

"But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent." Revelation 2:4-5

"The love you had at first." - Revelation 2:4

"In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that **God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.**" 1 John 4:9-10

"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. **We love because he first loved us.**" 1 John 4:18-19

"And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So **we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us.** God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him." 1 John 4:14-16

"For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but **God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**" Romans 5:7-8

When we love someone, we live for them and no longer for ourselves. As our love for them grows, our desire to please them grows. God is unique from all other creatures in that He has nothing to gain from us. He would be just fine without us. People are needy and selfish so our love is always tainted with motives for getting something in return from the person we love. God's love for us is pure, unselfish, never lacking or failing in anyway. Because God loves us, He receives pleasure when we receive the love that He is giving us.

"For **the love of Christ controls us**, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and **he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.**" 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

What is pleasing to the Lord?

When we trust Him by receiving all that He has to give us.

"Fear not, little flock, for **it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.**" Luke 12:32

What does it mean to receive the kingdom from the Father?

"Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who **does the will of my Father who is in heaven.**" Matthew 7:21

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for **it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.**" Philippians 2:12-13

"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on... But **seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness**, and all these things will be added to you." Matthew 6:25,33

"And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. **He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son**, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Colossians 1:9-14

"The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, **provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him...** And we know that **for those who love God all things work together for good**, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined **to be conformed to the image of his Son.**" Romans 8:16-17,28-29

In short, when we receive what God is giving, we are entrusting ourselves to the One that the Father has placed as King over His kingdom. Thus, our lives in Him do not consist of trying to earn anything. Nor is God out to use us to achieve some other thing. His calling to us is based solely and purely on His love. Love can only be received:

- From (by the power of the Holy Spirit) the Father through Jesus Christ [See John 6:44]
- Through (by the power of the Holy Spirit) obedience to Jesus Christ [See John 14:10-21]

When we live to please people, we usually end up getting abused and taken advantage of. We become a tool to serve that person's agenda. Again, God is unique or holy from all others in that when we live to please Him, we are receiving His goodness because that is exactly what pleases Him - to give Himself to us.

Now may the God of peace... **equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight**, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. Hebrews 13:20-21

The work that God calls us to is centered upon obeying all that Jesus commands us to do. God gives us faith so that we can 'take up our cross daily and follow Jesus' and do so trusting that God has called us to this because and ONLY because God is good.

“Repent, and do the works you did at first.” - Revelation 2:5

God is only interested in work that He finds pleasing. Our work is not pleasing to Him and benefits Him in no way. Likewise, our work does not benefit us either. Only the work of God will withstand His own judgment and scrutiny.

“We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.” Isaiah 64:6

What is the work ‘done at first’? It is God’s own work performed in our hearts through God’s own miraculous gift of grace.

“I have this against you, that **you have abandoned the love you had at first**. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.” Revelation 2:4-6

We usually think that if we are ‘working’ for someone we ought to be paid for this work. And if we are not getting paid for our work that we are doing this person a favor because we are removing a burden from them. In other words, we are either doing something for this person that they can not do for themselves or we might simply be helping them get the job done sooner by providing an extra set of hands. It is easy to bring this same mentality into our understanding of God and the work that He calls each of us to. But God’s work and how we are called into it is vastly different.

To start, we need to look at the work that God is actually doing.

What is the end result that God is seeking to achieve in His creation? For that, let’s take a look at Ephesians 1:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, **to unite all things in him**, things in heaven and things on earth.”

Ephesians 1:3-10

What God has already accomplished on our behalf:

- 🕒 Every blessing that God has given is in His Son, Jesus
- 🕒 He chose us, In Jesus, to be holy and blameless by His blood
- 🕒 He predestined us for adoption through His Son, Jesus
- 🕒 He has redeemed us out of darkness and into His kingdom through the blood of His Son, Jesus
- 🕒 He has chosen His Son, Jesus to carry out all of His purposes

What God is currently doing in our midst:

- 🕒 He is letting us know what He is doing through His Son, Jesus
- 🕒 He is uniting all things in His Son, Jesus which is His plan for the fullness of time.

Only God can accomplish these things. No one else can accomplish these things. I cannot get myself adopted unto the Father. I cannot redeem myself from my own sin, the penalty for which is eternal death. I cannot get myself united in Jesus.

The Father’s Work:

- 🕒 *“This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” John 6:29*
- 🕒 *“This is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” John 6:40*

The Father’s will is that we would believe in His Son because only in His Son is His blessing, adoption and redemption. And it is in Jesus that all things will be united into for all eternity. Apart from belief in Jesus, we will remain in darkness. All works done outside of faith in Jesus are works of darkness performed in darkness. They profit nothing because all of God’s purposes are in Jesus. Until we are in Jesus, we are cut off from God and all that He is doing.

What does it mean to be ‘united to Jesus’?

“All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Matthew 11:27-30

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." John 15:1-11

If we are disinterested in the work of God, perhaps it is because we view it as a burden. Essentially, we might believe that works of darkness are more beneficial than the work that God is doing. If this is the case, let us see that God's work that He calls us into is His grace.

If we are interested in the work of God, let us see that the only work that matters is the work that comes directly from abiding in Jesus.

Jesus does not desire us to create our own brand of unity or community. Rather he prays that we would be brought into the unity that already exists due to the nature of the relationship between He and the Father.

"that they may all be one, **just as** you, Father, are in me, and I in you, **that they also may be in us**" John 17:21

Jesus desires us to be one so that the world may know 1, that He was sent by the Father and 2, that the Father loves us as he loves His Son.

"so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me." John 17:23

According to God's Word then, the goal of Christians being together is not to discover how to enrich one another's lives but rather to receive what God is giving us in Jesus Christ whereby the world comes to know that The Father sent Jesus and loves us as He loves His Son.

Unity, fellowship, or community is a by-product that happens when Jesus gives us His glory that was given to him by the Father. It is not a commodity that we are to go take for ourselves according to our own desires.

Jesus, praying to the Father:

"I ask that they may all be one, **just as** you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may **be in us, so that** the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even **as** we are one, **I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one**, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me." John 17:23

Therefore, our attention must not be on the pursuit of 'community' or 'unity', but on Jesus and surrendering our lives to Him so that he might have His way with us.

And what is the glory that the Father gave to His Son that He in turn is giving us?

Jesus, praying to the Father:

"I glorified you on earth, having **accomplished the work that you gave me to do.**" John 17:4

Jesus glorified the Father through His obedience which culminated on a cross of suffering and death.

We know that our works cannot save us for eternity. There is nothing that we can do to escape death and enter into life. Eternal life in the presence of God is a gift that can only be granted by the Father through the blood of His Son, Jesus. Similarly, our works cannot save others or benefit them in any way whatsoever. Yet God calls us to work - not for the sake of earning something, nor because he needs a favor; but because it is His good pleasure to lavish His grace upon us by allowing us to participate in the work of His kingdom (uniting all things in His Son, Jesus). By participating in God's work (obeying His Son, Jesus), we bear witness to the goodness and sufficiency of God to save us and work on our behalf 'to the praise of His glorious grace' (See Ephesians 1 again).

"Abide in my love. **If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love**, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, **that my joy may be in you**, and that your joy may be full." John 15:9-11

"And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says I know him but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, **in him truly the love of God is perfected**. By this we may be sure that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked." 1 John 2:3-6

We do the work of God (abide in Jesus by faith - obeying His commands) when God shows us that this is the highest good that He offers this side of eternity. Calling us into obedience to Jesus and enabling us to do just this is God's love 'perfected in us'.

“For **this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments**. And his commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? 1 John 5:3-5

Religion is either done in the authority of people or the authority of Satan. To be joined to Christ is to be in *His authority*. Religion is done by way of the resources and strength of people or of Satan. When we are joined to Christ, we receive *His resources and His strength*. In religion, people set the agenda and implement that agenda in ways that seem fit to them. In Christ, *He sets the agenda and implements that agenda in the way that He sees fit*. In religion, people determine the greater good through democracy and processes of trial and error. The Father declares that His Son, Jesus is the Righteous One and is pleasing in His sight. There just is flat out nothing good and lasting apart from Him.

Doing what Jesus did (such as meeting the felt needs of others) is not necessarily the same as being joined to Him. Living a ‘good’ and respectable life is not what it means to be joined to Christ. Until we receive the life that God gives through faith in Jesus Christ, we are completely dead. Our sinfulness condemns us before God to an eternal death and separation from Him. Our ‘good’ works, which might have the appearance of ‘good’, are actually dead and fruitless since the only work that is pleasing to the Father is the work of His own hand. Our works will never please him or even be acceptable to Him.

How God’s work is different from all other works.

No wage is received. The work that God calls us to is a gift of His grace just as eternal life with Him is a gift of His grace. If we desire a wage for our work, the only wage possible is eternal death (Romans 3:23)

- 🕒 Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will **give to you**. For on him God the Father has set his seal. John 6:27
- 🕒 And I am sure of this, that **he** who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. Philippians 1:6
- 🕒 **According to the grace of God given to me**, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. 1 Corinthians 3:10
- 🕒 Of this gospel I was made a minister **according to the gift of God's grace**, which was given me **by the working of his power**. To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, **this grace was given**, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. Ephesians 3:7-8

We have zero hire-ability. God ‘hires’ us according to His grace. We have no skills or experience that are of value to Him.

- 🕒 For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But **God chose what is foolish** in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; **God chose what is low and despised in the world**, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, **so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus**, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption. Therefore, as it is written, **Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord**. 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

We have no job security. We are replaceable because we did not deserve the job, we are unqualified, completely disposable and incapable of doing anything we are told. Instead, we enter God’s kingdom and participate in it only because God’s grace is at work in us.

- 🕒 For I will not venture to speak of anything except what **Christ has accomplished through me** to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed. Romans 15:18
- 🕒 So **neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything**, but only God who gives the growth. 1 Corinthians 3:7
- 🕒 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. 1 Corinthians 15:10
- 🕒 work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for **it is God who works in you**, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Philippians 2:12-13
- 🕒 For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, Let light shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that **the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us**. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you. 2 Corinthians 4:5-12
- 🕒 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for **apart from me you can do nothing**. John 15:5