

Series: *Colossians – Christ Above All*

Title: "Come as You Are...Stay as You Are?" (Colossians 1:10)

Speaker: Rev. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 7/26/2009

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Introduction

As we continue today in our study of the preeminence of the Lord Jesus Christ in Colossians chapter one, I want to read for you once again this great statement the Apostle Paul, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, has given us beginning in verse nine:

- 9. For this reason we also, since the day we heard it [that is, heard of your faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we], 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.**

I mentioned last time that one of the dangers in the Christian life is to accumulate Bible knowledge without having God's purpose for that knowledge at the forefront of your thinking. That can lead to pride, which leads to other problems.

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Being filled with the knowledge of God's will has a purpose. At the beginning of Colossians 1:10, Paul tells us the legitimate goal of Bible knowledge: "that you may walk worthy of the Lord."

In Colossians chapter two, Paul is going to tell the Colossian believers that if anyone has any other goal in mind – whether it's mingling Biblical truth with human philosophy, promoting legalism, or inventing your own doctrines – then you'd better watch out, because it means that you have detoured onto a dangerous road. You've been sidetracked from following after the truth. In chapter two, verse eight, Paul says, "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men." And again in verse sixteen, he says, "Let no one cheat you of your reward." This is serious business.

The purpose for gaining knowledge of God's Word is so that you can be filled with – that is, 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.

You Colossians, Paul says, you 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 is your personal Savior from sin. You are to walk worthy of the fact that God the Holy Spirit lives within you. You are to walk worthy of the fact that you have a

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new family name – the name of Christian. 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. It's not 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.

We also saw last time that there are six characteristics of a walk that is worthy of the Lord in chapter one, verses ten through twelve. We're going to start looking at them in more depth today. It's important for us to do this, because we're at a place in the book of Colossians where Paul is building a structure. He's in the process of setting up a framework. And on that framework he is going to erect as a superstructure one of the most powerful, concise statements in the entire word of God about the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. When men go to school to study theology, one of the things they study is the subject of Christology, the doctrine of Jesus Christ. And one of the first places in the Bible that they go for that kind of study, if they're attending a good, Bible-believing school, is this first chapter of Colossians. So we're watching now as Paul puts the framework in place for the deeper study of who Jesus Christ is, what He has done, what He is doing, and what He is going to do in the future. We need to have this clearly in our minds.

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So here, once again, are the six characteristics of a walk that is worthy of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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.

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

Characteristic number three: Walking worthy of the Lord means continually increasing in your knowledge of God. And we find that also in verse ten.

Characteristic number four: Walking worthy of the Lord means continually receiving God's strength. We find that in verse eleven.

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 eleven.

And characteristic number six: Walking worthy of the Lord involves continually giving joyful praise to God, because of what He has done for us through Christ. And we find this at the end of verse eleven and one into verse twelve.

So now, let's begin looking at each of these points in depth.

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Fully Pleasing Him

Paul says, we “ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him.” Now I want to give you an expanded translation of that last part, which takes us into verse ten:

“...that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may continually conduct and occupy your life, and continually regulate your behavior, in a way that is suitable and fitting and worthy of the One who is your Lord, with the goal constantly before you of fully pleasing Him.”

I want to make some points about what it means to fully please the Lord, and in doing so I want to call your attention to some other Scriptures that focus on this question.

The first thing we need to understand, and if you’ve been following our studies in Colossians, I think this will be an obvious point, is this: You can’t fully please Him unless you understand *what pleases Him* – that is, His will. That’s why we gave so much time and attention to verse nine, “that you may be filled with (that is, controlled by) the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” That is how you will understand what pleases the Lord, by getting into His Word, and thus understanding His will.

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Secondly, you can't fully please the Lord unless you understand *who He is*. And Paul is going to go into considerable depth on that subject in the rest of chapter one. He is going to give us a rich and comprehensive picture of who the Lord Jesus Christ is – and what He has done, what He is doing, and what He will do in the future. And desiring to fully please Him is thoroughly bound up in an understanding of who He is.

Thirdly, pleasing the Lord has to do with the *relationship* we have with Him as our Saviour and Lord. It is a slap in the face of the Lord to say that He is your Lord and Savior, but live like the devil. We are to "walk *worthy* of the Lord." The word translated "worthy" literally means, "of equal weight." The idea is that we as Christians are to live a life that is as much like the life of the Lord Jesus Christ as we possibly can. God says, "Be holy, because I am holy." That is the standard. And in that connection, I want to call you attention to First Peter chapter one, beginning at verse thirteen, where we read this:

"Therefore gird up the loins of your mind [in other words, get your mind ready for action], be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct, because it is written, "*Be holy, for I am holy.*" And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold,

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from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

The Sad Moral State of Today’s Church

“Be holy, as I am holy.” Dear friends, this is a serious problem in the church today. That kind of holiness is sorely lacking among people who call themselves born-again Christians today. Today, according to a recent survey, one out of every five people who are living together with someone of the opposite sex outside of marriage, are members of an Evangelical church. One large church that is built on the Purpose-Driven Church model did a survey and found out that 25% of the church's singles, 38% of its single parents, and 41% of its divorced members admitted to having had a sexual relationship with someone outside of marriage, within the last 6 months. That is the sad moral state of much of the Evangelical church today. Those kinds of statistics are not unusual, they are being found to be true over and over again.

Dear friends, the problem is that far too many Evangelical churches today are telling people to “come as you are” when what they really mean is “*stay* as you are.” Stay in your sins. That’s okay. We don’t want to get too convicting here, we don’t want you to feel uncomfortable, so we won’t preach against sin. We just want you to come here and feel good, and go out feeling even better. Affirming people in their sins, rather than confronting them, from Scripture, with their need for repentance and faith in Christ. Much of the Evangelical church today isn’t

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telling people that the Bible teaches that those who are truly born from above may not be perfect people, but if you are truly saved, your life and your behavior will change as a result of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And if your life doesn't change, if you're still living in your sins, it's a strong indicator that you aren't truly a Christian, and you need to go back and understand the Gospel and get right with God.

Let me give you some other Scriptures that bear out what I'm saying. First Thessalonians 4:1-8 – "Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord *is* the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit."

Philippians 1:27-28 – "Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the

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gospel, and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.”

1 Thessalonians 2:10-13 – “You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the Word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.”

Second Corinthians chapter six, beginning at verse fourteen – “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial [that is, the devil]? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: *‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.’* Therefore *‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.’ ‘I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty.’* Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

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Be Transformed

And let me draw your attention to one more passage as we close today. Romans chapter twelve, verses one and two – “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

What Paul is telling us in those verses is that *how we think and what we do needs to agree with who we are*. If you are truly a Christian, don't take on an outward worldly appearance that does not agree with the inward spiritual nature that is yours because of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. We shouldn't think, and talk, and act like the unsaved world. If you are truly a believer, then acting like the world is a masquerade. It is a deception. It is living a lie. Your thinking, your talking, and your actions should reflect your new life in Christ, and the eternal values that characterize that new life. As Paul writes in Philippians 3, “our citizenship is in heaven.”

Instead of being “conformed to this world” you are to be “transformed by the renewing of your mind.” The word “transformed” here means that what you are on the outside should be an accurate representation of what you are on the inside, because of Jesus Christ.

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To what are we to be transformed? Paul tells us in Romans 8:29 that God predestined believers “to be conformed to the image of His Son.” Colossians 3:10 tells us that we “have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.”

How are we to be transformed? We are transformed “by the renewing of [our] minds.” That word “renewing” literally means a *renovation* of our thinking. As the Holy Spirit works in us we are undergoing a transformation – literally, the original language of the Bible calls it a metamorphosis. And by that transformation, the true nature of Christ in us is supposed to become more and more evident to our fellow believers, and to the world. It is a process. This is sanctification. It doesn’t happen all at once – but it does happen, if you are truly a believer. Our transformation takes place over the course of life, as we think and meditate upon God’s will as He has revealed in His Word, and we put that knowledge into action in our living.

So dear friend, here is my question for you today: Is the Word of God renovating your thinking today? That is what Paul means, here in Colossians chapter one and verse ten, when he prays that the Colossians will “walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him.” And that is my prayer for you today.