

PREFACE

A few weeks ago we were in Marshalltown, at Linda's parent's house, so I could power-wash the exterior of their house. Naturally, it was the hottest and most humid day of the week, and the job I expected to take about an hour, took most of the day. By the end of the day my clothes were soaked through with sweat, with water spray, and I was filthy—and miserable from the heat and humidity. All I wanted to do was get out of those clothes and into the shower. A short while later I felt much better: scrubbed clean and wearing fresh, clean clothes.

That is the idea behind most of Chapter Three in Colossians: removing our filthy old clothes and putting on (literally, sinking into) clean new clothes.

Although it is not a Biblical perspective, many of us experienced a similar sensation at our baptism. I can still remember walking up and out of that huge round baptistry, in the old Baptist Temple in which I grew up, feeling cleaner than ever before. I felt washed, fresh-scrubbed, *new*. My old ways were now behind me; everything before me was goodness and light. (Anyway, that's what it felt like at the time. Would that my life had actually played out that way from the age of nine.)

Here is the outline, the structure of Paul's "put off/put on" treatise in Chapter Three:

Put off

3:5 – put to death/consider...as dead immorality, etc.

3:8 – put them all aside: anger, etc.

Put on

3:10 – put on the new self

3:12 – put on a heart of compassion, etc.

3:14 – put on love

Read Colossians 3:8-11.**v8-9A**

The list last week in v5 had to do with impurity and greed, while the sins listed in v8 are more concerned with attitude and speech.

anger = *orge* = from <G3713> (oregomai); properly desire (as a reaching forth or excitement of the mind), i.e. (by analogy) **violent passion (ire, or [justifiable] abhorrence)**; by implication **punishment** :- anger, **indignation, vengeance, wrath**.

wrath = *thymos* = from <G2380> (thuo); passion (as if breathing hard) :- **fierceness, indignation, wrath**. Compare <G5590> (psuche).

Orge and *thymos* are virtually synonymous, and used interchangeably throughout the NT and Septuagint (Greek translation of OT). If there is a slight difference, it is that "*thymos* is preferred for depictions of sudden bursts of anger...whereas in *orge* there is an occasional element of deliberate thought" (H-C. Hahn). Or put another way, *orge* might be used for premeditated anger, while *thymos* might be preferred for the anger of momentary passion. [But then (wouldn't you know it), some scholars say it is just the opposite.]

malice = *kakia* = from <G2556> (kakos); **badness**, i.e. (subject) depravity, or (active) **malignity**, or (passive) trouble :- **evil**, malice (-iousness), naughtiness, **wickedness**.

slander, blasphemy^{kjvs} = *blasphemia* = from <G989> (blasphemos); **vilification** (especially against God) :- blasphemy, **evil speaking**, railing.

abusive speech^{nasb}, **filthy language/communication**^{niv, kjvs}, **obscene talk**^{esv} = *aischrologia* = from <G150> (aischros) and <G3056> (logos); **vile conversation** :- filthy communication.

And in the beginning of v9 Paul adds to the list, "Do not lie to one another."

Turn to the epistle of James.

James emphasizes the perils of human speech in his epistle.

Read 1:19-20.

Read 1:26.

Read 3:5-6, 8

Jesus, too, spoke about those things that come out of our mouths.

Read Matthew 15:17-20.

My guess is that every one of us has experienced the truth of this in the church. If I had a nickel for every time I had to go to a brother or sister and say, "Please forgive me for what I said," I would be driving a newer car today.

James emphasizes the importance of *controlling* the tongue, while Jesus speaks of how the tongue is an indicator for the content of the heart. Certainly we should learn restraint and discretion in matters of speech, but that does not fix the root of the problem: the heart. When the *heart* is changed—as Paul writes further into v9—by laying "aside the old self," the tongue will follow, and less self-control will be necessary.

v9B-10

since you laid aside the old self/man with its evil practices

The verb in v8—*apothemi*—translated "put aside," or "put off" is not really the reference for the metaphor of taking off old clothes and putting on new. But the verb in v9 is; it normally refers to a literal "taking off" of clothes.

laid aside^{nasb}, **have put off**^{kjvs, esv}, **have taken off**^{niv} = *apekdyomai* = middle from <G575> (apo) and <G1562> (**ekdyo**); **to divest wholly oneself**, or (for oneself) despoil :- put off, spoil.

ekdyo = from <G1537> (ek) and the base of <G1416> (duno); **to cause to sink out of, i.e. (specially as of clothing)** to divest :- **strip**, take off from, **unclothe**.

Jesus replied and said, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they **stripped** him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead." (Luke 10:30)

Let's return to Chapter Two, where Paul lays the groundwork for this.

Read Colossians 2:11-12.

As F. F. Bruce puts it,

...their baptism was said to be, in effect, not the removal of an insignificant scrap of bodily tissue, as the old circumcision was, but the stripping off of the whole “body of flesh”—the renunciation of the sinful nature in its entirety.

Note that in v8 Paul tells the Colossians to “put aside” the behaviors of the sinful nature, but here he reminds them that they [already] “have put off/laid aside the old man/self.”

Likewise, he tells the Colossians (in v10) that they [already] “have put on the new self/man.”

...and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him

This passage (vv9b-10) is rich with imagery and doctrinal truth. I would like to propose two ways of thinking of it—not to suggest there are *only* two ways, nor are these two interpretations between which we must choose. Though they are different, I don't believe we must pick the one that is correct and reject the other. They are just a couple of good ways to fix in our minds the fullness of what Paul is really saying here.

Shedding and Renewal

Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.

though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

The NASB has the best translation:

decaying = *diaphtheiro* (dee-af-thi'-ro) = from <G1225> (diaballo) and <G5351> (phtheiro); **to rot thoroughly**, i.e. (by implication) **to ruin (passive decay utterly**, figurative pervert) :- corrupt, destroy, perish.

I thought of a snake shedding its old skin to make way for the new. Of course this process (in 2 Corinthians 4 and Colossians 3) is different; think of it this way:

Throughout the believer's life—throughout the maturing, sanctification process—the “old man,” the “outer man” is being sloughed off a piece at a time. Metaphorically, pieces of our flesh rot and fall off. So long as we are alive on this earth, the process never ends; we never run out of flesh to slough off.

Why is this happening? What is driving this process? Just this: *The inner renewal of the “new man.”* The picture I want you to have in your minds is of yourself, standing there before a mirror, and you are semi-transparent—you can see inside. Inside is a glow—the glowing of constant renewal: growth, maturing in Christ, through the process of sanctification gradually becoming more like Him. As this glowing continues, more and more of your outer flesh is rotting and flaking away: the more you glow, the more outer flesh you shed. And then, on the day you step over the threshold of heaven, the last tiny bits of the old flesh fall away, leaving only a glowing, resplendent “new man,” glowing inside and out.

First Man, Last Man

...according to the image of the One who created him

The end of v10 gives us a clue to a second way to interpret the text. Just what does Paul mean, specifically, by the terms “old man” and “new man”?

So far we have been expressing them in the sense of old *nature*, and new nature. That is, the “old self” refers to the fallen, depraved nature we were born with, while the “new self” refers to the nature we are acquiring as we journey through our sanctification in Christ. But there can be a different definition for these terms—and another clue to this is to simply answer two questions:

From whom did our old nature come? Adam

From whom does our new nature come? Christ

Let’s read how Paul detailed this to the church in Corinth.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:45-49.

The word translated “man” in this passage is the same used in our Colossian passage for “self” or “man.”

anthropos = from <G435> (aner) and ops (the countenance; from <G3700> (optanomai)); **man-faced, i.e. a human being** :- certain, man.

Let’s look at just a couple more references that get us closer to the idea of “put on.”

Read Romans 13:13-14.

Read Galatians 3:25-27.

And if we continue in Galatians 3 to v28, we see a tie-in to v11 in Colossians.

Read Galatians 3:28.

Read Colossians 3:11.

As F. F. Bruce points out,

It is not only the old sinful habits and attitudes that are done away with in this new creation. The barriers that divided human beings from one another are done away with as well.