

# Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"



Volume 26, Number 21  
2010

May 23,

## What are you Wearing?

*But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all. (Colossians 3:8–11)*

By far one of the most focused commentaries on these verses comes from Warren Wiersbe.

**Put off** (8–9). Like Lazarus (John 11:44), you must get rid of the graveclothes that belong to the old life. By faith, put off the old sins that bound you; Christ has set you free.

**Put on** (10–25). God wants you to wear the graceclothes, not the graveclothes! If your focus is on things heavenly, you will obey God in things on earth, especially in your relationships with others.<sup>1</sup>

In two simple words Wiersbe captures Paul's analogy beautifully; "graveclothes" and "graceclothes." Indeed, what are we wearing? Paul is here dealing with children of God, questioning the propriety of their conduct. Many men rely on their wives to select their wardrobe; in this case we must choose our own wardrobe. This passage deals with something even more personal and revealing than what we wear on our bodies. It deals with what we wear *in* our bodies, our moral and spiritual wardrobe. Someone has questioned, "If you were arrested and put on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?" Given Paul's analogy, do we wear the right clothes for the occasion in our daily lives? We should never take our minds or our bodies to places where our Christian wardrobe is not suitable.

As with our literal clothing, we normally must remove one set of clothes before we can put on others. So before we begin to look into the closet and select our new wardrobe, we need to take some things off. If we find any of these "put-off garments" in our spiritual/moral closets, we need to get rid of them. What are these obsolete

clothes that need to go out the door and into the trash can? Paul names them quite simply.

1. *Anger*. The word Paul used here refers to a state of mind, not to a momentary outburst. Have you ever known someone who lived in a near constant state of anger? Can you imagine how miserable such a person must be?
2. *Wrath*. Don't think Paul gave those brief sparks of anger a pass. He covers that problem with this word. He requires us to curb our abiding mood, and he also requires us to prevent those occasional overflows of anger. The next time someone cuts you off on the freeway think before you act.
3. *Malice*. ...a feeling of hostility and strong dislike, with a possible implication of desiring to do harm.<sup>2</sup> Anger fostered in the heart will inevitably overflow into actions. I hear people talk about their "righteous indignation," but I have seldom, if ever, seen it. What folks often rationalize as righteous indignation seems far more like sinful rage in action. Actions that begin with an angry heart do not improve when acted out. They are fully as ugly as the angry heart that cultivated them.
4. *Blasphemy*. Blasphemy, verbal abuse against someone which denotes the very worst type of slander mentioned in Matt. 15:19 with false witnesses; wounding someone's reputation by evil reports, evil

<sup>1</sup>Wiersbe, W. W. (1997, c1991). *With the word Bible commentary* (Col 3:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>2</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, vol. 1, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament : Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., 763 (New York: United Bible societies, 1996).

speaking.<sup>3</sup> The anger center in our minds is hard-wired to the speech center. The angry person may boast that he/she never raised a hand or touched anyone in anger, but words may inflict more damage than the hands.

5. *Filthy communication out of your mouth.*

"Vile conversation. It occurs only in Col. 3:8 where it refers to shameful words coming out of the mouth, implying that the person who has been redeemed by Christ (Col. 3:1) should never utter improper or filthy words which he may have uttered in his life of unbelief. A Christian ought to have a changed vocabulary, and the genuineness of one's Christianity can be discerned by his vocabulary."<sup>4</sup> After enduring high school physical education taught by the school's football coach who devoted every P. E. period to planning his next football game's strategy, my first year of college introduced me to a devoted physical education teacher who believed P. E. was the reason he was employed. My respect for him quickly grew when I walked into the dressing room on the first day of class and read a large sign on the wall, "Profanity comes from a lack of vocabulary." Our routine conversation should consistently manifest our faith.

6. *Lie not one to another.* No profound mystery here, the idea means that God requires His children to tell the truth. Some twenty years ago we welcomed a new neighbor next door who professed to be strong believers. I soon learned that, any time the husband wanted to lie or to misrepresent something, he always prefaced his lie with "I give you my word as a Christian." By the way, this exhortation does not entitle a believer to speak with intentional cruelty intended to hurt another person and then to defend the cruelty with "Well, I'm just telling the truth."

Okay, here we have a solid description of our old, obsolete, distasteful wardrobe. Did you notice that almost every trait in some way connects the darkness of the heart to the mouth. Watch a person's eyes and listen to their words. Between these two clues, you'll see the "real person"

<sup>3</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary : New Testament*, electronic ed. (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary : New Testament*, electronic ed. (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

almost every time. If we find any of these clothes in our moral/spiritual closet, we need to throw them in the trash can immediately. Don't store them in the cedar chest in case they come back into style. God has permanently banned them from tasteful style forever. Our spiritual closet has limited space. Every space we fill up with these ugly clothes is a space that cannot hold their counterpart in God's up-to-date, stylish, godly wardrobe.

*...seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds....* In this verse Paul does not depict "old man" as an integral part of our being, a separate, autonomous component of our person, but as a piece of clothing that is taken off, not to be worn again.

*And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him....* Likewise, the "new man" is put on, a behavior that we embrace and consistently practice, not an integral component of our being. Clothes that we wear need regular cleaning and pressing. Our spiritual wardrobe likewise needs regular attention, to be *"...renewed in knowledge...."* Further, the knowledge that renews our spiritual wardrobe requires a specific kind of knowledge, *"...after the image of him that created him...."* What we send forth out of our minds and mouths always reveals what we've been feeding our minds. The more we feed our souls with the knowledge of God by regular--and, please, thoughtful--time with Scripture the more we shall manifest a godly spiritual wardrobe.

*Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.* The family of God cuts across every cultural and racial barrier known to man. God never established superficial hierarchies among His children. "A Child of the King" suits every heir of God's loving promise.

Here is a brief preview of what Paul will teach us as we move through the Colossian letter.

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. (Colossians 3:16)*

*Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man. (Colossians 4:6)*

Paul expands the wardrobe analogy to a diet analogy. We champion salvation by grace, and by grace alone. If we hope to serve our Lord as a faithful witness to His glorious, liberating, enriching truth, we need to make sure that our

mouths speak with the same kind of grace that we need for our salvation. Think about every word and sentence you've spoken over the last week. Did you consistently speak words and ideas that were tastefully seasoned with true grace?

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Worship service each Sunday	10:30 A. M.
Joseph R. Holder	Pastor