

## Workers Together With God

*“We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain,”* 2 Cor. 6:1.

Contextually, this verse follows what Paul had to say about himself and the other apostles in 2 Cor. 5:12-21. Specifically, he stated that they had been given “*the ministry of reconciliation,*” 2 Cor. 5:18; they had been given “*the word of reconciliation,*” 2 Cor. 5:19, and they were “*ambassadors for Christ,*” and as such they implored the people “*on Christ’s behalf*” to be “*reconciled to God,*” 2 Cor. 5:20. Then in 2 Cor. 5:21 the apostle introduced the basis upon which reconciliation “*to God*” is possible; namely that “*He (God) made Him (Christ) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*” In stating that Jesus was “*made...to be sin for us,*” the apostle was not teaching that Jesus was a sinner; far from it! Elsewhere we read that Jesus “*was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin,*” Heb. 4:15. Moreover, the apostle Peter said that Jesus “*committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth,*” I Peter 2:22. For that matter, Jesus Himself boldly asked the Pharisees, saying, “*which of you convicts Me of sin,*” John 8:46.

Looking more closely at 2 Cor. 5:21, we note that “*He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us...*” That fact that Jesus “*knew no sin*” proves that Jesus was not a sinner! So in what sense did He (God) make Jesus “*to be sin for us?*” In the sense that Jesus became our sin offering! In fact, Isaiah prophetically had much to say about the sacrificial death of Jesus (Isaiah 53:4-8), and then stated in Isa. 53:10, “*Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him, He has put Him to grief, when you make His soul an offering for sin,*” Did you note those words — “*an offering for sin?*” Indeed, Jesus was made “*an offering for sin!*” With this in mind, we note Heb. 2:17 wherein we read that Jesus is “*a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.*” cf. I John 2:2; 4:10. Hence, because of the great sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, we, through obedience unto His gospel which was made possible by His death, burial, and resurrection (I Cor. 15:1-4), we can thereby “*become the righteous of God in Him,*” 2 Cor. 5:21. Worded differently, those who heed “*the word of reconciliation*” (i.e., the gospel) (2 Cor. 5:19) proclaimed by the apostles, the Lord’s chosen “*ambassadors*” (2 Cor. 5:20), are thereby “*reconciled to God,*” all of which was made possible by reason of the fact that in the great love and infinite wisdom of God Jesus became our sin offering. As John the Baptist proclaimed, Jesus is “*the lamb* (i.e., the sacrificial lamb, bw) *of God who takes away the sin of the world,*” John 1:29.

Returning now to our opening text (finally!), we note that Paul said “*we then as workers together with Him, also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain,*” 2 Cor.6:10. “*Then*” in this verse (taken from *de kai*, Gk), takes on the meaning of “*therefore.*” Jesus, by “*the grace of God,*” tasted “*death for everyone,*” Heb. 2:9. “*The grace of God*” (2 Cor. 6:1) was **therefore** evidenced in the death of Jesus, and it is made applicable through “*the word of reconciliation*” (2 Cor. 5:19), which is the same as “*the gospel of the grace of God*” (Acts 20:24), which, when obeyed “*from the heart,*” results in those who formerly were “*slaves of sin*” becoming “*slaves of righteousness,*” Rom.

6:17-18. The saints at Corinth had obeyed the gospel (I Cor. 15:1-4); therefore they became the recipients of God's amazing grace. With that in mind, the apostle Paul addressed these brethren, saying, "we *then as workers together with him, also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain,*" 2 Cor. 6:1. Contrary to the thinking of modern Calvinistic theologians, the apostle Paul strongly believed that it is possible for a child of God to fall from grace! In fact, writing to the saints at Galatia, this same apostle said "*you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace,*" Gal. 5:4! Clearly, any person who obeys the gospel is thereby saved from his past sins (Acts 2:28; Rom. 1:16). However, if he ceases to "*hold fast that word*" (the gospel) which formerly had been "*preached to*" him (I Cor. 15:2), then that person has received "*the grace of God in vain*" (2 Cor. 6:1, having thus "*fallen from grace.*" This, my friend, is a mistake you must avoid at all costs!

Having enlarged upon the contextual background of our opening text, we now return to the title of this article — "**Workers Together With God,**" a title based upon the actual wording in 2 Cor. 6:1. The apostles, the Lord's chosen "*ambassadors,*" 2 Cor. 5:20, were "*workers together with God.*" But in a general sense, it is the divine intent that **all** Christian should be "*workers together with God.*" That being the case, we shall now examine each word in that phrase.

"**Workers.**" In the physical realm, it is an absolute necessity that there we be workers. In fact, the Bible plainly says that "*If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat,*" 2 Thess. 3:10. In the parable of the two sons, each of the sons was told to "*go work today in my vineyard,*" and the one son who actually did the will of his father (who represents God in this parable) was the son who went and **worked** in his father's vineyard (Matt. 21:28-32). When the Lord returns to judge the world, He "*will reward each according to His works*" (Matt. 16:27). The Bible clearly states that "*faith without works is dead*" (Jas. 2:20). The saints at Corinth were assured that one's "*labor is not in vain in the Lord*" (I Cor. 15:58). Indeed, true Christians are workers — not shirkers!

"**Together.**" Genuine Christians in a local church are not only "*workers;*" they are "*workers together!*" Worded differently, they are "*members of one another*" (Rom. 12:5), suggesting the unity and fellowship which must exist for the Lord's work to go forward. The first converts in this the gospel age "*continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers*" (Acts 2:42); hence, not surprisingly, we note in the very next verse that "*all who believed were together, and had all things in common*" (Acts 2:43). Yes, they were "*workers,*" and they were "*workers together!*" The work of the church is not a one-member task; it is an every member responsibility! No one is exempt from the responsibility of doing the very best that he (or she) can do. No greater compliment could be paid to any person than that which the Lord paid to Mary when He said "*she has done what she could*" (Mark 14:8; cf., John 12:1-8. Time could be well spent in looking at the closing verses of Paul's epistle to the saints at Rome, wherein he urged the brethren to "*Greet,*" and then he listed a host of saints (both men and women) whom they were to "*Greet*" (Rom. 16:1-15). What did they have in common? They were Christians — active Christians who, like Jesus, were endeavoring to be about their "*Father's business*" (cf. Luke 2:49).

"**With God.**" God works! Jesus said "*My Father has been working until now, and I have been working*" (John 5:17). And we must "*work the works of God*" (John 6:28). Faithful Christians enjoy a divine partnership; their "*fellowship is with the Father*" (I John 1:3). In fact, if we are faithful Christians, then we are "*fellow workers with God*" (I Cor. 3:9). Worded differently, we are "*workers together with God*" (2 Cor. 6:1). With this in mind, Paul said "***I*** *planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase*" (I Cor. 6). This language infers the

interdependence that exists. **We** depend on God; **God** depends on **us**! We sometimes wonder “why is the church not growing faster?” But we fail to take into consideration that **God** gives “the increase” when **we** “plant” and “water” (I Cor. 3:6). The word of God is powerful (Heb. 4:12); it is spiritual “seed” (Luke 8:12), but we, as Christians, must be seed sowers! Seed left “in the barn” (Hag. 2:19), potentially, is very powerful, but it must be taken from “the barn” and planted in the soil if it is to bear fruit. Too many of us, figuratively speaking, have left the spiritual “seed” (God’s word) in “the barn,” while overlooking the fact that the Scriptures demand that we share the truths we “have heard” with others, with the intent that they carry the torch further, namely to “faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2).

What greater compliment could be given to God’s children than to say they are “workers together with God?” Yes, as Christians, we must be “workers;” we must be “workers together;” and we must be “workers together with God” in this amazing partnership wherein we **work**; we work **together**, we work together **with God**, and **God** is working through us! As Christians, we must do more than merely “meet and greet;” we must take to heart the words of I Cor. 15:58: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable always abounding in the **work** of the Lord, knowing that your **labor** is not in vain in the Lord.” —Bobby Witherington

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