

Devotional 7

The Garments of the New Self

Daily Renewal Is Not Addition — It Is Exchange

The Awakening

The language most Christians use to describe spiritual growth is the language of addition. We add prayer to our schedule. We add Scripture to our habits. We add service to our week. We accumulate spiritual disciplines like tools in a kit, and we define growth by the size of the collection. The problem is that nothing has been removed. The old self — its assumptions, its default loyalties, its habitual responses — remains fully intact beneath the accumulated disciplines, quietly shaping everything the disciplines are supposed to change.

Colossians 3 uses a different metaphor entirely. Not addition. Exchange. Not accumulating — stripping off and putting on. The old self is clothing that must be removed before the new self can be worn. And the exchange is not a one-time event accomplished at conversion — it is the daily act that makes daily renewal concrete and embodied. Every morning is a new opportunity to take off what belonged to the old life and put on what Christ has provided for the new.

COLOSSIANS 3:9–10 — FOUNDATIONAL TEXT

Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

What the Text Reveals

The Aorist Behind the Imperative

Paul's grammar is carefully constructed here. 'You have taken off' and 'put on' are aorist participles — they describe something that has already occurred at conversion. The imperative 'do not lie' is grounded in this accomplished reality: you are not being asked to do something you have never done. You are being asked to live in accordance with something that has already happened to you. The old self has been taken off. The new self has been put on. Daily renewal is the practical actualization of a completed transaction.

Anakainooumenon: Being Renewed in Knowledge

The new self 'is being renewed' — present passive participle — 'in knowledge in the image of its Creator.' The renewal is ongoing. It moves toward a destination: the image of the Creator. And the instrument of renewal is knowledge — epignosis, full and accurate knowledge. This is not information accumulation but transformative recognition: knowing God as He actually is, knowing yourself as He has actually made you, knowing the world as He has actually ordered it. This knowledge is the substance of daily renewal.

The List That Follows: Renewal Made Specific

Colossians 3:12–14 supplies the content of the 'putting on': compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience. And over all of these, love. These are not abstract virtues to aspire toward. They are garments — specific, concrete, wearable. The question daily renewal asks is not 'Am I generally growing?' but 'Did I put on kindness this morning? Humility? Patience?' The image makes renewal actionable in a way that vague spiritual aspiration never can.

The Biblical Architecture

The clothing metaphor for spiritual transformation appears throughout Paul's letters with remarkable consistency. Galatians 3:27 — 'All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ' — uses the same imagery for the initial act of conversion. The clothing was Christ Himself. Ephesians 4:22–24 makes the daily exchange most explicit: 'put off your old self... be made new in the attitude of your minds; and put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.'

Romans 13:14 condenses it to its sharpest form: 'clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.' The daily act of putting on Christ is the practical alternative to giving the flesh what it demands. The choice is concrete: what will you put on today? The identity that belongs to the old age, or the identity that belongs to the new creation?

Isaiah 61:10 provides the Old Testament root of the imagery and its eschatological fullness: 'He has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness.' The clothing God provides is not earned — it is given. Daily renewal does not earn the garments; it wears them. The person who spends the day in the garments of the new self is the person who began the day by consciously putting them on.

CORE THESIS

Daily renewal is not the accumulation of spiritual disciplines layered over an unchanged self. It is the daily exchange — taking off the old, putting on the new — in which the specific garments of the new self (compassion, kindness, humility, patience, love) are consciously, concretely worn into every encounter the day will bring.

THE QUESTION THAT MATTERS MOST

What specific garment of the old self do you most habitually fail to take off in the morning — the one that is still on when you arrive at the first difficult conversation or unexpected frustration of the day? And what specific garment of the new self, if you wore it today, would most change what the people around you experience?

A PRAYER FROM THE AWAKENING

Father, we confess that our approach to growth has been additive rather than transformative. We have layered disciplines over an unchanged self and called it renewal. We have accumulated without surrendering, added without removing.

The old self is clothing. Today we take it off: the self-protection, the impatience, the reflexive pride, the performance anxiety, the habit of speaking before listening. We put it down.

****Now we put on what You have provided: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and over all of these, love. Not as aspirations but as garments — worn today, in the specific encounters You have already prepared for us.****

Clothe us with Christ. Let what He is be what the people around us encounter today. Amen.

Scripture Treasury

CATEGORY	REFERENCE	SCRIPTURE
Taking Off and Putting On	Colossians 3:9–10	<i>You have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.</i>
	Ephesians 4:22–24	<i>Put off your old self... be made new in the attitude of your minds; and put on the new self, created to be like God.</i>
Clothing Yourself with Christ	Romans 13:14	<i>Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.</i>
	Galatians 3:27	<i>All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.</i>
The Specific Garments	Colossians 3:12–14	<i>Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience... And over all these virtues put on love.</i>
	1 Peter 5:5	<i>Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.</i>
Righteousness as Clothing	Isaiah 61:10	<i>He has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness.</i>
	Revelation 19:8	<i>Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear. Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God's holy people.</i>