

## **Dr. Ayo Adewuya, 2 Corinthians, Session 6, 2 Corinthians 5, Ambassadors for Christ**

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This is Dr. Ayo Adewuya in his teaching on 2 Corinthians. This is session 6, 2 Corinthians 5, Ambassadors for Christ.

We're looking at 2 Corinthians chapter 5, and as we start again, we want to ask some basic questions because these questions help us to think through the chapters as we look at them bit by bit and carefully.

Why do we do what we do? In other words, what is our motivation for what we do? These questions are so important; they're very pertinent and relevant to the ministry today. It's not good enough just to do the right things. We must do the right things for the right reasons.

Despite the numerous troubles that Paul faced, he was relentless in pursuing the ministry to which he was called. His zeal never flagged. He just kept going. The keyword is motivation.

Motivation in the sense of right motives. When we come to chapter 4, chapter 5 rather, Paul builds upon the conclusion in chapter 4, verses 17 to 18, and he provides further details of his motivation for ministry. Paul, without any doubt, was fully convinced of a future life that is devoid of suffering and pain.

It's a life without change, a life where death has lost its power. So, he had an abounding hope of resurrection out of heaven. Not only that, Paul was sure of future divine judgment, something we don't like to talk about today or we don't want to hear.

We see that in verses 9 to 10. So, in the face of the coming judgment, he had incredible confidence. For his relationship with God was right.

Number three, Paul was persuaded that the reconciliation of humanity to God was God's initiative, motivated by love and manifested in and effected by Christ Jesus. So, as we come to chapter 5, we're looking at ambassadors for Christ. No passage in 2 Corinthians has probably prompted more discussion than chapter 5. So, there is a diversity of scholarly interpretations, but some things are very clear.

What Paul says here is directly related to the part of chapter 4, where Paul pointed out that even in the midst of affliction, perplexity, and persecution, through divine consolation, there was through divine consolation the hope of glory. So, in other words, even in the presence of the ravages of mortality and death, there was,

through divine intervention, the operation of life. That's what we saw in chapter 4, verses 10 to 12.

So, this twofold theme of life in the midst of death, glory after suffering, is what Paul continues in chapter 5, verses 1 to 10. Paul now clearly specifies the sources of divine comfort afforded the believer who faces the possibility of imminent death. Basically, what we see is number one, the certainty of the future possession of a spiritual body.

Number two, the present possession of the spirit as the pledge of ultimate transformation. And, of course, we see in number three that the knowledge that death brings begins a walk in the realm of sight and involves departure to Christ's immediate presence. I want to read from chapter 5, for we know that if our earthly tent, if the earthly tent we live in, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

For in this tent, we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling. If indeed, when we have taken it off, we will not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan under our burden because we wish not to be unclothed but to be further clothed so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the spirit as a guarantee. So, we are always confident, even though we know that while we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight.

Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So, whether we are at home or away, we aim to please him. All of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil.

Verses 1 to 10 basically show Paul's confidence in the face of death. So, Paul starts on a note of confidence. We know.

We know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, it implies that the Corinthians acknowledge what Paul is about to say. We know, but it is more than that. It indicates Paul's unwavering conviction and settled belief that the Christian will eventually be done with the frailty and suffering of his or her present experience.

Now listen, Paul says we know. He does not say we think. He doesn't say we hope.

He does not say we assume, but he says we know. What a bold statement. You see, as Paul has previously said in chapter 4, verses 1 to 15, believers can face any trial in this life because of the hope of resurrection.

So, what Paul says here is directly related to what we read in chapter 4, and apparently, it seems that for the first time in his apostolic career, Paul begins to reckon seriously with the possibility, now a probability, of his death before the return of Christ. Now if we judge by 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 verse 15 and verse 17, and 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verse 51, it seems that Paul had expected to be among those Christians living when Christ returned. But now, as a result of his recent devastating encounter with death in Asia, which we read in chapter 1, verses 8 to 11, he realized that he was likely to die before the parousia, that is, the coming or the manifestation of Christ.

Though he always entertained the hope of survival, he was always waiting. And if I may just say, you know, you understand when you have a hope like that, it affects the way you live. When we look forward to that, everything changes.

And so, Paul begins to think about it. He says, we know in the earthly tent. Now, remember that Paul was a leather walker.

Paul was a leather walker whose duties would include tent making. So, Paul naturally likened his present body to an earthly tent. So, he brought that imagery from his profession, from his work.

He likened the present body to an earthly tent that might at any moment be dismantled or destroyed. This would simply mark the termination of the process of weakness and decay already at work in his body. But, and this is a big but, this possibility of the earthly tent being dismantled did not daunt him at all.

Why? Because he was assured of, he was an assured recipient of a permanent heavenly house. Look at this one, verse two, for in this tent, we groan, longing to be close to our heavenly dwelling. Look at the now and not yet in that passage.

Now, we live in a tent. The not yet, we live, we have a building. A tent contrasted with a building.

Not only that, one is earthly, the other one is eternal. One is heavenly, rather. So, in terms of permanence, one is a tent, and the other is a building.

In terms of environment, one is earthly, and the other is heavenly. In terms of, look at it, one is destructible, one is eternal. In terms of its structure, its solidity, it says, for in this tent, we groan, longing to be close to our heavenly dwelling.

One is human-made, and the other one is made by God. Look at the difference. Very, very different.

It likens the present human body to a foldable tent that is to be replaced with a building, a clear allusion to the resurrection body that Paul previously mentioned in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. I mean, that great resurrection chapter, if we just look at it very briefly, 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 38, to understand what Paul is saying here, let's appeal to what he said earlier on about resurrection. This passage is very important because if we don't have chapter five of 2 Corinthians, we know less about what happens when a person dies.

I mean, apart from 1 Corinthians 15, this is the only passage that tells us explicitly what happens after the believer dies. 1 Thessalonians simply tells us about going away with the Savior. 1 Corinthians chapter 15, looking at a few verses there, verse 38 to begin with.

In verse 38, God gives it a body as he has chosen unto each kind of its own body. Verse 40, there are celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies, but the glory of the celestial is one and the glory of the terrestrial. Celestial means heavenly, and terrestrial means earthly.

So, you can say the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another. Verse 42, so it is with the resurrection of the dead, what is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. In verse 44, it is sown as a physical body but is raised up as a spiritual body.

If there's a physical body, there's also a spiritual body. Then, verse 46 says, here, but it is not the spiritual, which is false, but the physical, and then the spiritual. Verse 48, as was the man of the dust, so are those who have the dust.

And as is the man of heaven, so are those of heaven. So, Paul continues to compare and contrast the earthly with the and then beginning from verse 52, beginning from verse 52, he says, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, for the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable and we shall be changed. For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality.

When the perishable puts on the imperishable and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: death is swallowed up in victory. So, the present tense body that gradually ages and wears out will be taken down and folded up when we die. At the return of Christ and the resurrection of the faithful, we receive our new bodies, and we can say at that point that our salvation is complete.

So, you find Paul talking about our bodies, talking about confidence in the face of death. Verses 2 to 4 belong together, and verse 4 actually expands verse 2 while verse 3 is a kind of parenthesis. You see, one reason for Paul's assurance of his future

accusation of a resurrection body was the raising up of the temple of Christ's body, alluded to by the phrase not built with hands.

And what does he say? He says in verse 4, for while we are in this tent, we groan under our burden. We groan. The passage does not define the precise nature of the groaning, but the immediate context and Paul's thought in Romans 8, 19 to 23 and Philippians 3, 20 to 21 suggests it was his sense of frustration with the limitations and disabilities of mortal existence, knowing as he did that he was destined to possess a spiritual body perfectly adapted to heaven's ecology.

So, Paul sought liberation, not a sought liberation from the imperfection of present embodiment, from bondage to decay, nor from any and every form of corporeality. No, that's not it. After all, it is to Paul that Christian theology owes the doctrine of the spiritual body.

But not all the Corinthians shared Paul's view of the Christian's destiny. There were some who thought that resurrection was in the past, accomplished spiritually already and corporative for all believers at the resurrection of Christ. So having in mind these people that we call Proto-gnostics, you know, the Gnostics who believe in knowledge and all that, who were dualistic, who denied any future bodily resurrection, but envisaged disembodied immortality, Paul tells them, we do not want to be unclothed, but to be clothed over, to be overclothed without heavily dwelling.

Very, very important. You see, the present, the believer's present existence, is punctuated with suffering and with pain. The present age we live in is characterized by groaning.

In fact, Paul says that the creation groans even now, waiting for redemption. We groan. But listen, we do not groan as hopeless people.

It is a groaning that is accompanied by a longing. And it was not a longing just for death. Paul's hope and groaning were not for death because death is not the hope of the Christian.

Many of us, unfortunately, do not earnestly long for heaven as Paul did. Instead, we're trying to make the world a better place, maybe a better place from which people can get to heaven more easily. That's what we want to make the world to be.

Perhaps it is because we're so comfortable on earth. Now, it's not that we should seek out affliction, but neither should we dedicate our lives to the pursuit of comfort. You know, one of the things in the American Constitution is that we should be in the pursuit of happiness.

Unfortunately, nobody ever catches up with it. We pursue happiness, but you tell me, the millionaire, the billionaire, doesn't catch up with it in pursuit of happiness. That's why we're not in pursuit of happiness, because we have joy.

There's a difference between joy and happiness. Pursuit of happiness. Happiness belongs to happenings.

It depends on happenings, events, and things around you. But joy comes from knowing the Lord and having the Lord inside you—real joy inside us.

Maybe we're too comfortable living in the world, and as a result, we don't love heaven. There's nothing wrong with honestly desiring heaven. Nothing.

There's something right about being able to agree with Paul and say, we've grown. Why was Paul, as it is true of all Christians, in the physical body, away from the Lord? Not all Corinthians agree with Paul, we know.

He tells us in verse 5, he said, for this purpose, this very purpose, for which God had made better, with God is prepared. The believer is defined by verse 4 as the transformation of the mortal body. So, verse 5b tells us how it's going to happen.

When we say verse 5b, we mean the latter part of verse 5. It indicates how the preparation took place. God has prepared the Christian believer for resurrection and transformation by giving us the spirit as a pledge and as a deposit. Undoubtedly, the crucial word in this verse is pledge, *arabon*, which had two basic meanings in commercial usage.

Number one, it means a pledge or guarantee, which differs in kind from the final payment, but it renders it obligatory. You know, sometimes you want to buy a house, or you want to buy something, and then they tell you to bring earnest money, that is carbon, to make sure that you're really interested in buying it, and they tell you it's not refundable. So if you've deposited thousands of dollars and it's not refundable, you better make sure before you deposit it, that you really want it.

But that's exactly what Paul is using here, *arabon*, a guarantee, which means the final payment becomes obligatory, or it means a partial payment, first interment, that requires further payments but gives you, the payee, a legal claim to the goods in question. You see, so Paul says God has given us a pledge, but the question is, how can the spirit be God's pledge of the Christian's inheritance? You see, no doubt, through his empowering our daily recreation and the future effecting of our resurrection is what is working in us. The present work of the Holy Spirit prefigures and guarantees the future completion of the work of God.

So, in verses six to eight, Paul continues with the assured hope of his accusation of a glorified body, and having a pledge of that transformation in the presence and activity of the spirit, he was confident with that assured hope. Because we realize that we are absent from the Lord's presence as long as this body forms our residence, it is our preference to leave our home in this body and take up residence in the presence of the Lord.

Remember, he said in Philippians chapter one, I'd like to be with you, and I'd like to depart. He said, but well, I think it's good I will be with you. He said, for to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

I was torn between two. Yes, Paul says, yes, we've grown. We would like to leave our present residence and take up residence in the presence of the Lord.

But that is not yet the time. Residence in the body is the absence of the Lord. That is what is implied in verse six is what Paul now states explicitly in verse eight.

Verse six: we're always confident, even though we know that while we're in body, at home in the body, we're away from the Lord, but we walk by faith. Now, listen, verse seven is a passage we also quote regularly. We walk by faith, we don't walk by sight.

Now, verse seven is supposed to correct a possible misinterpretation of verse six. If the clause we're away from the Lord is interpreted in an absolute sense, then present fellowship with Christ would appear illusory, and then it will mean that mortal embodiment is an impediment to spirituality. So, what we read in 2 Corinthians chapter five is actually a correction.

So, those deductions must not be made. So, Paul says, we do, in fact, still walk in the realm of faith, not of sight. So, to the believer, the Lord is present, not to sight, but to faith.

Any special separation we have with the Lord is temporary, it is not final. That's what Paul is talking about there. Then, he goes on to say in verse nine that whether we're at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

Verse nine basically follows verses one to eight in much the same way as an ethical imperative. What do we mean by that? You see, Paul will normally give some teachings, and then he comes with some imperatives and will say, in light of this, in light of what I have said, this is the way you should live. That is an ethical imperative.

So, he's now saying that, in light of what I've just said, being absent from the Lord and then waiting to meet him, in light of that, you have to live in such a way and make it your aim to please him. So, after stating those doctrinal truths in verses one

to eight, Paul now begins to show the implications in verse nine. This, the implication of what is just said, is constant ambition is to please Christ.

To please Christ. His awareness that death will terminate his relative exile from Christ and inaugurate his walking in the realm of sight in the presence of the Lord demands that he should please him. So, to entertain the hope of person-to-person communion with Christ after death naturally prompts the aspiration of gaining acceptance in his eyes before and after death.

Now, we need to understand that we need to make it our aim to please God. Our supreme aim should be to please God. You remember the Westminster Catechism, which asked the question, what is the chief end of man? And it says the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

If you want to enjoy him forever, you have to glorify him here in the world, in our mortal existence. We have to make it our aim to please him, to walk with him, and make that our goal every day. Do you realize something? Now, when you really love somebody, you don't want to offend that person.

When you really love somebody, you want to make sure you don't want to offend that individual. And that's important. You're almost afraid, in a sense, to offend that person because you treasure the relationship, and you don't want anything to ruin that relationship.

That's the same thing. We make it our aim to please the Lord. In preaching, we make it our aim to please the Lord.

In living, we make it our aim to please the Lord. Every aspect of our life should be our desire, our goal, and our longing, and I just want to please you. And you know, sometimes, that means you have to displease someone.

Not that you are looking for somebody to displease, but naturally, it happens because the value of someone may be completely different from God's values, and at that point, you have to make a choice. He said we make it our aim to please the Lord. He then goes on to say that all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

The judgment seat of Christ here basically describes the Bema seat. The seat where people are given the rewards, given the reward, because what we do in the body has moral significance and has eternal consequences. To be conformed to Christ's glorious body in the next life, we must be conformed to His image and character in this life.

He talks about receiving, appearing before the judgment seat of Christ, requiring that we live a life that pleases Him. And remember, we said, it's the Bema seat where



people receive their rewards. At that point in time, it's not our salvation that has been examined, not at all.

God is going to reward us. He's going to see about the things we've done, whether good or evil. Now, it should be whether good or evil.

There are evil things as we know them, but they are worthless. Whether they are worthless or whether they're important or not important. You see what we mean? Unlike many people pleasers, for Paul, nothing was more important than pleasing the Lord Jesus Christ, who had commissioned him.

That means that even when Peter is wrong, he's able to confront him and say, Peter, you are wrong at this level. I mean, we see that in Galatians. He's able to tell him, no, yeah, I know you're an apostle before me.

He didn't say it exactly that way, but if you were there at the conversation, he would have said, yeah, I know you are with the Lord, but at this point, you got this wrong. He was not hell-bent on preaching, in pleasing the Jerusalem church, not at all. Although Paul is not completely devoid of the hope of being honored by the Corinthians, his proclamation of the gospel and his entire life were devoted to pleasing the Lord rather than winning honor and accolades from people.

You know, today, people like being praised. After a service, the preacher is waiting for people to say, that was a great message. That was fantastic.

That was great. Now, if people come to you and say that, thank God for that, but let's not get swollen-headed, but let's know that if the glory belongs to God, you know when you read what Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter four, when he says, what do you have that you are not given? And if you are given, why do you behave as if you are not given? Let's know that whatever successes we have in ministry, whatever successes, whatever victories we have are all due to God, and we should make sure that we are pleasing God. We should not be so much carried away with the honor that people give.

For all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. While in the body, we must act in such a way so that we'll be pleasing to him at judgment. We shall be seen for what we are.

You see, all pretensions will be gone. All masks will be taken away. All believers will be stripped of all disguises, masks, and pretensions.

What we do in the body has moral significance. So, we need to make sure that we are conformed to the image of Christ. We all must come together.

In this context, Paul is thinking primarily, if not exclusively, of the Christian's obligation to give account of ourselves. Appearance before Christ's tribunal is the privilege of Christians. It is concerned with the assessment of our works, of course, indirectly with our character, not with the determination of our destiny.

It is concerned here with reward, not with status. That's very, very important to make that distinction. And then, we see Paul's motivation going to verses 12 to 17.

Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade others. But we ourselves are well known to God, and I hope that we are also well known to your consciences. We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you an opportunity to boast about us so that you may be able to answer those who boast in outward appearance and not in the heart.

For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God. If we are in our right mind, it is for you. For the love of Christ constrains us or urges us on because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore, all have died.

And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them. From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view. Even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way.

So, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation. Everything old has passed away. See, everything has become new.

So, from verse 11, he begins to talk about the fear of the Lord. You see, the fear that Paul talks about in verse 11 is not personal piety nor the terror that the Lord arouses in the hearts of people. He's talking about the reverential awe that Paul had for Christ as his divine assessor and judge.

So, we're beginning to look at these verses, the motivation for service. In verses 11 to 15, you see Paul's motivation for service. Once again, the focus shifts back to Paul's ministry as he reviews his third motivation for ministry.

He first talks about the ministry of proclamation and then expounds it in greater detail the content of his preaching. In chapter 5, verses 11 to 13, Paul reiterates what he has stated already in 1, 12 to 14. He sees the fear of the Lord as the basis of faithful and diligent service.

He says, we persuade men. Aware of his personal accountability, Paul said, we persuade men. Persuade them of what? Convince them of what? The answer is very simple.

Of the truth of the gospel and the truth concerning himself, that is, his motives were pure and sincere, and that his apostolic credentials and defense of the truth of the gospel includes both exposition and notice that the open statement defense of the truth of the gospel includes both exposition of the scriptures about Jesus and the kingdom of God and as well as the disputation concerning the practical implications of the gospel. Knowing that the fear of God, he sees the fear of the Lord as the basis of faithful and diligent service. It is said that one serves the most the person one fears the most.

One serves the most the person one fears the most. It is not a slavish fear. Such fear that Paul is talking about here excludes self-reliance.

So, Paul does not vainly try to rely on his own wisdom and paltry resources. You see, some of Paul's critics must have accused him of being beside himself. So, in verse 13, it says, for if we are beside ourselves, it is for God.

If we're in the right mind, it is for you. You know, so it is today we live in a society that is not only suspicious of Christians but also often thinks that Christians are at least a little crazy too. That's the kind of society we live in.

Society is not only suspicious of Christians, but sometimes they think we're just a little crazy for believing that somebody died and rose, somebody died for your sins and rose from the dead and is coming back, and they say, have you lost your sense? Well, that's exactly what they thought. However, we can say like Paul, that Christ loved for us as well as our love for Christ. You see the verse, the Greek tends to use their genitive, can be saying it could be Christ loved for us or our love for Christ.

But I don't think Paul is intending to make a decision there. We can say our love for Christ. If we love Christ as well as Christ loved for us, to live for Christ is to live for others.

It constrains us. So, both Christ's love for us as well as our love for Christ motivate us. And he says, whether we're beside ourselves, you think we're mad, you think we're crazy.

He said it's for you all. The love of Christ hedges us, constrains us, and pulls us because we are convinced that one has died for all. And then, in verse 15, he died for all so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.

Furthermore, for Paul and for believers today, our convictions are rooted in the death and resurrection of Christ. So, what Paul does is he highlights the false consequence of what he has stated in verses 4 to 15. He no longer judges or evaluates things by human standards.

His way of looking at things has become completely changed. I don't judge things by human standards anymore. I judge things in light of what God thinks about them.

You see, prior to his conversion, Paul had a negative view of Christ as a Messiah. So do many today. Judging Christ from a human point of view continues in various forms, both in the society at large and within the academy.

But some judgments are just as wrong as the judgment of the Pharisees of Christ's day, who saw him as no more than a carpenter's son or as a disillusioned prophet. And some people still see him that way. Apart from Christ, people are also evaluated by human standards.

Today, people are treated based on the region of the world they come from, nationality, ethnicity, educational standards, wealth, and so on. And sadly, of course, the church is not exempt, sad to say. Such standards, rather than promote reconciliation, only lead to strife and divisions.

Christians must shun all superficial human standards. We do not evaluate people based on what they have, where they come from, or what they know. But the main evaluation is, are these people believers? To be a Christian and listen is more than a mere show of hands and accepting the Lord, in quote, without a corresponding change of life.

That's the second consequence. It says the second consequence is verse 17: if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has gone, and the new has come.

There's a transformation that is brought about as a result of union with Christ. One must remember that Jesus did not bring a new religion but a new creation. Jesus didn't come to bring a new religion.

It's a new creation. You see, if you read Charles Dickens' story, A Christmas Card, you read the story of Ebenezer Scrooge, that wrinkled, cynical, bitter, greedy old man. He encountered death in a dream on Christmas Eve.

His late partner, Jacob Marley, appears to him, dragging him in his chaise to tell Scrooge that his death was certain and looming all his life long. Marley had worked on forging every link in his chain through hatred, greed, and unrighteousness. So, Scrooge was taking on a tour of Christmas' past, present, and future, and he sees his own name carved on a gravestone.

The dreadful nearness of death finally had the effect of changing him. He woke up on Christmas morning a different man. You see, when Scrooge awoke the next day, everything looked different to him.

The weather, the light, the people, his relationships, and his lightness of step, everything literally. Awareness of his impending death and the possibility of being different, he had made his outlook on life new and vital. Dickens makes no mention of the gospel in his story, but it provides a good portrait of what takes place in us when we contemplate the death of Jesus, and we truly see for what it is.

When we know what the death of Jesus means, if anyone is in Christ and we know what is done, there becomes a transformation. When, by faith, we enter into the death of Jesus on the cross and his resurrection from the grave, we have a new life; we become a new creation, and everything changes for us. In a much more profound sense, the death of Christ on the cross makes each of us a new creation.

We are utterly new, and like the pilgrim in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, free from all baggage that held us down in the past, Paul is not talking about reincarnation as some people would suppose. No, not at all. That is the best non-Christians can hope for.

Unfortunately, it's not there. There are people who get another shot at this life, but could anyone hope to do better? If another chance were given, not so sure. We'll probably be just as bad a mess of it the second time around.

Paul is talking about a new creation, a life that is filled with the presence of God, a life that is transformed by the power of God, washed and cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. He goes on in verse 18, saying that all this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. My brother and my sister listened to this.

There can be no trans, and there can be no reconciliation except for a transformation in the heart of the person. There must be a change of heart, a change of life. Transformation, transformation is the way to reconciliation because when we are divided on the basis of race and gender and all that, it's hatred, and it is sin.

And now, I mean, if we want to get rid of racism, we have to start with a transformation of the heart because racism is a sin and is based on hatred, whatever it is. All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. That's our responsibility as believers today.

That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. When Paul says all this, he's talking about what are the in verses 14 to 17, particularly to the redemptive work of Christ in verses 14 to 15. God reconciled Paul and others to himself.

It was not something that they could do by themselves. God took a decisive step in Christ to bridge the gulf between himself and humanity. All people were alienated from God, all people alienated from God, but God in his mercy, God in his grace, is now reconciling people unto himself.

And then he says he's made us an ambassador. Listen, verse 19 is the very heart of the gospel. First, the initiative was with God.

He bridged the gulf of separation created by our sin and rebellion. Second, the mediator was Christ. Reconciliation centers in the death of Christ at Calvary through which Christ stood in the bridge for us.

Third, as a result of Christ's death, God opens the way to reconciliation. God has now committed the message and ministry of reconciliation to us as believers. And listen, he calls us ambassadors.

We're ambassadors of Christ. You know, as an ambassador, if you're in the diplomatic service, you don't deliver your own message. You deliver the message of your home government.

You are representing a nation. And therefore, every sentence you make is important. Every appearance is scrutinized.

Every move you make is watched very closely because you're an ambassador. You make a statement, and people latch on to it. They believe you are representing the state government and they take it to be that.

Now understand that we're ambassadors for Christ. We're ambassadors for Christ, and because we're ambassadors for Christ, we must represent him. It reminds me of a story.

I won't mention the name of the country now, but I will tell you the story of a particular president in a particular country. This is a true story. Who had a very good friend who bankrolled his politics and all that?

So, he went to him. He was not a learned man, but he was very rich. He was not educated, but he was very rich.

So, he bankrolled the election of that president, and then one day he thought about, he said, I want to be, he said, I need a position in the government. So, he went to the president. I called his first name.

He said, William, I want you to appoint me. I want you to do me a favor. And the president said, what do you want me to do? He said he wanted to be appointed as an

ambassador, but he said, I want you to appoint me as your embarrassment in Germany.

Instead of saying, I want you to appoint me as your ambassador in Germany, he said, I want you to appoint me as your embarrassment in Germany, and the president told him, you don't have to go to Germany. You're already my embarrassment here. I'm asking a question.

Are we an embarrassment to Christ, or are we ambassadors of Christ? As ministers of the gospel, are we embarrassments to the one who has called us or are we his ambassadors? Are we giving a faithful representation of who Christ is? As ambassadors, we have a great responsibility, a grave responsibility. What is our message? Our message is be reconciled to God. God offers reconciliation, but it has to be accepted by those to whom it is offered.

Then, Paul concludes the chapter by referring back to the death of Christ and his goal. What does he say? He said he has made a sin offering for us. So, we're ambassadors for Christ.

Then, in verse 21, for our sake, he made him to be seen who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. He made him to be sin for us. Now, understand what he says.

He made him to be sin for us. It could be, you see, when you look at the Hebrew term *hatat*, it may mean both sin or sacrifice for sin. *Hatat* or like *asam*, it may mean both sin and sacrifice for sins.

It seems here that Paul's intent is to say more than that Christ was made a sin offering and yes less than that Christ became a sinner. He did not say Christ became a sinner for us. You know, there are some people who say, well, Jesus died spiritually.

No, that's wrong. If Jesus died spiritually, then he needed a redeemer himself. He did not. I mean, in an attempt to talk about identification with Christ, no, not at all, but he made him a sin offering.

So complete was the identification of the sinless Christ with the sin of the sinner, including his dire guilt and his dread consequence of separation from God, that Paul could say profoundly, God made him to be sin for us, like Jesus was on the cross, and we were told that the Father looked away, the Father, and then he says, he cried on the cross, Father, Father, why have you forsaken me? Why? Because your sins and my sins were laid upon him as our sin offering. You see, Paul's declaration of Christ's sinlessness may be compared with what Peter said in 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 22, and what the author of Hebrews says in Hebrews 4, 15 and 7, 26. Just as the

righteousness of God is extrinsic to us, so the sin with which Christ totally identified with was extrinsic to him.

He knew no sin. He was the perfect sacrifice. He was without any acquaintance with sin that might have come through ever having a sinful attitude or doing a sinful act.

No, both inwardly and outwardly, Jesus was impeccable, and we are to be his representatives. And once again, let me ask you, are you an ambassador for Christ, or are you an embarrassment to Christ?

This is Dr. Ayo Adewuya in his teaching on 2 Corinthians. This is session 6, 2 Corinthians 5, Ambassadors for Christ.