

St. Paul admonishes us to put off the old man. This is your old self, or your old Adam. It is your original sin, or your sinful condition, which still clings to you. It is the evil passions and desires, which still exist in you. Paul says, put it off. You have been called by one Lord to one faith through one baptism to serve one Father. You therefore don't belong to the world. In your baptism, you were joined to the death of Christ. You were buried with him. Your old self – your old man or old Adam – was crucified. So now your sinful nature, which still clings to you, is a dead nature. It's dead, because you have been given a new life in Christ. He has forgiven you all of your sins and transferred you from the power of darkness into his light of grace. The Father has seated you with Christ. He has given you faith and new life by his Holy Spirit. This is your confidence. It's your life. It's your eternal purpose and hope. So when you find that your sinful desires still cling to you, then don't let them bother you. Instead, put them off.

You can put off the old man, because he's dead. Sure, he seems alive. Your sinful passions seem to be in charge sometimes. But God tells you that the body is dead because of sin, and your spirit is alive because of righteousness. God declares you righteous. He declares you alive. He promises you the resurrection of your body, yes, the very body that is filled right now with so much sin. You see, in the end, not even your body will be touched by your old self. So put it off.

But how do you put off this old, dead self? Well, consider what happened when you were baptized. St. Paul says in Galatians that when you were baptized into Christ you were clothed with Christ. His righteousness therefore covers you. So whenever you return to his Word, trusting in the same promise he gave you in your baptism, then you are putting on Christ. If you are putting on Christ, then you are putting off your dead, sinful desires.

Now, consider what else happened in your baptism. St. Peter says that your baptism for the forgiveness of sins bestows on you the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit promises now to rule in your heart and in your whole body. He chooses you to be his holy temple.

So use him! Put to death the immoral desires that burn in you. Don't let them get the upper hand! Stay away from fornication, and don't listen to the godless people in this world who would make fun of you for being a virgin into your twenties. If you aren't married yet, then that is what God has called you to do. It's much better to have the Holy Spirit making his home in you than to have the approval of fornicators. Put to death the greed for money, which only leads to false worship and the loss of faith, not to mention the loss of blessings from God as well. Put to death your anger, which stews against those who did you wrong. Put it all to death.

You might say, "But I can't! These desires are too strong. I don't feel like I have control over them. I just can't put them off!" Yes you can! You can put off your old sinful self, because God has given you the power and the authority. He has given you his Holy Spirit. He has given you a new life. Believe God when he says that your fierce passions and burning desires are only last gasps of your old dead self. And have courage! Draw courage from Christ who died for you. Draw strength from the Holy Spirit who speaks to you through his Word and lives in you by faith.

To put to death your old sinful self means that you don't think like your old sinful self. You don't think like the world. Instead, you think like a Christian. Listen to what St. Paul says:

Become new in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self, which is created to be like God, righteous and holy in the truth. (Eph. 4:23-24)

You see, putting on Christ – putting on the new man and the new creation in Christ – means that you have been given a new spirit and mind. It means that you think in a new way. You don't think like the world. This is a new mindset. God considers you to be righteous. God considers you to be dead to sin and alive in Christ. So consider yourself in the same way. Think the way God thinks. Think with the new mind God has given you. Don't think like the world thinks.

The people in the world take pride in being able to think for themselves. But they end up thinking in the same way. Sure, everyone thinks for himself. That is to say, he thinks about how he can benefit himself. But that isn't the new mind God has given you in Christ. As a Christian, you know that this world is passing away. You know that all your earthly goods are passing away, all your accomplishments have only so much time in the sun. And yet, despite all this, you know that your labors are not in vain. Why? Because God has called you to be his own. Christ has been raised from the dead, forgiving you of all your sins, promising you eternal life even in your own dying body. So why spend your time thinking about how you will get ahead? Why torture yourself over how you will make yourself secure? God has already done so.

When you put off the old Adam and sinful desires, you aren't pretending that you don't have them anymore. You aren't imagining that you no longer struggle with them. No, that would be deceitful. That would be lying. Of course, your sinful desires still cling to you, even when you put them off. Of course, you still find yourself failing because of your own weakness. To pretend that this isn't true does you no good. Instead, you can be honest about your sinful condition, because you know that God doesn't count your sins against you. You don't need to hide the fact that your body is sinful, because you know that Christ's righteousness already covers up your sin.

So don't lie. Tell the truth. Be honest with one another, because you are members of one another. Yes, it's frustrating that your dead, sinful condition still clings to you. The sin of your own heart as well as the sin promoted by this godless world is enough to anger you. But don't let this anger turn into a sinful despair of God's goodness. Even as you are bothered and angry about sin, don't give the devil a chance to work through this anger. Instead, cast it on the Lord. Because he is zealous to save you and lead you through the dark times.

When you put off the old Adam and sinful desires, this also teaches you to be generous. Because you know that God provides for everything you need. You know that your works won't save you. You know that the work you do with your hands will only last for a while. And yet, you have the confidence that God is working good through it all. God is blessing your work, no matter how small it may seem. Why? Because he has blessed you. He has saved you. He has promised to work everything out to keep you in the faith, grounded in his Word, and secure in his kingdom. You therefore don't need to worry about how small or insignificant your works and labors might seem. If God is pleased with you, then you can be content with what he has given you to do. Those who aren't content with what God has given will try to gain honor and security for themselves. This only leads to coveting and stealing what isn't theirs. But you who know Christ – you who have the rich treasure of the Holy Spirit and eternal life – you can be content with what your hands produce. Because you know that it is God working in you both to will and to do for his good pleasure.

Putting off the old self doesn't mean that you no longer have your sinful condition hanging around your neck. It doesn't mean that you no longer feel the burning temptations. It doesn't mean that you no longer succumb to your weak and dying nature. It also doesn't mean that you are always feeling happy

and victorious. But it does mean that you have confidence in what the gospel says. You believe God when he says that your sinful condition is nothing but a dead body. You believe God when he says that you have been made new in Christ. So you repent of your sins, turning your mind away from the torments of your passions, with the confidence that God remains merciful and generous toward you.

So take heart. Have courage. Your sins are forgiven. Knowing this allows you to take up your bed, so to speak, and go home. In other words, having confidence that God forgives you of your sins for the sake of Christ allows you to go on living. Knowing that God declares you righteous because of Christ's obedience in your place allows you to do the work God has given you to do. You can do this work without worrying about whether you are meeting up to some high standard, because God has already seated you with Christ. You can go to your house justified, care for your spouse and children, honor your parents, and do the work God has given you to do while it is still day, because the light of Christ is shining on you.

Knowing that the Holy Spirit has chosen you to be his own temple allows you to put your old self, put to death your old Adam, drown all your sinful desires in the waters of your baptism. You do this daily. This is exactly what the Holy Spirit has given to Chase today. He has been baptized into Christ. Jesus' perfect life, death, and resurrection cover him as a glorious dress before God. The Holy Spirit dwells with him and in him. God has given him a new life, a new identity. He is a new creation. And his old, sinful self has been killed. What then will Chase learn to do throughout his life? What do we all learn to do throughout our lives? We learn to rely on the promise of our baptism. The Word of God joined to the water teaches us that the old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts, and that the new man should daily immerse and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

This is our confidence even in this sinful life. It is the authority God has given to us in his gospel. We rest on the forgiveness of our sins, looking forward to the resurrection of our bodies. In the meantime, our sinful bodies are dead, but the spirit of our minds remains alive and new in Christ. He will continue to cover us. He is who we are in this world. We are Christians. And we will not be put to shame. Amen.