

Christ's Ambassadors

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[0 : 0 0] moments to words that you find here particularly in verse 20 and through to verse 21 verse 20 especially therefore we are ambassadors for christ god making his appeal through us we implore you on behalf of christ be reconciled to god this is a wonderful passage about the reconciliation that god has already brought about through the death of christ and how in that reconciliation he has made provision for our individual reconciliation to christ personally in order to have eternal life given to us from his hand the world in which paul was placed was a world in which you had emperors and people in that sort of position who obviously employed servants as ambassadors envoys you might say is another word that was used for them and the ambassador of envoy was a very important person in paul's time it's still the case of course with ourselves ambassadors as they represent their country are placed in various countries throughout the world so that if you went to london for example you know you would find ambassadors of many countries there in the embassies that have been set there for many years and the ambassador in paul's day and to this day as well and to some extent uh not only was a very important person but the ambassador had a very important relationship with the person that was sending them whoever it was whatever government whether it was caesar the emperor or governments under that that would employ uh the services of an ambassador or envoy the relationship between the envoy and the one who was sending them was a very significant one a very important one obviously uh the ambassador or envoy needed to be a very dependable trustworthy person but as well as that the envoy actually knew something of the mind of the person who was sending them let's say it would be the king or the emperor and not only did they have an awareness of what was in the mind of that person because they were employed by them and had a close relationship with them they also pretty often would actually if especially it was a very important message they would actually know the content of the message if the ambassador was given a message to take to another country the message would the contents of the message would be known to the ambassador to the envoy because in all likelihood those that were going to read it at the other end would be asking questions about its content and so the ambassador envoy had to be prepared to answer those questions he needed to have as far as possible answers and therefore he needed to know the content of the message the content that had been written for him to carry to whoever it was he was delivering it to so obviously the ambassador envoy uh it was far more than just a postal service it wasn't just like the postman carrying a message that he didn't open and then just passed it on to whoever it was addressed to the envoy carried the message he knew its contents as he handed it over he left it to whoever it was was reading it and then waited to see if there was any response that he needed to try and answer or carry back to the person that he actually had sent had sent him with the message now that's behind the language that paul is using here in this passage in second corinthians because he talks here about himself as god's messenger and he here uses the word ambassadors in verse 20 therefore we the apostles and other apostles and himself those who were commissioned by god to carry the message of the gospel into the world he's saying therefore we are ambassadors for christ

god making his appeal through us we implore you on behalf of christ or in christ's stead be reconciled to god as we're looking for and seeking god's guidance with regard to another assistant essentially what you're sending for as a congregation is the same kind of person as when you sent for myself and others before me as the minister of the congregation because we are ambassadors for christ we have the message that god has given us in the gospel and god has actually given us the privilege and the responsibility of delivering that message the message of the king himself a message that focuses on christ as savior and so we'll look to at two things just very briefly without opening it out too much first of all we'll look at the ambassador's mission and then secondly the ambassador's message now the ambassador's mission first of all is that he represents christ you can see here we are ambassadors for christ we are here to represent christ we are here to represent christ in the preaching of the gospel and the person that you will be sending for as an assistant minister is exactly the same in that regard because that is his primary responsibility as a preacher of the gospel to have this representation from christ he represents christ so that christ speaks through us we are his servants commissioned by christ sent by christ in other words we share that the ambassador the spiritual ambassador shares the interest and the aim of christ just as god has commissioned the ambassador the spiritual ambassador the preacher of the gospel the minister of a congregation to deliver the message of the gospel so the ambassador knows that message that message has been made known and as he's delivering it it should never be the case that he's unfamiliar with that message himself and there are two implications really from that first implication is with regard to the ambassador himself and the second implication is with regard to those to whom the message is delivered and the implication affecting the messenger himself is that his behavior has to correspond with the character of the character of the person who sent him has to correspond with the aim with the purpose with the kind of person who has sent him and that's certainly the case in a spiritual ambassadorship as ambassadors of christ we are charged with delivering the gospel of christ but that's connected with our own particular way of life and behavior as well because that's something that backs up the message and for example verse 9 here you see uh what paul is saying so whether we are at home or away we make it our aim to please him we make it our aim to please god that is the the great aim of the christian ministry the christian ministry you could say it's this you could say it's singular aim is to please god even if you actually think of how god would use it in order to affect people's lives to bring them to know christ to build up his people spiritually still all of that comes under the overarching purpose or aim of pleasing the lord we're not here to please ourselves we're not here to present ourselves we're not here to in any way suggest that it is our message that really we are carrying or that it is our particular persons that's of greatest importance and we are not here to please you either

although hopefully in the right way we do that but it's not the underlying pleasing is the pleasing of god and whenever we do something that's not in keeping with our message or with our mission we know that god is not pleased with that and so the implication of being an ambassador for christ is that we are there to please the lord we represent christ our own behavior is so much connected with that but then the flip side of that if you like the second implication is in terms of those who hear the message and at paul's day it would be unthinkable to treat an ambassador especially of someone like the emperor to treat that ambassador in a an unworthy way or to abuse that ambassador in some way because that would itself be reflecting upon the person who sent him to abuse an ambassador to mistreat an ambassador was really pretty much to say that you despise the person who sent him you didn't honor the person who sent him and it's the same of course in a spiritual way with the gospel as well how we receive the message of the one who sent the ambassador the message that's coming through the envoy or the ambassador is really a reflection of what you make of the sender himself and so every time we receive the message of the gospel obediently that is saying something very important about what you think of the sender about god himself about the lord so the ambassador represents christ with the implications for the ambassador himself and his character and honesty and so on and also for those who hear the message and how the ambassador is received or treated and the message as well and the second thing about the ambassador's mission is that christ speaks through the ambassador the ambassador represents christ but actually christ speaks through him and that's the such a very important element in this passage you'll find some people not necessarily agreeing with this amongst the wider christian church and some people would find fault with me for saying that when i'm speaking and preaching the gospel if i'm doing it faithfully then it's christ who's speaking through me to you that's quite in keeping with what this passage is actually saying we are ambassadors for christ god making his appeal through us we're not actually making the appeal ourselves it is god who is doing this through the ambassador and when you're sending for a minister or an assistant minister you're sending for somebody that you expect god to use so as to hear god's voice so as to hear god himself speaking through the ambassador and as you well know these things already i know i'm not speaking to people who don't know this already but for myself i need to remind myself of what an ambassador is about and the privileges and responsibilities of it and so for yourselves as well it's a reminder of what the bible tells us about the importance of receiving the message that god has given in the gospel through an ambassador providing that ambassador is faithful to god which we're seeking to do to be so if you're hearing when you're hearing the ambassador ultimately you're hearing god himself if the message that that's being preached is through to the gospel then god is speaking and we depend on his spirit to bless it to us but it is the message of god himself and christ god making his appeal of course there's a lot to be said with respect to the message and the way to the way the message is being delivered

because none of us can say that we have a perfect way of delivering the message that we can show a perfect character from day to day as ambassadors for christ there may be much wrong with the deliverance with the manner in which the message is sent out or portrayed or has even been studied beforehand but you must never find a fault with the message itself with the gospel message itself i think it was spurgeon who said to his congregation at one time you will find many better preachers of the gospel but you will never find a better message i mean if spurgeon had to say that just imagine where that leaves us you will find many better preaching the gospel many better preachers of the gospel but he said you will never find a better gospel a better message than the message of salvation in christ so we are ambassadors for christ and of course not only are we answerable to the one who sent us the ambassador in those days having delivered the message would actually go back to the person who had sent him and deliver to the king or to the emperor a response or a report on what how the matter had gone how it'd been received and so on well we have to do that too but so do you as hearers because at the end of the day hearers and speakers alike the ambassador and those to whom he relays the message come under the provision of verse 10 for we must all appear before the judgment seat of christ so that each one of us may receive what is due for what he has done in the body whether good or evil the ambassador's mission then is to represent christ and christ speaking through him secondly the ambassador's message well we mentioned it's the message of the gospel the message that god himself has given to us to declare we haven't made it up ourselves whatever is involved in putting a sermon together and whatever we use by way of illustrations or anecdotes or historical episodes it's the message of the gospel itself that really forms the core of the ambassador's message and that message comes with authority and that message carries an appeal and that message contains terms of peace it comes with authority first of all and that stands to reason i don't need to really say much about that if it is the case as it is that god sends the ambassador to deliver the message of the gospel of salvation in christ it stands to reason it should be obvious to myself to every one of us that that message comes with his authority whoever is preaching it as far as the preaching is faithful it is god's authority that lies behind the message behind the content of that message of salvation in christ it has the authority of god himself behind it and secondly it carries an appeal and this is really very interesting here the way that paul puts it it doesn't say that it's the ambassador who is appealing on behalf of christ there may be elements in the preaching and indeed there should be elements in the preaching of the gospel on the part of the preacher that puts things in the form of an appeal to appeal to people to be converted to appeal to people for example to come and profess their faith in christ to appeal to people on the basis of what scripture says to carry out what scripture itself requires of us that will be these elements of an appeal or should be sometimes very strong and urgent and emotional appeals to the listeners but it's interesting here

the appeal is especially the appeal of god himself god is making his appeal through us so the message of the gospel is actually god's appeal to us to come and accept the reconciliation that he himself has already provided for us in the person of jesus when you receive as jesus as offered in the gospel you are receiving the reconciliation that he himself has died to achieve it comes in him and with him that reconciliation so it's not really a presentation or should never be thought of as an unemotional type of formality just saying as if we were really saying well here's the message of the gospel here's the message of the gospel there it is for yourself take it or leave it that's not how god presents the message of the gospel in his word to us god himself is making his appeal through the word of god to us to come and accept the reconciliation or to come and be whatever else it is in the word he requires of us to be so the ambassador and the ambassador's message comes with god's authority it also comes with god's own appeal through the ambassador to give heed to the message that god has sent by him that again is what we have in sending for a minister that's what a congregation is actually themselves vowing or themselves promising to be faithful hearers of the gospel in other words faithful hearers of god's appeal through the ambassador that he has sent and commissioned and thirdly it contains peace terms the ambassador's message comes with god's authority carries the appeal of god himself but it carries god's own peace terms and if you look here at verses 18 to 19 that's exactly what is specified by the apostle the peace terms are first of all what god has done and then secondly what we are required to do in response what has god done all this he says in verse 18 is from god who through christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation that is in christ god was reconciling the world to himself not counting their trespasses against him against them and entrusting to us the message of the reconciliation in other words he's saying what christ has done by his death on the cross is effectively to seal and secure reconciliation with god that doesn't mean you and i don't have to come to receive that and to accept it that's the second point i'll mention in a minute what we must do but that's what god has already done it's not that god sometime or other will reconcile the world to himself it's not that this is lying in the future it's not that this is an ongoing thing that's happening today god has done this the death of christ is accomplished it's complete the reconciliation that god himself purposed to bring to us in the gospel is there already in its fullness and that's what the gospel appeal the peace the peace terms that are presented really first of all contain what god has done and contain secondly what god requires of us in response therefore we are ambassadors for christ god making his appeal through us we implore you on behalf of christ be reconciled to god that's essentially what the message of the gospel is

[20 : 21] and incidentally you can see how wonderfully combined you find theology and appeal you find biblical teaching in terms of what god has done what christ has done what reconciliation is about combined with this wonderful appeal from god through the ambassador to be reconciled to god in other words he's not saying anything like make sure that you reconcile yourself to god reconciliation is there for us in the person of jesus in the work of jesus it's not a matter of us trying by our own efforts to reconcile ourselves to god or to make ourselves acceptable to god what it's about is basically this the appeal that's saying here be reconciled to god really means essentially accept god's terms of peace accept god's terms of peace that you have in jesus and most of you here if not all have already done that but it's just a reminder to us that this is what the gospel and the preaching of the gospel is about and this is what we're really intending by sending for ministers and assistant ministers they are ambassadors for christ they set out what god has done their message response requires a response from us to accept god's terms of peace for he says for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of god and uh in a wonderful way what's what it's saying there is when we do receive christ or accept christ as he's presented in the gospel by the ambassador's message when we do really accept the appeal of god through the ambassador to be reconciled to him there's no doubt as to what's going to happen god cannot be short of actually sealing that reconciliation to our lives he cannot fail to give us peace if when we come to bring christ into our possession by faith and when christ is ours that reconciliation is ours we haven't achieved it we haven't deserved it we haven't created it we haven't manufactured it but god has done it for us and it's one of the things that we constantly give him thanks for that without any input from us he secured reconciliation through the death of his son so that we might become the righteousness of god in him may god bless these thoughts on his word to us now we're going to proceed now to the other part of our purpose this evening for a meeting and that involves electing and i'm and i'm i'm nietzsche die die i'm