

Fact Sheet for “Ambassadors for Christ” 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

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Let's connect verses 16-21 with the previous context in 2 Corinthians. Paul knew he would one day stand before the judgment seat of Christ (5:10). What he was known by God. He hoped that the Corinthians regarded him also in this way (5:11). He references his detractors in verse 12. Now read verse 13.

“Would a sane person willingly face a riotous mob intent on destroying him? (Acts 19:30; 21:35-40) Who would be crazy enough to walk back into a city in which he had just been stoned and dragged out? (Acts 14:19-20) Only a person who was utterly devoted to God would show so little regard for himself. Such a man was Paul.”¹

And Paul's ministry was selfless. This was Paul's motivation in ministry, not personal pride (5:14-15).

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.**

NLT 2 Corinthians 5:16 ¶ So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now!

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.**

A year or so later Paul wrote to the Romans about being reconciled to God (Romans 5:10-11). We as Christians have been reconciled to God through Christ.

²⁰ **Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.**

In the first half of this verse Paul mentions “ambassadors for Christ”. In a sense every Christian can be an ambassador for Christ.

Now look at the last half of this verse. When I read this verse there was something about it that was not right, something that didn't quite fit with the context. Why was Paul imploring the Corinthian *believers* to be reconciled to God? Paul clearly indicated in Romans 5:10-11 that Christians *have been* reconciled to God! Why was Paul imploring the Corinthian *believers* to be reconciled to God? The answer lies with a difficulty in translating of a pronoun in this verse... the pronoun “you” (“you all”). Our English translations may translate an actual word “you” in the original Greek text. They also may translate the pronoun “you”, even though that word does not appear in the original Greek text, because it is understood as being there in the verb. The pronoun will be indicated by how that verb is spelled. We do something similar in

¹ The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament, p. 567.

English. Here's a two letter verb... Go! What pronoun do we understand as being there? "You". These are the two most common ways that translators of the Greek NT include the pronoun "you" in their English translations. But there is a third way. If the translators think that the pronoun makes sense in the verse, even though it doesn't appear as a stand-alone word or is understood in the form of the verb, they may include it. That is what has happened here. Let me translate the last half of this verse so that you can see.

"We implore on behalf of Christ, you be reconciled to God."

The first "you" is not even there, the second "you" is there in the verb. And the second "you" is not emphatic. Here's what this means. Paul is not imploring the Corinthian believers to be reconciled to God. He is saying that in his ministry he implores people to be reconciled to God.

The NLT gets at this in its translation.

NLT 2 Corinthians 5:20 So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!"

That is true of Paul's ministry everywhere.

Here's something else. Paul implores people to be reconciled to God. But Paul also wrote about reconciliation to the Roman Christians (Romans 8:28-30). Paul's firmly knew that those who are Christians have been predestined and called by God, but this does not keep him from a passionate in his presentation of the gospel. We should firmly believe in God's predestination and calling but, just like Paul, we should be passionate in imploring people to be reconciled to God through Christ. Paul closes out this chapter with verse 21.

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.

Let me go briefly into chapter six to show you how Paul's words in chapter five fit right in. The KJV begins with these words...

KJV 2 Corinthians 6:1 ¶ We then, as workers together *with him*, beseech *you* also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. Read 2 Corinthians 6:1-10. (In verse 2 Paul quotes Isaiah 49:8 for the wording but not the meaning.)

Have you become a Christian? Have you believed in Christ and put your trust in Him for the forgiveness of your sins? Then consider being a good ambassador for Him.

Actively share the gospel. Passionately seek the salvation of those who haven't believed in Christ. If you haven't trusted Christ, but are considering, you have an opportunity to do so right now. If God is drawing you to believe in Christ take that opportunity to accept His gift of salvation.