

AMBASSADORS OF RECONCILIATION

In Great Britain, France, Mexico and other countries, the United States maintain ambassadors. Such a representative of the United States is called “minister plenipotentiary and ambassador extraordinary.” As a servant of this country he is a servant full of power or authority, and, being the personal spokesman for more than 120 million people, with the President, the cabinet, the congress, the army and the navy behind him, he is truly a representative extraordinary.

Of course, the man selected for such an important ministry should be fully qualified for the position. In order that he may honorably and uncompromisingly protect the interests of his nation and people at the foreign court he must be exceedingly careful about receiving personal favours, concessions and gifts from official representatives of that foreign nation.

In the important act of establishing treaties and agreements between his own government and the foreign nation that has received him as United States representative, this ambassador is forwarded a government document from Washington, bearing the seal of the United States of America. signed by the President and the Secretary of State. In dignity, accompanied by his official attendants, the ambassador presents the document to the foreign court for the signature of the Ruler and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Thus treaties of possession, commerce and peace are made.

It is deplorable when such a representative is chosen, not because he is qualified for the post but to pay a political debt.

Surely it is a great privilege and a great honor to be an ambassador representing the United States.

It is not an easy task to persuade people that it is a greater honor and a greater privilege to be an ambassador for Christ, and the Kingdom of God. Note the statement of the Apostle Paul, recorded in II Corinthians 5:20. “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”

This same apostle, in Philippians 3:20, says: “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.” The word “conversation” here could be translated “citizenship” or even “politics”. There is a sense, then, in which the citizenship and politics of every representative of Christ is in heaven. But while here on earth, as ambassadors for Jesus Christ, those who belong to Christ have the very difficult task of trying to be pleasant among sinners, while at the same time being governed by Galatians 1:10; “for do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.”

In His wonderful prayer, recorded in John 17, the Lord Jesus said concerning His disciples: “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” John 17:16. The qualification for an ambassador is set forth in Colossians 1:12 to 15: “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son; In Whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.” In Colossians 1:12 the expression “hath made us meet” could be translated “hath qualified us”. In other words, before we can acceptably represent Christ we must qualify. We must be delivered; we must be redeemed. In Colossians 1:20 we are told how this is accomplished. It is through the blood of

His cross. Here we note that by the blood of the cross of Christ the believer is reconciled and is at peace with God. We quote Colossians 1:20 to 22:

“And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled. In the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight”

Here we note that alienated enemies are made wholly unblamable and unproveable because of what Christ did through death.

Peace and reconciliation by the blood of His cross. What a wonderful message God’s ministers have to proclaim to lost sinners. And what glorious good news the sinner may receive and be saved for time and eternity.

We go back now to II Corinthians 5:17 to 21:

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, Who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

Here we note that the ambassador for Christ is a new creature. According to Ephesians 2:10 he is God’s workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus. Man by nature belongs to the old creation. He is identified with Adam, the sinner. The most important transformation that can come to any man is to get out of Adam and in Christ; that is to be identified with “The Last Adam” Who is now the glorified Man in heaven. All who are in Adam are in sin, in the flesh, and under condemnation. If any man be in Christ there is a new creation. The new creature is no longer dead in sin. He is dead to sin. The believer’s old man has been crucified with Christ. He is in the Spirit. He is made accepted in Christ, the Beloved. He is complete in Christ. He is waiting to appear with Christ in glory. His citizenship is in heaven. He is in the world, but not of the world. And now he has a new responsibility. For unto him is committed the word of reconciliation. To him is given the ministry of reconciliation.

In these closing verses of the fifth chapter of II Corinthians we observe that it is not the sinner seeking God; but God, through ambassadors of Christ, seeking the sinner, and beseeching the sinner, in Christ’s stead, to be reconciled to God.

There is no more definite statement of the gospel, no clearer announcement of saving truth than we find in II Corinthians 5:21: “For He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

When the Lord Jesus Christ cried “finished”, and yielded up the Ghost on the cross, He was crowned with a crown of thorns, the emblem of the curse. He was made sin, although He knew no sin. The God of all grace ordained and permitted the cruel death of the sinless Christ, yea, offered up His well-beloved Son, so that poor unrighteous men might, by His infinite grace, through faith, be made the righteousness of God in Christ. Man’s only place of security and Divine blessing is in Christ.

This ministry of reconciliation is distinctively a Pauline ministry. More than a dozen times that great apostle emphasized the fact that he was the apostle, the preacher, and the teacher

of the Gentiles; that unto Him the risen Christ committed the “dispensation of the grace of God for Gentiles”; the “unsearchable riches of Christ for Gentiles”; “the mystery among the Gentiles”; and the “dispensation of the mystery.” Romans 11:13; Ephesians 3:1 to 3; Ephesians 3:8 and 9; Colossians 1:24 to 27.

According to Galatians 2:8, God was mighty in Peter in the apostleship of the circumcision. Peter received from Christ the keys of the kingdom of heaven and the so-called “great commission.” In his ministry, recorded in the early chapters of Acts, Peter preached unto Israel repentance and restitution; the gospel of the kingdom; the promises and blessings of the covenants which God made concerning Israel; but never once did he preach reconciliation to Gentiles. He did not refer to Adam. Never once did Peter preach to Israel, in those chapters, concerning the “old man” and the “new man”; concerning the “old creation” and the “new creation”. Peter did not preach concerning the believer’s identification with Christ in death, burial and resurrection; blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies. Peter had no authority from Christ to even refer to uncircumcised Abram from whence came Paul’s gospel of the uncircumcision. It was unto Paul that the risen Lord committed the gospel of the uncircumcision, (Galatians 2:7; Galatians 3:8) the ministry of reconciliation and the mystery concerning the Body of Christ. Invariably when we have the ministry of reconciliation we find linked with it the ministry of the new creation and the truth of the believer’s identification; out of Adam, into Christ. The word “atonement” in Romans 5:11 is a mis-translation. It should read “reconciliation”. Then follows the story of Adam and Christ, the old creation and the new creation, and the new creature’s identification with Christ. Romans 5:12 to Romans 6:12.

Our mission today is to beseech sinners to believe the word of reconciliation; to believe that the document has been signed and sealed; that the Lord Jesus Christ provided this reconciliation and made peace by the blood of His cross. Truly with such a ministry we should know that we are ambassadors extraordinary and ministers plenipotentiary. How willing and eager sinners should be to accept this glorious gospel message, be at peace with God, reconciled to God, and be redeemed for time and eternity.

If you are troubled to know under which one of the Lord’s commissions you are to labour, remember these words of Paul, “the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me (Paul) as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter.” Galatians 2:7. And again Paul’s words in II Timothy 2:2. “And the things that thou hast heard of me (Paul) among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” Again in Ephesians 3:1 and 2, “I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles”. . . “the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward”. Again, “the gospel which was preached of me is not after man . . . taught it by the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Galatians 1:12.

“That I (Paul) should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles—I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man’s foundation.” Romans 15:16 and 20.

Note what Paul says concerning himself, in I Corinthians 3:10: “According to the grace of God which is given unto me (Paul), as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation.”

When the risen Christ gave the so-called great commission, in Matthew 28:19 and 20, to Peter and his associates, he never hinted at the gospel of uncircumcision, the dispensation of the grace of God for Gentiles, or the ministry of reconciliation which some years later He committed, by revelation, to Paul who then declared, “I am the apostle of the Gentiles; I magnify mine office.” Romans 11:13.

The pity is that the Lord's ambassadors today minimize Paul's office instead of magnify it.

Well, fellow-Christians, our commission and message today is the word of reconciliation. That reconciliation message was not the commission of Matthew 28:19 and 20, because Israel had not yet been cast away and God's word instructs us in Romans 11:15, "the casting away of them (Israel) be the reconciling of the world." After Christ had been raised from the dead. Peter declared that He was raised from the dead to be a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance unto Israel. Acts 5:30 and 31. Christ raised from the dead to give repentance is quite different from the reconciling of the world because of Israel was cast away.

Now here is sufficient Divine authority for our ministry for the Lord, "hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" II Corinthians 5:19, "Hath given us the ministry of reconciliation." II Corinthians 5:18.

In the context note our identification with Christ—II Corinthians 5:15—And also note why we labour as ambassadors of reconciliation: "the love of Christ constraineth us"; "Knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men." II Corinthians 5:14 and II Corinthians 5:11.

Let us not be guilty of the spiritual crime of perverting the glorious Divine message of grace. In the message of reconciliation sinners are not to beg God to be reconciled to them and save them. Carefully note II Corinthians 5:20: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

God beseeches the sinner. We pray the sinner. This is not the sinner seeking God and salvation. This is God beseeching the sinner to accept the perfect work of redemption accomplished by Christ. When He was made sin on the cross, God was reconciled. The reconciliation becomes mutual the moment the sinner believes God and receives Christ. We have a blessed ministry, a great responsibility, and a glorious privilege as ambassadors of reconciliation.