



# Links Players

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## A Qualifier For The Called

*Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. (Proverbs 16:18, NIV)*

Playing in the literal and figurative heat of a Texas Senior Amateur qualifier at Willow Brook in Tyler, my final six holes were a wild ride.

After bogeying 13 and 14, I stood on the tee of the par-3 15th at 5-over. After drawing a nice 7-iron to five feet and making the putt, I thought I could get it back to 3-over with a birdie on the par-5 16th. What I should have been thinking about was today's verse.

A nice drive followed by a hybrid left me with 111 yards to a middle pin, a position we golfers like to call the 'go zone.'

Fortunately, my less-than-center-of-the-club-face approach came up short of the hazard, allowing me to cozy up a 50-yard recovery shot to two feet to save par. Or so I thought. You see, in sanctioned events, you actually have to make the putt, which I did not, back to 5-over.

On the par-3 17th I dumped one in the bunker, left one in the bunker, and wanted to go hide in a bunker after slinking off the green with a double bogey. 7-over.

Convinced I was now out of contention, I strode to the 18th tee, freed from the self-induced pressure. After a good drive and approach, I drained a 15-footer for a seemingly inconsequential birdie.

Little did I know it would be enough to get me into a 5-for-3 playoff, which I survived on my fourth playing of the 18th hole. Despite not having a '4' on my scorecard, I walked away with an invitation to compete against the state's best senior amateurs in late September.

If you've read any of my past devotions, you've probably realized I see facets of our faith walk in every round of golf, so let me highlight three from this 21-hole walk in the park.

First off, there were no pars coming down the stretch: bogey, bogey, birdie, bogey, double, birdie. Our life in Christ can follow a similar bumpy path. When we fail, we need to remember that we are forgiven, and when we do good, we must not get full of ourselves, "for we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10).

Secondly, despite my mistakes, I was given another chance in the playoffs. Isn't that what our Lord does for us? "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (John 3:16-17).

Lastly, I'm grateful that I'm still valued whether I play well or not and that my salvation is not tied to performance. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

"Therefore, as it is written: 'Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord'" (1 Corinthians 1:31).

**Prayer: Lord, thank you for the gift of salvation. Help us remember that it is indeed a gift and not a result of anything we've done except accept that gift.**

—

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