

“Gospel Qualified!”—Colossians 1:11-14

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Gospel Qualified!”, is Colossians 1:11-14 → *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.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Qualifications are necessary to functioning in life. Whether it's applying for a job, seeking to fill a public position, receiving disability or simply giving information to someone, you are required to put forth your qualifications in some way to determine your eligibility and credibility. If someone shares an opinion with you, don't you wonder about the basis of their information and what qualifies them to share it? With all the sinful, satanic deception and activity happening in the world it is very important that people on job sites are identified in some way to determine the validity of their presence in that building. What qualifies you to do what you do, to think like you think and to

act like you act?

It is no different when it comes to functioning in the various vocations of your life **as a Christian**. Ever had anyone challenge your “qualifications” for serving in the church? Ever had anyone challenge you when you’ve pointed out that a “popular” practice in the world is **sin according to God’s Word**? You may have even encountered a reaction such as: “Who are you to tell me what’s right and wrong? You don’t do everything right either! What do you think you are? A saint?” Sadly, the devil, the world and your own sinful nature will try to deceive you to doubt the credibility of God’s Word, rationalize sin and make you forget that you are Gospel qualified.

As Paul began his letter to the Christians in the town of Colossae he says that they were *qualified . . . to share in the inheritance of the saints in light*. (Verse 12) In fact, in Colossians 1:2 he even referred to them *the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae*. It is even more forceful in the Greek! The word translated *saints* is literally “holy ones!” These people were *saints*?

A common idea of “saint” in our culture is one who lived as a Christian in the past, did extraordinary works and/or miracles and was declared a “saint” by some religious body after his or her death. Some religious groups will even call on these “saints” for help, protection and healing today. It is not unusual for people to talk or think about “saints” as perfect in every way.

Actually, by the way in which Paul spoke about these Christians in Colossae, you'd think they were perfect people. In Colossians 1:2-4 he referred to them as *saints . . . faithful, with a love . . . for all the saints* (i.e. other Christians). Apparently they must have displayed quite a faith in Jesus as others observed their words and actions. However, their behavior and their words were not what qualified them as *saints*. In fact, they were just like you and I: broken sinners in need of the forgiveness of their sins, yet qualified for eternal life.

To be sure, one must qualify in order to be a *saint*. However, the qualifications reside in God, not in you. Notice how we are qualified to be righteous and holy in God's sight according to verses 13-14 of our text: *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*. We are "Gospel qualified!" It is completely the work of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit! We are *qualified* on the basis of God's powerful working in our lives through the Gospel, not on the basis of our good works.

According to the Scripture a saint is every living believer in Jesus Christ. This is why Paul referred to the Christians in this letters as *saints*. This is also why he gave thanks for these saints who continued to struggle with the presence of sin in the midst of spiritual battles everyday. Paul thanked God for

these Christians because they were **in Christ**. His joy came as a result of their relationship with Christ based upon God's grace.

Even after you've come to faith in Jesus on the basis of God's grace in Christ, it's easy for you to get so involved with striving to live in obedience to God's law that you lose focus of **His** power in the process. Satanic deception sets in when you strive to feel "qualified" as a Christian based upon your works, leaving you constantly feeling "unqualified" because your works are lacking the perfection God requires. Isaiah 64:6 says that even *all our **righteous deeds** are like a polluted garment* in God's sight.

This is why in our Gospel qualified state we need to encourage one another to grow in that relationship into which the LORD has brought us by His Holy Spirit! This happens as we encourage one another **in the Word** and pray for one another on the basis of God's power working in us through His Word and Spirit. Colossians 3:16 describes it this way: *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

Notice Paul prayed for these Christians in Colossae to be *filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding* (cf. Colossians 1:9-10) so that they would strive to be discerning in service and life by the

power of the Holy Spirit! Such Gospel qualified power is behind this prayer for them in verses 11-12 → *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.*

You are qualified as God's saints through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He has kept God's Law perfectly for you! His perfect obedience becomes your perfect obedience! He provided the perfect sacrifice to redeem your soul from eternal darkness in hell, bringing you into the light of God's eternal glory in heaven! You are holy, saints of God through faith in Jesus Christ alone. By faith in His Person and His Work the Holy Spirit empowers you with . . .

- . . . *all endurance* → The devil uses the sinful world around you to tempt you to fall into sin, give up the faith and depend upon works to define being "qualified" for heaven. Endurance is necessary as we fight the fight of the faith which is Christ-focused.
 - . . . *patience* → Waiting for Jesus to come back again can be very difficult in the midst of suffering and persecution for the name of Christ. We look to Him alone to present us holy and blameless in God's sight on the Last Day (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:8; Ephesians 1:4; Philippians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 5:23)
- based completely upon His work for us—in *Whom we have***

redemption, the forgiveness of sins!

- . . . joy → Jesus said in John 15:11 → *These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.* In the midst of so much presence of sin there is much that challenges your joy **in God's grace**.
- . . . give thanks → Giving thanks to God in the midst of all circumstances can only happen when your focus is on God's grace for you in the Person & Work of Jesus. Your baptismal certificate is a reminder of who you are **in Christ** today, not simply a reminder of a rite performed by the church in your past.

As a Gospel qualified person, looking to Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins daily through His Word and Sacraments, works of service to your neighbor flow into the lives of others. They may call you to present your "qualifications" for pointing out sin with the desire to point out the Savior, Jesus. You will identify with them as a sinner who cares deeply about sinners becoming Gospel qualified for eternal life! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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