

Ambassadors or Diplomats?

II Corinthians 5:18-20 – March 14, 2010

Philippians 3:20

- **Ambassadors: Why _____?**
II Corinthians 5:18

It was God in His _____ to send men as ambassadors for Christ.

- **Ambassadors: Our _____**

1st - They are involved in _____ business.

2nd - God has chosen to put _____ upon His representatives.

3rd - Our business is _____ business.

- **Ambassadors: Our _____**
II Corinthians 5:18-19

- **Ambassadors: Our _____**
II Corinthians 5:20

God _____ when His ambassadors _____.

II Thessalonians 1:6-10

The reality of ambassadorship

1st – It is not _____.
Ezekiel 18:32 Isaiah 1:18

2nd – It is to be motivated by _____ of God.
Ezekiel 3:17-19

3rd – It is to be motivated by a _____ for Christ.

II Corinthians 5:14

- **Ambassadors: Our Needed _____**
Psalm 73:25-26

Effective Ambassadors:

- Keep their heavenly _____ in focus!
Colossians 3:1-3
- Understand their heavenly _____.
Matthew 28:18

Wrap Up:

My NEXT STEP for Today:

- Pray for a different missionary each day.
(Missionary list at information center)
- Hand out some “Million Dollar” tracts.
(Get a packet by the exit doors)
- Do something special for a neighbor.
- Ask anyone, “*How good do you think we need to be to go to heaven?*”

Ambassadors or Diplomats?

II Corinthians 5:18-20 – Missions Week #2 – March 14, 2010

Intro: U.S. Citizenship is a precious thing to most of us. As I traveled to Abu Dhabi a few weeks ago ... I held my U.S. Passport with some pride. A U.S. Passport is special. It was even reported to us by our new friends in Abu Dhabi – that Ex-pats, foreigners working in the United Arab Emirates ... are paid according to their passport. Having a U.S. Passport means you will make a good salary. Those with a passport like from Sri Lanka are paid the lowest. Discrimination exists based on one's Passport – interesting.

I'm sure every world leader would like the citizens of their nation to take pride in their citizenship and passport. But believers from every nation have a citizenship that is to be treasured more their country. It is our citizenship in heaven.

Philippians 3:20

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;

Since our citizenship is in heaven – our citizenship here is secondary. Heavenly citizenship means our Sovereign Ruler is the Lord Jesus Christ – the king of glory. And since our citizenship is in heaven ... we are on this earth as aliens. And as aliens – we are here as representatives of our homeland – heaven! We are heavenly ambassadors.

Key point this morning

Understanding why we were left on this planet after salvation ... and where our citizenship truly is will determine what kind of heart we have for missions.

Two important reasons God left us on this planet after salvation

1st – That we might live to **GLORIFY** Him

2nd – That we might live to properly **REPRESENT** Him to a lost world

II Corinthians 5:18-20

Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation,

5:19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

5:20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

Transition: Last week and this week our focus is on missions. But missions will not be a priority to us if we do not understand our citizenship and our responsibility to our Sovereign King.

The big question:

What is an ambassador?

How big of a priority is it to be ambassadors for Christ?

Is this duty greater than any other duties of the believer?

Webster's Dictionary says:

An ambassador is a minister of the highest rank accredited to a foreign government or sovereign as the official representative of his own government or sovereign

And this statement is so excellent it almost seems like Webster is inspired of God. What an amazing thing – simple people, ordinary people are called to represent the Creator of the universe ... the sustainer of all things ... the all-knowing and almighty God.

➤ **Ambassadors: Why US?**

A question we might ask ...

Wouldn't it have been better if God had angels represent Him and share the gospel?
Clearly the answer is – God didn't want this!

But the Bible is clear ...

II Corinthians 5:18

Now all these things are from God, who ... gave us the ministry of reconciliation

Why not angels?

- ✓ Perhaps because when a sinful man has himself been forgiven – he will readily associate with the unsaved man
- ✓ Perhaps because sinner saved by grace will talk tenderly to someone still in their sin
- ✓ Perhaps a sinner saved by grace will talk with great sympathy for the person who is lost
- ✓ When we share the gospel ... we are quickly taken back to our own rebellion ... and the grace we received ... and with joy can share what Christ has done for us
- ✓ And a sinner saved by grace more readily will share with gentleness the good news of reconciliation with Christ

But an angel could give the facts but has never experienced grace.
An angel could condemn weak and sinful people ... but never share in that weakness.

When we, who once were enemies to God, tell you, who are still at enmity against Him, about our own rebellion, and how it was ended by divine love ... you will be graciously drawn to the Savior by the example of another who was in a similar case to your own.

Here's a good thing to realize

It was God in His **KINDNESS** to send men as ambassadors for Christ.

The greatest ambassador was the Lord Jesus Christ. He not only proclaimed peace He made peace. In contrast, we do not *make* peace we *proclaim* peace.

Transition: There is something about being an ambassador that should be acknowledged ...

➤ **Ambassadors: Our PRIVILEGE**

Things to understand about ambassadors.

1st - They are involved in **ROYAL** business.

- We are doing the business for the King of kings, and the Lord of lords.
- We do not come in our own name. We come in the name of our king.

When I share the gospel with people ... I do not consider that I am not representing Riverpark Bible Church. I do not have on my mind the desire to have a sinner saved so they can come to our church. I do not represent the church with the gospel. I represent as an ambassador ... the Lord Jesus Christ.

2nd - God has chosen to put **HONOR** upon His representatives

If the president of the United States called us to serve as an ambassador to a nation large or small ... we would consider it our highest honor. But to have this calling from our Almighty God is an honor beyond words!

3rd - Our business is **IMPORTANT** business.

And we'll never be ambassadors that please our Sovereign until we know and can proclaim the gospel!

The problem

We are prone to not think seriously of our duties to our Sovereign King. And we grieve Him daily when we do this. So this is a good wake-up call for the church. We are involved in important business as ambassadors.

Transition: It is a privilege to be an ambassador ... but unless we're aware of our duties ... we'll be miserable ambassadors. So there is something an ambassador for Christ should understand.

➤ **Ambassadors: Our MESSAGE**

II Corinthians 5:18-19

Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation,

5:19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Our commission – the ministry of reconciliation

Our duty – to put it into words! We need to speak to people about their need for reconciliation with God. Man cannot reconcile himself to God ... but God can and has! We need to tell people this!

It is accurate to say to a sinner –

- ✓ *God is angry with you!*
- ✓ *But though He's angry with you He's ready and willing to reconcile.*
- ✓ *God has made a way to for people He is angry with – to become His friend.*
- ✓ *It was a costly way ... it required His death ... but it is free to the sinner*
- ✓ *God could not do this by a legal decree ... for that would violate His justice.*

- ✓ *Punishment had to occur ... and Christ took the punishment we deserved so that the honor of God's character and justice be maintained*
- ✓ *In light of what Christ did ... be reconciled to God by believing on Him!*

It becomes quite clear that missions work is not reserved for missionaries. It is the duty of every believer. If you know the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior raise your hand. If your hand is up – you are an ambassador for Christ.

Transition: Let's go a little deeper in this passage and observe ...

➤ **Ambassadors: Our APPEAL**

II Corinthians 5:20

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

God has appointed us to appeal to others on behalf of our Sovereign king. The appeal is for reconciliation

“making an appeal through us”

A powerful truth ... when we share the gospel ... something incredible is happening. God **SPEAKS** when His ambassadors **SPEAK**

When we share the gospel ... God is speaking through us!
We represent Him even when we speak poorly or inaccurately ... but when we share the gospel accurately ... God is speaking through us and we're representing Him to others.

Here's an amazing reality

Since Adam sinned in the garden of Eden – man has been at war with God. There has been no treaty between God and man by nature. But though man will not make terms of peace with God ... God has made terms of peace with man.

Since Christians are the ambassadors of Christ ... we are ambassadors of those who are in rebellion against God. But as ambassadors ... we are not sent to declare war but peace.

The believers peace declaration:

5:20 – *“be reconciled to God”* is an offer of peace. God wants to have peace with sinners through the work of His Son.

Watch this

An ambassador is sent on friendly terms not terms of war. God is still on friendly terms with sinners ... He's still on friendly terms with this world – though this world is in rebellion against Him. God has sent ambassadors to a foreign land – which is where we live ... to seek peace. God has not declared war on the world ... at the cross Christ declared peace. But some day He will declare war on those who did not accept His offer of peace.

Question

Is being an ambassador limited to select believers? No. It is an appointment, a position for every single believer. I am an ambassador. You are an ambassador. The appointment came at the moment of salvation.

Notice the unique manner of our appeal to sinners ...

II Corinthians 5:20

“... we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

“*beg*” = deomai, to want, entreat ... used 6 times in the New Testament.

- ✓ A demon possessed man to Jesus said ... “*I beg You, do not torment me*” (Luke 8:28)
- ✓ A father whose son was demon possessed said to Jesus ... *Teacher, I beg You to look at my son, for he is my only boy* (Luke 9:38)
- ✓ In Acts 21 ... Paul said to the Roman commander who had just arrested him ... *I beg you, allow me to speak to the people.*”
- ✓ Paul begged the people to listen to him in Acts 26:3

Transition: That we are ambassadors is one thing. Valuing it is something else. The value it and appreciate it is something else.

Preach the gospel here!

II Corinthians 5:21

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

The honor of a country is in its ambassador’s hands.

The honor of Christ is at stake
The furtherance of the gospel is at stake
The salvation of souls is at stake

The reality of ambassadorship

1st – It is not **EASY**

Ambassadors of nations are readily accepted and honored ... but not Christ’s ambassadors. Ambassadors are usually not involved in begging with men to accept their king’s requests. Ambassadors stand on their dignity. But ambassadors for Christ do not try to appear as people of great dignity ... for we are to be about the business of begging people to have peace with our Savior.

But be encouraged ...

In every land and in every nation there are some who God has targeted for salvation. And those targeted for salvation will heartily welcome Christ’s ambassadors.

But Christ’s ambassadors are readily accepted and honored ... when the message penetrates the hearts of sinners.

What the gospel does ... and when ambassadors are appreciated and welcomed.

- It disrupts the soul of sinners who find they are engaged in a war with God they cannot win. They discover it is a war beyond their strength. When a sinner discovers they are up against an unbeatable foe – God Himself – ambassadors are sure to receive a cordial welcome
- An ambassador is always welcome to sinners who recognize there is a hell and they are terrified to go there!
- An ambassador might be graciously received when he does not bring hard terms

Notice a contrast of one king ...

I Samuel 11:1-2

Now Nahash the Ammonite came up and besieged Jabesh-gilead; and all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, "Make a covenant with us and we will serve you."

11:2 But Nahash the Ammonite said to them, "I will make it with you on this condition, that I will gouge out the right eye of every one of you, thus I will make it a reproach on all Israel."

What's obvious

These are incredibly hard terms for peace!

In contrast ... the covenant ambassadors bring to sinners is quite different

- There are no hard terms in the gospel
- As a matter of fact ... there are **NO** terms, **NO** conditions.
WE AS AMBASSADORS BRING A MESSAGE OF PEACE WHICH IS AN UNCONDITIONAL PEACE THAT GOD MAKES WITH MEN!

The ambassador for Christ ... comes with a message of peace

Ezekiel 18:32

"For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies," declares the Lord God. "Therefore, repent and live."

Isaiah 1:18

"Come now, and let us reason together," Says the Lord, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool."

2nd – It is to be motivated by **FEAR** of God

Ezekiel 3:17-19

"Son of man, I have appointed you a watchman to the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from My mouth, warn them from Me.

3:18 "When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die'; and you do not warn him or speak out to warn the wicked from his wicked way that he may live, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand.

3:19 "Yet if you have warned the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered yourself."

3rd – It is to be motivated by a **LOVE** for Christ

II Corinthians 5:14 - NIV
For Christ's love compels us ...

The problem

A lack of love for Christ will result in pathetic ambassadors

Transition: But I want to consider for a few minutes why Christians do not take seriously their call to be ambassadors for Christ. There is a requirement that is missing but needs to be present to be an ambassador who represents his Sovereign Ruler well.

➤ **Ambassadors: Our Needed PASSION**

We will not be the kind of ambassador we're called to be if the One whom we serve is not highly exalted in our mind and heart. We need to have a heart for our sovereign to represent Him properly and effectively.

Ambassadors who represent their Sovereign best are those who love the Lord with all their heart. The Psalmist had this kind of heart ... which we should long for too.

Psalm 73:25-26

Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And besides Thee, I desire nothing on earth.
73:26 My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

The problem for too many Christians ...

Desires for things on earth diminish a desire for things in heaven

The problem

We treasure the wrong things ... things in the wrong places.

Matthew 6:21

for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

My mother treasures heaven. She was sharing the gospel with one of her grand-kids and pointing this out. She said something profound ... *I cannot take anything material with me to heaven ... but what I can do is give you the gospel so that someday you can join me in heaven.*

Unfortunately, many Christians have digressed into thinking that they are to be **DIPLOMATS** for Christ rather than ambassadors for Christ

Hugh Thomson Kerr

"We are not sent to preach ...

- *sociology but salvation;*

- *not economics but evangelism;*
- *not reform but redemption;*
- *not culture but conversion;*
- *not progress but pardon;*
- *not a new social order but a new birth;*
- *not revolution but regeneration;*
- *not renovation but revival;*
- *not resuscitation but resurrection;*
- *not a new organization but a new creation;*
- *not democracy but the gospel;*
- *not civilization but Christ;*

We are ambassadors, not diplomats."

If you consider yourself a **DIPLOMAT** for Christ ... you'll use **DIPLOMACY** rather than the truth of Scripture in representing your Sovereign.

Effective Ambassadors:

- Keep their heavenly **CITIZENSHIP** in focus!

Colossians 3:1-3

If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

3:2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.

3:3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

- Understand their heavenly **AUTHORITY**

Charles Spurgeon

Look at the history of every imposture; it shows us that the claim of authority insures a degree of progress. How did Mahommed come to have so strong a religion in his time? He was all alone, and he went into the market-place and said, "I have received a revelation from heaven." It was a lie, but he persuaded men to believe it. People looked at his face; they saw that he looked upon them earnestly as believing what he said, and some five or six of them joined him. Did he prove what he said? No. "You must," he said, "believe what I say, or there is no Paradise for you." There is power in that kind of thing, and wherever he went his statement was believed, not on the ground of reasoning, but on his authority, which he declared to be from Allah; and in a century after he first proclaimed his imposture, a thousand sabres had flashed from a thousand sheaths, and his word had been proclaimed through Africa, Turkey, Asia, and even in Spain. The man claimed authority—he claimed divinity; therefore he had power.

But when we are commissioned as ambassadors ... our ambassadorship comes with the authority of Christ!

Matthew 28:18

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

- We are not people with an occupation who just happen to be ambassadors for Christ – we are ambassadors for Christ who happen to have an occupation.
- You are not a student who just happens to be an ambassador for Christ. You are an ambassadors for Christ who just happens to be a student.

Being an ambassador is the same for every believer. It is not for a select few – though few practice their ambassadorship dynamically.

Until we truly grasp this and live it out ... we will be mediocre in our effectiveness as ambassadors. And the church will be a dead and dying place ... void of power and void of effectiveness.

Spurgeon

If ministers of the gospel were more hearty in their work of preaching; if, instead of giving lectures and devoting a large part of their time to literary and political pursuits, they would preach the Word of God, and preach it as if they were pleading for their own lives, ah! then, my brethren, we might expect great success; but we cannot expect it while we go about our work in a half-hearted way, and have not that zeal, that earnestness, that deep purpose which characterized those men of old.

Wrap Up:

We have the responsibility and privilege to beg sinners to lay aside their animosity towards God and accept Christ's terms of peace.

Though mankind has from the time of Adam's fall declared war on God – at the cross God declared peace! And we are His ambassadors to declare the terms of peace.

What an amazing privilege! We are an ambassador of the King of kings! O that we might live this out wherever God has placed us in this city!