

You Were Raised Right

Studies in the Book of Colossians

Text

Colossians 1:9-14

Topic

Paul uses one of his favorite illustrations of the Christian life, telling us to “walk” worthy of Jesus

Title

“Take a Walk on the Worthy Side”

It takes more than make-up to be a Walker.

“Walkers” are the zombies on the hit series, *The Walking Dead*.

They’re never called zombies. They have been called Biters, Creepers, Dead Ones, Floaters, Geeks, Lamebrains, Lurkers, Monsters, Roamers, Rotters, and Skin Eaters. Mostly they’re called Walkers.

As I said, you can't just walk-on set with make-up and be a Walker. The casting process involves actors going through special training. The show's special effects guy said,

Well, you know, every season we hold auditions for future Walkers, and we have affectionately termed it Zombie School. So they will come to Zombie School and they will audition for me. I usually do 20 or 30 people per class and I spend an entire day auditioning people, putting them through some exercises in terms of how fast they walk, what their character is, [and] what their personality is.

Pardon the segue, but **Christians are Walkers.**

Think about it: The most common description of our relationship with Jesus on the earth is that of a walk.

But not just any walk. Listen to these verses:

Eph 4:1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to **walk worthy** of the calling with which you were called...

Php 1:27 Only let your conduct be **worthy** of the gospel of Christ...

1Th 2:12 that you would **walk worthy** of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

Look in our text for today, at verse ten: “that you may **walk worthy** of the Lord...”

Christians are a particular kind of Walker - a *worthy* Walker. Let's shorten that and call ourselves Worthies. It can be our own CalvaryHanford term of endearment.

Our first thought when we read that we should walk worthy is that we must prove our worth; that being worthy is something to be earned over time.

That's not the sense I get here in Colossians:

1. For one thing, this was Paul's prayer for them. These were things he was asking God to perform *in* and *through* them.
2. For another thing, Paul was praying for them to walk worthy **right now** - not in some far away future after graduating "Worthy School."

How can we be considered Worthies right now? I'll organize my answer to that question around two points: #1 You're A Worthy By Receiving God's Filling, and #2 You're A Worthy By Remaining Fixated On God.

#1 You're A Worthy By Receiving God's Filling

(v9-12a)

Basic definition of a zombie is a corpse that still functions, and feeds on human flesh.

I don't want to draw the comparison too much, but basically all human beings, in our natural birth, **are considered the walking dead.**

We read in the Bible that we are born dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1).

When you are born-again, you remain in your rotting body of flesh, but in the knowledge that one day your spirit will be resurrected or raptured in a new, glorified body, fit for eternity.

If you are among the walking dead - someone who is not “in Christ” - then God the Holy Spirit is working in your heart right now to reveal your need for saving by Jesus Christ. Our prayer is that you would call upon Him, and be saved.

Verses nine through twelve tell us how Paul prayed for those in Christ in the city of Colossae. If you want to do a great personal Bible study, identify and read all the prayers of Paul.

At one point in his ministry, Paul told us to imitate him as he imitated Jesus (First Corinthians 11:1). His prayers are a good place to start.

Col 1:9 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;

Epaphras had travelled from Colossae to visit Paul who was under house arrest in Rome. Epaphras gave Paul a report about the believers. That's what he means when he says "since the day we heard it."

Paul didn't pray for the usual things or in the usual manner. He "[asked] that [they] may be filled with the knowledge of [God's] will."

It is accomplished by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Now Paul doesn't explicitly mention the Spirit, that's true. But I think we can see that is Who He intended - for two reasons:

1. Number One - Can you "fill" yourself? No, you cannot. "May be filled" puts the responsibility upon God. It is something He does *to* you.

2. Number Two - The very language and imagery of being filled always takes our minds back to the Day of Pentecost, when Jesus gave the church the promise of the Holy Spirit to fill and go on in-filling us.

Reading the New Testament, you get the idea that the writers believed that if you were in Christ, you were filled with His Spirit, and continuously experienced fresh in-fillings. The Spirit doesn't always need to be mentioned; He is implied.

Being "filled with the knowledge of God's will" is therefore not something to be discovered after a long, protracted spiritual search. No, it is something immediately available to you, thanks to your in-filling by the Holy Spirit.

Paul qualified God's will by saying it is "all wisdom and spiritual understanding." The word "spiritual" qualifies both "wisdom" and "understanding." Meaning sometimes this knowledge and understanding will seem contrary to that of the world around us.

- “Wisdom” refers to what we *believe* as Christians.
- “Understanding” refers to how we can *behave* as Christians.

Simply put, Paul prayed that all believers yield themselves to the indwelling Spirit, applying God’s wisdom to their lives, and conducting themselves accordingly.

God’s “will” in this context is not a mystery to be discovered. It is already revealed to you in His Word. It is His instruction on being a man or a woman of God; on being a husband or wife; a father or mother; an employer or an employee. It doesn’t involve guesswork - only yielding in obedience.

Colossians 1:10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him...

“Worthy” is a word I can stumble over. In so many ways I am not “worthy” of the name ‘Christian.’ No matter how long I walk with the Lord, I will continue to fall short of sinless perfection.

But that is not how Paul is using the word. He's telling you that your being filled by God is what makes it possible for you to walk worthy *right now*, i.e., in every circumstance and situation. You were declared righteous, and now you are a Worthy as you simply yield to His will.

“Fully pleasing Him” is another way of understanding “walk worthy.” Adam Clarke commented, “Do every thing in the best manner, in the most proper time, and in a becoming spirit.”

Another commentator said, “To walk in Christ is to live a life patterned after His and empowered by His Spirit.” You begin doing that the moment you are saved.

Do it **right now** - at home, at work, at play, in church.

Let's use our conversations with others as an example. No matter what the other person says, since I'm filled with the Spirit, I can respond in a

manner that would please Jesus, and be worthy of a walk with Him.

Or I can be like one of the zombies - a “Biter,” i.e, a *backbiter*, seeking to devour them.

I can't stress enough that we see these exhortations as immediate responses - not things that I might one day achieve on my own after years of spiritual discipline. I can always choose to “please Him” instead of myself.

Paul next mentions four ways we walk worthy. If I'm filled with, and yielded to, the Spirit, these four things will be evident in my conduct.

Colossians 1:10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

Language scholars say that what Paul wrote in the original language was that you produce “fruit” *in*, or *during*, “every good work.”

Paul draws upon another illustration of what it means to be in Christ. He is like a vine, and we the branches. We bear fruit for Him not through effort, but through obedience.

The second characteristic of a Worthy is, “increasing in the knowledge of God.” “Knowledge” was a buzzword being used by the false teachers. They were telling the Colossians that they were deficient in the ‘true’ knowledge of God. In order to attain this ‘knowledge’ they must jump through religious hoops of various kinds.

Did Paul mean that there was secret knowledge to be discovered? John Gill wrote,

It may be observed by the apostle's asking for them, that all our knowledge, and the increase of it, and all our fruitfulness in good works, **are all from the Lord.**

In other words, the “knowledge” we need is always available to us. It usually presents itself in God’s Word.

If you didn't have direct teaching about how to treat others, you could figure it out by yielding to the Spirit to produce in and through you a *What Would Jesus Do* disposition.

The third characteristic of a Worthy is,

Col 1:11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power...

“Strengthened” is in the tense of being strengthened. “Might” is the word we get our word dynamite from.

Paul is saying that at “all” times you can be strengthened by God's dynamic power to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit. It's not a future hope; it's a present possibility.

“According to His glorious power” means that when you behave this way, people will understand it can only be by the “glorious power” of God working *in* you and *through* you.

It is most evident during your afflictions and trials:

Col 1:11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy;

Patience” literally translates, *remaining under*. We use the word endure. “Long-suffering” translates, *long-tempered*. It means self-restraint.

“Patience” has to do with circumstances and “long-suffering” involves people:

- The fruit produced by God in and through us by His glorious power is to remain patient. We are empowered to endure our circumstances.
- The fruit produced by God in and through us by His glorious power is to be long-suffering. We are empowered to be long-tempered with other people.

Here’s the clincher: All of this is done “with joy.”

Usually I'm asking for prayer to get out of my circumstances, not to endure them with joy. Or I am wanting God to change people, not for me to be long-suffering with them and have joy doing so.

The fourth characteristic of a Worthy,

Col 1:12 giving thanks to the Father...

Billy Graham wrote,

Thanksgiving for the Apostle Paul was not a once-a-year celebration, but a daily reality that changed his life and made him a joyful person in every situation. Thanksgiving - the giving of thanks - to God for all His blessings should be one of the most distinctive marks of the believer in Jesus Christ. We must not allow a spirit of ingratitude to harden our heart and chill our relationship with God and with others.

In part two of this morning's study, we'll see some blessings we can always be thankful for. We can, in everything, be thankful.

God's filling makes all this a present, moment-by-moment possibility. We're not some day going to be given a certificate that says "Worthy." We don't earn it; we receive it.

And by "receive" I mean you realize God is in you, to empower you to obey Him and bring forth fruit.

#2 You're A Worthy By Remaining Fixated On God

(v12b-14)

We associate "fixated" with an unhealthy obsession. But it's a good word to describe the mindset of a Worthy. We should be "fixated" in the sense of always willfully *directing our eyes towards* the Lord.

Later in this letter Paul will again strongly suggest we fixate on the Lord:

Col 3:1 [Since] you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

Col 3:2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

Fixated on Heaven, I'll walk worthy on the earth.

Col 1:12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

This verse is a promise to each and every saint. It is not something to be earned but something you received the moment you were saved. When God saved you, when you believed on Jesus Christ, you were “qualified... to be [a partaker] of the inheritance of the saints...”

Paul was not talking about your individual rewards, earned by deeds done for Christ. He was talking about the eternal inheritance of each and every believer. He was talking about things like the promise of a new, glorious, resurrection body; of a mansion in Heaven; of spending eternity with the Lord in the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem.

If you've ever bought a home or a car with a loan you had to be qualified for it. The moment you were saved God “qualified” you.

You cannot become disqualified when it comes to partaking of “the inheritance of the saints.” It’s secure for you, in Heaven.

Whatever earth holds for you (and it can be brutal), Heaven awaits with its beauty and blessing. That’s why you can **always** “[give] thanks to the Father.”

At the end of verse twelve Paul uses the phrase “in the light,” which dovetails into verse thirteen,

Col 1:13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love,

You have been once-for-all “delivered... from the power of darkness and conveyed... [into the light]..., the kingdom of the Son of His love.”

Like every other human being you were born under the “power,” or *authority*, of “darkness.” You were born with a sin nature and you sinned.

When you get saved you are “delivered” from darkness and “conveyed” to a new authority:

- “Delivered” has the idea of being *rescued*.
- “Conveyed” means *removed* in the sense of being relocated.

You’ve been rescued and relocated to the authority of the Son of God whose kingdom is one of “light” ruled by the “Son” Whom the Father loves.

Calling Jesus the “Son,” by the way, is a challenge to the false teachers. They minimized the person of Jesus to that of a created being. Calling Him the “Son” puts Him in a unique relationship to the Father. It puts Him not only above all other created beings but makes Him equal in nature, power, and authority with God.

John Walvoord wrote, “There is a glorious kingdom ahead of us, the glory that is going to be ours in the predicted millennial kingdom and throughout eternity as we are with Christ. In view of these things, God

has called us to a walk that is in keeping with our destiny... We “walk worthy” of God because we are saved, because we are a child of the King by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

When you are struggling everyday to be joyful in your patience with circumstances and your long-suffering with people, you can fixate on what God did for you yesterday and what is waiting for you tomorrow:

- ‘Yesterday,’ on some wonderful day, He saved you. You were rescued from the darkness of this world.
- ‘Tomorrow,’ when He comes for you to resurrect or rapture you, you will see the Son He loves, and Whom you love, and remain together for all eternity.

Col 1:14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

If the previous blessings mostly describe yesterday and tomorrow, verse fourteen is for today.

Because we've been redeemed by the death of Jesus as our Substitute, we enjoy "the forgiveness of sins."

If you're like me, you feel anything but worthy. In fact, there seems to be a growing sense of just how sinful you remain. It's not uncommon as you get older in the Lord, as you walk further with Him, that you start to recognize very subtle attitudes as springing from your flesh.

It's wonderful to realize that you enjoy God's forgiveness as an ever-present blessing. You're not worthy, not in practice; but you are a Worthy in your position.

I'll close with this, from a hymn:

*Living for Jesus a life that is true,
Striving to please Him in all that I do,
Yielding allegiance, glad hearted and free -
This is the pathway of blessing for me*

