**WE ARE CHRIST'S AMBASSADORS**

2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2

Key Verse 5:20

We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.

**Introduction**



 God has given us a glorious hope of an eternal home in heaven. With this hope, we live by faith, not by sight. Furthermore, we make it our goal to please God, for we must all appear before Him to be judged. This passage teaches us what we should do to please God as we hold to this living hope in His eternal kingdom.

1. Read verses 5:11-15. How did Paul defend his ministry? (11-12) What compelled him to love them so much? (13-14a) How did Christ show his love for us? (14b-15a) How should we live from now on? (15b)

1-1, Read verses 5:11-15.

Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. **12** We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. **13** If we are “out of our mind,” as some say, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. **14** For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. **15** And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

1-2, How did Paul defend his ministry? (11-12)

 ***Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. 12 We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart.***

* Paul defended himself and his ministry, for some people criticized him saying he used deceptive techniques to capture people.
* But Paul tried persuade men out of fear of the Lord. He was always conscious of God’s presence.
* Paul saw the need to persuade the world of the person and work of Jesus and of his own integrity as a messenger of the good news.
* Paul hoped that the Corinthians would recognize his pure heart and gospel faith and simply accept him as God’s servants.
* Paul wanted them to know that what really matters in a servant of God is his inner motive to please God.
* They could then be proud of him as their shepherd. It is kind of healthy pride for him to have, for it is not based on his pride but on the love of God.
* One problem with the Corinthian Christians is that they liked those who glory in appearance and not in heart. They looked down on Paul because his glory was not in appearance and only in heart.

1 Samuel 16:7 reads,

 The Lord does not see as a man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart

1-3, What compelled him to love them so much? (13-14a)

 ***If we are “out of our mind,” as some say, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you.***

* The Corinthian Christians probably thought Paul was crazy because he seemed content with a life of pain, trials, and discomfort if it brought glory to God.
* In being accused of being beside himself, Paul was imitating Jesus was also accused of being out of His mind ([Mark 3:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/mark/3/21/s_960021) and [John 10:20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/john/10/20/s_1007020)).
* In the book of Acts, Festus also thought that Paul was crazy due to too much learning. And his enemies at Corinth might think the same way.
* Paul doesn’t want the Corinthian Christians to think he is deliberately acting in a way that some might think crazy, just for the sake of acting crazy.
* Instead, he is doing it for God’s honor. Then again, if the Corinthian Christians want to think Paul is of sound mind, they can think he is acting that way for them.

***14 For Christ’s love compels us,***

* Paul is motivated by the love of Christ. Paul had received so much love from Jesus that it compelled him to serve others.
* This is the greatest foundation for ministry, wanting to give something to others because Jesus gave you everything. When we really receive the love of Christ, it touches us and makes us want to serve others.
* Paul felt compelled by the love of Christ. Paul would say, “I have received the love of Christ. I also have the love of Christ in my heart for all the people Jesus loves. I am compelled and even pushed by the love of Christ to serve others.”

1-4, How did Christ show his love for us? (14b-15a)

 ***because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. 15 And he died for all,***

* How did Jesus show His love? He died to save all who will come to Him and is a demonstration of God’s love to all.

1-5, How should we live from now on? (15b)

***That those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.***

* That those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.
* If Jesus died for us, it is only fitting that we live for Him. Jesus gave us new life, not to live for ourselves but to live for Him.
* The question is simple: Are you living for yourself, or are you living for Jesus? He died for us that we might die to ourselves.
* God created us for the purpose of living for Him, not for ourselves. It is our corrupted heart that makes us want to live for ourselves and not for the Lord.

 Revelation 4:11 reads,

“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”

* But it doesn’t mean that we can say, “I won’t love or serve anyone else but God.” Instead, our love for God, and our life for God, is expressed in the way we serve others.
* Therefore, when we say that we live for God, we can not use it as an excuse to neglect serving others.
1. Read verses 5:16-19. How is our perspective changed after meeting Christ? (16-17) What ministry and message has God committed to us through Christ? (18-19)

2-1, Read verses 5:16-19.

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. **17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+5&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28895a)] The old has gone, the new is here! **18** All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: **19** that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

2-2, How is our perspective changed after meeting Christ? (16-17)

***16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!***

* We came to have a different perspective after meeting Jesus in person.
* Because we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen ([2 Corinthians 4:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/2corinthians/4/18/s_1082018))
* Because our earthly tent will be destroyed, but we will have a new body, eternal in the heavens ([2 Corinthians 5:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/2corinthians/5/1/s_1083001))
* Because we walk by faith, not by sight ([2 Corinthians 5:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/2corinthians/5/7/s_1083007))
* Because we do not glory in appearance, but we glory in heart([2 Corinthians 5:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/2corinthians/5/12/s_1083012)) For all these reasons, we don’t look to the image and appearance of the flesh(this world) but to the eternality in Jesus’ coming kingdom.
* Paul used to be a Pharisee and saw Jesus from worldly point of view but no longer saw Jesus that way, because he became the new creation.
* When we are in Christ and His words and His love, our lifestyle, value system, inner desires, and the way we see others.
* Christ gives us love, joy, and peace in our hearts. Christ gives us eager desire to serve and love others. We give thanks always. Though our situation is unchanged, inwardly we are being transformed and a new creation!

2-3, What ministry and message has God committed to us through Christ? (18-19)

***18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.***

* This work of a new creation is from God, not something we have to earn and achieve by our own strength or will.
* God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ. God initiated this ministry of reconciliation. He reconciled us to Himself. We did not reconcile ourselves to Him.
* Importantly, God did this through Jesus Christ. God did not reconcile us to Himself by neglecting His holy justice, or “giving in” to sinful people.
* He did it by an amazing, righteous, sacrifice of love. God demands not one bit less justice and righteousness from man under Jesus, but the demand has been completely satisfied through Jesus Christ who said, “it is finished.”
* And has given us the ministry of reconciliation. Now God expects us to take up the ministry of reconciliation and has therefore committed to us the word of reconciliation.
* Reconciliation comes by the word(message) of reconciliation. God uses the preached word to reconcile men and women to Himself.
* People try in many ways to bring about reconciliation. But inevitably they failed in the end, for the problem lies not in the shallow relationship between people.
* We should begin at the broken relationship with God the Creator. Yet it is God who is reconciling the world to himself and has given us the ministry of reconciliation!
1. Read verse 5:20-6:2. What is our new identity and what should we do on Christ’s behalf? (20) What did Christ do for our reconciliation? (21) What was Paul's final appeal? (6:1-2)

3-1, Read verse 5:20-6:2.

We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. **21** God made him who had no sin to be sin[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+5&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28899b)] for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. As God’s co-workers we urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain. **2** For he says, “In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.” I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.

3-2, What is our new identity and what should we do on Christ’s behalf? (20)

 ***We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors,***

* Paul sees that he serves in a foreign land as the representative of a King. The King has a message, and Paul is delivering that message as though God were pleading through us.
* An ambassador does not speak to please his audience, nor does he want to say whatever he wants to say. Rather he speaks on behalf of the King who sent him.
* An ambassador does not speak on his own authority. He simply says what he has been commissioned to say.
* But an ambassador is more than a messenger; he is also a representative, and the honor and reputation of his country are in his hands.
* So an ambassador is an accredited diplomat sent by a country sent as its official representative to a foreign country.
* This is a glorious title for Paul and the other apostles. However, it is not more glorious or more stunning than the thought of God.

***as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.***

* As God’s Ambassadors, we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God. As an ambassador Paul makes a plea: be reconciled to God!
* This makes it clear that the work of reconciliation mentioned previously in the chapter does not work apart from our will and our choice.
* Who are the ones reconciled to God? Those who have responded to Jesus’ plea, made willingly through His ambassadors.
* This makes it clear that it is we who must be reconciled to God, not He to us. We are the responsible party and we are supposed to be reconciled to God through accepting Jesus.
* Also there was underlying conflict between Paul and the Corinthian believers that had prompted Paul to write this letter to them. But he said, “Be reconciled to God” instead of “Be reconciled to me.”
* The root problem is a relationship problem with God. Without solving this, they could not really solve their relationship with Paul.

3-3, What did Christ do for our reconciliation? (21)

***21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.***

* This is the work of God Himself! The Father and the Son (and the Spirit) were in cooperation in the work on the cross. The work of atonement on the cross was the work of God.
* Jesus took our sin, but gave us His righteousness. It is a tremendous exchange, all prompted by the love of God for us!
* In order to be reconciled to God, we must come to God, confessing our sins sincerely and ask God’s mercy and sin forgiveness.
* God made Jesus who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Praise Jesus!

Isaiah 53:6 reads,

We all, like sheep, have gone astray,

 each of us has turned to our own way;

and the Lord has laid on him

 the iniquity of us all.

3-4, What was Paul's final appeal? (6:1-2)

 ***As God’s co-workers we urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain.***

* Paul sees himself as a co-worker with Jesus Christ. They are partners, and Jesus has given us the ministry of reconciliation (5:18). Since Paul is among the ambassadors for Christ (5:20), he works with God.
* It isn’t that God needed Paul, or any of us. Instead, it is that God wants us to be workers together with Him for our good.
* The word “workers” itself is important. There is something good and important in work itself, so much so that God wants us to be workers together with Him.
* God’s best for our life is never a state of ease and comfort and indulgent inactivity. God wants us to be workers together with Him, not “couch potatoes.”
* It is His work that He asks us to do together with Him. Instead of trying to get God to help us with our work, we need to find out what God’s work is, and do it.
* What does it mean to receive the grace of God in vain? It means to receive the goodness and favor of God, yet to hinder the work of grace in one’s life.

* It means to receive the favor of God and to fail in what Paul spoke of in 1 Cor 15:10. “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”
* If Paul did not work as hard as he did, the grace of God would still be given to him, but in some measure it would have been given in vain.
* Grace, by definition, is given freely, but how we receive grace will help to determine how effective the gift of grace is.
* Grace is yet given to encourage work, not to say work is unnecessary. God doesn’t want us to receive His grace and become passive.
* Paul knew that God gives His grace, we work hard, and the work of God is done. Many Christians struggle at this very point. But we must trust God, rely on Him, and then get to work and work as hard as you can!
* That is how we see the work of God accomplished. If I neglect my end of the partnership on our side, God’s grace doesn’t accomplish all that it might and is therefore given in vain.

***2 For he says, “In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.” I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.***

* By quoting and applying [Isaiah 49:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/isaiah/49/8/s_728008), Paul wants to give the Corinthian Christians a sense of urgency. God has an acceptable time for us to work with His grace.
* God has a day of salvation that will not last forever. This is no time for Christian lives consumed with ease and comfort and self-focus. It is time to get busy for the Lord and to be workers together with Him.

**Conclusion**

 The title of today’s passage, “We are Christ’ ambassadors” is especially helpful in understanding the nature of being workers together with Him. An ambassador can rightly be described as working together with his king. Yet, the ambassador himself has no power or authority or agenda on his own – it is all bound up in his king. The king delegates power and authority to the ambassador and reveals his agenda to the ambassador, and then the king expects the ambassador to fulfill that agenda. Also Paul told us that God was pleading through the ministry of the apostles. Now Paul will also plead with the Corinthian Christians. May the Lord help us to follow his example in our mission field. Amen.

**One word: We are Christ’s ambassadors!**