

Together- Let's Rest in His Work / Equipped to Serve – Bride of Christ Pray: Brandon/ Baptism/ Invite during Advent

*Amazing Race. Couple's race around the world and compete in ridiculous obstacles to win a million dollars. Lack of sleep. Annoying partners. Extreme exhaustion and the thought "I just have to be strong enough and smart enough to win the one thing that will fix my life...1,000,000 dollars. The most frustrating obstacles where you don't know what you are missing to allow you to move on to next obstacle. You have some local judge just smiling at you and saying no its not good enough. Then you have your partner who is just staring at you to the side saying "you can do it!" "I believe in you!" (if you are lucky) or they are yelling and pointing out how big of an idiot you are and that you will be the reason they don't win the million dollars. All the while – we question: Will I Ever Be Good Enough! Can I Do It?*

**This is one picture of what it can be like serving together - as the body of Christ.** It can be crazy, messy, thankless, exhausting, encouraging and sometimes full of discouragement and pain - where we feel like everything we do is wrong. On top of it all, we often forget or just don't realize that we have an enemy in Satan who is real. And He is continuously hurling accusations at us reminding us how ill equipped we really are and that we will never truly make a difference.

**I Corinthians 1:4 (ESV)** 4 I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, 5 that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— 6 even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you **The only way we will be sustained and thrive in our call to serve our King and His kingdom is – is by resting in the Grace of God.** Last week God showed us that the purpose of our corporate worship is to help one another rest deeper in the finished work of Christ – increasing our affection & devotion to God. Today, we will see that it is from resting in His grace that we can be sustained & thrive in our call to serve our King & His Kingdom. There is 1 big truth God has for us today. We will state it in the negative and positive as our two points.

**01. Serving FOR grace and its rest – leads to strife and unrest.**

**02. Serving FROM grace and its rest – we thrive in our service together.**

*Do you believe you serve FOR grace and its rest or From Grace and its rest? Maybe you're not sure. Here is one really good way to get at the heart of it. Have you ever had this conversation with yourself. 1) "I can't believe I am or we are going through this. I have given so much, I have served, sacrificed and now this – it just doesn't seem right. Why would God allow this after all I have done?" If you have every found yourself disappointed or hurt because you believe you should have earned a pass from this crisis or suffering – you may be serving FOR grace. 2) If you have every said to yourself, "Man I don't want to serve there but I can't say no to her." For whatever reason – if you are a person who struggles to say no to serving – you may be serving FOR grace.*

**01. Serving FOR grace and its rest – leads to strife and unrest.**

**Serving FOR grace and its rest is when we serve believing our work should earn us something**

**with God or others.** This is not how God calls us to serve because in Christ and his service we already have all of God's grace and the rest it gives our souls. It is ours. We don't serve FOR this grace or rest. But when we do ...

1) We grow weary.

2) We get hopeless. *We begin to believe the brokenness of this world is bigger than Jesus.*

*Fran and I love Brandon McCain. Favorite student as a Youth Minister. Hit college and he lost his way – family stuff, personal stuff – but bottom line – he just said no to God. I'm going to do this my way. Every time I saw him making bad decisions it was like I had failed. Everything I had invested in him – seemed like it was for no purpose. This caused strife in our soul and made me stay up a lot at night. Unrest lived in my body and soul. At the core I believed Brandon's change and life in Christ was up to how well I invested in Him. I thought I earned his life.*

3) We call people to a gospel that says – you earn God's grace – and its rest. *You will call people to the good news that you believe. You may say – God saves and his grace is free. But if you functionally serve to earn God's rest – you will call people to this gospel in your words and actions. They will learn from you - parent, student worker, servant in your neighborhood, shed worker. They will watch and learn from your stress & joy.*

4) We begin to resent those we serve. *Setting up for 14 years was fun and a chore. When I was serving from grace and God's rest - it was one of my favorite things to do because I got to be with other people and knew it was for a great purpose. However, when I was serving for rest, for the provision we get in grace - I just got annoyed and resented those who were not helping because they weren't working hard like me – they weren't earning their way.*

**Before we go any further I want to point out how God's grace is at work - even when we are trying to earn it or serving for it. What do I mean?**

God really builds up the Church at Corinth at the beginning of this letter. In ch 1, vv 5-9 he is encouraging, celebrating, rejoicing in their lives. Seems like they have it all right and should just keep going like they are.

But ... It doesn't take long to see the church isn't getting it right all the time. In the very next verse – 10 - God points out there are divisions in the church over which leader to follow. In this book he rebukes them for -

1. Divisions
  2. Sexual immorality *the unchurch don't engage in.*
  3. Fighting & suing one another. *Sounds tiring. Sounds exhausting being a part of this church.*
  4. Marital chaos – *treated covenant like a contract with a hired worker.*
  5. Using gifts without love!
  6. Jealousy over gifts and a tongues competitions in worship!
- God is telling us - "trying to serve apart from God's grace - trying to serve for God's grace - will lead to strife and unrest in us and the body."**

He understands the danger of serving together as the Church. *It cost Jesus his life, covered him in our guilt, shame, and sin, and divided and scattered his followers.* Yet, it was His serving, His work that gave us God's grace. Let's be clear what grace – God's grace is.

1 cor 1:4 / I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus. Grace is a gift – an undeserved gift that comes by someone else's work. In this case Jesus' work. God's gracious gift is - *His forgiveness, His presence, His joy, His acceptance and more - BECAUSE of Jesus' service – not ours.*

**Are you tired? I am.** *We planted The Summit 19 years ago. And in those 19 years of serving the King and His Kingdom – I have done a lot of things well and some not so well. In the last month – it seems as though my pile of wrongs have gone from a whisper to a yell – look at this mess! Look at your mistakes, your sin, your failures. These whispers and yells at their heart say – what you do earns my grace in this body and your soul. These whispers wreck my soul because part of me still believes: Rest – true rest comes from my work. And its not enough – I'll never be done and this kind of serving for God's grace and its rest – leaves me soul foul of strife and unrest.*

*Max Lucado, Grip of Grace - Sometime ago I read a story of a youngster who was shooting rocks with a slingshot. He could never hit his target. As he returned to Grandma's backyard, he spied her pet duck. On impulse he took aim and let fly. The stone hit, and the duck was dead. The boy panicked and hid the bird in the woodpile, only to look up and see his sister watching. After lunch that day, Grandma told Sally to help with the dishes. Sally responded, "Johnny told me he wanted to help in the kitchen today. Didn't you Johnny?" And she whispered to him, "Remember the duck!" So, Johnny did the dishes. What choice did he have? For the next several weeks he was at the sink often. Sometimes for his duty, sometimes for his sin. "Remember the duck," Sally'd whisper when he objected.*

*So weary of the chore, he decided that any punishment would be better than washing more dishes, so he confessed to killing the duck. "I know, Johnny," his grandma said, giving him a hug. "I was standing at the window and saw the whole thing. I already I forgave you. I was wondering how long you would let Sally make a slave out of you."*

*He'd been forgiven, but he thought he was guilty. Why? He had listened to the words of his accuser.*

*You have been accused too - of immorality, dishonesty, greed, anger, arrogance, and the list goes on. Every moment of your life, your accuser is filing charges against you. He has noticed every error and marked each slip. Neglect your priorities, and he will jot it down. Abandon your promises, and he will make a note. Try to forget your past; he'll remind you. Try to undo your mistakes; he will thwart you.*

**Serving FOR grace and its rest – leads to strife and unrest.** *It will beat us down and leave us full of the longing to find rest in any and every place but Jesus and His finished work. And our striving will never end.*

## 02. Serving FROM grace and its rest – we thrive in our service together.

**What does God's grace provide us in regards to being God's servant?** *How does it help us thrive together?*

4 I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, 5 that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— 6 even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you—

1) God transforms our thoughts and actions to live in rest and help point others to the rest there is in God's grace. Resting in His grace – His work, dependent on him – we are desperate for Him to change us. When we are depending on our work – we don't even think about this. *Over time (months or years) have you seen change in thoughts or actions. This is grace at work for the good of the kingdom. (My speech has changed – purity.)*

7 so that you are not lacking in any gift ...

2) God helps the body know and embrace the fullness of His gifts. *Not every person gets every gift, but together, we have every gift and everything we need in Christ. However, when we serve for God's grace and his*

rest – we start believing we are lacking because the enemy whispers these lies. We believe we are lacking because

**1) you are:** you don't have every gift & all power, **2) you don't believe what you have in Christ is enough.** You don't believe His power, His presence and His gifts for us – is enough. **From grace, God helps us believe!**

7 so that you are not lacking in any gift ... as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ,

**3) God moves us to believe He is at work – completing His work even when we cannot see it.**

**How many of us like to wait on anything?** *I was not patient during the crazy season in Brandon's life because I knew little of the rest I could have had in Christ. I just went crazy every time he left after he came over to our house talking of his crazy life.*

*Had an uncle that was a farmer. Spent some time with him one summer and watched how hard he worked and still had to wait with hope & patience that rain & sun would come and water the fields he had tilled and planted. He had to wait in hope that the right amounts of water and sun would come and cause growth and that bugs and disease would not kill. That few days I spent with him – killed me. That the work was incredibly hard was one thing – that the fruit of your work was out of your hands – hard to see - was incredibly difficult way to live.*

When we serve from God's grace – we like a farmer – live believing life as work under the soil of a person's heart – even when we can't see it. God moves this patience and hope into us – *if you are waiting only in his grace will your waiting turn to hope and belief not strife and unrest.*

8 who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**4) God fills us with a growing peace from Jesus' work -even in the midst of never ending whispers.**

*The duck story as told by Lucado ends this way: Our great accuser comes against us in God's court to condemn us. Every moment of your life, your accuser is filing charges against you. He has noticed every error and marked each slip. Neglect your priorities, and he will jot it down. Abandon your promises, and he will make a note. Try to forget your past; he'll remind you. Try to undo your mistakes; he will thwart you. He is "the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accused them day and night before our God" (Rev. 12:10). Can't you see him? Pacing back and forth before God's bench. Can't you hear him? Calling your name, listing your faults. He rails: "This one you call your child, God. He is not worthy. Greed lingers within. When he speaks, he thinks often of himself. He'll go days without an honest prayer. Why, even this morning he worshiped other things as he raised his voice to you. I accuse him of laziness, egotism, worry, distrust, worshiping other gods, prejudice, lust, envy . . ." As he speaks, you hang your head. You have no defense. His charges are fair. "I plead guilty, your honor," you mumble.*

*"The sentence?" Satan asks. "The wages of sin is death," explains the judge, "but in this case the death has already occurred. For this one died with Christ."* Colossians 2:13–15 (ESV) 13 And you, who were dead in your trespasses ..., God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, 14 by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. 15 He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

*Satan is suddenly silent and put to shame. You are suddenly jubilant. You realize that Satan cannot accuse you. No one can accuse you! Fingers may point & voices may demand, but the charges can never truly stick. No more dirty dishwater. No more penance. No more nagging sisters. You have stood before the judge and heard him declare, "Not guilty, forever." This growing peace begins with you believing this truth from God's words to us ...*

8 who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- **Not guilty - forever!** *Can you believe that today? In all our messed up motives for serving or just not serving at all we have been declared NOT GUILTY – as we faith Christ's life and death in our place.*

BUT there is more ...

9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord

- **Completely accepted by God – we are one with Jesus forever.**

This judge has done more than just declare us not guilty, he has completely accepted us into His family – bible calls its adoption. And in this adoption, we are united with Christ forever. We are His – forever.

**This means – we serve alongside Jesus** as he serves this world – drawing them to the rest in His grace. His work and His service is perfect. With him, in him – we can't mess it up. It may look rough ...

*A group of people went out to the city last week to serve another church TBOC. Cade and I never taped and bedded a dry wall – we did. And all our imperfections were smoothed over by Chris Carlson who is really good at this.*

Our Savior is a perfect servant – that brought us perfect peace, rest with God through His work.

He is still serving – perfectly and we get to go in that rest, that grace – as we go with him (in fellowship).

*Imagine serving **From** this position going forward. We can – together.*

*\* Imagine an Olympic gymnast performing – knowing their score will win. They would kill it.*

*\* Imagine competing on Amazing Race – knowing your effort would win. Freedom, fun, joy.*

*\* Imagine joining Christ – serving alongside Him – knowing His effort, His work has already won the day. That would allow you to serve, give, run – knowing all you do matters in Him and you can't mess it up. Will you grow physically tired serving with the King in his Kingdom. Yes – because serving is hard work. Working in this broken world with your Savior is messy, hard, crazy, and tiring yes. BUTTTTTT – not tiring because you wonder if you have done enough, or done it right. Tiring because you are human and we get tired. But serving from his grace – we are know the fullness of his rest that transforms us, let's us see all his gifts in the body, moves us to believe he is work even when we can't see it, and fills us with his peace – even amidst the never ending whispers.*

**Serving FROM grace and its rest – we thrive in our service together.**