

Ambassadors: Mastering the Art of Biblical Persuasion The Charge of Being an Ambassador

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2 Corinthians 5:16-21

¹⁶ From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Are we *all* ambassadors or just Paul and his fellow apostles?

1. Given the context, it seems like Paul is referring to himself and his colleagues, fellow apostles, as ambassadors.

“...Paul takes most seriously the divine charge to preach and teach the good news of reconciliation. He considers himself and his co-workers ambassadors for Christ, because God commissioned them to be his representatives... Paul writes that he and his colleagues are ambassadors for Christ. They represent him, so that all the people of Corinth and elsewhere may see, hear, and come to know Jesus Christ in the apostle and his associates.” (Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: 2 Corinthians*, 198)

“Though much of Paul’s perspective in this passage is common to all believers, he is representing Christian experience through the prism of his own apostolic calling.” (Scott J. Hafemann, *NIV Application Commentary: 2 Corinthians*, 251)

2. However, we can make the argument that all believers are ambassadors for Christ:
 - 2.1. Paul connects his ambassadorship to this task of spreading this message of reconciliation, a task given to the church at-large, all believers. If one is reconciled to God, he or she will herald that message of reconciliation as did Paul.
 - 2.2. The use of the word *us* in 5:18: “All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled *us* to himself and gave *us* the ministry of reconciliation.”
 - 2.3. In many ways, we’re called to be what Paul is and do what Paul does. “Be imitators of me” (1 Cor. 4:16); “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.” (1 Cor. 11:1)
 - 2.4. We realize all believers are not given the same status and authority as apostles, and there are certain offices for certain people. All believers are ambassadors for Christ; *we are just not ambassadors in the same role as Paul.*

“Whoever declares ‘the message of reconciliation’ (v. 19) is both a delegated representative of Christ and an actual spokesperson of God.” (Murray J. Harris, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Revised Edition: Volume 11 [Romans – Galatians]*, 482)

“Paul thus described his role – and the role of all believers – as a messenger representing the King of heaven with the gospel, who pleads with the people of the world to be reconciled to God, who is their rightful King.” (John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, 1631)

God has committed the message of this provision to those who have experienced reconciliation, and our ministry is to present it to all people (Matt. 28:19-20). Paul was perhaps speaking primarily of his own ministry of bringing people back to God as well as the ministry of his fellow apostles. However, all believers clearly share this ministry since God has reconciled us all. The word of reconciliation is the gospel message... This makes us God's ambassadors, one of the most exalted titles the Christian can claim. (Dr. Thomas Constable, Dallas Seminary Class Notes)

The Charge Given to Ambassadors:

1. Our primary mission as ambassadors is to represent our King.

*So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” (1 Corinthians 10:31)
And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” (Colossians 3:17)*

2. Ambassadors fulfill the King’s assignment and objectives.

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

3. Ambassadors communicate the King’s message.

*And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to **persuade** Jews and Greeks. (Acts 18:4)
And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and **persuading** them about the kingdom of God. (Acts 19:8)*

*²⁷ King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.” ²⁸ And Agrippa said to Paul, “In a short time would you **persuade** me to be a Christian?” ²⁹ And Paul said, “Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains.” (Acts 26:27-29)*

*²³ When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to **persuade** them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening. ²⁴ Some were being **persuaded** by the things spoken, but others would not believe. (Acts 28:23-24)*

*Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we **persuade** others. (2 Cor. 5:11)*

Objective proofs for the Bible are many and compelling, but they cannot force people to believe against their wills. Sinners are only persuaded to receive the Bible as God’s Word as the Holy Spirit changes their hearts and assures them that they can trust and rely on what Scripture says. (R. C. Sproul, “The Spirit’s Internal Witness,” TableTalk Magazine)

4. Ambassadors face challenges.

5. Ambassadors view the world differently.