

**Col 3:8-14, Position/Practice Chiasm**  
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**Overview**

1. 2:4-4:1 works out the first two themes, chiastically. The Practice sections are marked by imperatives, and also make reference to the believer's Position in subordinate clauses.
  - a) 2:4-8, Practice
  - b) 2:9-15, Position
  - c) 2:16-4:1, Practice

2. Second major Practice section of 2:4-4:1 (2:16-4:1):

	3pimpv	condition
Warn vs. Heresy	2:16-19	2:20-23
Exhort to Godliness	3:15-4:1	3:1-14

3. 3:1-14 in turn has two parts, each with a "position" kernel.

- a) 1-7, three motivated commands (position in 3, the motive for the second)
- b) 8-14, Practice/Position Chiasm (position in 9b-10)

**A. 8-9a, Practice: Put off six vices.**

1. Specifics: The first three push back to the underlying cause of the sin; the last three look at different outward manifestations, first those most naturally associated with the inner impulses, then those that seem more remote but are nevertheless fruit from the same root.

- a) The underlying vice is analyzed by pushing back toward the cause.
  - 1) Anger *o) rgh/n*: A settled feeling of hatred, which naturally leads most directly to outward manifestation. This is something that is cultivated after the initial offense; e.g., desire for revenge. Thus to root this out we must put off something more basic that leads to it:
  - 2) Wrath *qumo/n*: the immediate excitement resulting from the offense. Yet even this is not the basic cause:
  - 3) Malice *kaki/an*: a predisposition to wrath. The evil habit of mind from which other vices spring. Lit. "badness." What you get when you scratch through the outer covering.

*Application:* Note in this series the principle that we sin

because we are sinners, not the other way around. A tendency to anger and wrath can only be fixed by being transformed by the renewing of the mind (Rom. 12:2). The solution is not learning to respond differently when someone abuses us, but changing the underlying predisposition.

b) The outward manifestations.

- 1) Blasphemy *blasfhmi/a*: Abusive speech. Not just against God (as in modern parlance), but also against people: "chewing someone out," "letting off steam." This is the most immediate and obvious manifestation of anger or wrath resulting from malice.
- 2) Filthy communication *ai)sxrologi/an*: literally "shameful words." Dirty talk is NOT appropriate for the child of God. Interestingly, Paul here traces its origin to wrath, and indeed, this kind of speech is most common in angry utterances. It is another manifestation of the underlying "malice," badness, in the heart. Dirty talk reflects a continually simmering pot of malice in the heart, as though one were continuously chewing out the universe.
- 3) Lie not: clearly one of the series, but changes from another object of "put off" to a prohibition of its own. Deception is yet another reflection of anger and animosity: cf. John 15:15, it is the privilege of friends to know one another's hearts.

NB: Many who would never think of saying something they know at the time to be false, will make commitments into the future that they have no intention of keeping. Let your word be your bond to one another.

2. Compare these with v.5.

5	8-9
a) Result from desire	Result from wicked heart
b) Led to idolatry	Led to abusive speech
c) Put self ahead of God	Put self ahead of others
d) Vertical	Horizontal
e) Violate Law of God	Violate Love of Man

Even the references to fornication do not violate this pattern. Fornication is a form of covetousness, desiring something less than God. Adultery or seduction mingles with this the notion of deception, which is along the lines of 8-9.

3. These particular offenses are relevant to the divisive effect of the false teaching, which seeks to assure its members that they are superior to other believers. Thus the corrective coming up in 10-11, emphasizing Christian unity.

*NOT IN SERMON: Are the following ptcs to be understood as*

contemporaneous amplifications of the exhortation, or as antecedent events that motivate the commands?

1. Arguments for amplification (Lightfoot, Peake):

a) Lightfoot:

- 1) Paul usually uses the idiom of "put on...put off" in an imperative sense. (But most of his exx are impvs or subjunctives; those that are ptcs are open to interpretation as antecedents.)
- 2) Parallel in Eph. 4:24 is clearly imperative (but is it???)
- 3) Imperative in v.12

b) Peake: "with his deeds" in v.9 would be strange if this were an account of a past action, for why then would the exhortation be necessary?

2. Arguments for motives:

a) Alford: 10-11 at least seems to be a motive:

- 1) "therefore" in v.12
- 2) the objective facts described there are clearly historical

b) Hendriksen:

- 1) 2:11 has already presented "putting off" as an accomplished fact;
- 2) 3:2,3 follows the motivational structure.

c) Callow:

- 1) Parallelism;
- 2) hard to motivate a general command after a list of specific ones.

3. Peak's argument is the only cogent one for amplification, and the arguments for motive seem inescapable, so I stick with the AV. But what then about Peake's point? See exposition below.

**B. 9b, Position: You have put off.**

1. Who is this "Old Man" that we have put off, and the "New Man" that we have put on (v.10)?

a) Elsewhere we are said to "put on" the Lord Jesus.

- 1) Gal. 3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.
- 2) Rom. 13:14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to [fulfil] the lusts [thereof].

b) The LJC is contrasted elsewhere with Adam

- 1) 1 Cor. 15:22, 45-49
- 2) Rom. 5:12-21

c) "Old man" only used 3x in the Scriptures in this sense: here,

Eph. 4:22, and (the earliest) Rom. 6:6, right after Rom. 5!

d) So the point is not merely moral renewal--"stop being what you were and become someone else." It is a reminder of our link with the two seminal humans, Adam and Jesus. We have moved from one family to another; like adopted children, we have forsaken the heritage of our biological parents for that of our adopted family. Thomas Goodwin: "There are but two men that are standing before God, Adam and Jesus Christ, and these two men have all other men hanging at their girdles."

2. Motive: you have put off the old man. Cf. 2:11. Accomplished at our salvation, when our baptism into the death of Christ made his death ours. It would be inconsistent for those who have experience this identification with Christ to live as though it had not happened.

3. What about the phrase "with his deeds"? If they have already "put off" his deeds, why does Paul now exhort them to do so?

a) The imperatives show that they were not successful in reaching sinless perfection at their salvation.

b) But the phrase "you have put off the old man WITH HIS DEEDS" shows that this was their declared intent. When they received Christ, they understood that they were committing themselves to a change in life. They realized he demanded of them not just faith but also obedience, and they expressed their willingness to change. As their Christian experience unfolds, the HS shows them more and more details that need to go; Paul here exhorts them on the basis of their past decision and commitment to Christ.

c) *Illustration:* In marriage, husband and wife promise to stick with one another "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health." Few couples have any idea just how "worse, poorer, sick" things can get, and when they learn the details, they need to be exhorted to carry out in practice what they promised in principle.

d) *Application:* Consider the implications of this verse for the controversy over "Lordship Salvation." There are many, particularly of the DTS orientation, who insist that we are saved simply by receiving Jesus as Savior, without any need to commit to him as Lord of our life. This verse shows that the Colossians at least had received no such gospel. When they put off the old man, they deliberately and consciously agreed to put off his deeds as well. They knew they were committing to a changed life, not just buying an insurance policy against hell. They received Christ as Lord and Savior, not just as Saviour. So must we.

**C. 10-11, Position: You have put on.**

The new man is characterized both vertically and horizontally. He

defines our relation both with God and with our fellow man.

1. Vertical: "renewed unto knowledge according to the image of the one who created him."

- a) "the one who created him": reminds us that we are creatures, answerable to our creator.
- b) "renewed ... acc. to the image": reminds us of our fallen state, and our restoration from it. In our first creation, God made us in his image, to reflect his glory. We rebelled against that responsibility. Now the second creation is again acc. to his image (cf. Eph. 4:24). He has graciously redeemed us in the LJC, and restored us to the full glory of his image-bearers.

c) "renewed unto knowledge": the specific detail of our restoration.

1) Satan tempted Adam and Eve on the grounds that God was withholding knowledge from them--the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

2) Ironically, by eating that tree they lost knowledge--the knowledge of God.

a> Acts 17:23 "an altar ... to the unknown god"

b> 1 Cor. 1:21 "...in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, ..."

c> Gal. 4:8 "Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods."

d> Eph. 4:17,18 the "Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, 18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:"

e> 1 Thes. 4:5 "the Gentiles which know not God"

f> 2 Thes. 1:8 "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God"

3) Though man does not know God, he has a gnawing sense that something is missing, and thus he is continually searching for what he has lost. This is what gave the gnostic teachers their appeal. They taught that they held the clue to the lost knowledge of God.

4) Paul here teaches that we have already regained what they falsely offer. In putting on the new man, Christ Jesus, we are renewed unto knowledge, restored to the knowledge of God that Adam lost.

2. Horizontal: Our position in Christ is the answer to the problem of human strife and separation.

a) The Effect: traditional distinctions need no longer separate us,

whether national, religious, cultural, or social.

- 1) Greek and Jew: national divide.
- 2) Circumcision and Uncircumcision: religious divide naturally goes away.
- 3) Barbarian, Scythian: Barbarians were anyone not speaking Greek, thus uncivilized. Of these, the Scythians were considered the worst, the most savage and untamed. But in Christ we cannot reject anyone out of hand as savage. No grounds for accusing anyone of having a lower level of culture.
- 4) Bond, Free: a primary social distinction in Paul's day.
- 5) Gal. 3:28 adds "male, female."

Each of these has often been the focus of strife and contention, the very kind of sins that Paul is discussing in 3:8-9. His point here is that the believer should not conduct himself in this way toward other believers because their unity in Christ overpowers any such division.

NB: The context here is anger and strife; in Gal. 3, access to salvation in Christ. Neither one does away with practical operational distinctions, which in fact other passages often uphold. For example, though there is neither male nor female, homosexuality is still wrong (Rom. 1), and husbands and wives still have distinctive roles (3:18-19). Though there is neither bond nor free, servants are still to obey their masters (3:22). Though there is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, circumcised and uncircumcised believers are still to respect one another's differing convictions (Rom. 14).

- b) The Cause: "Christ is all, and in all." Christ is the only way to regain the knowledge of God. "No man cometh unto the Father but by me," John 14:6. As long as we pursue different ways to God, we are separated from one another. But when we come together in Christ, there is no longer any reason for us to be estranged from one another.

#### D. 12-14, Practice: Put on six virtues.

Paul begins with the motive for his command, and then continues with six specific virtues that they should assume.

##### 1. The Motive:

- a) Paul recalls three actions by God that bring them to their current position. The central focus is on the first term, "elect," and the other two describe its origin and its issue.
  - 1) Elect. Reminds them that their salvation did not start with themselves, but with God. They are able to put on the new man only because God first chose them.
  - 2) Holy, "set apart," the *result* of God's election, as in Heb. 3:1, "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling,"

and Eph. 1:4, "he hath chosen us ... that we should be holy."

3) Beloved, the *basis* of God's election, as 2 Thes. 2:13, where "beloved" stands in the place of "foreknew" in Rom. 8:29.

b) How does being the elect of God motivate the virtues that follow?

1) By their application to the Subjects of the following virtues. Had Paul simply said, "You have put on the new man," some might be puffed up, leading to even worse manifestations of the sins of vv.8-9. Here, Paul reminds them of God's ultimate and fundamental agency in that renewal. It is God who chose them, set them apart, and bestowed his love on them, in spite of their sin. Hints at the truth brought out in 3:13b: "As Christ forgave you, so also do ye."

2) By their application to the Objects of the following virtues. As a member of Christ's church, I must remember that my brothers and sisters are chosen, set apart, and beloved by God. How can I abuse those whom God has so blessed?

2. The Virtues: successively more deliberate. We can easily imagine the HS developing each of these successively in the life of the growing believer.

a) Bowels of Mercy. Hebrew expression for the seat of compassion (because the pit of the stomach is where we most directly feel our sympathy with others). In our society, people are generally unwilling to be touched by the sorrows of others, but a believer should be tender-hearted, particularly toward other believers.

b) Kindness. A deliberate response to the feeling arising from the previous term. Because I put on bowels of mercy, I am susceptible to feel your pain. Because I am kind, I try to do something for you.

c) Humbleness of mind. Philip. 2:3, defined as esteeming others better than oneself. An attitude despised by the heathen. But the believer's new life begins with repentance, with declaring one's moral bankruptcy, and as the HS deals with us, continually uncovering new sins, we daily learn more and more how lost we were. One who has truly faced his own failings in this way will not vaunt himself up; cf. Paul, who even toward the end of his life could declare himself the chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). Conversely, if you don't esteem others better than yourself, you haven't really come to grips with the depths from which Christ has redeemed you.

- 1) Implications for this series: kindness to others costs us directly. It always means putting ourselves out for others. In addition, sometimes people show their pain by treating us badly, and kindness toward them means not reciprocating in kind. We can behave in this way only if we recognize how sinful and undeserving we are, and esteem them (in spite of their problems) as better than ourselves.
- 2) Beware of two errors:
  - a> Being proud of humility! Taking second place even though we think ourselves better than others. This is the hypocrisy of the false teachers, 2:18, "voluntary humility."
  - b> Being depressed over how bad we are. Our confidence is not in ourselves, but in Christ, and the worse we realize ourselves to be, the more glorious and precious he becomes to us.
- d) Meekness. A good clue to the meaning of this word is the first NT use of the associated adjective, Matt. 5:5 "the meek shall inherit the earth."
  - 1) This is a quotation from Ps. 37:11.
  - 2) The same Psalm uses a number of other expressions to describe those who will inherit the earth. The point is not that there are several different kinds of people who shall inherit the earth, but that the group of people who shall inherit the earth may be described in a number of different ways:
    - a> 9, "those that wait upon the Lord"
    - b> 22, "such as be blessed of him [the Lord]"
    - c> 29, "the righteous"
    - d> 34, those who "wait on the Lord and keep his way"
  - 3) v.34 is the fullest description. The meek are those who do not seek security in their own strength, but trust in the Lord and obey him regardless of the apparent consequences, trusting in him to provide for them.
  - 4) Fit into the series of virtues: we can afford to feel sympathy with other saints ("bowels of mercy") and in response be kind to them ("kindness"), even at the expense of ourselves ("humbleness"), because we commit ourselves to God and rest in his care ("meekness").
- e) Longsuffering. Humbleness and meekness enable us to put up with abuse from other brethren. When that abuse continues over an extended period, they need strengthening with longsuffering. This virtue is so important that Paul digresses to describe it further.



1) What is it? "Forebearing one another and forgiving yourselves."

a> Forbearance: the idea of steeling oneself in the face of an unpleasant circumstance. Cf. the English expression "put up with it." If someone is unpleasant toward you, that's their problem. You are responsible for your attitude. Yet this alone is not all that is required:

b> Forgiveness: lit. "bestowing grace upon." Grace is favor given where wrath is deserved, and is fundamentally seen in God's treatment of us, which indeed furnishes the motive for our forgiveness of one another. Cf. Eph. 4:2, where forbearance is reinforced with love. Longsuffering is not just keeping ourselves in, but also considering the offender with an attitude of favor and love rather than revenge or even indifference.

2) How do we do it? By following the example of Christ toward us.

f) Love (v.14). The final virtue; considered in our society to be a fundamental impulse, but in the NT the most deliberate of all, something to which we are commanded. When the impulses of "bowels of mercy" finally bear this fruit, the sins of vv.8-9 will be impossible.

Called "the bond of perfectness." "Bond" is translated "band" in 2:19; here as there, the reference is to binding together the believers into one body. The other five graces may contribute in one way or another to this unity, but only Christian love can do the whole job, thus it is termed "the bond of perfectness," binding the church together into a perfect unity.

### Analysis

*ABba: Aorist imperatives on the outside, each focusing on six items; aorist participles in the center. First half is "put off," second half is "put on."*

	<i>Imperative</i>	<i>Participle</i>
<i>Put Off</i>	8-9a	9b
<i>Put On</i>	12-14	10-11

A. 8-9a, Put off six vices:

- 3:8 nuni\ de\ a)po/qesqe kai\ u(meis ta\ pa/nta,  
1. o)rghe/n,  
2. qumo/n,  
3. kaki/an,  
4. blasfhmi/a,

5. ai) sxrologi/an e)k tou^ sto/matos u(mw^n:  
 6. 3:9 mh\ yeu/desqe ei)s a)llh/lous,
- B. 9b a)pekdua/menoi to\n palaio\n a)/nqrwpon su\n tai^s pra/cesin au)tou^,
- C. 10-11 kai\ e)ndusa/menoi to\n ne/on  
 1. to\n a)nakainou/menon ei)s e)pi/gnwsin kat' ei)ko/na tou^ kti/santos au)to/n,  
 2. Contrast: 3:11 o(/pou a) ou)k e)/ni  
 1) (/Ellhn kai\ )Ioudai^os,  
 2) peritomh\ kai\ a)krobusti/a,  
 3) ba/rbaros, Sku/qhs,  
 4) dou^los, e)leu/qeros,  
 b) a)lla\ [ta\] pa/nta kai\ e)n pa^sin Xristo/s.
- D. 12-14, Put on six virtues:  
 3:12 )Endu/sasqe ou)^n w(s e)klektoi\ tou^ qeou^, a(/gioi kai\ h)gaphme/noi,  
 1. spla/gxna oi)ktirmou^,  
 2. xrhsto/thta,  
 3. tapeinofrosu/nhn,  
 4. prau/+thta,  
 5. amplification p  
 a) text: makroqumi/an,  
 b) amplification:  
 1) Condition p  
 a> text:  
 1> 3:13 a)nexo/menoi a)llh/lwn  
 2> kai\ xarizo/menoi e(autoi^s  
 b> condition: e)a/n tis pro/s tina e)/xh| momfh/n:  
 2) Manner p  
 a> manner: kaqw\s kai\ o( ku/rios e)xari/sato u(mi^n  
 b> text: ou(/tw\s kai\ u(meis:  
 6. 3:14 e)pi\ pa^sin de\ tou/tois th\n a)ga/phn,  
 a) h(tis e)sti su/ndesmos th^s teleio/thtos.