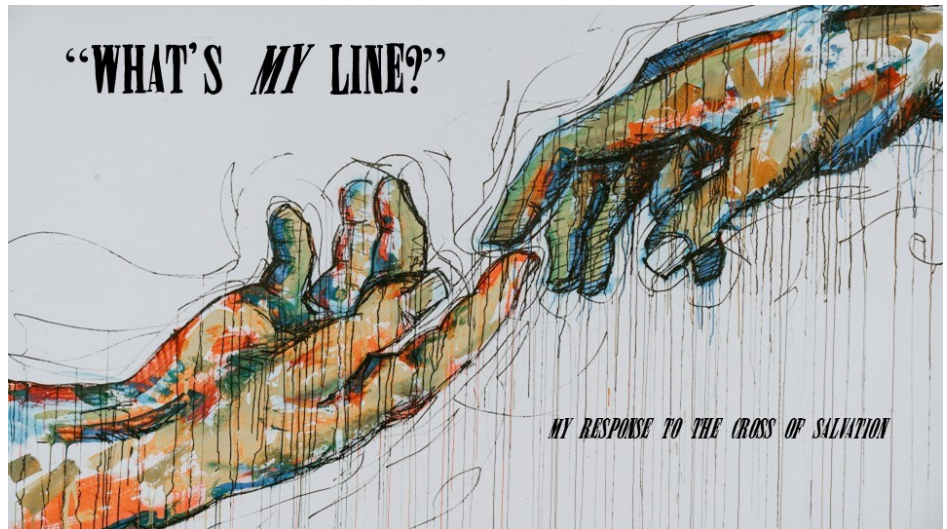


What's My Line?
By Pastor Tim Dodson
at Believers City
Church in Menomonie,
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Ephesians 4:20-24



Throughout our study in James, we were repeatedly left with a conundrum.

- Repeatedly we were left to consider the what was God's part in this relationship, and what was ours.
- Many of us would like to shift it all onto Christ as we remain purely in the seat of the recipient.
- We chant the mantra... "its all God!...its all God!"
- While that sounds very spiritual and quite pleasing too, it is sadly simply not a biblical fact.
- 2 Corinthians 13:5 explicitly instructs believers to "*test yourselves* to see if you are in the faith; *examine yourselves!*"
- 1Co 11:28 But let a man *examine himself*, and so *let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup*.
- Ga 6:4 But *let each one examine his own work*, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.
- Re 3:2 "*Be watchful, and strengthen* the things which remain..."

- Rev 3:3 "Remember therefore how you have received and heard; *hold fast and repent...*"
- Col 1:23 "... *if indeed you continue in the faith*, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard..."
- 1Pe 5:9 "*Resist him (Satan)*, steadfast in the faith..."
- 1Co 9:24 "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? *Run in such a way that you may obtain it...*"
- This list goes on and on. While Jesus is wholly responsible for our redemption, we absolutely play a part in our sanctification, our discipleship, and our maturity.

Throughout the book of Ephesians there is a repeated use of the term "in Christ."

- In fact, it appears some 70 times.
- Certainly we could gather then, that in those words lay the heart of Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus.

The *book* of Ephesians is in reality a *letter*

- ...a letter the apostle Paul wrote to a blossoming church that had begun in the city of Ephesus
- ...a city of a quarter million people in the days which Paul wrote, a city which lay in coastal Turkey.

Ephesus was a wicked city ...and was long before Paul rolled into town.

- Within its realm lay all of the wonders of the modern world in that day... as well as all the sin that one would find in a major city today.

- It contained some of the finest arts and literature of its time, yet replete with all the fleshly indulgencies that trail behind man's prosperity and self-glorification.
- It was a city that said "me first"...one that taught you had to watch out for "old number 1."
- This church in Ephesus started well, but it had clearly failed to "follow through" in their spiritual maturing.

Paul, writing to these faltering believers writes in Ephesians 4:20 – 24

- *...notice the order here.*
- First you 'put off the old.'
- Certainly it is a danger to overlay man's human responsibility in relationship to God's supernatural work via the Holy Spirit, and yet we cannot ignore the careful language we find here.
- The passage says "put off the old man" and it directly points to each of us, and then goes on to say "put on the new man"...again, seeming to lay the responsibility for this choice, if not the very action, clearly in the lap of each of us.

Paul, after spending 3 and half chapters here in this letter to the church in Ephesus... laying out all the blessings and benefits that are available to us and them as believers... now goes on to identify *our* responsibility in this verse...*our* part in the equation.

- We are to "put on" the new self as a garment. The new self (or man) is the person that the Christian is positionally after he or she experiences regeneration.
- We "put on the new man" as we pursue the things of Christ rather than the desires of the flesh.

The new man;

- When a man makes contact with God, he changes. There is no doubt about that!
- The power that exists in the person of Jehovah God is the most powerful force that has ever existed in the universe.
- You cannot have contact with God and not be affected and changed. It is a fact.
- If there is no change, then one must truly consider that he or she never really had any contact with the true and living God, but rather simply was going through the actions of religious motions.
- This is because God promises that when we come before Him with honest hearts of repentance, our minds are no longer dark, we are no longer aliens from God, and our hearts are left no longer hard and impure...*we're changed!*

Romans 6:6 *“knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.”*

- So the ‘old man’ ...the old life is *dead* if we have been reborn, according to the scriptures and according to the cross.
- But we must take careful note here... it doesn't *start* with ‘putting on the new man.’

Oh, plenty of folks try that.

- They come into the world of faith and try to add Christ like a condiment.

- They essentially want to still keep the old man around, or at least a little of him, and then bring in some Jesus to add to the old man like mustard or pickles.

We must make a conscious decision that we are no longer going to walk like those who are involved in sin. We must firstly lay down your old life...you get rid of the ‘old man.’

- 1Co 13:11 *When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, **I put away** childish things.*
- Eph 4:31 *Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking **be put away from you**, with all malice.*

This is where the process starts.

- It is an essential ...*and in fact a mandatory...* aspect of our very salvation.
- A very real and intrinsic part of the act of rebirth: *the setting down of our old life.*
- Within the very act of salvation is the acknowledgment that our life doesn’t work and in fact it is like a cancer that is slowly killing us.
- We know this as “repentance.” A ***turning***. A departure from what we were and moving on to what we are to be. Repentance, *we have already learned*, is mandatory to salvation.
- To “believe in Him” is to no longer “believe in me” ...which is a natural turning. I cannot “believe in both.” And in my natural state, I only believe in *me*.

We then begin to “put on” a whole new way of talking, living, and behaving. Your new lifestyle ...over time ...becomes who you are.

- It's not deception. It's not behavior modification. It's a ***decision***. It's an ***action***.
- People who are like Christ have made a conscious decision to put on the new man, to "put Him on." To "put on Christ." As a result, they become what they have chosen to put on.

If I merely sit here and wait for something to happen—for my personality to change, for my heart to feel loving, for my soul to feel kind—I'll wait forever.

- I've got to make a choice. I must choose to be compassionate. I must choose to love. And as I do, I *become* compassionate; I *become* loving.

Often we are confused in this matter...thinking that salvation will make me change.

- But salvation not gives you the power to change through the indwelling Holy Spirit.
- If I still don't actually want to change, I won't

How does this play out practically speaking? What does this "putting on of the new man" look like?

- First, we must be willing to actually move in the physical realm...to take positive action...in life practice, to live out the directions and promises of God.
- Secondly, we must make sure that we never forget where we came from, and what Jesus did to bring us to that point: We must make a memorial in our hearts and lives to make sure we remember.
- Let's look at a scriptural account that gives us a clear example of both of these issues:

(Text 1 Cor 10:1-12)

As we read that text, the word that is inescapable is the little word “all.”

- They *all* came out, but they did not *all* go in.
- God’s redemption of the people of Israel out of Egypt is a picture of the spiritual redemption of mankind out of the world through the cross of Christ. The part He does all by Himself.
- The ‘angel of death’ passed over *all* of them, ...they *all* had experienced the “parting of the Red Sea” salvation, ...God had provided *all of them* food, water, and shelter.
- A physical “redemption” came for them all... *all* of these redeemed individuals *began* their journey the same way.
- All the redeemed of men start out the same way.

Yet despite their great privilege and blessings, there obviously was no guarantee of success.

- They had so much ...literally *in their hands*, ...and yet they still never saw the promises of God.
- 3 million people had received God’s blessing and redemption from the world...of which Egypt is the spiritual/biblical picture.
- And yet according to the scriptural account, only two...caleb and joshua, ever found their way into the ‘promised land,’ ...only two found their way into the true and full blessing of God.

Apparently these that traveled with Moses had left Egypt *bodily*, but to a great degree their *hearts* remained in Egypt! How many of *us* have ‘left Egypt’ only to remain there in our hearts?

- Since Paul was writing this to the church in Corinth hundreds of years later, one would have to assume little had changed. Apparently the “wilderness” was still ‘littered with bodies.’
- The way we live our lives...our passions, our priorities, tell us where our hearts truly lie. But we need to ask us ourselves in truth, “*where is my heart today?*”
- Mt 6:21 *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

3 million people lost their lives there in that wilderness...at the very least to teach us a lesson!

- A lot to loose for us to only repeat such a massive error.

Even after being brought out...redeemed out of Egypt, like those who traveled with Moses...we can continue to “lust after” the attributes of Egypt...the “leeks and onions” that we left behind.

- These folks were not satisfied with what God had given them, but at the same time they lived in fear of moving beyond the manna and the desert wanderings.
- Instead of facing the giants in the promised land, with God on their side, ...they preferred to “play it safe”...
- ...wandering their lives away in relative safety...but never knowing the full promises of God.

The original journey from Egypt to the Promised land was actually only about a three day journey.

- But when they got there, they feared the “giants” in the land.
- They wanted to be rescued from Egypt, but they feared taking the next step.

Instead of moving forward ...they “sat down”...*their first mistake*, and then they spent their time *eating, drinking, and playing!*

- They had lost their way...and not by accident, but sadly, *on purpose!*
- They had ‘taken off Egypt’, but they had not “put on” the promised land.
- So while they may have been rescued out of Egypt, ...God’s work solely, they failed to know all of the blessings of living their lives “in God” or for us “in Christ.”
- God continued to take care of them, but it was not the “milk and honey” of God’s desired place for them. Not the bounty of the ‘promised land.’
- Instead they ate manna and only manna...everyday for 40 years and just wandered around in circles.

Again, much like today, so many of us fail to embrace God’s promised land.

- We simply refuse to ‘go on’ in God, and find instead comfort in the “new gods” of this “middle ground” which is not our home.
- We want out of our bondage and penalty of sin, but we are slow to take on the battles with the giants in the promised land that God wants us to live in.
- There was a reluctance on the part of God’s chosen people to take the next step...perhaps out of fear, perhaps out of laziness, who knows?
- Even though God had promised them victory over their enemies if they would just trust in Him. Jos 1:3 *"Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you..."*
- Not only is this “in between” not what God saved us from Egypt for, but let us take a true look around...*it is still only desert!*

- Here too, we may be taken care of, but it's still only manna, and it's still only a desert.

When we refuse to “put on the new man”, where we may find ourselves is anyone guess.

- Kind David's never started out to commit adultery, not to mention *murder*.
- It started with lust and idolatry, followed with *sitting down* and some overt “playing.”
- He gave an inch, and Satan took a mile. And the cost was *enormous*.

If you go back to the book of Exodus...to the original account of this story, you'll find quickly the people forgot their redemption. Forgetting was the *first* sin to occur.

- It was the sin that led to all the rest. **They *forgot*.**
- The sin of forgetting caused a slide for which they could not find their feet.
- And they died there in the wilderness...having never known that for which they had been redeemed out of Egypt...they never knew the promise land.

Even as the children of Israel....fresh out of Egypt, stood in the fullness of God's redemption...with the miracle of salvation so fresh it was like paint that was barely dry...they complained against God instead of remembering how far he had brought them and their miracles they had witnessed and experienced along the way.

The bottom line here is that all these things happened to the Israelites because they quickly forgot what God had done to save them.

- They had forgotten where they came from...they had forgotten where He had brought them too...What he had done for them...they forgot what life was like *before*...they ceased to be truly thankful...they began to murmur and complain...because they became obsessed and occupied with other worldly things. They *forgot*.

We are told that these things are recorded as examples to us, and are written for our “admonition,” as a “warning, and reproof.”

- Yes, God *does* warn and correct us!

How many of us ...even though we feel we are indeed born again, are failing to see the fruit in our lives, the joy in our faith, the peace in our hearts?

- Stop and take a look around. Is that sand between your toes? Maybe that's because even though you're not in Egypt anymore, *you're still in the desert...*
- Perhaps you just traded one prison for another one...
- God did His part in your rescue, but you have failed to follow through in the power that you have now been filled with via the Holy Spirit of God.

When the next generation of Israel finally *did* cross over into the promised land, into the place where God wanted them to be, they wanted to be sure they never forgot it.

- Certainly that no doubt would have been motivated by the 40 years they wandered around the desert...out of Egypt (sin) but not in the Promised land.
- They had taken off Egypt, but failed to put on the new man...they failed to “put on God.”

So this time they built a memorial...something that would help them remember.

▪ **Joshua 4:1-9**

And it came to pass, when all the people had completely crossed over the Jordan, that the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying: "Take for yourselves twelve men from the people, one man from every tribe, "and command them, saying, 'Take for yourselves twelve stones from here, out of the midst of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet stood firm. You shall carry them over with you and leave them in the lodging place where you lodge tonight.'" Then Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the children of Israel, one man from every tribe; and Joshua said to them: "Cross over before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of the Jordan, and each one of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, "that this may be a sign among you when your children ask in time to come, saying, 'What do these stones mean to you?' "Then you shall answer them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. And these stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever." And the children of Israel did so, just as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones from the midst of the Jordan, as the LORD had spoken to Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them to the place where they lodged, and laid them down there. Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests who bore the ark of the covenant stood; and they are there to this day.

2Co 4:10 calls us to “always carry about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.”

- We must carry with us...like that memorial, the daily remembrance what Jesus did to redeem us. His death should manifest our new life in us everyday.
- Life has a way of blowing in and overcoming us.

Satan loves to get us so busy about the issues of life that we forget where we came from, where we once was heading, and soon we are just lost in the desert.

- Out of Egypt maybe, but nowhere near the Promised land...

We must note the critical step of not only leaving Egypt, but the importance of crossing over and entering the promised land.

- We must not only “put of the old man” but we must take the next step and “put on” the new man.