

## Working together with Him

In 2 Corinthians 6:1 the apostle Paul says, **“We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.”** The Greek work translated “workers together” implies ‘to cooperate’, ‘assist’, ‘support’, ‘collaborate’ or ‘facilitate’.” There is a practical harmony, synergism and balance between the parties involved. There isn't any disunity, discord or incompatibility. It is exactly the way Jesus worked together with His Father!

We have the Spirit of Unity and togetherness living in us, the blessed Holy Spirit, who helps us to keep in harmony and in perfect balance with the Father. He is here to glorify Jesus through the work that we undertake together. However, we must first learn to work together and walk together with each other. We are workers **together** with God, but we are also God's fellow workers.

Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 3 verses 5 to 11... *“After all, who is Apollos? Who is Paul? We are only God's servants through whom you believed the Good News. Each of us did the work the Lord gave us. I planted the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God who made it grow. It's not important who does the planting, or who does the watering. What's important is that God makes the seed grow. The one who plants and the one who waters work together with the same purpose. And both will be rewarded for their own hard work. For **we are God's co-workers**. And you are God's field. You are God's building. Because of God's grace to me, I have laid the foundation like an expert builder. Now others are building on it. But whoever is building on this foundation must be very careful. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one we already have – Jesus Christ.”*

Apollos and Paul were servants through whom the Corinthians had come to believe in the Lord Jesus. They were simply God's agents and not the heads of rival schools. How unwise then of the Corinthians to raise servants to the rank of master. Imagine a household divided over mere servants! And remember, the servant is limited to what he can do. Paul himself could plant and Apollos could water, but only God could give the increase. Relatively speaking, the planter and the waterer are not that important. They have not the power in themselves to bring forth life. Why then should there be any envy or rivalry among the workers? Each should do the work that has been allotted to him, and rejoice in the increase.

Notice, he who plants and he who waters are one in the sense that they both have the same objective and aim. There should be no jealousy between them. And as far as service is concerned, they are on exactly the same level. In a coming day, each one will receive his own reward according to his own labour of love.

Remember also, that you too are God's field. He is doing a work in you and He needs your co-operation, your support and collaboration. God wants you to facilitate Him! Verse 9 declares that God is the One to whom all are responsible. All servants are fellow workers, labouring together in God's harvest field, or, to change the picture, working together on the same building. The second metaphor also shows the relative insignificance of religious leaders, but stresses their responsibilities. Ministers are like building contractors with restricted permits to build only on the prescribed foundation. As a minister of the Gospel you can only build on the original floor plan! And Paul cautions, **“But let each one take heed how he builds on it!”** Be very careful how you build!

Only one foundation is required for any building and once its laid it never needs to be repeated. In this instance, the foundation was Jesus Christ, His person and Work. You cannot substitute Jesus for self and still expect God to bless you with increase. Because, if you are a co-worker with Christ, then you must learn to work in harmony and in unity with His other co-workers. As you **cooperate** with Christ you must also cooperate with His chosen workers (helpers). As you **collaborate** with Christ you must also be in collaboration with those that are building His Kingdom. As you **support** Christ, you must also support those He has placed around you. Facilitate Jesus and you are obligated to facilitate His people.

In Philippians 2:19-30 we find three men who **worked together** to the glory of God. These are men who were taking seriously Jesus' model and were trying to live that out in their own lives. And it had brought them to that particular place in life. They not the sort of men you would expect to see together. They are not the same ages. Paul is middle aged, Timothy is quite young, Epaphroditus is somewhere in between. They are not from the same city. Paul is from Tarsus. Timothy is from Listra. Epaphroditus is from Philippi. They're not even from the same ethnicity. Paul is a Jew. Timothy is half Jewish and half Greek and Epaphroditus comes from an entirely non-Jewish background. What unites them is their commitment to Jesus Christ and specifically their **commitment to serving Him** in this world. That is what has brought them together and brought them to that place. And that is something that we need to remember as well – that this is what should bring us together. It's not our backgrounds, it's not how similar we are, it's our **commitment to Christ** that unites us, and what especially brings us closer together is our commitment to serve him.

In particular in this passage, you see that Paul and Timothy have a special relationship. Timothy comes from a family where his mother and his grandmother had been God-fearing Jews and had introduced him to the scriptures from his earliest life, and then his grandmother and mother became believers in Jesus Christ, perhaps during one of the times that Paul was preaching in Listra. Timothy probably became a believer the same way! Once when Paul is going through Listra (Acts 16), Paul notices Timothy, and as we find out from other verses in scripture, the Holy Spirit sets Timothy apart for special ministry. So from that time on Timothy and Paul are often together going to different cities to do God's work. And indeed later in his life, Paul entrusts some of the most complicated and heart wrenching situations to Timothy for him to sort out in his place.

They had a very special relationship. Paul even says, ***"but you know that Timothy has proved himself, as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel."*** As son with his father! The first thing we notice is the distance between them, the age distance. It's a father son type relationship, but you also get to see the closeness because it's a family relationship. That is how close Paul feels to Timothy. But note, when someone in that time (in Middle Eastern culture) would've mentioned a phrase like this, it would have been phrased differently. Probably, *"because as a son with his father he has served me well."* That is the normal way a sentence like that would have been delivered. As a son serving the father well, because that was the obligation of the son - to honour the parents, to stay within the leadership sphere of the parent, to work for the parent's good and welfare. And particularly as the parent got older, to honour that parent.

It's a thing that we see in cultures all around the world, but that is not what Paul says. What Paul says is *"as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel."* In fact the term that Paul uses here is implying that Timothy has served as a slave with him. It's a strong emphasis. They are co-slaves in Christ! And so, Paul's conception of himself, and what he delights in (as he looks at Timothy's life), is that they are both slaves together of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now Paul makes it real clear what he values in Timothy as a co-worker. Verses 20 and 21. ***"I have no one else like him who takes a genuine interest in your welfare, for everyone looks out for his own interest, not those of Jesus Christ."*** Timothy takes a genuine interest in their welfare. He doesn't look out for his own interest, but looks out for the interest of Jesus Christ. This is really one thing, it's not two separate things. Paul paints a picture here of the kind of **servant** he wants to be, and rejoices that Timothy is – someone who can put aside their own agendas and desire to put God's priority first. And that is, a sincere desire to seek the best interest and welfare of the people around them. Now that is exactly what Jesus did! That's the model we have because Jesus, in His desire to honour the father, poured Himself out to serve other people, even undeserving people.

Therefore, put aside your own self-concerns. Desire to put the things of Christ first and express that by seeking the interests and the good of those people God has placed around you. This is what it means to be "Christ like" – to be **working together with Him!**