

## Christ's Ambassadors

### 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Online Sermon:

[http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page\\_id=3567](http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567)

In Apostle Paul's time reconciliation or the removal of enmity between two aggrieved parties was sought using an ambassador.<sup>1</sup> A person was chosen for such a role in Roman society due to their high level of education, eloquent speaking, and their knowledge of the wishes and desires of the



leader of their nation.<sup>2</sup> The ambassador was “kept in the loop” of not only the politics of their own country but the list of reparations that might be offered to the foreign leader in times of conflict.

Sometimes the Ambassador was sent to live in a foreign country so that they might better understand their culture, economic, military, and political landscape to aid them in negotiations both at home and abroad. When disagreements broke out between two nations diplomatic envoys would be

sent between the “warring nations or communities in conflict” in hope that some kind of “common ground” could be found so that peace and reconciliation might occur.<sup>3</sup> However, in “ancient times usually the inferior nation would send an ambassador to seek reconciliation with the superior one, not the other way around.”<sup>4</sup> In most cases the ambassadors were highly respected and protected<sup>5</sup> which was often accomplished by being “friends of one’s friends and enemies of the enemies of the foreign nation.”<sup>6</sup> While to be an ambassador was the crowning achievement of one’s diplomatic career,<sup>7</sup> it was not a position without risks for if negotiations went sour then they could be executed to send a message to the other nation of their great displeasure! In today’s passage Paul masterfully uses the Greco-Roman ambassador to intimately describe the ministry of reconciliation God has given first to His Son Jesus and then to each born-again person.

## The Offense

Before we talk about the ministry of reconciliation lets first look at the offense that caused the war! From the moment God said, “let there be light” one can’t help but stand in awe of His creation. Looking at the beauty all around him King David said, “the heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands” (Psalms 19:1). The Bible states humans were made in the image, or likeness of our Creator (Genesis 1:26). God formed us from the dust of the ground and breathed

<sup>1</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 224.

<sup>2</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 224.

<sup>3</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 224.

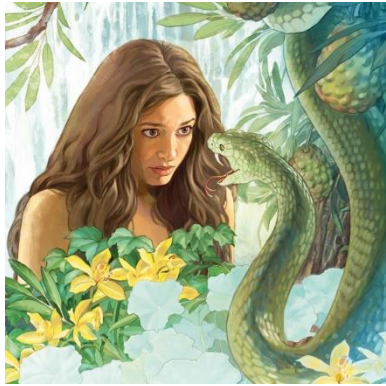
<sup>4</sup> George H. Guthrie, “2 Corinthians,” in *The Baker Illustrated Bible Background Commentary*, ed. J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2020), 1137.

<sup>5</sup> George H. Guthrie, “2 Corinthians,” in *The Baker Illustrated Bible Background Commentary*, ed. J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2020), 1137.

<sup>6</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, Second Edition. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2014), 508.

<sup>7</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 224–225.

life into our nostrils (Genesis 2:7), crowned us with honor and glory as those created a little lower than the angels (Psalms 8:5). God loved us so very much that He walked and talked with us in the Garden. He entered a covenant with us which



was “to be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth, and subdue it, and to not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 1:28-30, 2:15). Then Satan came along and exposed the very same pride by which he had fallen (Ezekiel 28:1-19) in us! When he asked Eve “did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the Garden” she lied by

saying that God told her they were not even to touch the tree (Genesis 3:2). Satan then told her that she would not die from eating the fruit of this tree but instead her eyes would be opened, and she would be like God, knowing both good and evil (Genesis 3:5). What Satan neglected to tell humanity was that we would not only prefer to do evil over good but would become enslaved by it (John 8:34). No longer would our thoughts, words and deeds be focused on walking and talking with God in the Garden of Eden but instead we would ignore the eternity God has placed in our hearts (Ecclesiastes 3:11) and forever wrestle with and be enslaved by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). We became gossips, slanderers, God-haters, arrogant and boastful (Romans 1:28). We invented ways of doing evil to the point that God regret creating humanity and had it not been for

Noah’s righteousness none of us would be here today (Genesis 6:5-8)!

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*Having rejected God’s right to rule over our hearts we freely broke His covenant and in doing so “earned” His righteous wrath and since there is no darkness in Him at all (1 John 1:5-7), we rightly received the wages of our sin, death (Romans 6:23), and eternal hell!*

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## God’s Ambassador Jesus

Being the inferior party who alone broke the covenant an ambassador should have been sent from humanity to our sovereign God to seek reconciliation. Due to our love and enslavement of evil we were not either willing<sup>8</sup> or able to send an ambassador for as Apostle Paul stated, “there is no one righteous not a single one; there is no one who seeks God” (Romans 3:10). Even if we were to present God an ambassador, he/she would be rejected because our filthy rags of “vain oblations” are “defiled, filthy, polluted, and wretched”<sup>9</sup> to a holy God who is sinless! God was the one who “took the initiative”<sup>10</sup> and sent His own ambassador, His Son Jesus, to provide how we might be reconciled unto our Creator. Imagine how difficult it must have been for Jesus to empty Himself of the status He had in heaven (Philippians 2:6-8) to be born and live amongst those who not only rejected but also crucified Him upon a tree! And yet God’s plan to offer His Son as an atonement was the only means by which sinful humanity, even

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<sup>8</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, “[God Beseeching Sinners by His Ministers.](#)” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 19 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 421.

<sup>9</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, “[God Beseeching Sinners by His Ministers.](#)” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 19 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 428.

<sup>10</sup> Lee Martin McDonald, “[2 Corinthians.](#)” in *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Acts–Philemon*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2004), 410.

though they be created in His image, could be reconciled until the One who was without spot or blemish! “On the cross, the perfect, He who knew no sin, Son of God became replacement sin. The Bible says, He became sin on our behalf. All the sins



of the world, on the cross was placed on Christ.”<sup>11</sup> “God is now free to face the sinner because the death of Christ satisfied His just, holy, demands.” The crucifixion of Christ not only satisfied God’s justice but also enabled humanity through faith in the atonement of His Son

to be part of His family as heirs. Christ died once and for everyone so that regardless of what nation one belongs too, class, genealogy, or economic status<sup>12</sup> one can be reconciled and receive every spiritual blessing in our Lord Jesus (Ephesians 1:3)!

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*Praise be that we go to heaven based on faith and not works (Ephesians 2:8-9)<sup>13</sup> for if that were true then all would perish, and none would get to see walk and talk in the garden with our Father ever again!*

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As it is we are credited as righteous<sup>14</sup> due to the atonement on the cross that we have received through grace and mercy!

<sup>11</sup> Tony Evans, [“Taking Your Ambassadorship Seriously.”](#) in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), 2 Co 5:17–21.

<sup>12</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, [“God Beseeching Sinners by His Ministers.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 19 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 427.

## Christ’s Ambassadors - A New Creation

While Christ alone is God’s means of reconciling sinful humanity unto Himself, Apostle Paul states Christ gave unto believers “the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18). While we cannot share in the praise meant for the “Lamb slain from the creation of the world” (Revelation 13:8), we are stilled called to be ambassadors of Christ to the world. Even though those who were created in the image of God and a little lower than the angels fell from grace and became enslaved to sin, Paul states that once born again the “old is gone and the new is here (5:17)!” Having been baptized into Christ’s death



we too are raised with Christ and through faith have been given a new life (Romans 6:1-4). God gave us a heart of flesh to replace the one of stone (Ezekiel 36:26) so that we might no longer be slaves to sin but righteousness

(Romans 6:15-18). With the Spirit of Truth living inside of us Peter says we participate in the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). Like many ambassadors of the Greco-Roman world, we too are called to live in a foreign land, i.e., on this earth, that is not our home (Hebrews 13:14-16) and let our light shine so that the people of this world might see our good deeds and glorify God the Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16). Though we sinned and fallen short of God’s glory through our faith in the atoning sacrifice of the Son “our guilt has disappeared, our burden

<sup>13</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, [“God Beseeching Sinners by His Ministers.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 19 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 425.

<sup>14</sup> Tony Evans, [“Taking Your Ambassadorship Seriously.”](#) in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), 2 Co 5:17–21.

rolled off our shoulders,”<sup>15</sup> and we have become true masterpieces of His grace. Unlike the ambassadors of ancient times, we were chosen not based on our natural abilities but purely due to God’s good pleasure and will. Having been “justified by grace through the redemption that is Jesus Christ”<sup>16</sup> we need not worry that we lack what we need to be good ambassadors for that which He asks He enables with the Spirit’s gifting and power (1 Corinthians 2:4-5). “God would have His ministers be like transparent glass, which lets the rays of the sun (Son) pass through unchanged.”<sup>17</sup>

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*As His hands and feet (Ephesians 2:10) let us strive to be holy as He is holy (1 Peter 1:16) so that His light might shine in and through our lives so that we might be a visible manifestation of His glory.*

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## Christ’s Ambassadors - How we See Others

To be good ambassadors in the eyes of Christ Paul states, upon conversion we are to “regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ this way, we do so no longer” (5:16). In an article in Forbes

<sup>15</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, “[God Beseeching Sinners by His Ministers.](#)” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 19 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 423.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Murray McCheyne et al., *A Treasury of Great Preaching: 5 Vol. Set* (WORDsearch, 2020).

<sup>17</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, “[God Beseeching Sinners by His Ministers.](#)” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 19 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 424.

<sup>18</sup> Taken from the following website: [You And Your Business Have 7 Seconds To Make A First Impression: Here's How To Succeed \(forbes.com\)](#)

magazine the author declares it takes a mere seven seconds to make a first impression of someone new you meet and less than a tenth of a second to start determining traits like trustworthiness!<sup>18</sup> Our “snap” assessment is based on what our



five senses pick up concerning their physical appearance, personality, and body language.<sup>19</sup> When Christ came incarnate and lived amongst humanity

many looked down upon the Him for He had “no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him” (Isaiah 53:2) and due to Him being a suffering servant rather than a conqueror of Rome! Because they focused on the externals,<sup>20</sup> the people of Jesus’ day missed seeing His majesty, power, and glorious and merciful kingdom plan to “give His life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). Paul tells us as Christ’s ambassadors we are not to see others from a physical but spiritual perspective!<sup>21</sup> After all, flesh and blood cannot enter the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 15:50), just our souls return to Him whom they came (Ecclesiastes 12:7)! To be good ambassadors and witness like Christ did we need to be like Him and despite how much persecution we face we are to still see the image of God within them and yearn for their salvation. To accomplish such a lofty goal, we must resist the urge to gravitate only to those

<sup>19</sup> Tony Evans, “[Taking Your Ambassadorship Seriously.](#)” in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), 2 Co 5:17–21.

<sup>20</sup> Tony Evans, “[Taking Your Ambassadorship Seriously.](#)” in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), 2 Co 5:17–21.

<sup>21</sup> Tony Evans, “[Taking Your Ambassadorship Seriously.](#)” in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), 2 Co 5:17–21.

who appeal to our physical senses!<sup>22</sup> Like Christ we are to be patient (2 Peter 3:9) with those who still see the cross as foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:18). Remember there was a time that we felt the same as the lost do and yet in grace and mercy God still sent someone as His hands and feet (Romans 10:4-15) to tell us the Good News!

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*While we are not to cast our pearls before swine (Matthew 7:6) may we never write any off as unredeemable until God says He has given them forever over to their reprobate minds (Romans 1:28)!*

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## Christ's Ambassadors - Passion

As ministers of reconciliation, we have a profound honor and responsibility to implore the lost to be reconciled unto God through faith in the atoning sacrifice of His Son Jesus! Those perishing in their sins need to know that when Christ spoke the words "it is finished" on the cross this means that "He put away everything that need separate a sinner and his/her God."<sup>23</sup> Tell the lost that the Father wishes none of them to perish for upon their conversion like the father of the prodigal son God will "run, fall on their neck, and kiss them."<sup>24</sup> Let them know that there will be great rejoicing in heaven when they get saved and they will feel unspeakable joy when Christ

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<sup>22</sup> Tony Evans, "[Taking Your Ambassadorship Seriously.](#)" in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), 2 Co 5:17–21.

<sup>23</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, "[God Beseeching Sinners by His Ministers.](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 19 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 431.

<sup>24</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, "[God Beseeching Sinners by His Ministers.](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 19 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 431.

<sup>25</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, "[God Beseeching Sinners by His Ministers.](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 19 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 429.

gathers them like chickens under His wings (Matthew 23:37)<sup>25</sup> to love, protect and feed them. Tell them that the thirst in their hearts was placed there by their Father and can only be quenched by Him by receiving salvation of which cost Christ His life but them nothing but mere acceptance through grace



and faith (55:1).<sup>26</sup> Lest they not know what is at stake in their decision to be born again tell them of the consequences of rejecting His gracious offer of being called out of the darkness into the light (1 Peter

2:9), eternal damnation in hell!<sup>27</sup> Implore the lost to be reconciled unto their Creator with passion for this glorious message is one of life or death! So, with more enthusiasm than one roots for one's favourite sports team shout from the mountaintops and in the valleys "My God saves." And while salvation does not depend on our pleading but through the power of the Holy Spirit to transform the souls of another,<sup>28</sup> may we fulfill our roles as ambassadors and plant the seeds of righteousness in those we meet for His honor, glory and in His name.

<sup>26</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, "[God Beseeching Sinners by His Ministers.](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 19 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 429.

<sup>27</sup> Tony Evans, "[Taking Your Ambassadorship Seriously.](#)" in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), 2 Co 5:17–21.

<sup>28</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, "[God Beseeching Sinners by His Ministers.](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 19 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 425.

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*Let me leave you with one final thought to ponder. “If you were to die tomorrow, how many would greet and hug you for having played a small part in their eternal destiny” and at the Judgement Seat of Christ will He utter to you the words “good and faithful servant” or say to you as My ambassador, sharing in the divine nature and spiritually gifted, you did little to save the very ones I died for!*

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