

**Text:** Colossians 3:9-11

**Title:** The Old Man and the New

**Truth:** A total transformation from old to new drives the life of the Christian.

**Date/Location:** Sunday November 22, 2015 at FBC

## Introduction

We come now to a restatement of a core truth of spiritual transformation in the Christian's life. I say *restatement* because we have seen already the idea of dying with Christ and rising again with Him. These truths speak to our Christian *identity*, that is, who we are in Christ. More particularly it speaks to how believers have that identity, because they are identified with Him in His death and resurrection.

And so because of that, we are to make our priorities heavenly priorities and our thoughts heavenly thoughts. We expect that the Lord will return suddenly, and perhaps rather soon, at which time it will become evident who we really are in Him. The world will not scoff at us then!

We must therefore mortify (kill) the things in our lives that are earthly, sensual, and demonic, like fornication, passion, covetousness, anger, filthy language, lying, etc. Next we learn more about **why we must** do that and **how it is possible**.

## I. We Put Off the Old Man, v. 9b

### A. Definitions

1. The *old man* is the whole of the unregenerate person in his old relationship to Adam and his old subjugation under sin and death. The 'man' terminology reflects a notion of realms or relationships.
2. *Putting off* the old man is the fundamental transformation that is made inside of the person at the moment of salvation where the old man was 'killed.'
3. The *old nature* is equal to the "flesh" in its sin-related metaphorical uses in the New Testament. It is also equivalent to the "sin nature." It is that set of attributes or characteristics or properties which mark a person (either before or after salvation) as having a tendency to sin, to desire sinful things, think sinful thoughts, etc. That nature is defeated at salvation as to its ultimate binding power over the believer, but still remains in a very vexing way in the life of the believer (Gal 5:16-17).

### B. The Meaning of Putting Off

1. There are two other passages in the Bible that deal with this putting off and putting on: Romans 6:1-11 and Ephesians 4:21-24.
2. The crucifixion of that old man in Romans 6 shows the shift that the person undergoes at the moment of salvation: out of the realm of the unregenerate into the realm of the regenerate; out of his old relationship to Adam and into

a new relationship with Christ; and out of his old subjugation under sin into a new freedom from the power of sin.

3. This is a positional change but is not only a legal or judicial fact in the mind of God with no other implications. In fact, it has a major impact on the Christian's experience. The believer does experience his new regenerate realm, his new relationship with Christ, and his new freedom from the power of sin. This change is the basis for sanctification in the life of the believer, both as to why it is necessary and how it is possible.

C. I have to emphasize that the "old man to new man" transformation is *finished* in the life of every believer. Every Christian is a "new person," not an old person. This is not a daily thing that the believer goes through. This is not something that has to be "reckoned as true" in order to make it true. It is true, period. And because it is true, the believer has a new in-born capability to live righteously. He has a new nature and the Holy Spirit to interact with that nature.

## II. We Put On the New Man, v. 10a

### A. Definitions

1. The *new man* is the whole of the regenerate person in his new relationship to Christ, righteousness, and life. He is regenerated, related to Christ, free from the dominating power of sin, and has life instead of death. While the old man has been fully crucified with Christ and is therefore gone, some characteristics of the old man (its nature) have carried over to some extent into the new man, though in broken form. A Christian is thus a new man with a new nature. The old man, that is, the pre-Christian person in all his relationships, is no longer in existence, but characteristics from the old nature remain, namely the tendency toward sin.
2. The *new nature* is that set of attributes or characteristics that are given to us by God at our salvation, which enable us to live godly lives. It is synonymous with the "divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). The subsequent verses in that passage indicate that we can grow in such characteristics, e.g. faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love (cf. 2 Peter 3:18). This is similar to Col 3:10, where the new man is being renewed. Obviously these are related to the fruit of the Holy Spirit's ministry in our lives (Gal. 5:22-25).

### B. The Meaning of Putting On

1. A completed thing. Like the putting off described earlier, this is a one-and-done kind of thing in a believer.
2. This is accomplished by God as part of the miracle work of salvation in the life of an individual.
3. We should notice how in each of the three passages that explains this idea, the putting on of the new man is either immediately followed by or preceded

by an exhortation to live apart from sin on that basis (Romans 6:12-13, Ephesians 4:25 and following, and Colossians 3:5-9a).

### III. Characteristics of the New Man Situation, v. 10b-11

- A. The new man is not static. While I said that you get the new man “once and it’s done,” the new man is being renewed all the time. This is another way of saying “sanctification.”
1. A couple of correlating passages are 2 Cor. 4:16 and 2 Cor. 3:18. These indicate an ongoing spiritual transformation in the life of the Christian person. We should be watching for this, God’s work, in us (Phil. 2:13), actively participating in it, and working to press it forward.
  2. Note that the outer person is the same whether saved or not, and the inner transformation can be going on very well even while our bodies might be losing strength and health.
- B. In Christ, there are no ethnic, ritualistic, or social distinctions.
1. Greek or Jew. When a Jew gets saved and thus becomes part of the church, he or she is a *Christian*. That is his or her primary identity. The same goes for a Greek. What is the primary way you identify yourself? “Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I am \_\_\_\_\_.” That second blank should be filled in with something like “a follower of Jesus Christ.” And you should actually put the second blank first! Who is more important in your life—you or Christ?!
  - i. There was and still is a distinction in the program of God for what He is going to do with the Jews nationally, politically, and geographically (Romans 11:25-27). That is, the flattening of distinctions in the church does not mean that there can’t be distinctions outside the church. In the future program of God, He will do different things for Jews and Gentiles.
  - ii. Similarly, the male/female distinction is “flattened” in the church (Galatians 3:28). But that doesn’t mean there are no distinctions remaining, even in the church! Only men can be heads of marriages and pastors (Eph. 5:23, 1 Timothy 2:12-14); only women can bear children (1 Timothy 2:15). Thus, different roles are observed even while all believers are united in Christ. If the body had no distinctions at all, how could it function (1 Cor. 12:14 and following)?
2. Circumcised or Uncircumcised. This ritualistic distinction was a big deal to the Judaizers who wished for Gentiles to become proselytes to Judaism in order to be saved. But it is of no import in the church. Membership in the church requires regeneration, water baptism, a Christian walk, and agreement to the beliefs of the church—not circumcision!

3. Barbarian or Scythian. There were barbarians, and then there were *Scythian* barbarians, the lowest of the low.<sup>1</sup> They would be to a civilized person in the Roman empire like a sword-toting jihadist would be to us today. They represented evil and chaos and savagery. If a Scythian were to be saved, that distinction would disappear in the body of Christ. No doubt some stigma would remain in broader society against a Scythian who was saved (because the world doesn't understand the "flattening" of such distinctions that happens in Christ). But a new-man barbarian and new-man Scythian are brothers in the Lord.

4. Slave or free. This social distinction was very prominent in Roman culture, very *noticeable*. But in Christ it evaporated and slaves and free worshipped alongside each other as equals.

C. Christ is all and in all. The Lord is all, as in *everything*, and dwells in all His people. This is why other distinctions disappear like the darkness of night in the bright sun of the day, because they are nothing compared to Christ in us, the hope of glory (1:27).

## Conclusion

We understand that a Christian is a new man with a new nature and an old nature. He is not an old man any more. The old man is not the same thing as the old nature. The transformation of old man to new man takes place at conversion. The transformation relates to both the person's being (as far as his character traits) and to his relationships.

I will let MacDonald state it another way: "Our old man refers to all that we were as children of Adam – our old, evil, unregenerate selves, with all our old habits and appetites. At conversion we put off the old man and put on the new man, as if exchanging filthy rags for spotless clothing (Col. 3:9, 10)...Just as the old man refers to all that we were as sons of Adam, with an unregenerate nature, so the new man refers to our new position as children of God."<sup>2</sup>

Therefore in Colossians 3:9-10, Paul is basically saying that believer was removed from the old relationships and placed under the new ones. This great transaction has occurred for true Christians, and is the cause for proper Christian behavior. Ephesians 4:22-24 has a similar emphasis, namely that belief in the basic Christian doctrine of such a great change would foster proper behavior. The Romans passage says that the transformation that occurs at salvation is a decisive one where the old man is eliminated (crucified). Though that passage does not specifically mention the "new man," it does clearly say the sin nature is defeated, but never indicates that it is removed.

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<sup>1</sup> Kent in *Treasures of Wisdom* (p. 133-35) quotes from Herodotus as to the awful practices of the Scythians.

<sup>2</sup> MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary*, pp. 1701-2, 2009.