

Help Wanted: An Ambassador

by Warren Wiersbe

As ambassadors for Christ, we must represent Him and His message of peace and reconciliation to a lost world, and we have all the resources and power we need to do so.

Duration: 39:16

Scripture: John 17:15-17, John 17:19, Galatians 1:8

Topics: "Evangelism", "Spiritual Accountability"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that many Christians do not witness because of fear. However, he reminds them that they have the provision and protection of God. Christians have the power of the Holy Spirit within them and the sword of the Spirit before them. The speaker encourages Christians to represent their ruler, God, and to seek to glorify Him in their actions and words. He also highlights the importance of using their time and opportunities wisely, as they will be held accountable for their works. The ultimate purpose of their ministry is reconciliation, bringing people back to God.

Transcript

According to this passage of Scripture, there's a war going on. And in fact, there are three wars going on in the world today, but they all go back to this one that Paul's writing about. People are at war with each other.

We have race against race, and we have clan against clan, nation against nation, class against class. People are at war with each other because, according to James chapter 4, they are at war with themselves. From whence come wars and fightings among you, asks James.

Here's where they come from. Your members that are at war down inside. So people are at war with themselves, and therefore they are at war with each other.

But the basic war is people are at war with God. And when people are at war with God, they're going to be at war with themselves. And if they're at war with God and at war with themselves, they're going to be at war with each other.

And so the only way really to bring peace into homes and cities and nations is for people to be at peace with God. Now, Paul does not tell us that God has declared war on the world. The fact of the matter is he says just the opposite.

He's saying here that God has declared peace on the world. And he sent out his ambassadors not to declare peace, not to declare war, but to declare peace and let people know that they can be reconciled to God. In the Roman Empire where Paul lived, there were two kinds of provinces.

Whenever Rome would move in and conquer some territory, these territories would be classified in one of two ways. They would either become senatorial provinces or they would become imperial provinces. You say, what's the difference? Well, the difference was significant.

Where the Romans conquered a people and these people were submissive, obedient, cooperative, it became a senatorial province. And there wasn't a great deal of army that was settled there. But where you had a province where people were rebellious, uncooperative, where it was dangerous, this was called an imperial province.

And an army, a large army was stationed there and an ambassador was sent there to deal with the people. Now, if Paul is telling us Christians in verse 20, we are ambassadors for Christ. You know what that means? That means that this world that we live in is not a senatorial province.

This world we're living in is an imperial province. It's at war. It's rebellious.

It won't cooperate. It won't listen. And so God's had to send ambassadors out.

Let's think about this tonight. Let's ask ourselves the question. We are ambassadors for Christ.

What does this mean? Doesn't say we should be ambassadors. Says we are. Paul's not challenging us.

He's describing us. What are the characteristics of an ambassador? What do we know about an ambassador? Well, let's just tick them off one by one because ambassadors back in that day were not much different from ambassadors today. Number one, an ambassador had to be a citizen of the country that he represents.

This is true today. If Mr. Carter is going to appoint an ambassador, he appoints someone who is a citizen of the United States of America. Now, you and I, as ambassadors for Christ, have to be citizens of the country that we're representing.

Now, what is the country we're representing? We're representing heaven. Here we are in this imperial province. People are rebellious against God.

They've declared war against God. The carnal mind is enmity against God. Here we are as ambassadors and we're coming into this province and we're saying to people, heaven is interested in you.

The God of heaven has sent us to you to tell you be reconciled to God. He has been reconciled to you. If that were not the case, he'd have blown you right up.

Through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, God has been reconciled to this world. Judgment is suspended. And we're representing the nation where our citizenship is.

Paul says in Philippians chapter three, our citizenship is in heaven. The disciples came to Jesus one day and they were just so thrilled. Usually they were arguing about who was the greatest, but not that day.

They were just thrilled. He had sent his apostles and some extras, 70 of them out to minister. And when they came back, they said, Lord, even the demons are subject unto us in your name.

And Jesus said, don't rejoice because the demons are subject to you. You rejoice because your names are written down in heaven. And I appreciate the fact that when Dr. Luke wrote that verse in the Greek language, he used the tense of the verb written that says, your names stand written in heaven and they always will be written in heaven.

The Lord didn't say, now, as long as you are successful, your names will be written in heaven. As long as you serve me, your names are written in heaven. He said, don't rejoice about your service.

Service comes and goes. The reason you are effective on earth is because you are known in heaven. Now, if you're a Christian tonight, your name is written down in heaven.

That's great. Our names aren't written in many great places. We don't have our names written in the annals of history.

If the Lord tarries and we someday pass off the scene, people won't pick up the Encyclopedia Britannica and find our picture and our name. But there's one place where our names are written down because of Jesus Christ. Our names stand written in heaven.

We're the citizens of heaven. Now, being the citizens of heaven, therefore, we can represent heaven. An ambassador must be a citizen of the country that he represents.

That's why it's an impossibility for us to be effective ambassadors if our citizenship is not in heaven. We can talk about Jesus, preach about Jesus, even in our own limited way, try to serve Jesus. But oh, when you get to know him and your name is written in heaven, then you can be an ambassador.

Now, a second characteristic comes to us. Not only must he be a citizen of the nation that he represents, but he has to be commissioned. Wouldn't it be silly for me to go down to Marshall Field and go into their leather goods department and say to the immaculately dressed clerk there, Sir, I want to purchase an ambassador's portfolio.

Are you an ambassador? No, but I'm going to be one. Really? Yeah, I'm going to make myself one. Some years ago, there was a gentleman who used to go around the United States and around the world carrying a crown and a folding chair.

Remember him? One day, he set up his folding chair right in the Capitol there, on the front stairs of the Capitol building, and he crowned himself King of the United States. A little squib in a paper about this alone. Nobody paid much attention to him.

You can't go walking into the embassy and say, Where's Behere? Oh, yeah, who are you? Well, I'm the ambassador of the court of St. James. Really, where are your credentials? Have you been commissioned? Oh, I commissioned myself. Sorry.

The ambassador has to be commissioned by the people that he represents. This is what our Lord says in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 19, that God has committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Verse 18, he has given to us the ministry of reconciliation.

Reconciliation, bringing together again. Satan is in the business of dividing. Christians should be in the business of uniting.

Sad to say some of them are in the business of dividing. We are commissioned by the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, you'll keep a marker, please, in 2 Corinthians 5, because we're going back there again.

And you'll turn with me to John chapter 17. John chapter 17, that magnificent high priestly prayer of the Lord Jesus. If this coming year you want to meditate on something that will lift your heart heavenly, John 17 is the place to go.

In John 17, our Lord prays an interesting prayer. Verse 15, I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

Sanctify them through thy truth. Thy word is truth. So the word of God keeps us clean in this present world.

And for their sakes, I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Now, I skipped verse 18 deliberately. Look at what it says.

As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. Every Christian has been commissioned by Jesus Christ to be an ambassador to a lost world. Now, he prayed that way and he spoke that way over in John chapter 20.

In John chapter 20, when our Lord appeared in the upper room with the disciples, when the doors were shut, and he came in and he said to them in verse 19, peace be unto you. He's the first ambassador of peace. And he showed them his hands and his side.

That's the basis of our peace. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, peace be unto you.

There is a peace with God and there is the peace of God. As my father hath sent me, even so send I you. And so you have to be commissioned by the ruler that you represent.

Now, have we been commissioned? Yet we have. Yes, we have. Now, there are many motives for being an ambassador.

Some people might want to be an ambassador because of the prestige that's involved. Somebody might want to be an ambassador because he can work his way into the government and perhaps become president someday. There are many motives for evangelism.

Why should we go out and witness? Well, there are lots of motives. Some people do it because they see the desperate plight of people. They say, I want to do something to help these people.

It's like Paul, when the man from Macedonia said, come over and help us. Paul says the love of Christ constraineth us. His love for Christ and Christ's love in him.

He was constrained. He was compelled because he'd been commissioned by the Lord Jesus Christ. There's no reason for us to argue about it or debate it or try to excuse it.

If we are not representing Jesus Christ as we should in this world, it's because something's happened to our love. We can take all the courses in evangelism. We can fill our pockets with tracts.

But if we don't have that kind of love that made Jesus Christ the first ambassador of peace, we're never going to get the job done. We are commissioned. You are commissioned.

I am commissioned. There's no escaping that. There's a third characteristic of the ambassador, and that's this.

He must represent the ruler. He doesn't represent himself. He's not supposed to represent some vested interest.

If we discover that an ambassador of the United States is using his office to carry on some kind of nefarious deal, we take away his commission. This is why the Apostle Paul says over in 2 Corinthians 4 and verse 5, for we preach not ourselves. Don't do it tonight, but when you have some time, read through 2 Corinthians and mark when Paul uses the word ourselves.

It's an interesting study. We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus, the Lord, and ourselves, your servants for Jesus Christ, for Jesus' sake. In other words, we are not to go out and preach D.L. Moody.

We're not to go out and preach Moody Church. We aren't to go out and preach ourselves. We're to preach Christ.

When an ambassador is sent to a foreign power, he represents the ruler who sends him. And the ruler says to him, now here is the message that I want you to give. Here it is.

And one of the saddest things in all of church history has been when men have refused to give the message that God has given. We have more different messages today. Someone says, I represent Jesus Christ.

If you let me baptize you, you'll go to heaven. If anybody else but myself baptizes you, you'll never make it. Somebody else says, I represent Jesus Christ.

If you come to this table or come to this church, we preach not ourselves. Paul said, if anybody preaches any other gospel than the one God gave to us, let him be accursed. That's strong language.

And he repeats it. I say it again, as I've said before, if anyone, even an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel than the gospel we've preached, let him be accursed. We must represent the ruler who sends us.

This is one of the most wonderful things in the Christian life. We don't have to manufacture anything. We don't have to get up in the morning and say, what can I say today? God has told us what to say.

Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures. He was buried. He arose again the third day, according to the scriptures.

He was seen of witnesses. That's our message. Now, to win the hearing is something else.

To be able to build the bridge between our message of peace and their heart of war. That's something else. But once that bridge is built and once we have the ear of the enemy, we have the message already.

It's too bad when many Christians think they have to think up cute ways, clever ways, novel ways to tell people that they're sinners and that Jesus died for sinners and they can believe and be saved. We don't have to do that. We just simply represent the ruler.

May I add in parenthesis at this point, the ambassador, wherever he is. Represents the ruler and the nation. And people judge the ruler and the nation by him.

This is one of the sad things about being a tourist in a foreign country. Some of you have had this experience. I always try not to look like a tourist.

Really, I don't carry a camera. Mainly because I can't take decent pictures. My wife takes the pictures.

And I always try to look as though I own the place. As though I've been there all of my life. Because there's one thing that has really upset me in traveling in foreign places.

It's because it's Americans who have acted like fools. I've told you about the time we were on the bus in London. And we went up on the second story of the bus.

So we could see the sights as we drove along. And we were in the back and in the front were six or eight American tourists. Boisterously laughing, cursing, talking about gambling and drinking.

And I said to my wife, don't tell anybody you're from the States. I was embarrassed. Now, perhaps it's wrong for us to do this, but we do it.

We judge a nation by the people that we see. We shouldn't do this, but we do. When the ambassador comes to court, when he presents his credentials, when he gives his message, the way he does it reflects upon his ruler and upon his nation.

That's why he should always be dressed in the uniform of his nation. Now, if you want to know what your uniform is as a Christian, read Colossians chapter three. But put off all these things, anger, malice, lasciviousness, all these dirty things, and put on meekness and humbleness of mind and love.

Can you imagine an American ambassador walking around London or Paris or any other capital city looking like a bum? Boy, Time magazine would put that in the front cover. Man of the year. Hobo News would feature it.

We represent our ruler and we give his message and we seek to glorify him. Now, a fourth characteristic comes to us. It's this.

The ambassador has all of his needs provided. Now, if you're going to be an ambassador for the United States, you'd be good to be wealthy before you start. Because there are extra expenses that must break them.

This is why so often wealthy industrialists become ambassadors, because they've got the checkbook and the credit cards to do it with. But basically, the needs of the ambassador are met by the nation that he's representing. That includes protection.

Technically, technically speaking, an American embassy on foreign soil is American soil. There is diplomatic immunity given to ambassadors in foreign countries, and we grant it to them here. Now, if we discover they're involved in some kind of a spy ring or something, we just ask them to leave.

That happened just a day or two ago to one of the United Nations personnel. But we have the provision and the protection of the God that we represent. I was just recently reading a book on discipleship evangelism.

I enjoyed reading it. And once again, it reminded me of something that I've known and you've known. We don't like to admit it.

In one of the chapters, the fellow says this, and Mr. Kennedy makes the same statement in his evangelism explosion material. Most Christians do not witness because of fear. They're afraid of what people will say and they're afraid of what people will do.

Now, what is there to be afraid of? We have all of the armies of heaven behind us. We have the power of the spirit within us. We have the sword of the spirit before us.

We have the God of glory looking down upon us. He has said, my God shall provide all your needs according to his riches and glory. Now get going.

What's there to be afraid of? Well, we're afraid of our reputation, but that's not why we're there. None of us has been commissioned to be an ambassador to build our reputation. Jesus gave up his reputation for us.

He was made of no reputation. They crucified him. Early in his ministry, Charles Spurgeon was lied about.

People were jealous of him and they hated him. And he was just having a great ministry and the devil fought him and he was criticized. Oh, they lied about it.

There were articles in the paper and people even published booklets entitled, Is C.H. Spurgeon a Converted Man? And it almost broke Mr. Spurgeon. His wife had a plaque made from the Beatitudes. Blessed are ye when men revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.

Rejoice and be exceedingly glad for great is your reward in heaven. And she had that put into his rooms. When he woke up in the morning, it's the first thing he saw.

But one day he read an account that just dragged him into the mud and back again, and he went and fell on his face and said, Oh, Lord, why should this happen? Then God said, Why shouldn't it happen? If they've criticized the master, they'll criticize the servant. If they have vilified him, they'll do the same. If they've crucified him, they'll crucify you.

And Spurgeon said, Lord, I have given you my body. I've given you my life right now. I'm going to give you my reputation.

And if you want to take my reputation and my name and allow this to happen to it, and it glorifies Jesus Christ, here it is. You and I aren't sent out as ambassadors to build our reputation. We're sent out as ambassadors to stand and give the message God's given to us, whether people like it or not.

And all of our needs will be provided and God will protect us. Quickly, there's a fifth characteristic of the ambassador. He must keep in touch with headquarters.

Now, this was a difficult thing years ago. When you read about the early days when Benjamin Franklin was sent over to Paris to do some negotiating, it took months to get across the ocean. My, now you can

get in a Concorde in New York and you're over there in what, three hours? And you can pick up a telephone or push a button.

And within a few seconds, you're in contact. The ambassador has to keep contact with headquarters because he's not there on his own. He is there as a representative and an issue comes up and he just can't make a snap decision.

And so he has to pick up the phone and dial headquarters and say, now, what's our position on this? What's our position on that? You and I, as ambassadors have got to keep in touch with headquarters. Since you then are risen with Christ, seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your attention, your affection on things above and not on things in the earth.

Now, Paul's not saying ignore the things on earth. We are on earth. We can't ignore them.

What he's saying is you govern things on earth according to heaven. Keep in touch with headquarters. How many times we as ambassadors, we go ahead and make snap decisions, what to do, where to go, how to spend our money.

Never consult headquarters. Never see what the rule book says. Never pick up the phone, dial heaven, talk to the Lord about it.

Get our instructions from headquarters. If the ambassador is going to be effective, he's got to keep in touch with headquarters. And if he isn't in touch with headquarters, more and more, he's going to get off of what headquarters wants him to do.

This is how Christians get out of the will of God. No time to pray. No time for the word.

The most beautiful thing you and I can do is each morning, get alone with God, open the word and say, Lord, here comes your ambassador. I'm going out where they are after me. Jesus said, I'm sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves.

So here we are ambassadors of peace. We have peace in our hearts. They have war in their heart.

We go forth with truth. They have lies. We have love.

They have hatred. Oh, God, you've got to prepare me. We get in touch with headquarters and God gives us all that we need for that day to get started and to go out and to represent him.

Which leads me to our sixth characteristic of an ambassador. One day he has to give an account of what he's done. He's called home.

He stands before the president or the secretary of state. And he says, well, here are the books. Here they are.

Here's how the money was spent. And here's what we did. And here's the documents.

Here we are. Now, the issue is not his citizenship. They don't call him in to see if he's a citizen.

That's all settled. We don't stand before the judgment seat of Christ to determine whether or not we're going to heaven. That's settled.

If it were not settled, you wouldn't be an ambassador. An ambassador must be a citizen of the country he represents. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, says verse 10, second Corinthians five.

That word appear doesn't mean show up. It means be revealed. It's a frightening word for we must all be revealed before the judgment seat of Christ.

Be exposed. The records are open. Now, not our sins.

I've heard some men preach about the judgment seat of Christ as though it's some sort of an evangelical purgatory. He's not talking about our sins. There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.

He is talking about our ministry, our witness, our lives, and the books are going to be open and we're going to be exposed as we really are. Today, we masquerade quite a bit. We can cover things up with our singing and our speaking.

But on that day, when we stand before the Lord, it's going to be exposure. God's going to see us and God's going to show us. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that everyone may receive.

That word receive means carry away. Carry away as you carry away wages. It's talking about a reward.

Everyone may receive the things done on his body. According to that, he hath done, whether it be good or bad. The word bad here doesn't mean evil.

It means worthless, good for nothing. God is going to open the books. Jesus Christ is going to examine our works and he's going to say, this is worthless.

This is going to last. Oh, how many people are just waste their life, waste time, waste opportunity, waste strength. It's not that they go around doing evil things.

They aren't guilty of burning down buildings and things like that. It's just useless, just worthless. And the ambassador has to give an account of his ministry.

Now, the purpose of our ministry is reconciliation. We aren't out to get people to join Moody Church. We aren't out to get people to think we're the greatest people in the world.

We're out to get people reconciled to God. We have marvelous news to give them. We have good news to share that God's not angry with you.

God loves you and God has sent his son to die for you and he is reconciled to you. Now you be reconciled to God. You turn from your sin.

You trust his son and they'll be at one. That's our ministry. To hear some people and to read some literature, you'd wonder if people know what their ministry is.

Our ministry is to tell people that Jesus Christ is God's bridge and you can be reconciled to God. And we're going to be examined on that basis at the judgment seat of Christ. And I have a suspicion, yea, more than a suspicion, I have a conviction that when I stand before the judgment seat of Christ, many things

that today seem very important to me won't be very important.

Some of the difficulties I've endured that I've said, oh God, why? I won't even think about them. I wonder if I won't be saying to myself, if only I could preach that sermon again. Oh, if only I could speak to that soul again.

The ambassador is called to give an account and someday we're going to give an account. Now I want to add one final characteristic of an ambassador. This is generally speaking in history.

Now don't, you could probably find an exception. But generally speaking in history, before war is declared, the ambassadors are called home. Now, one of these days, God's going to declare war.

Right now he's declared peace. Same pattern in the old Testament. God said to the Jews, now, when you go into Canaan land, you come up to a city, proclaim peace to the city.

And if they accept your terms of peace, fine, make slaves out of them. If they won't accept your terms of peace, wipe them out. Now what's God doing today? God's saying to us, go out and proclaim peace.

Don't declare war, declare peace. If they won't accept your terms of peace, they already are slaves. They're making themselves slaves.

I want to set them free. You see, in the old Testament, if they wouldn't accept the peace, they were killed. In the New Testament, they are already dead because they haven't accepted the peace.

Dead in trespasses and sin. Now, God says to the world today, peace. What did the angels say when Jesus was born? Peace on earth among men of goodwill.

What did Jesus say? Peace I give unto you. My peace I give unto you. Not as the world give.

What does Paul write? We are ambassadors for Christ. We're beseeching you. We're not besieging you.

We're beseeching you. We're persuading you, knowing therefore the terror of the Lord. We persuade men.

Not we manipulate men. Not we propagandize men. Not we exploit men.

We beseech you. We persuade men. Accept God's terms of peace.

Now, what are God's terms of peace? Number one, admit that you're at war. Number two, admit that you're wrong. You're a sinner.

Number three, believe in Jesus Christ, the Savior. And when you do that, those are God's conditions of peace. And he forgives you.

He writes your name down in heaven. And you cease to be a sinner. You become an ambassador.

And you go out and reach somebody. And before God is going to declare war, he's going to call his ambassadors home. I do not make this a test of fellowship.

You've heard me say this. I would never consign a man to some lower level of Christian living if he disagreed with me on this. But I believe that the Bible teaches that God's ambassadors are going to be called home before war is declared in this world.

Now, when we're gone, and that's going to happen in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, when we're gone, then God is free to declare war. And he will. And he will.

Now, if you're one of our Lord's ambassadors, let me close by giving you a very practical suggestion. It's this. I'll suggest it by illustrating it.

When I began my ministry more than a quarter of a century ago, I didn't like to go visiting. I was happy to study and preach in the pulpit. But when it came to knocking on doors or talking to people personally, I was timid.

I was fearful. I was embarrassed. And then one day I heard a preacher say, you are an ambassador.

Nobody's ever embarrassed to be an ambassador. I recall that we were standing in the White House one day. We were taking one of the back door tours of the White House, thanks to a friend.

And a helicopter descended over on the pad, and out came Ambassador Ball of the United Nations. And I want you to know that when he got off of that plane, he's the only real live ambassador I've ever seen. When he got off of that plane and came in the side door of the White House and came right through the room where we were, people moved.

I tell you, doors opened and people were in attention. He didn't come slinking in and say, oh, I'm an ambassador. And so my preacher friend said, you know, when you go knocking on a door, you shouldn't say, oh, I hope nobody's home.

You ought to say, you know, you people who are behind that door, there's an ambassador standing out here. And you ought to be rejoicing because one of God's ambassadors has come to talk to you. You know what that does? It takes, well, it puts some backbone into you.

It puts into you, would you excuse this term, it's the only one I can think of right now. It puts into you a sanctified superiority complex. Not egomania, not pride.

For their sakes, I sanctify myself that they may be sanctified. We are set apart. We are representing him.

We don't have to hang our heads in embarrassment and shame. We can stand straight and tall and say, I'm an ambassador. So if you're one of our Lord's children and your name is written down in heaven, right after your name up in heaven, it says ambassador.

Enjoy it, live it, share it. But if you're not one of his ambassadors, that means you're one of his enemies. And one of these days, the Lord Jesus is going to say, those men who would not have me rule over them, bring them.

And there's going to be judgment. And so my message to those of us who are saved and I preach to myself is this, stand tall and straight, rejoice. You are one of his ambassadors, the highest calling in all the world.

If you're not one of his ambassadors, it's because your name has not been written down in heaven. If your name hasn't been written in heaven, it's your fault. Trust him, believe in him.

Stop fighting him. Just come to him and he'll give you rest. Heavenly Father, forgive us when we have belonged to the secret service.

We have enjoyed, but we haven't shared. Forgive us, Lord, when we've been embarrassed and fearful. Help us, Heavenly Father, to realize what a high and holy and dignified calling we have as your ambassadors.

Thank you for your patience with us. And thank you for your long suffering with a wicked world. Thank you, O God, that you are not willing that any should perish.

This is why you're waiting. And I pray for any here tonight who are perishing, who are on the losing side. Oh, that tonight they might come and trust Christ.

This is our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

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