

Out with the Old, In with the New

(Ephesians 4:20-24)

I. Introduction

- A. This time of year when we look two directions—back at 2008, forward to 2009
1. Our word “*January*” comes from the “*Janus*,” Greek god of gates and door
 - a. He was depicted with two faces, so he could look in two directions
 - b. It is also from Janus that we get the word “*janitor*” (lit *doorkeeper*)
 2. It’s this time of year we see TV retrospectives on “*The Year That Was*”
 - a. These also generally include predictions of what to expect in coming year
 - b. That’s much harder than looking back; notice some famous predictions
 - “*There’s a world market for maybe five computers*” (president of IBM in 1943)
 - “*There’s no reason anyone wants a computer at home*” (DEC founder, 1977)
 - “*Telephone has too many shortcomings...no value to us*” (Western Union, 1876)
 - “*Guitar music is on the way out anyway.*” (Decca Records reject Beatles, 1962)
 - “*640K ought to be enough [computer memory] for anybody.*” (Bill Gates, 1981)
 - “*Everything that can be invented has been invented*” (US Patent Office, 1899)
 3. What does A.D. 2009 have in store for us as a people and as a church?
 - a. Any prediction would be about as accurate as the ones we just saw!
 - b. It always easier to look back, and sometimes it is important to look back
 - 1) What matters is not the old (*acts/identity*) but the new (**Gal 6:15**)
 - 2) Paul tells us to forget the past and look ahead (**Phil 3:13-14**)
 - c. That sounds suspicious like “*out with the old and in with the new*”
- B. Our text this morning from Ephesians 4 contrasts old and new lives before God
1. Paul had spent more time in Ephesus than with any other church!
 - a. Paul often stays just weeks with a new church; he stays 3+ yrs at Ephesus
 - b. You’d expect this to be the most personal letter; in many ways it is least!
 - c. That likely because it intended as a circular—whole region near Ephesus
 2. In our text, Paul does seem to be getting personal... in readers lives
 - a. In context, Paul had described a pagan world in rebellion against God.
 - b. He insists that surely they (we) didn’t learn Christ to live in that way
 3. How will we live? *Out with old and in with new!* (**Reading: Eph 4:20-24**)

II. Out With the Old...

- A. Paul begins by saying we must decide to “*put off your old self*” ([Eph 4:22](#)).
1. OK, it’s out with the old before in with new, but what does that mean?
 - a. When I was baptized at 9, my life was pretty much sports (*still is?*)
 - b. Did everything suddenly change after baptism? Did anything change? (*maybe at 9, I wasn’t a poster child for depravity, although some of you knew me*)
 - c. What does he mean, “*Put off your old self?*” Look back at [Eph 4:18-19](#)
 2. Paul says here the world without God is characterized by **two things**:
 - a. **Chosen Ignorance**: People who are apart from God are in the dark
 - 1) He says they closed their mind and hardened their heart.
 - 2) So this ignorance of God really is just that— it is **IGNORance**.
 - 3) World chose to ignore God, which reflects Paul in [Romans 1:21](#)
 - b. **Chosen Rebellion**: When the world ignore God, they also deny Law.
 - 1) Jean Paul Sarte said, “*If there is no God, everything is permitted.*”
 - 2) Once you dismiss God, you ultimately dismiss idea of accountability
 - 3) Which is the same place where Paul ends up in [Romans 1:24-25](#)
- B. The old self we are to put off is **chosen ignorance** and **chosen rebellion**.
1. Our post-Christian no longer just accepts Judeo-Christian basis morality
 - a. They don’t just see church as a good thing or the Bible as the Good Book
 - b. World has chosen not to acknowledge God... and so the world changed
 2. Teacher polls suggest big problem in schools in 50’s was gum & spit wads.
 - a. *World changed!* Today the problem in schools is not gum, but guns
 - b. *So the world changed?* No, problem is that world hasn’t really changed
 - 1) Does anyone think the big school problem in 50’s was *Wrigleys*?
 - 2) The Brown vs Board of Education ruling on segregation was 1954
 - 3) Chosen ignorance and chosen rebellion were alive in the 1950’s
 3. Paul tells us we did not learn of Christ to continue to live like the world.
 - a. Paul’s world sounds an awful lot like our world—“*no sense of shame.*”
 - b. They live for lustful pleasure and eagerly practice every kind of impurity
 4. So the first step in “*out with the old and in with the new*” is out with the old

III.... In With the New

- A. After we put off the old self, Paul says to change the way we think.
1. NIV has Paul say, “*made new in the **attitude** of your minds*” (**Eph 4:23**)
 - a. ESV/NASB have more literally “*in the spirit [πνεῦμα] of your minds*”
 - b. NLT has different slant, “*let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes*”
 - c. No matter how you translate it, this renewal involves Spirit (**Titus 3:5**)
 2. We have to allow God to give us a totally, radically new way of thinking
 - a. This contrasts with the old thinking that he described earlier (**v. 18**)
 - b. This new mind is a heart opened to God, listening for the things of God
 - c. On Wednesday night, I referred to novel Echo Park by Michael Connelly
 - 1) Two main characters, cop and killer, were from identical background
 - 2) They were abandoned by mother, lived in orphanage, served in Nam
 - 3) The killer explained the difference by suggesting we have two dogs
 - a) One leads to good and the other evil; we have decide which dog to feed
 - b) “*You went your way and I went mine. I guess I fed the wrong dog.*”
 3. We must decide which mind we are going to feed—the flesh or the Spirit
 - a. God will empower, but we must choose which nature we will feed
 - b. We choose which side to empower by what we read, hear, fellowship
- B. We are “*created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness*” (**Eph 4:24**)
1. We sang, “*I Was Made For This!*” We do have a purpose (**Rom 8:28-29**)
 - a. We were made for a purpose—“*conformed to the likeness of his Son*”
 - b. Our purpose is to become like God in “*true righteousness and holiness*”
 - 1) Sometimes we think purpose of religion is religion—rites and rituals
 - 2) Rites and rituals of religion are to point us to God—be like him
 2. Peter says we are to become “*partakers of the divine nature*” (**2 Pt 1:4**, KJV)
 - a. Peter tells us here that you and I can share in the divine nature of God
 - b. And when we do that, we can escape the world’s wickedness.
 - c. Peter is specific HOW we go about doing that— *little steps* (**2 Pt 1:5-9**)
 3. New years is the time we focus on “*out with the old, in with the new*”
 4. For Paul and Peter, it’s New Years every day—*process of daily discipleship*
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IV. Conclusion

- A. In 1979, Flavil Yeakley published *Why Churches Grow* (based on dissertation)
1. Research focused on things that lead people to convert and then drop out
 - a. Many church that stressed evangelism didn't do well at keeping people
 - 1) Growing church tend to have a slow, steady baptism and keep most
 - 2) His research now is very dated, but a lot of things are pretty timeless
 - b. He found people who baptized and stayed had several things in common
 - 1) One was changes relationships— replacing old friendships with new
 - 2) More new relationships were formed, the likelier was faithfulness
 2. I wonder if we can apply this to ourselves personally as disciples
 - a. We must put off old behaviors—habits, practices and relationships
 - 1) Some things move us further from God or make seeking Him harder
 - 2) Things we do, movies we watch, music we listen, people we hang with
 - b. At same time, we put on godly behavior—habits, practices, relationships
 - 1) Something move us closer to God and make it easier to follow
 - 2) Things we do, services we attend, music we listen, what we read, etc
 3. Our success in living for God is the combination of all of those things
 - a. It is the combination of the “*out with the old and in with the new*”
 - b. We constantly seek to add more good things and subtract more bad things
- B. What will you subtract/add for God this year? *Point of New Year's resolutions*
1. What will you subtract? *Watch less TV? Fewer movies? Less Overtime?*
 - a. Wait a minute, there's nothing wrong with those things in themselves!
 - b. Maybe not, but these moving you closer to God and His holiness?
 2. What will you add? *Attendance? Small group? Work church/community?*
 - a. But those aren't required! Perhaps, but they may move you in a direction
 - 1) What direction... stay home & watch TV on Wednesday night?
 - 2) What direction... stay out late Saturday & sleep Sunday (*in church?*)
 - 3) What direction... so busy in your life, can't commit to serve others?
 - b. What direction are you going? You have to answer that for yourself
 3. Choices you make are personal but the direction you are going isn't!