

2 Corinthians 5:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

Analysis

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ—Hyper Christou oun presbeuomen (ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ οὖν πρεσβεύομεν). Presbeuo (πρεσβεύω) means "to serve as ambassador, represent officially." Hyper Christou (ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ, "on behalf of Christ") indicates representative authority—ambassadors speak for absent kings. We represent heaven's kingdom on hostile earth, bearing Christ's message with His authority. Oun (οὖν, "therefore") connects to vv. 18-19—since God entrusted reconciliation ministry, we function as His official envoys.

As though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God—Hōs tou Theou parakalountos di' hēmōn, deometha hyper Christou, katallagēte tō Theō (ώς τοῦ θεοῦ παρακαλοῦντος δι' ἡμῶν, δεόμεθα ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ, καταλλάγητε τῷ θεῷ). Parakalountos (παρακαλοῦντος, present participle of παρακαλέω, "entreating, beseeching") suggests urgent appeal, not casual invitation. God Himself pleads di' hēmōn (δι' ἡμῶν, "through us")—stunning condescension: Creator beseeching creatures. Deometha (δεόμεθα, "we beg, we beseech") intensifies—Paul begs on God's behalf. Katallagēte (καταλλάγητε, aorist passive imperative, "be reconciled!") is urgent command—accept reconciliation God offers. Passive voice: humans cannot reconcile themselves to God; they can only receive reconciliation God accomplished.

Historical Context

Ancient ambassadors represented emperors with full authority—rejecting ambassador was rejecting sender. Paul's ambassadorial claim was audacious: he spoke with divine authority, not personal opinion. Corinthian critics questioned this authority; Paul insists his message carries God's own voice. This established gospel preaching's authority through church history.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. Do you take seriously your identity as Christ's ambassador—that you represent Him wherever you go?
2. How does God "beseech" unbelievers through you—is your life and witness a visible, urgent plea for reconciliation?
3. Who in your sphere of influence needs to hear "Be reconciled to God"—what holds you back from speaking?

Interlinear Text

ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ οὖν πρεσβεύομεν ὡς τοῦ θεῷ
for Christ Now then we are ambassadors as though G3588 God
G5228 G5547 G3767 G4243 G5613 G2316

παρακαλοῦντος δι' ἡμῶν· δεόμεθα ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ
did beseech you by us we pray for Christ
G3870 G1223 G2257 G1189 G5228 G5547

καταλλάγητε τῷ θεῷ
be ye reconciled to God
G3588 G2316
G2644

Additional Cross-References

Luke 14:23 (Parallel theme): And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

Ephesians 6:20 (Parallel theme): For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Malachi 2:7 (Parallel theme): For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.

2 Corinthians 5:11 (References God): Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

John 20:21 (Parallel theme): Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

2 Corinthians 3:6 (Parallel theme): Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

2 Corinthians 6:1 (References God): We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

1 Thessalonians 4:8 (References God): He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.

Luke 10:16 (Parallel theme): He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.

Job 22:21 (Parallel theme): Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee.