

When we consider our “worth”, or whether we are “worthy”, we may think in terms of being “qualified” for the job we are trying to do or for the goals we are trying to reach. Indeed, we may not truly be “qualified”, but we may be treated as such by those who see our potential.

When I was a young PhD physics student, I anticipated with great dread the qualifying exams that I absolutely had to pass before I could continue to pursue my degree. These exams covered the huge area of knowledge that I had been exposed to (and should have learned) over several years of intensive study. But I was very concerned about my ability to pass them and become “qualified”.

So, I developed a plan. I distilled the recommended books down to more and more condensed study sheets, and worked as many potential test problems as I could. I set aside the two weeks before the week of the tests to study full-time (off of work, but not any kind of vacation), and had planned a day and a half of comprehensive review before each of the three tests that would occur during my week in the valley of the shadow of death. Finally (with one main hiccup in the middle that I have described elsewhere), it was over, and the agonized waiting for the results began.

My advisor, Dr. Mason, was a kindly man who was very good to me, finally announced that the results were in and called me into his office. I was rather petrified, but prayerfully hopeful. Dr. Mason greeted me with a nice smile, and told me that I had passed and that I was qualified to continue to work on my degree. I was naturally curious, and asked him what my score was. He hesitated, and then must said simply, “You passed.” I may not have aced the test, but I was smart enough to let this go.

I returned to my little laboratory very excited, but wondering a bit about whether I had actually passed, or had been treated as though I had passed. I imagined that perhaps I had just missed the mark and needed the advocacy of Dr. Mason to carry me over the hump. I could him saying, “He really tries hard and would be a good contributor to the field of physics. We should let him continue on.”

I found that I didn’t really care much about the score; I had put so much work into studying (perhaps not necessarily learning) that I was grateful to have passed (or be accounted as passed) in any way that I could. I may not have passed with flying colors (perhaps static black and white would be a better description), but I was past that gate and could move on to the other significant challenges that still remained.

I see a parallel here, of course, to that of God and His Grace. We are accounted as righteous<sup>1</sup>, even though we are sinners and have missed the mark. We haven’t even come close to the mark. But we have an advocate<sup>2</sup> because God loves us, and we return our love to Him, He will “qualify” us to service in His physical and spiritual Kingdom. The score doesn’t matter – being with God does<sup>3</sup>.

We are not applying for a position in heaven in the same way that we apply for a job here on earth. And though God accepts us to the job without qualifications, He will not stand for us not doing our duty<sup>4</sup>. We must always work as though we are working for God and are trying to please Him<sup>5</sup>. And because He blesses us with His love and Fatherly relationship, we truly won’t care what our score is.

1. Romans 4:3, 4:6

2. 1 John 2:1b - But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.
3. Psalm 84:10 - Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.
4. Luke 17:10
5. Colossians 3:22-24 – esp. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters...

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