

## Whose Software I Live By!

Sermon for the 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity

Sermon Text: Ephesians 4:22-32



*<sup>22</sup> to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, <sup>23</sup> and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, <sup>24</sup> and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. <sup>25</sup> Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. <sup>26</sup> Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, <sup>27</sup> and give no opportunity to the devil. <sup>28</sup> 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. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. <sup>32</sup> Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

Jesus Christ says that in the end times people will come and say: See here is Christ or see there is Christ! But Christ will not be where these people claim that He is... because they are liars. Our text for today is about lies and truth. And that is a matter that we humans all struggle with. In many a court, this argument was made after long negotiations: “You say you are a Christian! But you are a liar. We don’t believe you!” How easy it will be in heaven when we all will wear the white robes of Jesus Christ. And the bright robes of Jesus Christ will shine brightly that there will be no more room for lies... and very clearly on these robes will be written: “Child of God... Saved through Jesus Christ and born again!” Nobody can say anything against these words. But in our world, everything is still unclear. In our world, we still wear the dirty clothes that everyone else wears. We Christians are also sinners. And none of us can stand up here now and claim: He’s a Christian! But he isn’t!

And yet the apostle Paul tells us in our sermon today: “put on the new self!” And when Paul says that, he doesn’t mean that we can only put on this new self in heaven. No, we should already be putting on the new self. We should let the spirit in our minds be renewed. How am I supposed to understand all this? And how does it even work that I become a new creation? First of all, we must understand that we are not talking about a thing, like a piece of clothing.

We are talking about Jesus Christ Himself, who was there at the beginning of creation. This Jesus came to us here on earth. And has come so close that His presence surrounds and encloses about our entire life like a warm coat. Jesus Christ is immeasurably bigger than a coat that not only surrounds my life but all Christians in the entire world. Jesus makes all of this permanent through baptism. Paul uses language of new clothes because at that time, Christians wore a new white dress after their baptism. Baptism was understood as a white dress. After baptism, it was clear that a Christian is "IN Christ." And yet our previous life is not simply replaced by the cloak of Jesus Christ. I still remain an independent person. My daily experiences also remain the same. I am and remain a person who has completely normal wants and desires. With computers, the software determines what the computer is capable of. The software already defines all the possibilities and limits of a computer. It is the same with people. But we must state that our human software is not by nature Christian and that, by its nature, it doesn't want what is good. This is how God speaks about people: "*The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*" (Genesis 6:5) Our innermost being (our heart) is the software from which the whole person is controlled. When I see it that way, our wickedness is so much worse that putting on a new suit can't help. To tell the truth, our hearts are so filled with evil that we don't even understand that something is missing within us. Lies, theft, hate, envy fit us and our lives like a glove and we can sometimes get along quite well with this unjust and godless suit. Some people even think that you can be completely happy and content with it.

In our text, Paul doesn't speak to saint who are without sin. He speaks to specifically to those people who, on the one hand, are baptized and have put on the new clothing of Christ and who, on the other hand, are also burdened with sins. In other words, Paul talks to normal Christians like you and I are. Because we all know this situation, that we all want to live as Christ and yet we continually can't do so. Again and again, sin pushes to the front of lives and wants to distract us from Christ. We would love to be free someday. We want so badly to be whole Christians so that everything is clear! Can we see more of Jesus and His power in our lives? Can the warm cloak in Christ be more effective in my life? To explain all of this, Paul repeatedly makes the distinction between the old Adam, who lives out of our human nature, and the new creation in Christ, who lives out of Christ. The power of the new creation can only come from Jesus! We must not mix the Christian with the old Adam as it is easy to confuse the old self with the new self in Christ. There is a lot that can be taught to the sinful self! The sinful self can be taught to hide behind many moral rules. The sinful self can be treated psychotherapeutically. One can even make a very pious person out of this sinful self so that some would say: "That is a real Christian!" However, such pious people don't have anything to do with Jesus. They have nothing to do with Him because they live out of their selfish nature and not out of Christ!

We Christians are also in danger of not living for Christ but for ourselves. We can be baptized and as baptized Christians simply walk away from Jesus. Paul describes this and tells us: "we give Satan an opportunity." And when that happens, all the old vices come back into our life. That which comes from our inner corrupt soul becomes public. Words spread! Lies

spread. And such things operate like a pandemic. A lie leads to many new lies. One word out of anger spreads into bitterness and hate. Just like a pandemic, the risk of infection is great. Hate and distrust spread to other Christians too. Because every ordinary Christian is also like me and has to fight with the old sinful nature. The danger is great that we will instinctively respond to the software of Satan that is working within us. And that we forget the new birth in Jesus. Later we don't even know how our new life in Christ will look like. Paul says the Holy Spirit is grieved at this cruel confession of failure. We make the Holy Spirit sad when we have new birth in Christ but live our lives according to the old Adam. Such a life is hard. The clothing of lies presses heavily on the soul and makes us sad. The hate and resentment even makes us sick. How light the clothing of Christ that reveals everything again and makes the heart free! Through Jesus, we have the courage to freely and openly speak about our sins. Through Jesus, we have the courage to help other and to accept them as they are. Through Jesus, trust in one another is strengthened and we aren't afraid to speak the truth. Because Jesus has made us free. Amen.