

WORKERS TOGETHER

"We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain" (II Corinthians 6:1).

Truth has a divine and a human side. The things that hurt are the extremes which make truth onesided. The divine and human sides of salvation and service can be blessed if recognized and obeyed, but they can be hurtful if they are confused and distorted.

The sovereignty of God in salvation is a gracious truth, but it does not deny the responsibility of man in salvation. God must do the saving, but man must accept the saving. God can not save a man who will not be saved. God must inspire the work of a saved man, but the saved man must accept the energizing God gives. God will not work through an unyielded man. So for salvation and for service the grace of God is needed, but for both salvation and service grace can be in vain.

I. An Appeal From God.

Here is an appeal from God: "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you."

The scripture of which the text's appeal is a conclusion is an important part of the letter of Paul to the Corinthians in which the writer presents "the ministry of reconciliation" which God has given to believers. That ministry makes us "ambassadors for Christ" -- speaking on Christ's behalf, speaking "in Christ's stead."

Workers together with God have the text's appeal from God. Ambassadors for Christ have this appeal from God. Therefore, it is an authorized, authoritative appeal. It is God's appeal to every Christian.

II. An Appeal From God's Man.

"We, then, as workers together with him, beseech you."

Here is Christian cooperation at work -- working together with God and working together with fellow Christians -- working together in response to an appeal from God, to an appeal from God's man.

The appeal of this text is God's appeal made through God's man.

What is this appeal? That "you receive not the grace of God in vain."

III. An Appeal For Grace.

1. The grace of God.

As Paul used this expression, "the grace of God," it implies two things which are connected as root and fruit -- the active love of God, in exercise towards us sinful creatures, and the gifts with which that love comes fully charged to men.

"The grace of God" was a big thing with Paul. Hear him as he declares, "By the grace of God I am what I am" (I Corinthians 15:10). This is not the statement of an unsaved man trusting in natural might. The natural man boasts that he is what he is by his own might, and he always comes to grief. The saved man is what he is by the grace of God.

Grace transformed Paul from a lost sinner into a child of God. Grace also transformed him from a servant of sin into a saint of God, from a persecutor of Christians into an apostle of Christ, and from a busy person into a fruitful Christian. Grace also sustained Paul throughout his Christian life. It was the grace of God that gave Paul victory over all his difficulties and problems. The grace of God made out of Paul a successful worker for Christ. Grace also enabled Paul to face death courageously and victoriously, saying, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand."

How great is the grace of God in all that it is, in all that it gives, and in all that it does! Mightier than the might of earth's greatest is the might of God's grace. More tender than the tenderness of a mother's love is the tenderness of God's grace. Only heaven itself and the eternity ahead will reveal the wonders of the grace of God, the grace that works for lost men and works in saved men.

2. The grace of God accepted.

"The grace of God" accepted was a glad thought to Paul. Hear him as he declares in I Corinthians 15:10, "His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain."

Paul had accepted the grace of God for salvation and for service. It had worked in his salvation to show what God could do for a lost sinner, even the chief of sinners. It had worked in his service to show what God could do through a saved man. Hear his words in I Corinthians 15:10, "I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

3. The grace of God not accepted.

"We beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."

The grace of God, the love, the gifts of the love, may all be put away by our unfaithfulness, by our non-receptivity, by our misuse, and by our negligence. It is an awful and a solemn power that every poor speck of humanity has to lift itself up in God's face, and say, in answer to all His pleadings, "I will not." The door opens from within. Not to accept is to reject; not to yield is to rebel. You have only to do nothing to reject His grace. That is the height of folly and guilt.

IV. Grace In Vain.

It is an awful thing for a sinner to receive the grace of God in vain. We would call a man a fool who refuses a great gift of land or money. What about the man who refuses the greater gift of God's grace? We think strange of a man who refuses the gift of a devoted woman's love. What about the man who refuses the greater gift of God's love?

It is likewise an awful thing for a saved man to receive the grace of God in vain. This expression, "in vain," is equivalent to the phrase "to no purpose."

The grace of God has a mighty purpose, the purpose of God, for His glory and for our good. What a tragedy when we receive it to no purpose!

When we consider what the grace of God can do, the glorious salvation it offers, the ministry of reconciliation it gives, the evangelistic task it presents, the strengthening and confirming of churches its effects, the happiness it opens for time and eternity, what an awful tragedy for any man to make it of no purpose, to receive it in vain.

How long since you were saved? Has that saving grace been permitted to do more or has it been received in vain?

It is not for any man to say whether any professing Christian is really saved, but it is for every man to see whether a professing Christian is receiving God's grace to purpose or to no purpose. It is not for any man to judge another's salvation, but it is for any man to know for himself the assurance of salvation and the activity of service in admitting the grace of God for its blessed purpose in his life.

Paul had a right to plead for grace to be accepted because he had accepted it and it had done so much for him and through him.

What has the grace of God done for you? Has it been accepted for salvation? Has it been accepted for more than salvation? Or, has it been received in vain, to no purpose? Why did God save you? The grace of God is for the purpose of God. Is that purpose being realized in you?

V. Workers Together.

The text appeals to us to be workers together: "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."

When we as individual Christians let God's grace have its purpose in us we will be happier Christians.

When we as a church seek and serve the purpose of God's grace for us we will be more useful and a more blessed church.

Let us listen to Paul's appeal, which is the appeal of God, and obey it.

God has been so good to save us. He has been good to make us His partners, and to permit us to work with Him. He did not save us to put us on a shelf as trophies of His power to save. He saved us to make us workers with Him as partners of His grace.

Here is a high privilege that ought to be a holy pleasure, and a possessed power that will help to show the world His power through us.

God is not seen visibly, but His power can be seen in and through us as workers together with Him and with one another.

In his book, "The Hope of The Gospel," J. D. Jones said, "Ask the people of Buffalo, that great town twenty miles away, what Niagara is to them? And they will answer you -- power. It is Niagara that runs their cars; it is Niagara that drives their machinery; it is Niagara that lights their streets. Niagara chained, harnessed, put to use, is doing the work of Buffalo And grace is a perfect Niagara of power!"

God's grace did so much for Paul and through him. He let grace have its purpose. God's grace can do so much for us and through us. Let us not receive it in vain or to no purpose, but let us yield ourselves to it for its purpose to us and through us. Let us be loyal workers together with Him.