

He Qualified You

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[0 : 00] And if you find the book of Colossians and you get on over to chapter 1, chapter 1 and verse 9, Corey is serving us today.

He's going to read down through verse number 14. Thanks, Corey.

Father, as we turn our attention to your word, would you please watch over my mind and my heart and the minds and hearts of your people.

Cause our attention to be centered on this truth for this time and what you have to say to us. Cause our affection to be stirred again for our Savior Jesus.

Would you please fill us with your spirit and motivate us to believe and obey this good gospel that we are so privileged to proclaim today.

[1 : 50] We ask that you would be with us in Jesus name. Amen. If I told you that I loved books, I wonder if you would believe me.

Now, you might say, well, I have been to your house and you have a wall of books. So, yes, that tells me that you love books.

And I've heard you talking with others about books. And I've heard that you enjoy reading books with others.

And I've seen you reading books from time to time. And maybe you talk to my neighbors and my neighbors are like, oh, yeah, he always has packages from Amazon. He buys books. Must be books. Lots of books.

If I told you I loved books, that would be consistent with what you are observing, what you are seeing, what you are hearing of my life.

[2 : 57] And you would say, well, that's true. What he says is true. He does love books. What if I told you that I was a PGA golfer, a professional golfer?

Now, some of you are being very gracious. I can tell already. But you've probably, some of you, been to my garage.

And you're like, I've been to you guys' house. There are no golf clubs in your house. I have never seen golf clubs there. I've never heard you talking about golf.

We've never had to adjust our plans because you were too busy golfing. You don't dress classy like a golfer.

You don't have those cool shoes. Nobody is endorsing you. I don't really think you're a golfer. And furthermore, I'm pretty sure golfers are doing their thing on Sundays and you're here all the time.

[4 : 03] You are not a PGA golfer. And you would be right. I am not a professional golfer. You wouldn't have any evidence to back up that claim.

Sometimes our behavior aligns with what we say. I do love books. And other times our behavior does not align with what we say. And this is true in our spiritual lives as well.

Here's the question that this passage raises. Does the way that I live align with the gospel that I say I believe?

Neither Paul nor Timothy visited the city of Colossae. But Epaphras planted the church. And then he has brought back a report.

The Colossians have heard, as we saw last week, the word of truth, the gospel. They have understood the grace of God in truth.

[5 : 13] Two beautiful passages. Two beautiful phrases from those opening eight verses. This is a good report that Epaphras has given. It's a good report.

And yet I want you to notice what Paul and Timothy do, having received this good report about this church.

Look at verse number nine. What do they do? They pray. 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.

God. The Colossians' faith is not self-generated. The Colossians' love, it is not self-motivated.

[6 : 35] The Colossians' hope, it is not self-sustained. God really is at work through the gospel among them.

What a wonderful testimony to the grace of God. And yet, Paul and Timothy commit to praying for this church.

What do they pray for? Notice two requests. First, they pray that this church would be filled with the knowledge of his will.

Do you see that in verse nine? Filled with the knowledge of his will. First prayer request. Now, when we hear God's will, I think we default to assuming that this is, you know, I need to pray about my future.

I need to pray about what my life is supposed to look like. God has some secret plan for me. And so I need to be filled with the knowledge of his will.

[7 : 47] That is not what Paul and Timothy have in mind here. Let me show you why. Notice that the word knowledge appears twice.

Once in verse nine. And if you're taking notes, again in verse 10. Notice what this knowledge is of in verse 10.

It is knowledge about God. And notice what this knowledge in verse 10 does. Do you see it?

It is bearing fruit. And it is increasing. What did we learn about the gospel back in verse number five and six?

The word of truth that you have heard. The gospel. It is bearing fruit. And increasing. Do you see the parallel?

[8 : 45] Well, to be filled with the knowledge of his will means to be growing in understanding and appreciating the gospel.

Consider also the word spiritual. This does not mean some kind of fuzzy or mystical. What Paul and Timothy have in mind here is this knowledge, this wisdom, this understanding that they are to grow in comes from the spirit.

Look back just one verse. Verse number eight. Epaphras reports about the Colossians that they are filled. Sorry, that they have the love in the spirit.

Do you see it there in verse eight? They have love in the spirit. And now Paul says, I want this knowledge. I want you to be filled with the knowledge of the gospel in all the wisdom and understanding that the Holy Spirit gives.

Second request in verse number 10. That they would walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. Now, I almost don't think I need to say this, but just for the sake of saying it.

[10 : 16] When Paul says you need to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, he doesn't mean when you go to the track at the Fargo Sports Center that you're walking there needs to be in a certain way that is pleasing to the Lord.

Although, of course, he includes that there also. Walk in the scripture is about our lives. It's about the way that we live, the way that we carry ourselves, our normal, everyday coming and going, ordinary life.

This is your walk. This is your walk, your behavior, your speech, your attitude, how you carry yourself. Paul wants their walk to glorify Jesus.

Why is this second request important? Well, because sometimes our walk matches our words. Sometimes our behavior aligns with our beliefs, like being a book reader. And other times our confession conflicts with our conduct.

[11 : 39] And so Paul and Timothy pray for this church, where they have received a good report, where the gospel is bearing fruit and increasing, where there is a growing understanding and appreciation for God's grace, for this church.

Paul and Timothy pray. Why? Because walking in a manner worthy of the Lord does not come naturally.

Look again at verse 10. 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, being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father.

What does it mean to walk worthy of the Lord? The scripture gives us four ways that we walk worthy of the Lord.

First, bearing fruit in every good work. Taking every opportunity to do good to those that you encounter.

[13:40] Bringing the Spirit's fruit. Bringing the Spirit's fruit. Love and joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness and faithfulness and gentleness and self-control.

Bringing the Spirit's fruit into every situation that you encounter. Bearing fruit in every good work. Walk worthy of the Lord. Second, increasing in the knowledge of God. This means that you have an eagerness to better understand the gospel.

A commitment to continue growing in knowing not only the gospel by reading and so on, and growing what you understand, your knowledge in your head, but growing in appreciating your relationship with the Father.

Learning what he is like. Spending time alone with him. You may be able to take every opportunity to do good.

[15:00] And you may be able to grow in your relationship with the Father when life is easy. But what about when life is hard?

What about when your world stinks? And your perspective shrinks? Now what?

What about when life is full of adversity and hardship and persecution?

Walking in a manner worthy of the Lord means, number three, being strengthened with all power for patient endurance.

Your source of strength for enduring the difficulties of life is not better habits.

[16:07] It's not more spiritual disciplines. It's not another quick fix life hack. Walking worthy means depending on God for your strength.

Being strengthened with all power. It means remembering that your faithfulness to Jesus is a result of God's sufficient grace. And not your conviction.

Or resolve. Finally, walking worthy of the Lord means joyfully giving thanks to the Father.

I think joyfully belongs. I know it comes before the comma in many of our translations. I think that goes with giving thanks. Joyfully giving thanks to the Father.

In any and all circumstances. As Paul writes to the Philippians. Whether well fed or hungry. Whether in abundance or in need.

[17:19] Walking worthy means worshiping when life is good. And when life is hard. I wonder if you feel the weight of this list.

Because I do. I feel the weight of this. Walking worthy of the Lord.

Who can do this? Bear fruit. Increase in knowledge.

Endure patiently. Give thanks joyfully. Who does this? Who can do this? The Colossians? On their own?

In their strength? No way. What about you? What about me?

[18:21] On my own? In my strength? No. No. Not a chance. And this is exactly the point.

You can't do this. Which is why when Paul and Timothy pray for the Colossians. And give them the ways that they are to walk worthy of the gospel.

They bring them back to the gospel. Look in your Bible. Verse number 12. Giving thanks.

Joyfully 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.

[19:26] Have you ever received something that you knew that you didn't really deserve? That you knew you were not qualified for it.

And yet you received it anyway? This is every Christian. This is every follower of Jesus.

You didn't meet God's standard. You didn't measure up to his expectations. The Father did not, you know, look down through time and see that, oh, he's going to believe in me someday.

She's going to believe someday. So therefore, I'm going to choose to love and save that person. No. Sin disqualified you.

As we sang at the beginning of that beautiful song. Thank you, Jesus, for the blood. I remember what I was. I was disqualified.

[20 : 29] Sin disqualified you.

And yet God didn't turn away. He qualified you. He chose you.

This is the doctrine of divine election tucked in here in the book of Colossians. By his sovereign grace, he qualified you.

To what? Qualified to what? What is it that I was disqualified from? And now I have been brought into. It is to the inheritance of the saints in light.

To share in that inheritance. Remember that word saints from back up in verse number two. These are those who God has set apart.

[21 : 34] If you are a saint, you have been set apart for God. And we remember, remarkably, this letter was written to Gentiles.

And yet again, Paul is welcoming them into something. Intentionally using language that calls our attention back to the Exodus.

Back to their deliverance from Egypt. Back to their entrance into the promised land. Who got in on that?

Only God's people. Only those who were part of the people of God. And Paul says, no, you too. All of you Gentiles. The Father has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints.

Of those who have been set apart. After 40 years of wandering in the wilderness.

[22 : 41] After failure, after failure. After so much faithlessness. That we would have abandoned them in the wilderness. God still gave Israel the land.

Because they earned it? Because they deserved it? Of course not. Because he promised it to them. That's the word inheritance. And our inheritance is even better. Verse 5. Again, if you're taking notes from last week.

Our hope is laid up for us in heaven. This is our inheritance. Future blessing. Future joy.

Future being forever with the Lord in his presence. God qualified them because they were disqualified.

[23 : 47] And he delivered them from the domain of darkness. Could the Colossians deliver themselves from the domain of darkness?

Could they free themselves from the deep demonic domain of darkness? Could they ever defeat their adversary, the devil?

No. Could you? No. God delivered them because they couldn't deliver themselves.

And having rescued them from the domain of darkness. He transfers them into the kingdom of his beloved son.

And they're going to be brought into the plan of God. These Gentile believers in Jesus have been brought into the plan of God. No longer excluded from the kingdom of God.

[24 : 54] No longer excluded from what God is doing. But now part of the people of God. Sharing in the inheritance of the saints in light.

They have been brought into God's plan. What is that? It is God's people under the reign of his beloved son, King Jesus.

When sin disqualified them, God did not look the other way. He sent his son.

Verse 14. In whom we have redemption. The forgiveness of sins.

Through his death on the cross, Jesus paid the price to purchase his people.

[25 : 55] This is what redemption means. Paying a price in order to purchase back. Making a payment in order to buy back.

This is the idea of redemption. Redeemed. Redeeming. And the payment was his death. His death canceled our debt.

It has been paid in full. And now God's people enjoy the freedom of forgiveness.

Walking worthy of the Lord does not mean moving on from the gospel.

Walking worthy of the Lord means living every day. Believing the truth of this gospel. That when we were disqualified, the Father qualified us.

[27 : 01] And when we were held captive and could not save ourselves. The Father delivered us from the domain of darkness. And when we were trapped in a kingdom of sin and self.

He transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved son. This is the gospel that we are to walk in every day.

Then what does it look like practically to walk worthy of the Lord?

Bearing fruit in every good work means loving your neighbor.

And serving your spouse. And diligence at work. And patience with your siblings.

[28 : 06] And kindness towards other drivers. And generosity towards servers. I wonder if there is someone in your life.

I wonder if there is someone in your life. That you are withholding good from. Maybe it is because doing good would be inconvenient.

Or maybe it is because doing good would scrape the scar of an old wound. Maybe it is because life is just so full right now.

And you have not properly prioritized it. Because the gospel is bearing fruit and increasing in our lives.

Do that good thing this week. Align your behavior with what you say that you believe. Increasing in the knowledge of God.

[29 : 15] It doesn't mean merely that you read more books. This would be an easy one for me if that's all it meant. I love reading books.

Do you know what's much harder? Finding time to be alone with the Father. In the quiet of prayer. Solitude. Meditation on him and his word. What if you scheduled one unhurried block of time to be alone with God this week?

And to recenter your attention and affection on him. Unhurried. That's going to be a challenge for some of us.

But the gospel is bearing fruit and increasing in our lives. Then let's remember his work.

[30 : 28] Let's reflect on how he is changing us. Let's reorient our thoughts around his good purposes. Let's remember his work.

How can you be strengthened with all power this week? Stop rehearsing your story of suffering as a story of suffering.

This is hard. Instead, tell it as a story about what God is doing.

I'm not asking you to deny the reality of the things that you have suffered. I'm asking and encouraging and inviting you to frame what you have suffered in light of the gospel.

In light of what God is doing. In light of what God is doing. In light of his good purposes in your life. In light of the fact that the gospel is bearing fruit and increasing in my life.

[31 : 53] Then I can tell this story as a story of God's good work. And not as a story of how much I have suffered.

This is one way that we can be strengthened for patient endurance. How can we joyfully give thanks?

What is that voice in your head saying right now? What's the voice in your head saying right now? For some of us, I suspect it's saying, I have not read my Bible enough recently. I have been acting like a hypocrite.

I haven't prayed enough. I lost my temper again at work. I said that I was going to be different this time. And yet, I haven't changed.

[33 : 00] I know better. And I still went ahead and did it anyway. Some of us are hearing these types of voices in our head.

And when we hear this voice, it is measuring our standing before the Father in light of our performance. In light of how good we're doing.

This is the path towards frustration, disappointment, discouragement, depression, and cycles of these things over and over and over in our lives.

This is not what God has for his people. Verse 12 does not say that he qualified you based on your consistency.

It just says he qualified you. Past tense. Done. Before this week. Before this year.

[34 : 07] Before you had anything good to show for yourself. So if you have been beaten up by your failure, if you're stuck in this cycle of frustration and disappointment and then repentance and coming back again but finding yourself stuck here, I wonder if you would repent and receive his grace.

And I wonder if you would replace the snicker of shame that echoes around in your head with this bedrock truth. He qualified me.

Thus, this is what joyfully giving thanks could look like.

Remembering that he qualified me. If you are not sure whether you have been delivered from the domain of darkness, forgiveness, if you're not sure whether you have been redeemed, if you're not confident that your sins have been forgiven, then please hear the words of Jesus with open arms saying, come.

Come to me. All who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Turn from your sin.

[35 : 46] Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and God's promise to you is sure you will be saved. The Colossians heard the word of truth, the gospel.

And so have we. And if you came this morning and the gap between what you believe and how you behave is perhaps a little embarrassing, I have good news for you.

I am not a professional golfer and neither are you. But this is not what God is asking of you. He calls you to walk worthy.

And you cannot walk worthy until you know where you stand. Here is where you stand, my brother, my sister. He qualified you.

He delivered you. He transferred you. The gospel does not work because of you. The gospel works because it is true.

[36 : 51] The gospel is not where you start. It's where you stay. So come on. Let's go for a walk.

Let's pray.