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# The New Self And Its Practical Impact

*"Put on the new man, which according to God is created in truthful righteousness and holiness."*

Ephesians 4:24 JND

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## The Audience

Our title is taken from the verse just quoted and it introduces the topic we desire to discuss in this article. It is about what God has in mind for all the believers who belong to "the Church of the living God" (1 Tim. 3:15 NKJV). This began with the 120 believers in Jerusalem that included the 12 apostles, along with the 3,000 who were added to them on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 1-2). Soon after, the Lord added many more to the Church (5:12-14, 11:19-24), and He has done so over the years and will continue until the rapture (1 Thess. 4:16-18).

The Book of Acts records how these believers came from entirely different backgrounds – Judaism and paganism – yet were placed together in a completely new context. They were called "Christians" (Acts 11:26, see 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16). Even now, the Lord desires us to follow their example.

God made His thoughts about these new developments known to the apostle Paul, who shared them with Peter and John, and later with the other apostles as well as with new believers elsewhere (Gal. 1–2). The believers of the Old Testament – Adam, Noah, Abraham, David and others – belonged to a different family, or group of believers. This will also be the case of those who will be saved after the rapture.

We are not saying these things to complicate matters but to clarify what is understood by the term in Ephesians 4:24 of “the new man” (JND), or “the new self” (ESV). I encourage you to read or reread *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, while asking the Lord to make these things clear to you.

The believers we are talking about in this article, both male and female, are called “the saints” and “the body of Christ” (v. 12). However, this does not mean that the believers who belong to different time periods – either before Pentecost or after the rapture – are not saints, for they are as well.

Still, in the context of Ephesians 4, the term “the saints” refers to those who belong to the same family of believers that started in Acts 2 and that will continue until they “meet the Lord in the air, and so ... will always be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:17).

What about you? Do you belong to them? Living now, your opportunity to be saved, to be a saint of God, is today. For you, “now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2).

## The Source Of The Message

It was Paul’s calling and task to make sure the believers in Ephesus and elsewhere would understand these things. Therefore, they could live according to God’s instructions. In other words, Paul communicated to the believers the things God had revealed to him, which He intended for all Christians. He urged all believers, then and today, to walk “worthy” of their calling (Eph. 4:1), and he showed them the qualities needed for this: true humility and meekness, patience with each other, and readiness to forgive in real love.

His concern was that they might understand these teachings, put them into practice and keep growing, while using the gifts God had given them. Paul instructed the new believers in God’s thoughts, that they might live accordingly and be built up (v. 12). The apostle had told similar things to the elders of Ephesus when he met them at Miletus (Acts 20:17-38), on his way back to Jerusalem toward the end of his third missionary journey.

## What Is “The New Self”?

A few years later, from his rented home in Rome where he was held as a prisoner for two years (Acts 28), Paul wrote his beautiful letter to the Ephesians. This special letter is about the spiritual blessings Christians have in the *heavenlies*. The Lord had

it sent with the intention that all the believers would be informed about these matters, there and elsewhere, then and now. To enjoy these wonderful things, God the Father has adopted all true believers as sons for Himself, sharing with them the blessings that rejoice His heart. These blessings and privileges lead to an outpouring of praise and worship of the Father and the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit, now and forever (Eph. 1:3-14; 3:14-21).

After his doctrinal exposition, or explanation, and his two prayers in this amazing epistle, the apostle described our blessed position and privileges (Eph. 4:1-16). He then added more instructions (Eph. 4-6). In contrast to our former way of life in our sinful condition, a renewing takes place when putting on “the new self.” This new self may be described as “Christ as He is now, reproduced in all believers through the work of the Spirit in the new creation” (consider Eph. 4:24). How incredible!

On our side, this implies a profound transformation as well as a special commitment (vv. 25-32), in a constant process of the renewing of our mind (v. 23). This coincides with our putting on “the new self” according to God, which is created in righteousness and holiness of the truth (v. 24).

The word “new” emphasizes a *new order* of things, whereas the renewing in verse 23 indicates an ongoing process that is new and fresh. The Greek words for “new” (v. 24) and “renewed” (v. 23) are different.

Verse 24 emphasizes that this new entity – “the new self” or perhaps better, “the new man” – is “according to God” (NKJV) and has been “created in righteousness and holiness of the truth” (NASB). This description implies God’s creative action in full agreement with His standards of holiness and righteousness.

The apostle also explained how this new self manifests itself, or is seen, in a moral transformation, implying that an amazing work of God is taking place at the same time. Paul’s exhortations help us work things out in a practical way for the honor of God and for the blessing of His people. These are down-to-earth instructions that we must put into practice on a moment-by-moment basis.

Let’s read together two passages:

*“But ye have not thus learnt the Christ, if ye have heard Him and been instructed in Him according as the truth is in Jesus; [namely] your having put off according to the former conversation the old man which corrupts itself according to the deceitful lusts; and being renewed in the spirit of your mind; and your having put on the new man, which according to God is created in truthful righteousness and holiness.”*  
Ephesians 4:20-24 JND

This indicates a learning process for all believers as disciples, or learners, in God's school. It does not speak of a religion but of a relationship with Him, and because of Him a relationship with each other as His disciples and followers.

The Scriptures present Christ Jesus – the Person of whom we learn and who is being formed in us (see Gal. 4:19), now glorified, who is the Teacher through the Holy Spirit. He is also our Lesson for every day and situation, in God's living Book and Program, if I may use that term in connection with the Lord Jesus. The Bible – the Scriptures – are living and powerful, presenting the greatness of our Lord Jesus on every page!

*"Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the Devil. Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." Ephesians 4:25-32 ESV*

This learning and renewing process for the formation and building up of the new self is quite thorough and effective, because it is God's program. Let us follow these instructions Paul gave us, for our own well-being and that of others.

## Submit To His Plan

Putting on the new man – the new self – leads to amazing results, which demonstrate the power of God's methods and resources. May we all be ready "to go for the gold," as is sometimes said, and not resist the work of the Holy Spirit in us and with us.