

*Ambassadors for Christ*  
*II Corinthians 5:18-21*

**INTRODUCTION**

Who are the ambassadors of Christ? This is a critical point in the interpretation of this passage. Many expositors interpret the 'we' to mean 'we Apostles'. They understand the Apostle to be setting forth the dignity and honor of his own position along with the other Apostles. Surely, we cannot debate their being such ambassadors for Christ. Others would include all official ministers of Jesus Christ. They would interpret it to mean those proclaimers of the Gospel that we would identify as pastors, evangelists and missionaries.

Could the Apostle be including all Christians? This is my conviction. It is obvious that the assertion that "we are ambassadors for Christ" is directly related to the giving of the ministry of reconciliation and the depositing of the word of reconciliation. Notice how it is set forth in the text. "And all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation." Surely there is nothing in the text to indicate that the second 'us' refers to only a limited number of those included in the first 'us'. The simplest explanation would be that those who are reconciled, have also received the 'ministry of reconciliation'. The same would also be true concerning the 'word of reconciliation'. How we interpret this has great importance. It is no small thing to be identified as an 'ambassador for Christ'. There is a heavy responsibility that goes along with the honor. In this case, the relationship that men are to have with God is related to the work of the Ambassador.

You are an ambassador for Jesus Christ. You have a work to do and a word to share. The urgency of the matters involved, demand that we give full attention to this matter.

**I. THE WORK OF THE AMBASSADOR**

The word used by the Apostle was borrowed from the political system of the Roman empire. The root of the word suggests the person would be a respected elder. He would be selected by his government for a special assignment to another government. Several things are suggested about our work by this figure.

The work of an ambassador is an honorable work. Ambassadors are usually people who have distinguished themselves in some manner. They go about their affairs with a certain proper dignity and honor. Of course, the greater the government they represent, the greater the honor there is in the position. Since we are the ambassadors of King Jesus, the King of the court of Heaven, we are ambassadors of heaven itself. Could there be a more honorable calling? Should we go about this assignment in a manner befitting the assignment?

There is an interesting contrast suggested in the text. As we relate to the Lord himself, we have been given the 'ministry' of reconciliation. The word ministry comes from the word for servant. As we relate to the Lord, we are just servants. All of the honor goes to Him. However, as we relate to the world, we go with an honor that goes with the position. Since we represent such a great and glorious King, we have a certain honor. We are His ambassadors.

The work of an ambassador is a representative work. This is the basic idea. We are His ambassadors because we officially represent Him to men. His interest has become our interest. This is His plan for the age in which we live. After He finished the work to make reconciliation possible on the Cross, he returned to Heaven. But, He appointed His people to be His representatives. They are responsible for confronting all men in His name and to make known to them His word. The Lord God has no other plan in this age for getting the word of reconciliation to the world that is at enmity with Him.

In this role, there can be a relative importance to this representative work. The work of our ambassador to Canada does not take on the importance of our ambassador to the Soviet Union. In our friendly relations with Canada, there will be very few major issues arise. Things are normally peaceful along our border. In the case of our relations with the Soviet Union, the welfare of the whole world is at stake. Our relations with the Soviet Union are dangerous and stormy. There is always the threat of open conflict and warfare. The role of this ambassador is of supreme importance. Only the most trusted and best trained are given this assignment. In our case, we have been sent to a party that is at war with God. We have been sent to represent Him to those whose attitude toward Him is antagonistic. Because of this, we will often become the object of their rejection and hostility. We may be inclined to take it personally, but it is really because we are His representatives. The issues we represent are serious. They are a matter of life or death, of heaven or hell, of salvation or damnation. There is an urgency in our work as His representatives

## ***II. THE WORD OF THE AMBASSADOR***

It is the reverence to the 'word of reconciliation' that leads to the assertion, "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ". There are certain things about the 'word' that are suggested in this text.

First, it is a given word. "And has committed to us the word of reconciliation." The ambassador never goes with a word of his own. He never speaks until his government speaks. If his government does not send him a word to share, he is silent. As the ambassadors of Jesus Christ, we share the Word he has given to us. We are not free to speculate or to come up with creative messages. We are limited to the word that is given to us by our heavenly King.

The language of Paul in this statement is helpful. The literal idea in the statement is that the Word is actually deposited in us. The sure implication is that we are not detached from this message we share. Indeed, the Gospel has been placed in us in such a way that we have become a part of the message.

What is this word of reconciliation? It is a truthful report about God's attitude and God's activity. It is a truthful report to the unsaved man that God loves him and that God desires peace with Him. We have been given the word that God does love sinners and that He is full of mercy for sinners. But it is also a report about what God has done to make reconciliation with His enemies possible. It is a truthful report about how God made His sinless Son to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. It is a factual report of the death of Christ upon the Cross for our sins, of the burial of Christ in the tomb, borrowed from Joseph and of the glorious resurrection of our Lord from the dead. It is factual report that as the living Christ, he is able to give to men righteousness as a gift and to effect a peaceful relationship between them and God regardless of their sins. This is the word that the Lord has given to His ambassadors.

Some want to complicate this message. They want to take up every objection and every question that unbelieving man may raise. However, the basic assignment given to the ambassador is to deliver the message his King has sent. In our case, God has not given us the answers to all of the questions that men may raise, but He has given us a message to deliver, even the word that can bring about reconciliation.

Second, it is an authoritative word. This is important. Since the ambassador speaks only the word he been given, all of the authority of his government is behind it. The world holds together because this is recognized as being so. When the ambassador of the United States delivers a message to Foreign Ministry of the Soviet Union declaring that our country is imposing a grain embargo against their country, they can be sure that this is not just the word of their country, they can be sure that this is not just the word of the ambassador. Would it not be a world of confusion if every government had to make sure that

the word delivered had the authority of the government he represents behind it. This is just assumed in the world of diplomacy.

This is a point Paul is making in our text. The world that needs reconciliation with God can know that the word the ambassador of Christ is speaking is authoritative. They can know that it is just as much the word of Jesus Christ as if Jesus Christ spoke it to them personally. Is this not an awesome thing? Just imagine with me for a moment. Whenever the humblest child of God goes out to confront an unsaved man with the word of Christ, something awesome is happening. Whenever he declares in his own humble way, "God loves you. God desires peace with you. God has sent me to tell you that Christ died for your sins. God wants you to know that if you will repent of your sins and will receive Christ as your Lord, that you can be at peace with Him. I beg you to do this for His sake." The words that he shares have all the authority of heaven behind them. They are as much the message of Christ to that man as if Christ himself had delivered them personally. This is His plan of delivery for this day.

The only limit here would be the integrity and the power of the government involved. The word of the ambassador would have just as much integrity as his government. The word of the ambassador would have just as much integrity as his government and just as much power behind. Governments have been known to promise things through their ambassadors that they later were unwilling to deliver, or in some cases, unable to deliver. The Ambassador of Christ now has such problems. He moves with the confidence that His message has come from Truth Himself. He represents the God who cannot lie. He also knows what his King has promised, he is fully able to deliver. He has all power in heaven and in earth. Delivery will be no problem.

In our case, the word is an urgent word. The Apostle points to this when he writes, "as though God were pleading by us; we implore you in Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God". 'Implore' means to beg, to plead. It surely has in it a note of great urgency. There are matters involved in the delivery of this word that have implications for all eternity. It is a most urgent word that we deliver. Nothing in the life of man is more important than the reconciliation of man to God.

***Conclusion:***

What kind of ambassador are you? Have you been trustworthy and faithful to your assignment? Are you doing the work and delivering the word God has given? The sobering impression that I have is that most of us have room for much improvement. We have not taken our assignment that seriously. We have left the delivery of the message to others.