

2 Corinthians 6:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

Analysis

We then, as workers together with him (συνεργοῦντες, synergountes, 'working together')—Paul identifies himself and his fellow apostles as synergoi, co-laborers with God in the gospel mission. This participial phrase emphasizes divine-human cooperation in ministry, where God's sovereign action does not eliminate human agency but enlists it.

Receive not the grace of God in vain (εἰς κενὸν, eis kenon, 'into emptiness')—The verb dechomai ('receive') in the aorist infinitive suggests a definitive reception that produces no fruit. Paul warns against treating grace as a dead orthodoxy rather than a transformative power. To receive grace 'in vain' is to hear the gospel without genuine repentance, to claim justification without sanctification, to profess faith without obedience.

This verse connects directly to 5:20's appeal to 'be reconciled to God,' serving as both transition and application. Paul's apostolic ministry is not merely proclamation but urgent entreaty (parakaleo, 'beseech') that the Corinthians' initial response to the gospel would bear lasting fruit in holiness.

Historical Context

Paul wrote 2 Corinthians around AD 55-56 from Macedonia, addressing ongoing tensions with the Corinthian church. The church had received Paul's gospel but struggled with false apostles and worldly living. Chapter 6 continues Paul's

defense of his apostolic ministry (chapters 1-7) and his appeal for the Corinthians to live consistently with their profession of faith.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. In what ways might you be receiving God's grace 'in vain'—professing faith without corresponding transformation?
2. How does viewing yourself as God's 'co-worker' change your understanding of your role in ministry and witness?
3. What evidence in your life demonstrates that you have received God's grace with fruitfulness rather than emptiness?

Interlinear Text

Συνεργοῦντες	δὲ	καὶ	παρακαλοῦμεν	μὴ	εἰς	κενὸν
as workers together	then	you also	We	not	in	vain
G4903	G1161	G2532	G3870	G3361	G1519	G2756
τὴν	χάριν	τοῦ	θεοῦ	δέξασθαι	ὑμᾶς·	
G3588	the grace	G3588	of God	receive	that ye	
	G5485		G2316	G1209	G5209	

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 12:15 (Grace): Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

1 Corinthians 3:9 (References God): For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

1 Peter 4:10 (Grace): As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Galatians 2:21 (Grace): I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

Hebrews 12:25 (Parallel theme): See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven:

Romans 12:1 (References God): I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Acts 14:3 (Grace): Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

Galatians 3:4 (Parallel theme): Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.

Matthew 23:37 (Parallel theme): O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

Titus 2:11 (Grace): For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,