

# Weighing In as Worthy

Picture an old fashioned balance. On one of its trays, you might place a 100 gram weight and on the other, perhaps, a chunk of cheese. When the weight of the cheese is exactly 100 grams, the balance will steady and voila, there you have it – worthy cheese.

Now, you can do the same for any item to get say worthy chips or worthy salsa or worthy salami, etc.

That's the meaning of the Greek word 'axios' in the New Testament – "having the weight of another thing of like value". However, in our examples above you may have noticed that we're not quite there because although the weights are the same, the value of the items and the balance weight is not. And actually, that is the fundamental point – for anything to have worth implies that there is a corresponding value system for it.

Money is a value system; the various penal codes are types of value systems; your grades in high school represent a value system. There are many value systems and the worth or worthiness of something is only meaningful in the context of its own system of value. For instance, if you weighed out on our balance 100 grams of gold, you probably wouldn't want to trade it for the 100 gram balance weight!

A man walked over to the perfume counter and told the clerk he'd like a bottle of Chanel #5 for his wife for their anniversary. "A little surprise, eh?" smiled the clerk. "You bet," answered the customer. "She's expecting a cruise." Clearly, this guy was operating in the wrong value system! He was in for his own little surprise I suspect.

Understanding the system of value that is applicable is critical to understanding any worth.

With this in mind, let's consider worthiness in the Bible:

Jesus said, "*He who loves father or mother more than Me is not **worthy** of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not **worthy** of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not **worthy** of Me.*" Mat 10:37, 38.

Conceptually, this verse presents an attribute of Christ on one side of the balance – His love; and your love is on the other side. In His first two statements, what He was saying was that to be worthy, your love for Him should be as His is for you.

Consider Calvary. Jesus said, "*Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.*" This is why He followed up His first two statements above with the one about taking up your cross and following Him. This is how a 'worthy' love for Him is manifested for it is how His own was manifested for you.

Paul wrote, "*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not **worthy** to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*" Rom 8:18 On one side sits the glory, the radiance you'll have in heaven; and on the other side are the sufferings of the present time. Paul said that they are not even in the same category – you can't even weigh them out together. You may think your sufferings here are quite heavy but the value systems are totally different. These present sufferings are temporal while the coming glory is forever.

In the epistles, we are admonished to have a walk, that is, to behave:

- ✓ Worthy of the calling with which you were called – Eph 4:1
- ✓ Worthy of the gospel of Christ – Phi 1:27
- ✓ Worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God – Col 1:10
- ✓ Worthy of God who calls you into His kingdom and glory – 2 Thes 2:12

Now, if you weren't intimidated by the fantastic weight on the other side of the balance before, you must be now! First, the 'worthy-balance' holds your calling, then the gospel, then the Lord Jesus and then Father God!! Wow! I'm such a lightweight, just dust on the scales and these are such heavyweights. What worthiness can be offered, what compares? Let's look again.

- ✓ Calling refers to your invitation by God to be His child. What compares? What is worthy? Your whole hearted embracing of it. By saying, "Yes!" with a truly thankful heart.
- ✓ Gospel of Christ – the good news of God's gift through Jesus to pay for all your sins. What compares? Your faith in it. Your absolute confidence that it's a finished work. No adding to it nor taking away from it.
- ✓ The Lord – here, we have to check out the rest of the description – "fully pleasing Him, being fruitful...increasing in the knowledge of God". Now, pleasing implies obedience and obedience leads to fruitfulness. Then you have knowledge. Actually, this knowledge is literally, the precise and correct knowledge of God coming by way of experiencing Him. It is the result of spending time with

Him. So what goes in the balance? What is worthy? Obedience and intimate fellowship.

- ✓ God – that is, "God who calls you." What compares? What is worthy? Father God called you in mercy and forgiveness. Can you call to others in the same way?

The worthiness of the believer is also linked to watchfulness. Jesus, speaking to the church of Sardis says in Revelation, "*Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.*"

This group of people have strayed from the foundational issues. They are not watching because they have ceased to believe in an imminent return of Christ. They may have turned to works to achieve right standing with God. Imperfect or incomplete works could also refer to a straying from faith in Christ as Savior for Jesus said, "*This is the **work** of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.*" (John 6:29)

The Bible says that we as believers are robed in righteousness – Christ's righteousness. In speaking to Sardis, Jesus continued, "You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are **worthy**." (Rev 3:4) Defiled garments are stained or polluted garments – not by sinful deeds as some commentators attest for Christ paid the price for all our sins -- but rather

by a departure from faith in Christ. Not Christ as a great man or even as a martyr but Christ the Risen Lamb of God who laid down His life for the sins of the world, Christ the only begotten Son of God. In addition, Jesus told His disciples concerning the last days tribulation events – *“Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted **worthy** to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”* (Luke 21:36) Thus, worthiness on the part of the believers is here a matter of holding on to faith in Jesus and as a consequence, watching for His return (and staying in prayer!).

Finally, concerning believers we have a verse that pertains to your election by God. Paul wrote, *“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted **worthy** of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer;”* (2 Thes 1:3-5) Here, we have a translation issue that needs to be addressed in order for this to be understood. The aorist tense is used in the Greek where we read “that you may be counted worthy...” and though there is no direct translation for it into English, the most common and correct practice is simply to use the past tense. I suggest therefore that the proper translation should read, “that you *were* counted worthy...” In this manner, it is clear that Paul was

saying that he was thankful to God because the believers were demonstrating patience and faith in the midst of their trials showing that God made the right choice in the first place in picking them for His kingdom.

But worthiness is really not about us is it? Worthiness is ultimately about our Lord. As we’ve seen in the verses above, any worthiness on our part is not truly the result of our own works or natural goodness but rather the work of God. Oh, we would like to think that just a little of that worthiness is because of us – something we did to merit the lofty standing of “Worthy”. But even your faith, your response to God, your patience in tribulation, your mercy and forgiveness, your obedience and fellowship – all of it, is first a work of God in your heart. And it all points back to Jesus.

You see, the universal acclamation in heaven is about Jesus Christ -- *And they sang a new song, saying: “You are **worthy** to take the scroll, and to open its seals; For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,... **Worthy** is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!”* (Rev 5:9,12)

Everyone in heaven recognizes that Christ alone was and is and ever will be worthy of the scroll. As we’ve said before, this scroll is the documented indebtedness of all mankind because of sin. Imagine in that balance one side weighed down with every sin ever committed from the smallest to the most heinous – every thought, word or action contrary to the perfect heart of God, all the way from Adam up to what

you did just a moment ago and on into forever. That indebtedness made us the slaves of sin and death. What could possibly weigh out on the other side of the balance? – no son of Adam.

Enter the sinless Son of God who came to earth the son of man, who though He knew no sin, became sin for us. He took upon Himself the weight of all our sins. The balance, if you would, steadied. As a consequence, the complete reward of God is His – power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory and blessing! He alone is worthy of it.

As we said in the beginning, worth or worthiness only has meaning within the context of its value system. The worthiness of the believer which is nested in and derived from the worthiness of Christ has the kingdom of God as its value system. It is completely contrary to the world’s myriad systems of values. The world doesn’t get it. Never has, never will. Yet, all the world’s value systems will vanish like vapor. God’s kingdom is eternal.

An elderly man stepped up to the pulpit to speak, "A father, his son, and a friend of his son were sailing off the Pacific Coast," he began, "when a fast approaching storm blocked any attempt to get back to shore. The waves were so high, that even though the father was an experienced sailor, he could not keep the boat upright, and the three were swept into the ocean."

The old man hesitated for a moment, making eye contact with two young men who were looking somewhat interested in his story.

He continued, "Grabbing a rescue line, the father had to make the most excruciating decision of his life....to which boy he would throw the other

end of the line. He only had seconds to make the decision.

The father knew that his son was a Christian, and he also knew that his son’s friend was not. The agony of his decision could not be matched by the torrent of waves. As the father yelled out, 'I love you, son!' he threw the line to his son’s friend. By the time he pulled the friend back to the capsized boat, his son had disappeared beyond the raging swells into the black of night. His body was never recovered."

"The father," he continued, "knew his son would step into eternity with Jesus, and he could not bear the thought of his son’s friend stepping into an eternity without Jesus. Therefore, he sacrificed his son. How great is the love of God that He should do the same for us."

With that, the old man turned and sat back down in his chair as silence filled the room.

Within minutes after the service ended, the two young men were at the old man’s side. "That was a nice story," politely started one of them, "but I don’t think it was very realistic for a father to give up his son’s life in hopes that the other boy would become a Christian."

"Well, you’ve got a point there," the old man replied, glancing down at his worn Bible. A big smile broadened his narrow face, and he once again looked up at the boys and said, "It sure isn’t very realistic, is it? But I’m standing here today to tell you that THAT story gives me a glimpse of what it must have been like for God to give up His Son for me."

"You see...I was the son’s friend."

And if you’re a Christian, you are too. **Worthy** is the Lamb of God!!!