

Series: *Colossians – Christ Above All*

Title: "Walking Worthy of the Lord" (Colossians 1:10-12)

Speaker: Rev. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 7/19/2009

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## **Introduction**

Last time, we finished our study of Colossians chapter one and verse nine. To quickly summarize, that verse speaks of the Apostle Paul's first and greatest desire for the Colossian believers, and that is that they should be filled with the knowledge of the will of God, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

And we said that in the original Greek of the New Testament, the idea of that phrase "be filled with" in chapter one verse nine really means "be controlled by." It is Paul's desire and prayer that the Colossian believers will know the will of God as it is revealed in God's Word, and that they will be controlled by that knowledge. Paul's prayer is that knowledge of the will of God, will be the controlling factor in every aspect of their lives.

In fact, that is what the rest of the book of Colossians is all about. Right now, here in chapter one, we're in the section that extends from chapter one, verse one, through verse fourteen, where Paul is telling them that Jesus Christ is preeminent in the Gospel. First of all, Paul tells them, it is because they have received Christ as Savior that they can know the will of God. That's the key. And then he's told them in verse nine that he wants them to be filled with that knowledge. He wants them to be controlled by that knowledge.

And so in the rest of the book of Colossians Paul is going to layout for them, in a very concise and a very rich way, a good deal of that knowledge of God by which they need to be controlled. You see, the book of Colossians is a very

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practical book about knowing what it is that we need to know, in order to live the Christian life.

The first thing Paul is going to do, here in the rest of chapter one, is to give the Colossian believers a deeper knowledge of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the One they are to please in every area of their lives. He's going to teach them about the greatness, the preeminence, of the One they are to please. He's going to teach them that Jesus Christ is preeminent in the creation and sustaining of the entire universe, just as He is preeminent in their salvation. He made everything. He sustains everything. Jesus Christ not only made you. He has redeemed you. You are His by right of ownership. And that is reason number one why you are to please Him.

Paul is also going to teach the Colossians that Jesus Christ is preeminent in the Church. The focus of the Church is pleasing the Lord Jesus Christ, carrying out the purposes that He has ordained for His church, which He has purchased with His own blood. And, Paul is going to teach them here in chapter one that Jesus Christ is preeminent in genuine ministry. You can tell whether someone's ministry is genuine or not, by what he has to say about the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then in chapter 2, Paul is going to defend the preeminence of Christ. And Paul is going to defend Christ's preeminence against three dangers that just about every individual Christian, and just about every local church, will face sooner or later. These are three of Satan's most clever traps. First, there is the danger of

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empty philosophies instead of Christ. Second, there is the danger of legalism instead of Christ. And thirdly, there is the danger of man-made doctrines instead of Christ.

And so Paul is going to tell the Colossian believers this in chapter two: I want you to understand that Christ, and Christ alone, is the sure cure for vain philosophies, and for legalism, and for man-made doctrines. Don't be cheated out of what you have and what you are in Christ, but falling into Satan's traps.

And then in chapters 3 and 4, Paul is going to tell the Colossian believers how they are to demonstrate the preeminence of Christ in their lives. In their conduct. In their character. In their homes. On the job. In their witness to unbelievers. And in their service to the Lord.

In all of these things, Paul is going to be explaining various important aspects of God's will to the Colossian believers. He is not only praying that they will be filled with the knowledge of the will of God, Paul in his letter is setting out to be instrumental in the answer to his own prayer.

And so we continue now in verses ten through twelve of Colossians chapter one. And as we begin looking at these three verses, I want to once again read the full sentence that begins with verse nine:

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- 9. For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;**
- 10. that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;**
- 11. strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy;**
- 12. giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.**

And as we continue now, I want you to take notice of several very important points in these verses.

### **Being Filled with the Knowledge of God's Will Has a Purpose**

The first thing I want you to notice is that being filled with the knowledge of God's will has a purpose. One of the dangers in the Christian life is to fill our heads full of knowledge of the Bible without having God's purpose *for* that knowledge at the forefront of our thinking. There are lots of people – people who are not Christians, as well as people who are Christians – who have a lot of Bible knowledge. They know all kinds of facts in the Bible. They may be able to quote a

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lot of Scripture. They may even know a lot of theology. But they know it with the wrong motives in mind.

Many of them are the kind of people the Apostle Paul had in mind in 2nd Timothy chapter three when he talked about those who are "ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." These are people Paul said, who even "resist the truth." These people don't have God's purpose for the knowledge of God's Word as *their* purpose. Instead they have their own agenda. They have their own purpose in mind.

And their purpose, quite often, is rooted in pride. Look at *me*, look at how much *I* know about the Bible. And often they have an attitude that says, "*I* am the authority." God's Word isn't the authority, *they* are the authority. They have a superior attitude. They're not approaching the Bible with an attitude of submission to it as the Word of God, the only place where they can learn the *will* of God. They want their *own* will, their *own* way. And that is a deadly serious problem for a Christian, to say nothing of an unbeliever.

### **What Does It Mean to "Walk Worthy of the Lord"?**

Paul is telling the Colossians in this book, you need to be careful not to be like that. You need to always remember that being filled with the knowledge of God's will has a purpose. And here at the beginning of verse ten, Paul tells them what that purpose is: "that you may walk *worthy* of the Lord." "That you may walk worthy of the Lord." That is the only legitimate goal of studying God's Word. If

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you have any other goal in mind, Paul is saying, watch out. You're on the wrong track. You're on a dangerous road. The only rightful purpose for gaining knowledge of God's Word, is so that you can be filled with, so that you can be controlled by, the knowledge of God's will, in order that you may conduct your life in a way that is worthy of being identified with the Lord Jesus Christ.

That is what it means to walk worthy of the Lord. The Greek word that is used here for "walk" is a compound word that literally means, "to walk around." But when the word is used in various contexts in the New Testament, it takes on different meanings according to the context. And the Apostle Paul in particular uses this word "walk" throughout his epistles to mean "how you conduct you life."

In Galatians 5:16 Paul says, "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." In other words, conduct your life under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, so that you will be controlled by the Spirit and not by your sinful flesh.

Paul uses the same word several times in the book of Ephesians. In Ephesians 4:1 we have a very similar statement to Colossians 1:10. Paul says, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called." Also, Ephesians 2:10: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." We are to conduct our lives in a pattern of good works – good works that God ordained literally before the foundation of the world, for us as Christians to do. We are to "walk in" good works.

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And in Ephesians chapter two, Paul reminds the Ephesian believers that they once conducted their lives in a different way: "And you hath he quickened" – made alive – "who were [once] dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air" – that is, the devil. Now that you are a Christian, you are to walk in a different way. You can't conduct your life the way you did before.

And in First Peter chapter four, beginning at verse one, we read this: "Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles — when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this reason the Gospel was preached also to those who are dead [in other words, believers who have already gone to be with the Lord], that they might be judged according to men in the flesh [and here Peter is speaking of the persecution they suffered], but [that they might] live according to God in the spirit" (1 Peter 4:1-6).

You Colossians, Paul says, are to walk in a different way. You are to "walk worthy of the Lord." You are to walk in a way that is suitable of the Lord. You are to walk in a way that is worthy of the fact that the preeminent Lord Jesus Christ,

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the Creator of the universe, the Savior of sinners, the Lord of the church – worthy of the fact that He is your personal Redeemer. Worthy of the fact that God the Holy Spirit lives within you, worthy of the fact that you have a new family name – Christian. Worthy of the fact that you have a home in Heaven reserved for you. Worthy of the fact that you have a glorious inheritance awaiting you. Don't disgrace the family name. Walk worthy of the Lord.

And that, Paul says, is the goal of being filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Not simply so that you can have knowledge that will *puff* you up, but so that you will have knowledge that will *build* you up in Christ, that will *lift* you up, into the heavenly realms where you are seated with Christ.

### **Six Characteristics of a Worthy Walk**

Now as we look closely at Colossians chapter one, verses ten through twelve, we find that Paul lays out several key characteristics of a worthy walk, a walk that is worthy of the family name of Christian. Now it happens once again, as we found in verse nine, that these can most readily be broken down into six propositions, six statements of fact about a worthy walk, the kind of walk that God desires for Christians to have, the kind of walk that Paul is talking about here in Colossians, just as he does in all his other epistles.

I want to give those six characteristics to you today, explain each one just a bit, and then beginning with our next message we're going to look at each one in more

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depth. And once again, I want to proceed carefully, because this is a rich passage, and because Paul is building a structure here. He's in the process of setting up a framework. And on that framework he is going to erect a superstructure of one of the most powerful, concise statements in the entire word of God about the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. So we need to make sure we have the framework in place, and clearly in our minds, before we build upon it in our exposition and application, as Paul himself does.

So here are the six characteristics of a walk that is worthy of the Lord.

Characteristic number one: Walking worthy of the Lord means pursuing the goal of pleasing the Lord in everything you do, in all areas of your life. We find this in verse ten: "that you might walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him," in other words, conducting your entire life with a view toward pleasing Christ.

Characteristic number two: Walking worthy of the Lord means continually bearing the right kind of fruit. We find this also in verse ten "being fruitful in every good work."

Characteristic number three: Walking worthy of the Lord means continually increasing in your knowledge of God. We find that also in verse ten. The Christian needs to accumulate knowledge of God from God's Word for the right reason, for the goal of a worthy walk. And because a worthy walk is a lifetime pursuit, increasing your knowledge of God is also a lifetime pursuit. You can never say, "I know enough. I've arrived. I don't need any more. I can rest on the knowledge I

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have." God always has more to teach you. You will never exhaust the depths of His Word.

Characteristic number four: Walking worthy of the Lord means continually receiving God's strength. We find that in verse 11: "strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power." Not proceeding in our own strength, but in God's strength. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," Paul says in Philippians 4:13. And here in Colossians the word "strengthened" is a passive verb. It is something God does to us, does for us.

Characteristic number five: Walking worthy of the Lord means that God will build patience and longsuffering into your way of life. We find this also in verse 11: "for all patience and longsuffering." The word "patience" has to do with endurance, with steadfast waiting on God. The word "longsuffering" has to do with calmness and forbearance in the Christian life, not seeking to avenge wrongs, but to leave the outcome of all things, even the wrongs that people do to us, in God's hands.

And characteristic number six is this: Walking worthy of the Lord involves continually giving joyful praise to God, because of what He has done for us through Christ. In most Bible translations, the words "with joy" appear at the end of verse eleven, which connects them with patience and longsuffering. But those words also have a connection to what follows in verse twelve: "giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light."

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The reason the Christian can praise and thank God the Father, even in the midst of situations that require patience and longsuffering, is because of what God the Father has done for us through Christ. Because Christ has redeemed us by His blood, that has given us the right, the authority, John 1:12 tells us, to be called the children of God. And because we are the children of God, we have a glorious inheritance – the new heavens and the new earth, eternal life with Christ, and all the yet-to-be-revealed glories that go with that! All because of the preeminent Christ!

This is the reason the Christian can endure the trials of this world, walking worthy of the Lord. We know the glories that lie ahead, and we know, as Paul says in Romans chapter eight, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us."