

# Ambassadors of the King of kings

*Hope for Tomorrow*

By Bob Vincent

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**Bible Text:** 2 Corinthians 2:17, 2 Corinthians 5:11-21  
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What I want to talk about this morning is the role of the preacher as an ambassador of the King of kings. We see that theme really here as he speaks at the very end when he says in 2 Corinthians 2:17 he says, "On the contrary, we speak before God," we thought about that last week when we thought about the fact that when we gather together in the Lord's name, the Lord is present with us and we are worshiping with the hosts of heaven in the presence of the Triune God, and today we want to focus on the very end of that where he says, "we speak with sincerity like men sent from God," and that theme continues over into chapter 3 and into chapter 4, and then into chapter 5.

I want us to look at the last half of chapter 5 where he describes this, page 1,799, and he says in verse 11, 2 Corinthians 5:11, "Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord." If I could say that one of the largest problems in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, what it is, is the lack of the fear of God. Until we learn to fear God, we will be afraid of everything else. And it's amazing that the fear of God sets us free from other fears. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, it's the beginning of knowledge, it's the starting point of everything and we must say this as we work our way through this passage, that the fact that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone, does not exempt us from the Father's dealing with us in this life with his fatherly chastisement.

Listen, salvation is received by faith alone but never forget this, real faith, saving faith is never alone; it is always accompanied by a changed life, imperfect in this life to be sure but a changed life nonetheless. I'll never forget some confrontations I had with people over the years as a pastor because pastors have a wonderful job most of the time, but then pastors sometimes have to confront people and when you promise to become a member of the Presbyterian Church, you promise to submit yourself to the government and the discipline of the Lord, the leadership of the local church. Why is that important? And I try to explain it to people this way: when you commit yourself to becoming a member of the local church and to submit to the leadership of the church in the Lord, you're not promising, "Well, before I go and buy that Volkswagen, I'm going to go see the elders and ask them to approve the purchase." That's not what's in view. What's in view is when there's a knock on your door, and one of the elders or two of the elders come to see you,

you're promising to open the door and listen to them, and I've had to do that over the years.

And I can remember on more than one occasion. One time I had a lady who came to me for counseling and the reason I counseled so many hundreds of people over the years was one basic reason: I never charged anybody or accepted anything for counseling. So when you're free, they'll knock your door down. Well, this woman was brought to me by a friend and she was a very active leader in a local church, not mine, and she was wanting to divorce her husband and so I was trying to find out if she had a biblical basis for divorce and so I asked her a question, but the Holy Spirit messed up my tongue and it came out the wrong way. What I wanted to ask her was, "Has your husband been faithful to you," but what I said was, "Have you been faithful to your husband?" And there was a pregnant pause, pregnant pauses always give birth to something not too good, and so the other lady said, "I think I should step out."

And at that point when the other lady stepped out, she poured out to me the most amazing story. Here she was a leader in a local church, very active in church and Sunday school, and yet she was involved in one affair after another, from one-night stands to two month stands. I never heard such a tale in my life. Well, actually I've heard that more than one time. But when I finished, I challenged her to commit her life to Jesus Christ and to become a Christian and she said to me, "Oh, I'm a Christian."

I said, "Really?"

She said, "Oh yes, on such-and-such a date, I walked down the aisle, I prayed the sinner's prayer and I became a Christian and I've always been told never to doubt."

Well, let me tell you something, if your life today is radically the same as it's always been before you became a Christian, you're not a Christian. Think about it. When Jesus Christ comes to a person and saves that person, he doesn't simply declare that person righteous by means of that person's faith, but he begins a work in that person's heart by the Holy Spirit to change that person.

As the Sunday school ditty put it, if you're saved and you know it, then your life will surely show it. Now I want to say it's imperfect and we all at times do things we should not do, even deliberately and knowingly and we can go through a season of spiritual coldness and spiritual deadness but we can never utterly fall away if we know the Lord and have ever been born again because this Holy Spirit keeps us. So, if you're saved and you know it, then your life will surely show it sooner or later.

So, she's telling me this tale that she's a real Christian. Now I think she actually was a real Christian because this is what happened next.

I pulled my Bible out, this was in my study at the church on a night, and I began to read for her 1 John 3, "Hereby we know the children of God and the children of the devil," and as I read those words to her, she came under powerful conviction of sin and she realized

that she either had never become a Christian or she was a Christian with a terrible stronghold of adultery in her life that she needed to deal with then and there, and the amazing thing is she did deal with it then and there and she followed what I told her to do. She later met with her husband and confessed her sins to her husband, and she amended her life, and so far as I know, her life has reflected that. I haven't seen her in decades, but her life has reflected the fact that she really did repent that night.

Now was she a Christian before that? I can't say absolutely but I can say this, she did truly bring forth fruit of her repentance beginning that night. If you're saved and you know it, then your life will surely show it. God's Spirit deals with people. He will not allow a believer to live on and on and on in sin. He will work by his Holy Spirit to change that person and let me give a warning, if we do not change when we are warned by the Holy Spirit internally by conviction, then God in his providence works to bring us into situations where we cry out to him.

I love to tell self-deprecating stories and for the young disciples, that means I like to make fun of myself.

So one day in a particularly idiotic moment on a very cold day, having taken my wife for a motorcycle ride -- and you will be pleased to know I no longer own a motorcycle -- I took our canoe by myself and I allowed the dogs to get in it, three dogs, and we went canoeing and I had on motorcycle boots and a motorcycle jacket, and everything was fine but the dogs were having convulsion fits because I think sometimes dogs are smarter than people. So, I let them out and I went around this point -- I live on a lake, and when I came back around, I was trying a particular technique of not having to row on both sides.

So, I had the boat up somewhat out of the water in the front and guess what happened? The wind popped the canoe and it flipped over and the dogs were onshore, and they were barking and howling and yelping but none of them volunteered to go in and get me. So, I went under water and it was icy cold and the first thing I did as I burst through the surface was to holler out, "Help me, Jesus!"

And he did, he put a little bit of sense in my head and I grabbed that canoe and I held onto it and I kicked with my feet until I got to a point in the lake where I had solid ground and I got to shore and I was okay.

I'm going to say this, that in your life and in my life when we ignore the promptings of the Holy Spirit to deal with things, sooner or later he's going to bring us to a spot where we're going to cry out, "Help me, Jesus!" because he wants us to call on his name, because he wants us to ask him for help. And he rescued me out of a very terrible situation because I could easily have drowned in there because I had on so many clothes and I was so water-logged and it was so cold that when I got to my house and got in the shower, I had to turn on all cold water because anything but cold water burned me. I had gradually to increase the heat.

I've got to rank that as one of the top 10 stupid things I've done in my life, so here's a warning to young disciples: Don't ever do something that stupid. But the point of my illustration is simply to say, God will engineer the things in your life to bring you to a point where you say, "Help me, Jesus!" and that's when he will help you, he will help you to deal with whatever it is in your life that is displeasing him and dishonoring him.

What happens when we don't do that? Well, I made a promise to the elders that during the week if somebody dies, I'll drive up and do the funeral. That's not a joke. God takes his own home when his own stubbornly, stubbornly, stubbornly hold onto sin in their lives in spite of the internal warning of the Holy Spirit, in spite of circumstances in life. Why? Because God wants you holy and happy. I think there's something about that in the little child's catechism. Holy and happy. Happiness and holiness go together.

So as we think about it, the role of the preacher is to bring people to understand that we have business with the King of kings as we look again at page 1,799, verse 11, "Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord," I pray that you know what it is to fear the Lord, and let me say what the fear of the Lord is not -- because First John makes it plain, that perfect love casts out fear. It's not a sense of terror, it's not saying, "I don't know whether I'm going to go to heaven or hell."

I want you to know that you can know that you're on your way to heaven and you can know it today on the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of September 2019. You can know it. How can you know it? Because God's word gives us exceeding great and precious promises and when we lay hold of the promises of God by faith alone, God will do what we ask him to do.

What is the one promise that we know absolutely God will always do? Let me say what it isn't. I don't know ultimately whether what the doctor has said about my eye is going to come true. The doctor told me to come back in two months, that it'll be healed by then, and I'm praying every day that God will heal me of the double vision, but I don't have an absolute promise from God that God is going always to heal me.

God has given promises about meeting our financial needs and I've seen God do incredible things for Sandy and me in our finances over the years, but I don't always know that when I pray for something material that I'm going to get what I'm asking for.

But I know one thing and I know it absolutely, it's absolutely true, if today you will call on the name of the Lord and ask him to save you, ask him to forgive your sins, ask him to change your heart, ask him to give you a new heart, he will hear your prayer and you will be saved. Now assurance is not always instantaneous. Sometimes time passes before we have that deep assurance in our hearts that what we ask the Lord to do for us, he's done for us, but I'm telling you the promise of God is still there.

So, the fear of the Lord does not mean that I'm afraid I'm going to go to hell. I'm not afraid I'm going to go to hell. The Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross for me to shut the gaping doors of hell. Jesus paid it all, "All to him I owe." He sealed the doors of hell and he has opened the doors of heaven for me and I know that and I'm simply saying that as

you sit under the preaching of the word of God, as you seek the Lord day by day and week by week, the Lord will give you that assurance that I know whom I have believed, as the choir sang, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. So, there's assurance. The fear of the Lord does not mean that you doubt your salvation and that you are afraid you're going to go to hell.

You know, I had an interesting experience this week. Two of my grandsons' other grandfather died this week and he died with great assurance that he knew the Lord Jesus Christ. And his funeral is this coming Saturday in Alexandria and he had all six of his grandchildren there, his two daughters and his two sons-in-law, one of whom is my son, and he died in great assurance that he knew that as he closed his eyes, he was going to be with Jesus. Now, not every Christian has such a deep assurance of salvation, but God wants you to have that.

So, when we speak here of the fear of the Lord, we're not talking about the fact that we're doubting God's goodness, doubting God's love, we're simply aware of the fact that whom the Lord loves, he chastens and he spans or scourges every child whom he receives. If you are a child of God, you will know God's spanking from time to time and, believe me, I've been spanked multiple times.

So knowing the fear of the Lord, what is it that he's really thinking about, he says as we persuade men, he's thinking about the fact that God, for those who have never repented and never will repent, for those who've never believed and never will believe, God is a consuming fire. And so, the picture of the preacher that we're about to see here in 2 Corinthians 5 is an ambassador of the King of kings, warning people of the dangers that lie ahead and so we read on, we try to persuade men. I want to say that preaching is a supernatural event in which the Holy Spirit works through the written word of God to apply it to people's lives. He uses human instruments, frail instruments as in chapter 4, we have this treasure in earthen vessels.

And he says next, "What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience." He says in verse 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. If we are 'out of our mind,' it is for the sake of God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you." Let me say something, earnest Gospel preaching will sometimes strike a person who doesn't know the Lord, that the guy that's speaking is out of his mind.

I remember one Sunday I was preaching on hell, and I actually broke down and cried in the pulpit. Why did I break down and cry? I was so moved by the reality of the fact that the entire human race is going to end up in one place or another in eternity, heaven or hell, that I wept. One of my elders was so terribly offended because he had invited a friend of his to come that Sunday to hear me preach and he really gave me a tongue-lashing and all I could say was, "I'm sorry. I could not control myself. When I thought about the fact that there is a judgment and that those who have not repented are going to end up in a Christ-less eternity, it moved me so much emotionally that I wept." By the

way, God brought that visitor and his wife to Christ and the interesting thing is that after that lady was left as a widow, she founded a ministry to unwed mothers. So, God uses his word and he uses his word even when the preacher may seem as if he's crazy, so if we are out of our mind, it's for the sake of God. If we are in our right mind, it's for you.

Now look at verse 14, "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. 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." Verse 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." And then he says and see how we're on this theme today, verse 17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ." In Christ. You've come to the Lord Jesus Christ. You stand before God in Christ. Christ is in you and you're in Christ.

He is a new creation. "The old has gone, the new has come." What does that mean? If we compared Scripture with Scripture and we don't have time this morning, but we would understand that for the believer, our judgment day has come and gone. Again, I'm going to have to give an account to the Lord for the things I've done in my body one day, but my destiny is not in doubt at that point. It's about ultimately perfecting what God has done in me in this life. But for the believer, we need to understand something, the day of judgment, in the sense of the judgment of heaven or hell took place in the year 30 AD, when the Lord Jesus Christ hung on that cross and when he cried out and said, "It is finished!" At that point our judgment day came and left because that's when our sins were judged on the cross.

The new creation began at that point and the new creation begins in the individual believer the moment that he or she puts his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ And then reading on, verse 18, "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." What is that? Well, in this world if you want to be reconciled to somebody, you have to do something. It reminds me of another word that I won't even say today, well, I guess I'll say it, but I don't want to, I'll explain it another time. The word is a big, big word for young disciples, propitiation. Propitiation means to satisfy the anger of somebody that's upset with us.

I remember riding down the highway near the church that I used to preach at for 40 years, and there was a flower shop and from time to time there was a sign in front of that flower shop that said, "Just how mad is she?"

So, in order to get rid of the anger of the spouse or the girlfriend or whomever, the implication was go buy some flowers, and the madder she was, the bigger the bouquet. That is an offering to take away wrath. That's propitiation and in order to be reconciled, the person was supposed to do something. So, if we're going to be reconciled to somebody we have to do something.

Now this is the amazing thing about the ministry of reconciliation, in the Lord Jesus Christ, God is the one that's bought the flowers even though he's the offended party. He's

provided the sacrifice to remove the guilt of our sin, expiation, and to take away the wrath of God that's legitimately there for our sin, propitiation. He has done the work of reconciliation and what he's done is to charge the church with the ministry of reconciliation and this is what he says, then, in the next verse, he says, verse 19, "that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them." Wow, that's an amazing thing. One of these days, if God permits, I'm going to preach on receiving a sin credit card but not today. What is it? The moment that you or I come to the Lord Jesus Christ, God no longer charges our sins against us because he's already judged our sins in the person of his Son when the Lord Jesus died on the cross, and that's the deal. He has bought the flowers. He is the one who was offended, but he's paid the price to take away that offense.

Then he says in the next sentence of verse 19, "And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation." The message of reconciliation is not what you and I have to do, the message of reconciliation is what God has done for us in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. We receive that gift with the empty hand of faith.

Now we read further, and he says, verse 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." And then he says in verse 21, I love this verse. This is a verse that every believer ought to try to commit to memory, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

What is he saying? There are a lot of fine folks in the world and I'm sure Texarkana is full of them -- but look particularly at the first self-righteous church in Pascagoula. Have you ever seen that video? The Mississippi squirrel revival? Listen, churches are full of people who if we really knew them, we'd be shocked. We would be, and believe me as a pastor, I've been shocked many times.

Listen, there is only one person in the entire history of our planet who never sinned; it's the Lord Jesus Christ. He is sinless. He is perfect in every way. Absolutely. He did not have a sinful nature; whereas all of us are born with a sinful nature. Scripture says the wicked are estranged from the womb, speaking lies as soon as they're born. "All I want is attention but I'm going to scream as if you stuck me with a diaper pin."

The wicked are estranged from the womb, speaking lies as soon as they're born and, you know, as we look at Bible history, there's not a single solitary hero in the whole of the Bible but one, the Lord Jesus Christ. But God made him, the Lord Jesus Christ who never sinned, to become not a sinner, Jesus was not a sinner but to become sin for us. Do you understand what happened when he was hanging on the cross? Why he cried out, "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani*," or in Aramaic which is probably how he said it, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani*, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Because God the Father did forsake his Son at that moment on the cross, when he made him sin on your behalf and my behalf. He drank the cup of cursing that we would never have to drink it. That's why the moment that the Lord Jesus gave up his spirit on the

cross, at that moment the veil of the temple, from top to bottom, was ripped apart because at that point the way into the very presence of God, the *Kadosh HaKodashim*, the Holy of Holies was opened for us because God the Father made him, the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal, perfect Son of God, to become sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

What does that mean? Well, it's a double sense. God puts to your account and to my account his own righteousness, that is, God, the Lord Jesus Christ whose perfect life, his active obedience in obeying the law of God, and his passive obedience in submitting to the cross, is put to your account and to my account, and therefore when God looks at us, he doesn't see us as we are, he sees us as perfect and as righteous. And then he does something else, he begins to work in us by his Holy Spirit so that what he has already done and already pronounced for us begins, little here and little there, to become true as we begin to manifest a changed life in Christ. But you see this ministry of reconciliation is charged to the church to represent Christ to the world and to persuade people.

So, as I stand before you today, I stand before you as an ambassador of the King of kings. It's as if the city is closed up and not allowing the King to enter and we say to those who control the gates of the city, "Open the gates. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is the King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. He is the King of glory."

Here's where it is, as Christ's own ambassador having no words of my own but commissioned only to tell you what Christ himself has said, I'm saying to you: The King is coming. Christ has died. Christ has risen. Christ will come again. I don't know when, I don't know the day nor the hour, not even the Lord Jesus Christ knows the day and hour when he's going to come, but he is coming and now is the day of salvation, now is the opportunity.

So as Christ's own ambassador standing before you this morning, my beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, if you do not know him, please come to him, please surrender your will to him, please cast your righteousness aside as a filthy garment and embrace the righteousness of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. He will save you because the King is coming.

May we pray.

*Lord, we ask you in the name and the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, if there's one person here today who does not yet truly know the Lord Jesus Christ, would you grant that this day, the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of September 2019, would be the day of crossing from darkness into light, of casting aside the sin-stained garments of our own righteousness and being clothed in the righteousness of Christ. Lord, and we pray for our world, our world right here on Robinson Road, our world in Texarkana, Texas and Arkansas, and in the four states that are near here, Lord, that people will come to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ, that you would give each of us*

*a burden to take this ministry of reconciliation to the world. Lord, help us. Lord, have mercy. Bless us, we pray in the name of Jesus.*

And let me say to you as I pray, if you would like to talk to me about your relationship with Christ, I would love to talk with you after the service today.