

SLIDE #1 (13) Read Colossians 1:9-14

Although I would like to focus on just those 5 verses this morning, I want to take a quick review of the sermon series that Pastor Mike and Pastor Jude have just taken us through. For the month of January, we studied Colossians 1 with an aim to be able to “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord”. As part of each sermon, Mike and Jude would have a list of “What we must know” and “What we must do” list. I’d like us to look at the “What we must do” portion of the series just now. Let’s call it “Our to-do list”.

SLIDE #2 (14) To-do list from the sermon series:

In order to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, we must...

- a) Steadfastly pray for ourselves and one another. (4:2)
- b) Diligently read and apply God’s Word. (3:16)
- c) Continually increase in our knowledge of the preeminence of Christ. (1:18)
- d) Solidly persevere with hope in our preeminent Reconciler, Christ the King. (1:23)
- e) Joyfully accept the power and glory and pain and suffering of serving Christ the King.(1:24)

Let’s pray.....

I love to-do lists. Show of hands: how many of you are like me and if you do something that was not on your original to-do list you add it to the list just so you can scratch it off?

To-do lists are great for people pleasers. Lists let people pleasers know exactly what to do to make someone like them; to make someone pleased with them; to satisfy others’ expectations. I love when people tell me what they want for their birthday, for example, because then I know that if I perfectly follow their instructions, they won’t be disappointed either in the gift or in me.

However, there is a bit of a love-hate thing going on for me with to-do lists like that. You see, say you tell me that you want one specific book for your birthday. I diligently go to Amazon to order it for you (and--let’s be honest—a little something for me, too....free super saving shipping and all that). I know that if I get you that book you will be pleased with the gift, and pleased with me. Win, win, right? But, to my horror, Amazon is sold out. Well, I’ll just look on Indigo. Sold out. Christian Book Distributor? Sold out. What if I find out that not only are the stores sold out but the book is actually out of print and there is simply no chance for me to please you with the gift you requested?

Suddenly, I hate to-do lists. See, if I hadn’t have asked what you wanted in the first place, and if I had bought you something else, you may have been disappointed in what I gave you, but I could have pled ignorance: “Oh, I’m sorry you are unhappy with my gift! I just had no idea what you wanted.”

But to know what is desired and expected and required and to not be able to accomplish it? That’s hard for my heart to handle.

And truthfully, that love-hate inner turmoil is how I felt coming in to a Colossians series that had a subtitle of “Walk in a manner worthy of the Lord”. But first a very quick back story about the book of Colossians and me.

Once, when I had gone to Pastor Mike for some godly counsel, he suggested that I read Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. He said I should start with Colossians. So I did. I obediently sat down the very next morning with a pen, a blank journal sheet, and Colossians open before me. My intention was to make a to-do list of all the things required of me as noted in the book of Colossians. I thought if I could get this list down properly then I could fix some of the complicated details of my life. Or maybe I could really please the Lord so *that he* would fix some of the complicated details of my life.

The next week, I returned to Pastor Mike’s office. I explained to him my attempts at making a to-do list from Colossians. Gently, he corrected me. “No, no! Colossians is not about DOING; it is about RECEIVING.”

But what does *that* mean? Aren’t we responsible to do something? Aren’t we supposed to pursue holiness and walk in a manner worthy of the call of Christ? Aren’t we supposed to work out our salvation and do good works? Aren’t we called to obey? Don’t we have to DO something?

Yes. Yes, of course.

And so, when Pastor Mike and Pastor Jude began spelling out a to-do list for walking in a manner worthy of Christ, I was simultaneously thrilled and terrified. **I was thrilled** because I would have a shiny new check-off list to program my Christian walk, and to **really impress** the Lord by my accomplishment of the list. **I was terrified** because I knew, even by looking at the action points on that list (**still on slide**), that I could never, ever, ever do it well enough or completely enough to please anyone.

When I hear that I am to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, do you know what I actually hear? I hear, “You’d better really work hard and do a good job. You’d better really be impressive this time, or you may be out.” Can anyone relate to that?

But here’s the freeing truth that I’ve begun to understand: We can only “do” obedience to God once we’ve “received” from God everything we need for obedience.

I want to see if I can show you the truth and freedom of that from the passage in Colossians. We are absolutely responsible to walk in a manner worthy and to work on this to-do list. I am not undermining or arguing against what Pastor Mike and Jude have been teaching. Not at all. In fact, I’m hoping that as I focus for a bit on the “*receiving*” that it will spur us on to *more “doing”* or *easier* doing or *more joyful, grateful* doing.

Did you notice that the Lord also has a to-do list in this same passage of Colossians? I want us to consider our passage again, but this time I want you to notice how active the Lord is, and how very dependent on him we are. I have colour co-ordinated the text to highlight the Lord’s to do list and ours. Red is the Lord’s to do list; Black is ours.

SLIDE #3 (15) (Don't read it right away. Just look at it and note all that red.)

Colossians 1:9-14

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that **you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard.**

That's a lot of red. And very little black. And in fact, all of the black, all of our responsibilities are totally dependent on the Lord's! Do you see that? You need to give thanks. You need to share in the inheritance. You need to continue in the faith. You need to "walk worthy" but even those tasks come as a side effect of the work that the Lord does for you ('so as to'). And what has the Lord done for you? Here is a list of 11 things the Lord has done for you. (read these slowly saying 'you' as the ladies fill in the blanks)

SLIDE #4 (16) The Lord's Fully Completed To-Do List:

1. **Delivered me from the domain of darkness;**
2. **Transferred me to the kingdom of his Son, Jesus Christ;**
3. **Redeemed me;**
4. **Forgave me;**
5. **Reconciled me to God;**
6. **Qualified me to share in the inheritance of the saints;**
7. **Made me fully pleasing to him;**
8. **Fills me with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding;**
9. **Strengthens me with all power;**
10. **Makes me bear fruit; and**

11. **Presents me holy, blameless and above reproach to God.**

He accomplished his to-do list in what we call the Gospel. This whole “good news” of Jesus Christ—that is, His **incarnation**, his perfect life, his death by which he took ALL the wrath of God for us and took the punishment for our sin, his conquering of the domain of darkness by defeating the grave, his resurrection, his ascension to the kingdom of Light, his sending of the Holy Spirit, and his glorification and intercession -- manifests itself, in part, by these new realities for us: (all 11). Shouldn't that change how we approach our to-do list? If this has all been accomplished on our behalf (and it HAS!), then shouldn't it affect how we attack our to-do list?

I want to spend a little time explaining, practically, what a difference it has made in my walk to consider the Fully Completed To-Do list of the Lord. But first, let me take a minute and explain two words to you that will be helpful as we go on. When you read scripture, you can be looking for “imperatives” and “indicatives”. ***SLIDE #5 (17)*** The imperatives are what we are called to do. The indicatives are who we are declared to be. The Lord is so gracious to us. When he gives us an instruction (or an imperative) he also tells us that he's made us who we need to be (or the indicative) so that we can follow that instruction. As you read your Bible from now on, watch for this indicative/imperative pattern. For example: ***SLIDE #6 (18)***

If then you have been raised with Christ, [the indicative] seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, [a positive imperative] not on things that are on earth.[a negative imperative] For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. [the indicative] Put to death therefore what is earthly in you [a negative imperative]..... Put on then, [a positive imperative] as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, [the imperative] compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; [a positive imperative] as the Lord has forgiven you, [the indicative] so you also must forgive. [a positive imperative]

Colossians 3: 1-5, 12-13 from Because He Loves Me by Elyse Fitzpatrick

SLIDE #7 (19) Isn't that helpful? You can use this technique in your Bible study. Write out lists for yourself of what you are instructed to do, (the Imperatives) and a list of who God says he has made you to be (The Indicatives). If I read a to-do list in scripture like that, I get nervous. “Set my mind on things above. Put to death what is earthly in me. Put on compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness....man. I cannot do that.” But the Holy Spirit nudges me to read it again, and says, “Yes, you can. Your life is hidden with Christ in God. You have been raised with Christ. You are forgiven. You are God's chosen one. You are holy and beloved. The Lord has made you able to do this.”

Now: ask yourself this; Why has God done all this for me. Why has he accomplished his to-do list? Why has he made me who I need to be? Because you've earned it? Because you asked for it? Because you deserve it?

I spoke to a friend once about our being acceptable to God or loved by God. I said, "Tell me why you are loved by God." This person said, "I'm loved by God because I believe in Christ and I believe in his death, resurrection and ascension. I believe he is my saviour." No. Those are the right things to believe, but that is not why God loves you. Our belief in Him did not initiate His love for us. Our belief does not make us loved by God. Our understanding of the Bible does not make us loved by God. Our love for him does not make us loved by God. Our ability to walk in a manner worthy does not make us loved by God. Don't misunderstand me: he is pleased with our obedience, but our obedience is not what caught his attention and earned his favour to begin with.

The Scriptures teach us that ***SLIDE #7 (20)*** you are loved by God because he chose you before the foundation of the world. While you were still God's enemy, he reconciled you to himself. He chose to love and adopt you before you even existed. Before you thought one good thing, before you took one breath, before you were a twinkle in anyone's eyes, he chose you and loved you. His love for you predates anything 'worthy' you've done by all of eternity. This is an everlasting love. A steadfast love. An infinite love. An eternal love. An unearned love.

SLIDE #8 (21)

Other gods might offer forgiveness, but this God welcomes and embraces us as children, never to send us away. (For children do not get disowned for being naughty.) He does not offer some kind of "he loves me, he loves me not" relationship whereby I have to try and keep myself in his favor by behaving impeccably. No, "to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to be called children of God" -- and so with security to enjoy his love forever. -- Michael Reeves in Delighting in the Trinity.

Because he loves me, he has equipped me by completing his To-Do list so that I can walk in a manner worthy for his glory. And now, I walk in a manner worthy **because (precisely! Especially!)** he loves me (not so that I can make him love me or keep him loving me).

SLIDE # 9 (22) (Lord's To-Do List) Let's look at the Lord's to-do list again and try to make this very practical. The details of this list should make a great difference in your ability to 'walk in a manner worthy of the Lord'. Knowing that he steadfastly, infinitely loves you; knowing that he has fully provided for and equipped you, should make your to-do list **MUCH, MUCH** more doable.

For example: in my life.....

The truth that I'm Redeemed, Delivered from the domain of darkness... My battle with PPD, and his redeeming me from that pit. His deliverance from that particular darkness. And now when it crowds in again, and it does, I can stand firm and say, "No. I've been delivered from that darkness. Jesus has transferred me to his kingdom and delivered me from depression's domain and I am no longer held captive by that darkness. I do not need to believe that the pull into depression is inevitable."

The truth that he makes me pleasing to him reorients my thinking when I fall into people-pleaser mode, with man, and with God. I look at the list and think, "I can never do this perfectly and make him pleased with me." And it's true. On my own, in my flesh, I can't. But it is already done for me. God is already pleased with me because of Christ in me. So when I hold up my track record as a godly wife, or a godly mother, or a daughter, or a friend, or a homeschool mom, or a worship leader...all I see are my failings and short-comings. "I surely could have done that better. I surely *should* have done that better. I don't know how the Lord is going to feel about me now." That's a lie. Where there is sin and short-coming in my life, I know that I need to confess and repent, but I also know that he HAS forgiven me. He IS pleased with me. I am HIS CHILD and there is no 'he loves me, he loves me not'. It is always **and EMPHATICALLY**, 'he loves me'.

I can almost hear some of you debating this with me. I can hear the voice in your head that is saying, "Well, sure. That's true of some of these women here who have it all together, but not me. If she knew my life, if she knew what I'd done, then she'd know that he does not love me like that."

Remember though: you need to bring your emotions to the Word of God and determine what is true by what God says, not by what you feel. You can't read the Bible and say, "that part doesn't apply to me because it doesn't feel true." No. Take your emotions to task and say, "The Word of God says that God LOVES his children. And I am his child. So he loves me. The Word of God says that he has made me pleasing to God, fruitful, forgiven, reconciled, heirs with Christ, qualified, strengthened...." Who are you going to believe: The Word of God or your emotions?

Maybe you are coming around to see that "some" of these might be true of you, but maybe there is one or two that seem particularly too good to be true. If so, I would strongly recommend that you take your handout into your quiet times this week and look up the references that are listed under each of the Lord's To-Do items. These are other passages that reinforce the truth of your standing with God. You can also do a word search to find even more related passages. If you have a concordance in your Bible, you can look up a key word like "reconciliation" or "reconciled". If you are more of a digital girl, you can go to BibleHub.com and type in the key word. The website will give you many verses in many different Bible translations to help you in your search and truth-proving.

As you obey the Lord, as you work on your to-do list I want to give you a bit of a gauge to help you determine where your focus is at. It could be that you are obeying out of a place of receiving: you have received what God has done for you and you are gratefully living a life of obedience in return. Or it could be that you are grinding it out, trying to desperately walk in a manner worthy enough on your own merit.

SLIDE # 10 (23) Book Plug for [Because He Loves Me](#)

"So many of us cavalierly gloss over what he has done and zero in on what we're to do, and that shift, though it may seem slight, makes all the difference in the world. Our obedience has its origin in God's prior action, and forgetting that truth results in self-righteousness, pride, and despair."

Are you feeling self-righteous in your walk? Proud? White-Knuckled? Determined? Hopeless? Fearful? Despairing? If so, then maybe it is time to shift your focus from YOUR to-do list to HIS. Because he does love you. ***SLIDE #11***

Very quickly, as I close, let me remind you of our position in the family of God as we seek to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. Remember the Prodigal Son story? The youngest son took his inheritance, squandered it, came back grovelling and received a royal welcome. The father threw a huge party celebrating the return of his son. The Older Brother, however, is the one that always catches my attention. He sees the hoopla, he hears the festivities and he pouts to his father. "I have been working so hard for you. I've been trying so hard to please you. I've been doing my best to obey you. When are you going to give me a feast and a party and a gift like that?" The father loving says, "But everything I have has always been yours."

Do you see? Your heavenly Father is saying, "Everything you need--every good gift--your equipping, your inheritance, your salvation, your deliverance, your forgiveness, your position, your fruitfulness....it is all here for you. It is all already yours."

Ladies, here are two more items for your To-Do list: **Receive!** Receive the work that the Lord has done on your behalf. Everything he has --everything you need to help you obey-- is already yours. You don't need to work for it. You don't need to earn it. You don't need to walk in a manner worthy enough to keep it. Receive it! **Thank him for it.** Thank him for his infinite love that spurred him to complete his to-do list. And then live a life of empowered obedience with his spirit at work within you, for his glory. Amen.

Let's pray.....