

**Ephesians 6: 20; “An Ambassador in Chains”, Sermon # 15 in  
the series – “To be Strong in the Lord”, Delivered by  
Pastor Paul Rendall on January 6th, 2012,  
in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

If you were to ask me what an ambassador is, I would tell you that an ambassador is one who represents the government of his country in the capital of a foreign country. But because of his appointment he also represents his king and his government wherever he goes. It would seem to be a tremendous paradox – to put an ambassador in chains. To chain an ambassador is to insult the government which he represents. But such opposition comes to Christ’s ambassadors. I would like to show you this afternoon what your part is, what your work will be, in the embassy of Christ’s kingdom which is situated in this fallen world. His kingdom is being opposed by people who do not want to hear that they are sinful and need to be saved, and brought into the kingdom of light. The god of this world, Satan, will oppose Christ’s kingdom’s advance, and us who promote and support it. This is the proposition of my message to you this afternoon; that even as Paul was an ambassador in chains, so you and I as Christians need to make the most of every imprisoning situation to represent Jesus Christ our Lord. The question that I will put before you now is this. What will it mean for you to be an ambassador in chains? I would like to answer that question in this way. Using the Apostle Paul’s life and his words as our directional model, we must understand 3 things. 1<sup>st</sup> – We must understand who we are representing. 2<sup>nd</sup>- We must understand what to say. And 3<sup>rd</sup> – We must understand the meaning of chains.

**1<sup>st</sup> – We must understand who we are representing.**

In a special manner these verses 19 and 20 refer to the preacher of the gospel, and especially the Apostle Paul. “Pray for me that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains.” The Apostle Paul was appointed by God to be a preacher, and an Apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. Turn with me over to 2 Timothy 1: 8-18. “Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.” “For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.” “Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.” “That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy

Spirit who dwells in us.” “This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.” “The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found me.” “The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day—and you know very well how many ways he ministered to me at Ephesus.”

As we read these verses we are compelled to believe that those who preach the gospel should not be left to suffer alone in the troubles that come to them as a result of preaching the gospel. If they came into trouble, you as a Christian should have the heart and the will to minister to them even during the most difficult parts of their trial. They are representing the truth of the gospel to all men that they might be saved. Fellow believers are to share with their pastor and other orthodox pastors and preachers in their sufferings for the gospel. They are to be like Onesiphorus, who often refreshed Paul and was not ashamed of his chain. There was Paul in Rome, chained to a Roman soldier, but Onesiphorus was not ashamed to go to him. He sought Paul out diligently, and very zealously,. He ministered to Paul in many good ways. He had thought often of Paul before, but now that Paul was in prison, he thought of what he could do to be a friend to him; to show him brotherly love. There was a personal care for Paul and a love which was demonstrated to Paul, when he was in his greatest need of personal encouragement and help, which was very Christ-like. Onesiphorus knew, and you should know that an ambassador is representing God and Christ in speaking the gospel, and therefore he deserves our love and our support in practical ways. All of the saints in the local church can well represent Christ’s love when they will think of that man, support that man, and render service and help to him so that the message of truth might be verified by all those who listen to him.

Look with me over at 2 Corinthians Chapter 2, verse 12. We will see here that this brotherly care and love works both ways. “Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ’s gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia.” “Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.” You see from this description of Paul’s that he preached, and through him the knowledge of salvation in Christ, His dying love and saving grace, was diffused in every place as a fragrant aroma. Thanks be to God that He always leads us in triumph in Christ, he exclaims. But he was also concerned for his brother Titus, and he couldn’t rest in his spirit because he could not find him, and pray with him, and labor together with him. We should learn from this that when a preacher represents Christ, or in a church’s representing Christ, it is always more desirable to work with others, and labor together with others in the work of the Lord. If we are forced to go it alone, we will still find that God “always leads us in His triumph in Christ”. But notice how in verse 14 that Paul does not say, “I diffuse the

fragrance of the knowledge of Christ in every place; he says “God diffuses through us” the knowledge of Christ in every place. We are the aroma of Christ, and we speak in sincerity in the sight of God in Christ. He is speaking not only of himself and the others who went with him personally to preach Christ; he is speaking of all Christians in general as well, for each and every Christian represents Christ by how they live their life.

**Now 2ndly – To be an ambassador we must understand what to say to men, as we walk through this fallen world.**

Look with me over at 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5: 10-21. “Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to the Lord.” “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” “Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.” “For we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you opportunity to boast on our behalf, that you may have an answer for those who boast in appearance and not in heart.” “For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; or if we are of sound mind, it is for you.” “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” “Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh.” “Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.” “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” “Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.” “Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.” “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

Let us remember, as we hear these words, that we have a message to give, and we preach it to ourselves first on a daily basis, and then to others around us. Oh, how we long to have the power to persuade men! But if we would persuade men, we must first be persuaded ourselves of the truth and the power of the gospel. An ambassador for Christ must be persuaded of the truth and the reality of all of the major truths of the gospel and the word of God, and excited spiritually by the Holy Spirit to think upon them. Five things that you should think about in regard to your being an ambassador for Christ. First of all, you must be convinced that there is a judgment coming, and we must all appear at that judgment whether we are a believer or an unbeliever. (Verses 10 and 11a) Many people do not know this, or they do not believe it. 2<sup>nd</sup> – You must believe that you are well known to God.

(Verse 11b and 12) All of your weaknesses, all of your sins which you have repented of and all of your daily heart sins which you are repenting of, and all your desires and motivations for all that you do, and all of your desires for the salvation of people around you, are before Him. 3<sup>rd</sup> – That the right motivation in preaching the gospel is love to Christ first, and then love to the souls of people around you. (Verses 13 and 14a) The love of Christ controls you. 4<sup>th</sup> – that Christ's death, if trusted in, will change all things in your life and the life of others who will trust in Him. (Verse 14b) You have died with Christ. You have died to sin and your past life of living simply for this world and all of its lusts is over. Therefore, you ought to study not to be earthly-minded, but heavenly-minded; of service to God, and not the slave of men's opinions. You have died to sin. You are no longer living for the lusts of men. You are no longer to live for yourself, but for Christ. The focus of your life is the new things of His grace and truth; the new life of obedience to God's holy and precious word.

And 5<sup>th</sup> – That we would remember as we preach, and as we speak on behalf of God to others around us, that God is pleading with them through us. It is not our job to beat people over the head with the truth, or to be guilty of trying to “shove it down their throat”. We are to be those who learn to plead with sinful people. It takes grace to plead; to say the words: Oh, will you not consider this truth of the Bible? Or, oh, will you not consider the importance of your eternal soul? We ought to be those who are able to weep over sinners and tell them of Christ's love, as well as those who are able to warn them of the judgment to come. Both truths are very necessary in our preaching and sharing, but remember that “he who is wise wins souls”. The souls of perishing people are often miserable and they do not know it. And if they do know it, they will try to hide it. They delight to hide and cover up all their unhappiness. They are like flies who flit from one thing to another, trying to find satisfaction and meaning in life. You may be a burning and a shining light, and they may fly to the light of the truth that you are sharing only to be burned up by it because they do not see the love of Christ in you. Your light is shining so brightly that they are killed by the law, but they do not understand that there is grace in Christ. Oh, please preach the sufferings of Christ. The sinful people around you do not have the power to change themselves, or save themselves, do they? Well, the old maxim is true. “More flies are caught with honey than with vinegar.” You can't tone down the implications of the gospel, but you can learn to be winsome as you present it. Do not always be down on unbelieving people around you. They are blind and they cannot see. They are unwilling to come to Christ that they might find life. But, you can give them some of the honey of the gospel and the word of God. In fact the word of God is sweeter than the honey and the honey-comb. “Let your light so shine before men that they see your good works and glorify the Father in heaven.”

The gospel that we share is of the sinless Son of God who voluntarily came into this world and became a man, so that He could become the Savior of sinners; take

their place, become obedient to God's holy law even unto death, the death of the cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name; it is true. But the verse that we are looking at presently says, "...so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him". That is, this is something worth pleading for; Christ died for all who will believe in Him so that they can change, repent, and take up the Bible and learn the way of righteousness; having been justified freely through Christ's grace. Oh, you can and you should, learn how to weep for sinners if you have come to know the joy of sins forgiven and that salvation is not by the law, but by grace. You are so overwhelmed with the love and the mercy of God, that he would save you a sinner. This being so, you long then for the conversion of your relatives and family and people around you who are perishing. You plead for them to come to Christ, because God would plead through you. God is sovereign in the salvation of sinners, but He uses means. The means that He often chooses are for the ambassador to plead.

**Then 3<sup>rd</sup> – To be an ambassador in chains means we understand the meaning of chains.**

....that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak." The meaning of the chains ought to be becoming more obvious by now but perhaps you do not see it. It is perhaps the greatest confirmation of the truth of the gospel and the saving, satisfying power of Christ, that you are content with doing what God commands you to do, even when it leads you to a place where you are hemmed in, or put into prison, or even when it leads you to lay down your life for the gospel. Look with me at Acts 21: 10 with me. "And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea." "When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, so shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." "Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem." "Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart?" "For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." "So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, "The will of the Lord be done." You can see that Paul was ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem that the gospel might continue to go forward. I am saying that sometimes the gospel goes forward in a more powerful way, and God is more glorified in our being bound or imprisoned than if we were free and everything was going the way that humanly we would like to see things go.

In closing, let's look together at Philippians 1: 12-21. "But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the

Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.” “Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.” “What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.” “For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.” “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” You see, there will be imprisoning situations in our lives when we follow Christ fully, and delight to do His will. He will lead us into them, just as he lead Paul into them for His glory. But to have Christ and to do His will by faith will prove to be the best of decisions. Let us remember that our freedom in Christ is the freedom from the condemnation of the law, and it is the freedom to learn to do His will and seek to glorify Him in every imprisoning situation in which we may find ourselves. To God be all the glory.

I will close with a poem of Amy Charmichal from her book Gold Cord. She writes:

*“From prayer that asks that I might be, sheltered from winds that beat on Thee.” “From fearing when I should aspire, from faltering when I should climb higher.” “From silken self, O Captain free, Thy soldier who would follow Thee.”*

*“From subtle love of softening things, from easy choices, weakenings. Not thus are spirits fortified; not this way went the crucified.” “From all that dims Thy Calvary, O Lamb of God deliver me.”*

*“Give me the love that leads the way, the faith that nothing can dismay, the hope no disappointments tire, the passion that will burn like fire.” “Let me not sink to be a clod.” “Make me Thy fuel, O flame of God.”*