

## AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST

### ***“We are ambassadors for Christ”***

2 Corinthians 5:20

While traveling in foreign countries I have had occasion to visit United States Embassies. On one occasion, while ministering in Bangladesh, my wife and I met the U.S. Ambassadors to the countries of Bangladesh and Nepal. We were at our Mission Station when the Ambassador to Bangladesh came to the hospital located there, and accompanying him was his wife, who was visiting him from Nepal, where she was the U.S. Ambassador to that country!

We had been forewarned that they were coming and all personnel set about to make sure that everything was spic and span. When the motorcade arrived, U.S. flags were flying on the limousines and we were excited to see Old Glory and to meet government representatives from our homeland.

The Apostle Paul identified himself as an ambassador. He asked the Christians in Ephesus to pray for him saying: “...that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak” (Ephesians 6:19, 20).

Every Christian has the great privilege of being an ambassador for Christ. This is the term that Paul employs in 2 Corinthians 5:20 to describe our privilege and responsibility in this world. There are two important factors that we must get settled before we can go on to understand our appointments as “ambassadors”:

- *The first matter concerns our citizenship.*  
“Our citizenship is in heaven” ( Philippians 3:20). We are citizens of the heavenly country although living temporarily as citizens of an earthly country. Matthew Henry said, “This world is our passage, not our portion.” Although temporarily citizens of earth, let us not forget that our permanent citizenship is out of this world!
- *The second matter concerns our residence.*  
We are the citizens of one country, Heaven, but we reside upon the earth. Peter refers to believers as follows: “I beg you, as those whom I love, to live in this world as strangers and “temporary residents” (1 Peter 2:11 Phillips). We are special representatives of the King of King’s, living in a foreign country – we are in the Foreign Service!

With these two factors, that of citizenship and residence settled, we are now prepared to consider the challenges which face us as heaven’s ambassadors upon earth.

## WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN AMBASSADOR?

What is a governmental ambassador? “An ambassador is a minister of the highest rank, employed by one prince or state at the court of another, to manage the concerns of his own prince or state, and representing the dignity and power of his sovereign.” – Webster

What is a Christian ambassador? A Christian ambassador is a messenger/representative of his Lord. He is sent to represent the King of Kings. He is sent to do what the Sovereign would Himself do if He were visibly present. The ambassador is sent to make known the will of the One Who sent him. He is on divine business.

The Christian ambassador does not go in his own name, or in the name of any church or in the name of any earthly power, but he goes in the name of Him who made Heaven and earth and who governs all things by the word of His power! An ambassador must never go beyond his commission. His power comes from his King—he has no power of his own.

### **WHO IS A CHRISTIAN AMBASSADOR?**

“Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ...” (2 Corinthians 5:20). Paul uses the word “we” more than a dozen times in 2 Corinthians 5 to identify believers in Jesus Christ and the word “us” over one-half dozen times. Christians are addressed throughout the chapter and therefore, are the subjects to whom the truth of ambassadorship is applied. “We”—“we” who are God’s people; “We” who are “in Christ” (v. 17); “we” who are “a new creation” (v. 17) All in the family of God are representatives of the Father of the family.

*What are qualifications to be Christ’s ambassador?*

1. One must be a citizen of heaven to represent Christ upon the earth: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (1 Corinthians 5:17).
2. One must acknowledge and act upon the appointment as Christ’s ambassador: “Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18).

*Where does Christ’s ambassador serve?*

Everywhere! Everywhere we presently are. Paul was an ambassador, even when he was in prison. He asked the Ephesian Christians to pray for him, “...that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak” (Ephesians 6:19, 20).

There is never a time or place when Christ’s ambassadors cease to be an ambassador! True, many of Christ’s ambassadors are bad examples of His ambassadors and bring reproach upon His holy name, but once having become an ambassador through the new birth, one is an ambassador until death!

### **WHY IS AN AMBASSADOR NEEDED?**

Throughout the history of the human race mankind has been at variance with God. There has been a conflict, a battle going on. This rebellious attitude and activity by humankind against God began in the Garden of Eden where a revolt against God took place by our ancient parents. Consequently, the Scriptures repeatedly picture us as enemies of God. An adversarial relationship exists. The following scriptures emphasize the sinner's estrangement from God:

Philippians 3:18, 19 - "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things."

Colossians 1:21 – "You, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled..."

Romans 5:10 – "If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

Romans 8:7 – "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God."

James 4:4 - Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

If there is a war between two countries, and the leaders of one country want to bring the conflict to an end, an emissary, an ambassador is sent to deliver the terms for the cessation of warfare and the grounds for peace.

In the loving heart of God, He desires man, the crown of His creation, to be reconciled to Him, that there be peace between the rebellious sinner and Himself. Proof of that is seen in the condescension of God in sending His one and only Son to be the reconciling agent, the Ultimate Ambassador, from the Throne Room in Heaven to His enemies upon the earth.

Romans 5:8-10 explains God's initiative as follows: "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

God took the initiative and came to the world of sinners to effect peace. Job said of God: "For He is not a man, as I am, that I may answer Him, and that we should go to court together. Nor is there any mediator between us, who may lay his hand on us both" (Job. 9:32, 33). However, Jesus came and, as the Ambassadorial/Mediator made a way for His enemies to come back to God. Through His sacrificial atonement (at-one-ment) Jesus Christ brought man and God together again. God has been reconciled and has demonstrated His love to the lost world.

## **WHAT DOES A CHRISTIAN AMBASSADOR DO?**

God's ambassadors are scattered all over the earth and their main purpose is to show and tell forth the Good News that God is the friend of sinners and, if sinners will repent of their rebellion and resistance and accept God's terms of peace, they can become God's friends.

An ambassador of Heaven seeks to persuade sinners to be reconciled to God. The Christian ambassador has a distinct ministry called "the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18). He announces, proclaims, and communicates the peace terms that God has dictated. We are the messengers of Christ Jesus bearing the Good News. He sends ambassadors and He commands those ambassadors to plead with men, to pray for them, to beseech them that they would be reconciled to God.

We are to proclaim, but we are to do far more—we are to beseech. We are to beseech men as though God did beseech them. Now, how does God beseech them? Read several of the Lord's pleadings in Isaiah—how imploring they are! He says:

"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me" (Isaiah 1:2).

"Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18).

Another of God's pleadings—"Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money; come you, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isaiah 55:1).

Our only responsibility is to deliver the message just as God gave it. We cannot and must not minimize the message, change the message or add to the message. We are not to negotiate any new terms, or change those which God has dictated. We are simply to declare, explain and urge, the terms on which God is willing to be reconciled.

God's ambassadors are not sent to do the work of reconciling, of making peace between man and God, but to deliver the message from God to the estranged sinner that the work has already been done. All we have to do is to communicate that which God Himself has written in His Word. We have to speak out God's message as the spokesmen of God!

"He bids us—each according to his opportunity, experience, knowledge, ability and grace—to go abroad among the sons of men and exercise "the ministry of reconciliation," to labor to bring men into harmony with God, that they may be willing to accept what God has done toward the making of an everlasting peace." – Charles H. Spurgeon

Uppermost in the minds of God's ambassadors is that we are here to bring others to know the love of God for them; we are here as witnesses who have already experienced reconciliation ourselves; we are here as heralds to proclaim the Good News of salvation; as lights to be a blessing in a dark world; as sowers to scatter the Good Seed of God's peace proclamation; we are here on business for our King!

## WHAT IS THE MESSAGE AN AMBASSADOR DELIVERS?

“Now all things are of God, who has *reconciled* us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of *reconciliation*, that is, that God was in Christ *reconciling* the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of *reconciliation*” (2 Corinthians 5:19, 20). In these verses the words “reconciled”, “reconciliation”, “reconciling” are used. We are told that we have “the ministry of reconciliation” (v. 18) and “the word of reconciliation” (v. 19).

What does “reconcile” mean? Webster’s New World College Dictionary defines “reconcile” as follows: “To settle a quarrel; to make friendly again; to bring into harmony.”

What is “the word of reconciliation”—the message that Christ’s ambassador delivers? It is this: God has “reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ” (verse 19). That is past tense—all has been done that God requires for peace to be made. Now it remains for sinners to accept God’s peace terms.

God was the Reconciler in Christ. Christ, the Substitute, was punished for our sins and those for whom Jesus died go free! The proclamation is that God is reconciled! Peace is made with God by Jesus Christ for sinners—full peace, without conditions.

When Jesus died and rose again, everything was done that was necessary in order that God might be able to forgive the sinner. Nothing can be added to Christ’s completed work, of which He said, “It is finished.”

The ambassador is sent, not from man to God, but from God to man, therefore, the matter of the ambassador’s message is altogether of God, for it is God who has “reconciled the world unto Himself through Jesus Christ.” Read the verse again—“All things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation.”

Paul says that God “Was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them” (verse 19). Read the last verse of the chapter and you will get the full explanation—“For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” God took our sin and placed it upon Jesus, our sin-bearer, and when He died His death paid for all our sins. All that the enemy sinners have to do is simply to accept God’s peace terms, that is, look to Christ and take Him to be their Substitute and Savior!

Because the eternity of sinners hinges upon what they do with the message of God’s ambassadors, we are told that we are to persuade, plead and even implore sinners to accept God’s terms for peace: “Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20). When we plead with sinners, our expectation of their being reconciled to God does not lie in our pleading, but in the work of the Holy Spirit. Christ has commanded us to spread the Gospel beginning right where we are in our own Jerusalem and then to all the world and we must be obedient.

Whoever trusts Jesus Christ is at once forgiven and accepted! The war is over and peace is proclaimed the moment that the soul repents of sin and believes in Jesus Christ. There cannot be a simpler, sweeter and more needed message than that!

## **WHAT IS IN THE FUTURE FOR AN AMBASSADOR?**

An ambassador is a steward. A steward is one to whom an assignment has been given to be administered for the one who gave it and for which the steward must give an account. The early Methodist leader, John Wesley, said, "When the Possessor of Heaven and earth brought you into being and placed you in this world, He placed you here not as owner but as a steward." Jesus told of a steward who failed to administer that which had been entrusted to him. The day came when his master said, "Give account of your stewardship" (Luke 16:2).

There is a coming day when all of God's ambassadors will be called to give an account of their stewardship—how they represented Him as His ambassadors. Paul warns us of that coming day: "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: 'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.' So then each of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:10-12).

He writes further on the subject to the Christians in Corinth: "Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:1-2). The ambassador will have to give an account of how he conducted his Master's business.

1 Corinthians 3:13-15 makes it clear that we will be rewarded for faithful service as an ambassador and if we have not rendered faithful service we will lose any rewards we may have received. This is what Paul wrote: "Each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."

The children of God are not always aware of an inescapable appointment that we have to appear before the Judge of the universe. Even though Paul reminds us of that coming court appearance, many live as though it will never happen. However, the Word of God is plain and personal as 2 Corinthians 5:10, 11 states: "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men."

Ambassadors of earthly governments are called to come before the head of their government, from time to time, to report on their conduct of the government's business in the country to which they have been sent. There is coming a time when we too, as ambassadors of the King of Kings, will be called to report. In view of our coming court appearance, will we be rebuffed or rewarded?

The Book of Proverbs reminds us that "A wicked messenger falls into trouble, but a faithful ambassador brings health" (Proverbs 13:17). Let us be faithful ambassadors of Jesus Christ!

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## Conclusion

God is willing to forgive the adversarial conflict; He does not want those who have sinned against Him to continue in their rebellion. He sent the Prince of Peace, the Lord Jesus Christ, to pay your sin-debt and He made peace through the blood of His cross. Will you accept what He proposes to you?

It is an unconditional peace which God makes with mankind! It is a Gospel which asks nothing of sinners, but gives them everything! The terms are simple and easy: "Believe, and live." The rebellious sinner should hear and heed the message of the Christian ambassador: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself", and with joy embrace the embrace-able Savior!

A song so often vocalized but seldom personalized states it like this:

"I am a stranger here, within a foreign land,  
My home is far away upon a golden strand;  
Ambassadorial am I of realms beyond the sky  
I'm here on business for my King."

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