

165 – Strip off

Since our study on April 9, titled “Are we dead yet?” we have been looking from various angles at who we are, who we are becoming, and to whatever degree whom we have become in the Messiah, as members of His Body, as His complement – that which completes Him. To me, it is an exceedingly sobering and grand yet grave realization that ups the stakes on our frame of mind, our speech and our behavior each waking moment. Our accountability is at the highest it has ever been as a result of what we are hearing as we gather each week to Light Up the Scriptures; indeed, our accountability has grown steadily because of what we have been hearing all along throughout the history of these studies and in our other conversations among the members of the ecclesia.

Last week, we climaxed two specific studies into the new humanity versus the old humanity, but just yesterday, I was reminded of a particular wording that the Apostle Paul used to describe what we must do with the old humanity. Look at it with me yet again:

Ephesians 4:22

Put off from you, as regards your former behavior, the old humanity which is corrupted in accord with its seductive desires

Circle the words, “**Put off**,” and write in the margin, “see Colossians 3:9”; and then let’s go ahead and turn there:

Colossians 3:9

Do not lie to one another [actually, it’s “Do not lie INTO one another”], stripping off the old humanity together with its practices,

Circle “**stripping off**,” and write in the margin, “see Ephesians 4:22.”

I had thought that Colossians was a much earlier epistle than Ephesians, but, according to the *Daily Bible in Chronological Order*, it was written within the

same approximately 2-year time, between 61 and 63 AD, during Paul's house arrest in Rome. My point in bringing up the time frame is to show what looks to me to be a kind of mellowing in the language Paul used when instructing the ecclesia as to how to deal appropriately with the old humanity.

“Stripping off,” in Greek, is to *“wholly put off from one's self, denoting separation from what is put off”*; and it is done, *“for one's own sake.”*

“Put off,” on the other hand, comes from an entirely different Greek word, meaning, *“to put aside or put away.”*

I see more than either of these definitions suggest from the lexicons: I believe we are looking at a significant difference between simply laying aside or putting away our former nature as among Adam's offspring. *“Putting off”* conveys to me less of an effort than **“stripping off”** does, wouldn't you agree?

The image I have of *putting off* is this: when you sit down at a restaurant table, and there are more place settings than are needed for your party, the server will put off, lay aside, or put away, whatever isn't needed. It's like a routine that's no big deal, really, and doesn't require a lot of thought or effort; compared, at least, to the idea of **“stripping off,”** which to me conveys the idea of skinning wild game – you know, like Phil Robertson on *Duck Dynasty* skinning bullfrogs and throwing the skins – which are good for nothing – into a trash bucket. Now, if that's too graphic an image, imagine stripping a piece of antique furniture that has had paint on it – maybe several layers thick – for many years. If you've ever done that, or seen it done, I can tell you, it takes some serious effort. The result, of course is worth the effort to have a showpiece like Barbara's mother's burlled oak library case.

Colossians 3:9 also begins with six hugely important words: **“Do not lie INTO one another.”** In other words, *“do not deceive one another”*; even more, *“do not speak [– do not pour –] deliberate falsehoods [into] one another.”* The idea here is that of pollution and defilement, not only of a brother or sister, but the entire Body of the Messiah! Talk about **SERIOUS?!**

The apostle precedes this thought, and he follows it up, all of which we're going to look at shortly; the points that I am compelled to emphasize here are these:

1. If and when ever we speak deliberate falsehoods to one another or deceive one another – which is what the words, “**Do not lie to one another,**” means – we will find it *impossible* to “[strip] off the old humanity with its practices.” We are going to find ourselves in one of two places: we will either exhaust ourselves trying to accomplish the impossible because of having lied to one another, or we may THINK we are succeeding because we are ourselves deceived. We may have also lied to ourselves, which the Apostle Paul does not address here, I realize, but I am addressing it, because I know it’s entirely possible to do it -- I’ve **done** it, though, thankfully, not since the Father rescued me from my sin when He sent Barbara into my life! You all have received nothing but the absolute truth from Barbara and me, as hard as it may have been to swallow sometimes.
2. Stripping off the old humanity depends upon speaking ONLY the truth, as it flows from our Father in Heaven and through His Holy Spirit in to ours
3. The last part of Col 3:9 says, “**together with its practices,**” indicating that two acts of “**stripping off**” must be accomplished simultaneously, or the entire effort is doomed to fail. The fact is that “stripping off the old humanity” cannot be accomplished unless its practices are also stripped off at the same time.

Well, what ARE the practices to which Paul refers to in Colossians 3:9? To answer that, we have to go back to verse 1 and take in the context of this instruction. So, let’s do that.

We begin with **Colossians 3:1**

1 If, then, you were roused together with [the] Christ [that is, “the Anointed” or “the Anointed One”], **be seeking that which is above, where the Anointed One is, sitting at [actually “in”] the right hand of the Father.**

2 Be disposed to that which is above, not to that on the earth,

3 for you died, and your life is hid together with the Anointed One in the Father.

Paul doesn't leave his subject open to interpretation here, and what I'm struck by isn't the directions he points, which is above but the fact that he uses the word twice: "**Seek that which is above,**" and "**Be disposed to that which is above.**" He is even specific as to where "**above**" is: "**the Anointed One is, sitting in the right hand of the Father.**"

The second thing that struck me was that Paul says, "**IF, then, you were roused together with Christ.**" Paul treats our rousing as a matter of logical argument, as if to say, "*If you believe this then you'll do that.*" The mere fact that he uses "**IF,**" indicates that we may decide NOT to seek or to be disposed to, and that we may fail to recognize and live in accord with, the fact that our lives ARE "**hid together with Christ in God.**"

Colossians 3:

4 Whenever Christ, [the Anointed One], our Life [that is, "THE Life"], should be manifested, then you also shall be manifested together with Him in glory.

This is a direct reference to the Lord's return at which time we are either raised out from among the dead, or changed to meet Him in clouds.

5 Deaden, then, your members that are on the earth:

"Put your flesh to death," Paul writes. "*Slay it; deprive your flesh nature of power, destroy its strength; wear it out like an impotent old man.*" As usual, this is our job – our task to complete. The Father will not do this for us. This is what "Stripping" looks like to me, and it goes to our very nature as sons of Adam and daughters of Eve, because this nature, as manifested in our "**members,**" is entirely Earth-bound. It is entirely perishable and it's our task, the apostle says, to kill it off, literally, deprive it of its power and make it impotent – meaning make it unable to perform. Paul goes on to describe what these members are not only capable of, but what they manifest inevitably:

Colossians 3:5, the rest of the verse, and into verse 6:

prostitution, uncleanness, passion, evil desire and greed, which is idolatry,
6 because of which the indignation of God is coming on the sons of the stubbornness –

Notice that Paul labels “**evil desire and greed**” together as idolatry. I don’t think we can include the entire list, because of the punctuation. He joins “**evil desire and greed**” uniquely as ONE characteristic; they are equal, and together, Paul says, they ARE idolatry. Remember that idolatry disqualified the nation of Israel and estranged it from YaHoVeH.

“**Evil desire**” here is “*longing, craving, or lust*” that is “*of a bad nature; [coming out] of a mode of thinking, feeling, acting [that is] base, wrong, wicked, troublesome, injurious, pernicious, destructive, [or] baneful.*” Sounds pretty bad, doesn’t it? “Greed” means a “*covetous desire to have more.*”

I believe we could put “**evil desire and greed**” in **Colossians 3:5** alongside the “**seductive desires,**” which corrupt the old humanity, that we studied before, in **Ephesians 4:22**. However we view this, it’s nothing with which a son or daughter of YaHoVeH ought to be associated – not knowing what we know and certainly not at this late date. This is the stuff that has guaranteed “**the indignation**” which is yet to come upon “**the sons of THE stubbornness.**” What is “**THE stubbornness**”? Remember the importance of the definite article, the word, THE. I’ll only make this a short explanation for the sake of time tonight, but fact-check it on your own later. “**THE stubbornness**” is the action of the children of Israel in the desert throughout their journey, but especially upon rejecting Joshua and Caleb’s report about what they found in the Promised land, and their declaration that Israel could surely conquer whoever lived in that land, because YaHoVeH had chosen it for them and had chosen them for Himself. “**The sons of THE stubbornness,**” then, is a direct reference to the children of Israel, who to this day, reject the Messiah Yeshua, except for the so-called “*completed*” or “*Messianic*” Jews. Why anyone who knows Yeshua would choose to receive “**the indignation**” is beyond me.

Colossians 3:7-8

7 among whom you also once walked, when you lived in these things.

8 Yet now you also be putting away all these: anger, fury, malice, calumny [slander], obscenity out of your mouth.

Well, there's the list of practices that Paul is about to instruct the ecclesia – the Body of The Anointed One – to strip off in verse 9. The last five are those things that we speak, since Paul says, “**be putting away all these ... out of your mouth.**” Doesn't this recall to our minds **Proverbs 18:21**, “**death and life are in the power of the tongue**”? Look at this Scripture from the CLV:

Proverbs 18:20-21

²⁰ **From the fruit of a man's mouth, his belly is satisfied;
He must be satisfied with the yield from his lips.**

²¹ **Death and life lie in the grip of the tongue,
And they who love it shall eat its fruit.**

Let's go through the whole list of 11 practices that are part of the old humanity, which Paul is about to address:

1. **Be disposed not to that on the earth** – verse 2
2. **prostitution**
3. **uncleanness**
4. **passion**
5. **evil desire and greed, which is idolatry** – all in verse 5
6. **anger**
7. **fury**
8. **malice**
9. **calumny [slander]**
10. **obscenity** – all in verse 8
11. **Lying into one another** – verse 9, coming up

Colossians 3:9-11

**9 Do not lie into one another, stripping off the old humanity together with its practices,
10 and putting on the young, which is being renewed into recognition, to accord with the Image of the One Who creates it,
11 wherein there is no Greek and Jew, Circumcision and Uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, freeman, but all and in all is Christ.**

Notice in verse 10, Paul describes the “**young**,” in contrast with “**the old humanity**” in verse 9. In Ephesians 4:24, he makes the same contrast, but uses the words **old** and **new**, rather than **old** and **young**.

“**Being renewed into recognition**,” in **Colossians 3:10**, is a cryptic phrase, I thought, but when we parallel this with Ephesians 4:23: “**be rejuvenated in the spirit of your mind**,” and then come back to the end of Colossians 3:10: “**to accord with the Image of the One Who creates it**,” we begin to see that the Apostle is addressing WHO we look like by virtue of our behavior and our speech. Paul is writing about Whom we represent to the outside world, where the practices of the old humanity run rampant; more importantly, however, is Whom we represent toward one another, where the greatest potential threat for defilement is, and also the greatest potential blessing of our association.

You may have heard Barbara say, “The closer to the genuine, the greater the deception.” That phrase slapped me upside the head as I studied this today.

Last week, I thought we would be done studying the old humanity/new humanity phenomena, and I certainly seemed to declare our exit from the old humanity and our entrance into the new humanity. Perhaps it may have sounded to you like this was all a done deal and we never have to revisit it. As usual, however, the Father as much as says, “**Not so fast, young man**,” while He parts soul and spirit, and judges the sentiments and thoughts of the heart, according to his living and operative word.

Look again at **Hebrews 4:12**, which we studied not a week or two ago:

12 For the word of God is living and operative, and keen above any two-edged sword, and penetrating up to the parting of soul and spirit, both of the articulations and marrow, and is a judge of the sentiments and thoughts of the heart.

13 And there is not a creature which is not apparent in its sight. Now all is naked and bare to the eyes of Him to Whom we are accountable.

Our Father is faithful beyond our comprehension – that’s why He is YaHoVeH Elohim – He is God and we are most certainly NOT! He ALWAYS brings the hidden things to light for the sake of His purpose and for the sake of His name, which we carry within us and, I pray, which we express in everything we think, do and say. AMEN?

Here now is the grand contrast to the old humanity with its practice, which we must strip off:

Colossians 3:12-

12 Put on, then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, pitiful compassions, kindness, humility, meekness, patience,

13 bearing with one another and dealing graciously among yourselves, if anyone should be having a complaint against [or toward] any. According as the Lord also deals graciously with you, thus also you.

Keep these two verses in mind, because I’ll come back to them momentarily.

14 Now over [or on] all these put on [THE] love, which is the tie of [THE] maturity.

“**The love**” is the Father’s unique agape love that have studied extensively in the past. It’s important to keep this in mind when applying verses 12-13, because old humans tend to turn those verses into a religious Jell-O, forgetting the ruthlessness of THE agape that stops at nothing short of the complete fulfillment of the Father’s “**purpose of the eons.**” If we forget this principle, we will fall victim to all manner of defilement even from within our own ecclesia – indeed, we have in the past and I pray we have learned

enough to love as the Father loves to never allow it to enter our midst again! The qualities that Paul lists in verses 12 and 13 of Colossians 3 we may militantly apply and ruthlessly insist on in ourselves and among our fellowship; while, at the same time guarding through the Holy Spirit, the ideal thing which has been committed to us, as Paul instructed Timothy, whom he also instructed to shun:

2 Timothy 3:

2 for men [and women] will be selfish, fond of money, ostentatious, proud, calumniators, stubborn to parents, ungrateful, malign,

3 without natural affection, implacable, adversaries, uncontrollable, fierce, averse to the good,

4 traitors, rash, conceited, fond of their own gratification rather than fond of God;

5 having a form of devoutness, yet denying its power.

6 These, also, shun. [Paul doesn't pour any soup from Colossians 3:12-13 over this] For of these are those who are slipping into homes and are leading into captivity little women, heaped with sins, being led by various lusts and gratifications,

7 always learning and yet not at any time able to come into a realization of the truth. [We are looking at a basic inability here to integrate the truth of the evangel into one's character – it's most alarming to see]

8 Now, by the method by which Jannes and Jambres withstand Moses [these two are believed to be Egyptian magicians – sorcerers in Pharaoh's court who may have been among those who duplicated the early signs that Moses performed – Paul is comparing modern men and women with these two figures], thus these also are withstanding the truth, men of a depraved mind, disqualified as to the faith.

9 But they shall not be progressing more, for their folly shall be obvious to all, as that of those [that is, Jannes and Jambres] also became.

Colossians 3:15-17

15 And let the peace of the Anointed One be arbitrating in your hearts,

for which you were called also in one body; and become thankful.

16 Let the word of the Anointed One be making its home in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing yourselves; in psalms, in hymns, in spiritual songs, singing, with grace in your hearts to the Father.

17 And everything, whatsoever you may be doing, in word or in act, do all in the name of the Lord Yeshua the Messiah, giving thanks to YaHoVeH Elohim, the Father, through Him.

This last section contains Paul's instruction on how to negotiate our way through "**this present wicked eon**" until the Lord's shout of command.

I am so grateful to the Father for all of Paul's instructions like this on how to model the Father and how to represent the Lord in this eon, both to other humans and to the celestials.