Christ's Ambassadors

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Preacher: Mack Stiles

[0:00] Hey, church. So good to be with you. Todd and Brittany have meant so much to us and we've heard so many wonderful things about Trinity Church as you've come and gathered and proclaim Christ in this great city.

I want to speak to you from 2 Corinthians 5, verses 9-21. Why don't we stand in honor of God and His Word and I'll read the text. We start in verse 9.
So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.
Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God and I hope it is also known to your conscience. We are not commending ourselves to you again, but giving you cause to boast about us so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is 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 controls us because we have concluded this, that one has died for all and therefore all have died.
[1:28] And He died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who for their sake died and was raised. From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh.

Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard Him thus no longer.
Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come.
All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.
Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake, He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.
This is the word of the Lord. Amen. Please be seated. As a young boy, I grew up in a small western Kentucky city, village called Owensboro, where my father practiced medicine.
[2:58] It was provincial and somewhat isolated. It was a great place to grow up. But back in Owensboro, if you had asked me of my view of Arabs, no one ever did that.

But if you had, let's just say, if you had. All Arabs were Muslims and all Arabs didn't like Americans. Sort of a TV view. Well, I left Owensboro many years ago.
I joined student ministry, campus ministry, and I started directing short-term mission programs. And I ran a program in Tunisia, North Africa, a Muslim nation.
We placed students in homes, Muslim homes, of students who were English majors at the University of Tunis. And great friendships were formed. And amazing opportunities to share the gospel.
It was there I discovered the Arab view of Americans. All Americans were Christians. And all Americans didn't like Arabs. Sort of a different TV view.
[4:04] On that program, I met a young man named Hatem. Hatem was an English major at the University of Tunis. And he was a lot of fun.

And a practical joker. He was always pulling pranks on other students and myself. And we sort of developed a friendly rivalry. Hatem, one day, took us to the Muslim beach, where we could be away from kind of the decadent European beach.

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And we're walking along the sand shore. And I spied this sand bar that was out maybe 100 yards from the shore. And I said, come on, Hatem, I'm going to race you out to the shore.
You know, I'd been in the middle school swim team. And he was like, oh, no, I must go take a cigarette. And I said, okay, well, you go get your nicotine fix.
I'll meet you out there. Come swim out there. He said, okay. Okay, so I start leisurely swimming out to the sandbar. And suddenly I spy that Hatem, true to form, has dove under me.
[5:13] And he's going to beat me to the sandbar. And that is not going to happen. So I'm shadowing him. I spied him, of course. And I'm shadowing him right over. And he comes up back to me.

And I quick grab him in a choke hold and take him down under. It was a perfect opportunity. I dunk him down under the water. I bring him back. I'm laughing. He's sputtering for good measure. I take him down again. Bring him back up.
I spin him around. And it's not Hatem. It is a very frightened Tunisian who knows that the American has come to kill him personally.
You know, what do you say? I'm so sorry. You know, he doesn't speak English. And he's doing this number away from me. Eyes as big as saucers. And suddenly I have this sort of out-of-body experience by looking up on the shore and seeing his extended family of very buff guys.
Not mad yet. But wondering what in the world has happened to their younger brother. And so I'm following up stupidly. We get out of the water.
[6:23] And I'm, you know, uttering, you know, absurdities. And you know what I need at this point, right? None of them speak the language. I need someone who speaks the language. I need someone who can kind of explain this case of mistaken identity.

I need someone. Guess who shows up? Hatem. Hey, Hatem, come here. I grab his arm. I pull him over. I explain the situation to Hatem. Hatem, of course, tears streaming down his face as he tries to choke out the laughter, explains to this family what has happened.
And they think it's hilarious, too. The young man I never saw again. He backed up and went to his car in the parking lot. Never saw him again. But the family welcomed me in for lunch.
I had a great time in their great big Arab tent. And Hatem, of course, regaled the people with this story, as I do to this day, that Hatem had become my ambassador.
He showed up speaking the language, explaining the truth so that I might be reconciled and forgiven. Spared certain harm. Our passage today, this passage, is about ambassadorship.
[7:38] That's what it's about. Let me take a walk through the outline for you in 2 Corinthians 9 through 21, because I want to draw out five marks of the ambassador.

For those of you who are note-takers. Verses 11 through 15. Verses 11 through 15. Number two, an ambassador's view of people. Verses 16 through 17.
The ambassador's role in verses 18 through 20. And an ambassador's view of the world in verse 19. Finally, an ambassador's understanding of Christ's work in verse 21.
So, first, our motivation. Now, it will be helped to have your Bible open. We're just going to go through these sort of line by line.
But notice here that Paul starts off with judgment in verse 9. Judgment is coming. And he says that when we understand what's at stake in people's lives, that is when we fear God, we persuade people.
[8:45] So, judgment is coming, verses 9 and 10. And therefore, we persuade people in verse 11. That's the motivation of the ambassador. We know this is coming.

And so, we know that we must move out in a world that is hostile to the gospel. Even though they… And because they don't understand.
Now, at that point, Paul, in verse 11 and 12, it raises this issue of what people might think. And what people might think of him as he proclaims the gospel.
Notice in verse 12. We don't proclaim the gospel because we're proud. In verse 12, Paul was accused of being proud. And you will be too, of course, if you claim an exclusive truth.
The exclusive truth of Jesus. Jesus said, I'm the way, the truth, and the life. And no one comes to the Father except through me. That's a statement that people don't like and think you're proud.
[9:43] Or they think you're crazy. Which is what Paul's talking about in verse 13. That's what beside ourselves mean. Paul was responding to the accusations that he was proud and that he was crazy.

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But look at why we keep going. It's that we have concluded something in verse 14. That Jesus died for all who would repent and come to him.
He would do that out of his great love. That we know that his death was for their sake in verse 15. We have concluded that sins can be forgiven.
And reconciliation with God is possible through the death of Jesus. And that conclusion leads us to an understanding. We don't live for ourselves.
We step out of our safe worlds. We tell others the good news. We try to persuade them. We don't manipulate. We don't lie. We tell the truth.
[10:42] We persuade. And that means, brothers and sisters, that means it's almost as important about the way we share as what we share. Persuasion is Paul's call.

And notice too that at the end of verse 14, Paul states that Jesus was raised. This is a life-changing conclusion if you've made it. I was on a panel in Australia of a student conference for the Australian evangelical students.
And it was their yearly training event. A couple thousand students had gathered. And the question came to me about why I would do ministry in the Middle East.
So Leanne and I spent 20 years in the Middle East doing ministry as a pastor in Iraq and as a campus minister in Dubai. And he asked the question like I was crazy.
You know, why in the world would anyone do that? Right? I mean, that was how the question came up from the crowd. Now, of course, there's a lot of ways I can answer that.
[11:51] But I said, as I often do, well, because I really believe deep in my heart with genuine faith that this man Jesus got up from the dead.

And that changes everything. And so, because he offers salvation to anyone who will come to him, I want to tell everyone. Look, brothers and sisters, we're driven to boldness and crazy love because of God's amazing love and what's at stake in people's lives.
It's as if Christians are calling people off the ledge. Please don't kill yourself. Please, come back to God our Father.
He will accept you with open arms if you will only repent. Yesterday I was at a funeral for my aunt. One of the reasons I came to Boston.
The crowd that gathered was not Christian. I said the same thing. I really believe this man got up from the dead and that was the hope of my aunt.
[13:12] Bottom line. In verses 11 through 15, we're motivated by the fear of the Lord, the conviction of the truth, and the overwhelming love of God. It moves us out in mission and evangelism with crazy boldness for others.

Evangelism is the most loving thing you can do to another human being. That's our motivation. And this changes how we view people in verses 16 and 17.
Second point. When we're motivated correctly, Paul says in verse 16, ambassadors view people rightly. He says, from now on, therefore we regard no one according to the flesh.
Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come. So we regard no one according to the flesh.
We reject sinful views of people. Fleshly views. Sexist views. Worldly racist understandings of people. It's an enormous hindrance in mission, in the church, in evangelism.
[14:23] But it's our natural tendency. And this is Paul's point. He says that even though we viewed Christ that way. You know, in other words, he's making a point that we viewed Christ with worldly eyes in verse 16.

You know how it is. People want to say nice things about it. They find out you're a Christian and they're not a Christian. And they kind of want to, you know, say something nice about Jesus, accommodating. Oh, he's a great moral teacher.
Or he was just, he was a very good man. Or he was a great prophet. He's not just a man. He's not just a great teacher or even a prophet. He's God incarnate.
And anything less curses Christ. Christ. And Paul's point is that if we saw Jesus that way, we were much more likely to see other people through worldly eyes.
TV lends views of other people, not the eyes of God. And of course, Christians walk a tightrope on this, don't we? We understand that all people are created in the image of God.

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[15:27] C.S. Lewis deals with that so beautifully in The Weight of Glory. Where he reminds us that every person that has been presented to your senses has the mark of the divine on them.

They're created in the image of God. And that's why they have value and worth and honor and dignity. They do that because God's mark is on them. And so ambassadors strive to love all people. At the same time, Christians, followers of Christ, understand all people to be sinners. Not only sinners, but without Christ, enemies of God. We understand that from Ephesians chapter 2.
So ambassadors avoid worshiping people knowing that every human is fallen and sinful. Of course, that's just an explanation of the doctrine of the total depravity of man.
Total depravity doesn't mean you're totally sinful, as bad as you ever could possibly be. It just means that every part of us is tainted by sin. G.K. Chesterton said, I don't know why people don't believe in total depravity.
[16:31] It's the one doctrine we have empirical data for. Look at the last 5,000 years of human history. But the most important thing to understand about people is in verse 17.

We understand the potential of divinely created but fallen enemies of God and what they can become. New creations in Christ.
It's our hope for every person you meet to be restored, to be forgiven, to be redeemed. Creations in Christ. And is there any more joy in the world than to see someone turn from darkness into light, to become a new creation?
This can happen in the most surprising ways. And you know that because you came to Christ in a surprising way. No matter what, everyone's conversion is a testimony of the grace of God. Whether you grew up in a Christian home or a rank pagan and discovered Christ in some far-off place. Neighborhoods, schools, your own family.
[17:43] New creations in Christ. My sister, Linda, showed up on my doorstep. I've been praying for my sister for 20 years.

Hard. Two divorces. Successful in business. She's standing on my front steps, smoking a cigarette. Throws it down the steps, runs it out.
Okay. Tell me about this Jesus guy. Come on in, Linda. Come on in. Have a seat. She said, I don't know.
I used to think it was just a joke, a show. I didn't think it was real in your life, and I can tell it is. And after the second divorce, I just, I felt so ashamed of my life.
Just started weeping. I'm so ashamed. I said, Linda, let me tell you about the one who came to take away your shame.
[18:46] Let me tell you about it. She said, I don't know. I guess that's why I'm here. It was why she was here. I knew why she was there. And my sister, what, Leanne, 30 years ago, 35 years ago, in our living room, bent her knee to Jesus.

Yesterday, I was with her at this funeral. You wouldn't believe the transformation. The godly woman that she is. The amazing ministry that she has. The way that God has transformed her into a child of God.
Now, it would have been easy for me to say over those years that there were just too many obstacles in life and in her life for me to reach my sister.
What about you? What about you? Do you know someone you believe would never come to Jesus? Think they'd be too sinful, too hard-hearted, too isolated, too apathetic, too distant, too broken. Maybe they look like they have everything they need. Maybe their lives look better than yours, you think. Maybe as a believer, you're tempted to think they don't need God.
[20:04] Don't believe it for a minute. People, the world around you, Jesus, because he offers something you can't get just by living a good life. The world does not offer salvation.

Notice, too, that it doesn't just change our view of people here in this text. It changes our view of the world, which is point three. So, we looked at the motivation of an ambassador.
We've looked at an ambassador's view of people. Third point, how we see our role, verses 18 through 21. Now, Paul says in 18, All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.
That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.
Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God was making his appeal through us. So, if you're a Christian, Paul says in verses 18 and then in 19 and in verse 20, that we are Christ's

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ambassadors.
[21:21] That God is making his appeal through us. Now, Paul is purposely using the image of ambassador here to make sure we understand our role.

Ambassadors exist. Their purpose is to deliver a message from a higher authority. So, according to Paul, when you sit down for coffee and the spiritual topic comes up, and spiritual topics come up all the time, and you should take hold of them, and you begin to share your faith with a friend about Jesus, you, get this, represent the foreign power of the kingdom of God.
That's an astonishing thought. That blows my mind. That somehow, from the throne of God, through me, there's this thread that goes to that person.
So, we better get the message right. Know the message of the gospel. Ambassadors are not at liberty to change the message.
You can't air condition hell. Don't try. Don't nice up the message. Deliver it as given. You know, there's so many historical stories of ambassadors trying to change the message to great harm.
[22:48] But especially, and maybe more relevant for most of us, ambassadors don't leave the message undelivered. We don't stuff the message in our sock drawer.

That is, slay your fear of man in evangelism. The fear of evangelism is the fear of man. We fear what people think of us.
Awkward is better than silence. You know, it's said, I've heard it said often, that most of the world's Christian population fear the raised fist.
Here we face and fear the raised eyebrow. And just by the way, ambassadors, by definition, don't live at home.
We are wanderers in the world. Now, that doesn't mean you need to pack up your family and move to the Middle East like I did. It might.
[23:47] It might mean that. But I think it means mostly that we always live a bit uneasy in the world. We understand that ultimately, this world is not our home.

And here's our message in verse 20. Paul models what we say. It's a bit of a tricky verse. In the second half of verse 20, it can first sound like on first reading that Paul's calling the Corinthians to be reconciled to God.
Of course, all of us must be reconciled to God. But they were Christians for all their problems. And they had enormous problems. But for all their problems, Paul is repeating the message we shout out with Paul to the world.
This is the message of the ambassador. We implore you. We beg you. On Christ's behalf, we beg on Christ's behalf, he says, be reconciled to God.
Our message is, though your sins have separated you from a holy God, you can be reconciled to Him. So the text is clear.
[24:52] God is not counting our sins against you. So when we first got to Dubai and we started in student ministry, students started coming to faith on Muslim campuses.

And it was such a joy. And this is 20 years ago. And I thought, well, we started these Bible studies on campus and we need leadership.
So we need to have a leadership. We need to have leadership gathering. We're going to gather all the leaders together, kind of the less younger Christians, and we're going to train them how to be leaders.
And so, so we gathered up about, you know, 15, 20 leaders. leaders. And we met every week in my living room. And so, I started in this training course.
And then I realized, there's this kid on the front row. So I called one of our leaders up. His name was Nissen. Nissen, come here. Listen, Akil is here.
[26:04] He's right there on the front row. He said, yeah, he wanted to come. He thought it looked good on his resume to, you know, have a leadership thing. And I said, Akil's a Hindu. How's he going to lead a Bible study? You know, well, you know, he's a nice guy.

And actually, what was going on really was there was a real cute little Indian girl there named Shabnita. Shabnita. He was interested in Shabnita. Eventually, he got married. But anyhow, so, I said, listen, listen, tell Akil he can't come.
You know, this is, you know, for about, and Nissen was, no, he's not going to. So anyhow, Akil kept, actually, Akil turned out to be our most regular attender of the leadership week.

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And one day, finally, it's sort of alarming. And there's, you know, there's security concerns and stuff like this. So I said, Akil, come on, I got to talk to you. He goes, okay, I need to talk to you too. He comes up, real bright.
And I said, you go first. He goes, I've become a Christian. And I said, how'd that happen? And he said, well, I really appreciate the leadership. But, you know, the leadership conference times and seminar and everything, but all the students are excited about the gospel and they've been telling me I need to repent of my sins and put my faith in Jesus alone and take him as my savior.
[27:14] And I did last week. I said, Akil, that's great. He said, what do you want to talk to me about? I said, nothing, never mind. Keep coming. And I called Nissen. I'm like, Nissen, Hindus can keep coming back if they want to, I guess.

just listening in. Hey, maybe, maybe you're here like Akil. You're not a Christian. And you're just here listening in.
Let me, let me talk to you just a second. This is a message for you too because you need to see yourself through God's eyes. You were both divinely created and yet cut off from God because of your sin and rebellion.
I love telling my Muslim friends, that every Christian, true Christian, is a convert. And that means to repent of sin and put your trust and faith in Christ. You, you can see the potential if you will be reconciled to a loving God who has paid the penalty for your sin.
He offers complete and total forgiveness to you. He loves you. The Bible says, God will not hold your sins against you if you come to Him in faith and trust.
[28:25] All that's required of you is to not try and earn your way back to God. You know, that's a great, that's a great misunderstanding about Christianity. What we repent, most of all, when we put our faith and trust in Jesus is holding Jesus at arm's length.

Ultimately, the sin that casts us into what Jesus called the outer darkness is the sin of rejecting Him as the Savior of your life.
That's the message we shout out. I want to be like Paul. I want you to be reconciled to God. Be reconciled to God because you can be. Well, we've looked at the ambassador's motivation, the ambassador's view of people and the ambassador's role, which brings us to our fourth point, how we view the world in verse 19.
So, notice in verse 19, we see how ambassadors view the world. Paul expands the scope of this great salvation. He says in verse 19 that God is reconciling the world, that is, anyone in the world who would come to Him.
It's a universal message, he's saying. This was radical. He means not just Jews, everybody. That's what he means here. It's a message for all people in all cultures at all times.
[29:54] I know there's a tendency to think that this is a message for just parts of the world. But there are no barriers to God in the world. And it's happening now in the world.

And we need to see how our sovereign God is at work. work. So, when Leanne and I lived in our villa, we lived amid three mosques.
And they would call out, they called a prayer five times a day with a makeup in the gulf. There's a makeup prayer time, a six prayer time.
And sometimes, as we would hear the call to prayer reverberate through our homes, there would be a sense of despair. How can we reach this culture with the gospel?
How can we? How can we? But there are no barriers to God. On our staff team, as the staff team grew in Dubai, we had a young couple join our team.
[31:07] And I want to tell the story of Nestoran, who was married to Yuna, husband and wife, from Iran. They were Christian believers and had a great heart for the Iranian people in Dubai, many, many Iranians in Dubai.

Nestoran was a young teenage girl. She lived in Tehran. She'd taken a shower. And in the shower, she heard a voice. And the voice said, I'm going to wash you of your sins.
And she was not sure what that meant and what that was. And so, she's a good Muslim girl, never seen a hymn, never been to a church, didn't know anything of the Bible.
She goes to the imam, her imam, at her mosque, and says, I heard this voice. And the voice said, he was going to wash me of my sins. Who was that? And the imam said, that was Jesus.
He's the only prophet that talks that away. Pretty good for an imam, huh? So Nestoran said, thank you. And she went home. Same week, her sister, confusing name, her name is Nestorine.

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[32:22] These are real names. Nestoran, Nestorine. her sister, who has moved to Amsterdam for work and has joined a church. And she's come to faith, secretly.

She's not told her family. But one Sunday, a woman comes up to her and says, Nestorine, I had a dream last night. It was about you.
I dreamed that you were sitting on a bed talking to two women, sharing the gospel with them. And I think you're supposed to go home.
And Nestorine said, I can't go home. I don't have any money. And this woman said, look, I never remembered my dreams. I don't have dreams as far as I know, but it was so real.
I went ahead and bought your ticket. Nestorine flies home to Tehran. She knocks on the door. Nestorine and her mother answer the door.
[33:24] Nestorine says, I don't know why I'm here. And Nestorine says, no, we know why you're here. You've been in a Christian country, the Netherlands. And we've been spoken to by Jesus and we want to hear about him.

And so Nestorine is overjoyed, but they go sit on the bed like in the dream. Nestorine leads her sister Nestoron to the Lord.
There are no barriers to God. None. He's the sovereign Lord. In case you're tempted to exalt or desire that kind of story in your own life, I should tell you that their sweet faith has resulted in insult and harassment and separation, jail, deportation.
Nestorine was not able to go to her sweet mother's funeral funeral a couple years ago even. What about you?
You see people from other backgrounds and think you can't get to them? Maybe you see people of other faith backgrounds and set aside any hope that you might see them come to faith.
[34:53] This passage is why you should be concerned about missions, about the Great Commission. The Great Commission from Jesus to go into all the world and make disciples. Those people in the world who have never had the opportunity to hear the gospel message.

Even if they wanted to be forgiven, even if they long to know God, they wouldn't know which way to turn. Well, we've seen how ambassadors are motivated by love with a right view of people, a clear understanding of our role of ambassadorship and for all people worldwide.
And fifth, and finally, we understand what Jesus has done in the gospel. We take hold of that. We become students of the gospel.
The ambassador must understand, point five, God's work in the message of the gospel. Verse 21, for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
Now, much ink has been spilled on verse 21. It's about a significant theological idea, that of substitutionary atonement.
[36:04] In 24 words, it's astonishing. Substitutionary atonement is at the heart of the Christian faith. To atone, of course, means to pay for something, pay for sin.

It's a behind-the-scenes look at what God did on the cross where Paul says Jesus became sin for us. He didn't have just sin put on his shoulders.
He became sin. It was placed in him, imputed into Christ where in his great love God took all the sins of all who would repent and believe and put them on his perfect sinless son that we might be forgiven by God.
Jesus referred to this as drinking the cup of wrath. And then God takes all who will repent and believe in Jesus and clothes us in Christ's righteousness so that when we're united with Christ and we stand before him in judgment as we looked at in verses 9 and 10, he declares us forgiven and righteous as we stand before him.
I love this summary of the gospel in verse 21. I want to quote this. On the cross God treated Christ as if he had committed all the sins of every sinner who would ever believe so that he could treat every believer as if they had lived Christ's perfect life.
[37:35] Oh brothers and sisters what a promise that is for us. It's essential to see our righteousness contrary to all the other religions in the world come to us from God.

Our righteousness comes to us from God. It's not self-righteousness but a God given righteousness. I don't like self-righteous people.
I bet you don't either. God hates self-righteous people. Those who think they can stand before God and that he'll be impressed with all the good things they've done.

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That's self-righteousness. I don't like self-righteousness when I see it in myself. My own hypocrisy. My own failings as I judge others.
No, our righteousness comes from outside of us. Most of the world of course thinks you do that by yourself. But the entire Bible from Genesis on points to the event Paul's talking about in verse 21.
[38:46] Christ became sin for us. He took our place. It's substitutionary atonement. He died for me in my place. Christ is my substitutionary. How precious is that message to you?

Does your heart warm when you think about the gospel message when I explain substitutionary time? Does your heart leap? Or is it something, oh I've heard that before, you know, when's lunch? You may not be a Christian if you're not interested in the gospel. Let me ask another question. Are you willing to give your life to it? Are you willing to give your life to the gospel?
Are you ready to die for it? My suspicion is most of you are. My suspicion is day by day you're giving your life, you're giving your life away, that your life doesn't make sense apart from the gospel. You're laying down your life for the hope of the gospel day by day. But how about this? Final question. Are you willing to call others to die for it?
[40:01] In our time in the Middle East that actually turned out to be a little harder. I remember talking to Asma in her apartment, nine-month-old baby on her lap.

Asma, you know, you understand that if I baptize you, there will be people who want to kill you. Yes, I know. Jesus is worth it.
He's worth it. So we started a church called Redeemer in downtown Dubai. It grew to 1,500 people. It was astonishing. See the response?
I was preaching on Genesis 22, the story of Abraham being called to sacrifice Isaac. And I explained substitutionary atonement.
Right there in Genesis, first book of the Bible, substitutionary atonement is a part of the whole story that a ram was offered as a substitute. You know, when I grew up, the whole point of Genesis 22 and Abraham was to be like Abraham.
[41:02] You're not like Abraham. I'm not either, let me tell you. If we're anyone, we're Isaac on the altar. The knife of God's justice hangs rightly over us.

And our only hope is that substitute, that lamb. So that when John the Baptist saw Jesus and said, there goes the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, it was understood. Anyhow, that was what I was preaching.
At the end of the sermon, Nissen, faithful Nissen, who is now the director of the student ministry in Dubai, was leading a young man up to me through the crowd.
And he says, Mac, this is Mohammed. And he has just heard the message of the gospel really for the first time. And he would like to become a Christian. And I said, oh, Mohammed, that's wonderful. He looks down at my Bible. He says, is that a Bible? Is the one with all my notes in it? I said, in my heart, oh, I wish I'd left this Bible at home and brought my cheap Bible. I said, yeah, so would you like it?
[42:11] He said, I would very much. I'd give him my Bible. I said, you know, Mohammed, you may face persecution for this. You need to understand that. If you truly come to faith.

He said, I know, my father's an imam back in Sudan and he will kill me. He didn't mean maybe. I mean, he's not speaking metaphorically. By way of confession, there's a little hitch in me.
Maybe we should wait. We don't have to do this. God's sovereign, right? But then, because long ago, I determined that it's better for someone to come to faith in Christ and live in forgiveness even if it's just for weeks and meet God face to face at the judgment seat, than for someone to reject Jesus, eke out what pleasure they can in the world and meet God without forgiveness forgiveness is better to be forgiven.
And so I said, okay, listen, discipled Muhammad. He grew in faith. He left for Sudan and we never heard from him again.
him. But like asthma, Jesus is worth it. It's worth it.
[43:45] Do you believe that? It's part of our call as ambassadors to ensure we understand the preciousness of God's call on the gospel.

gospel. So remember the five marks of an ambassador. Our motivation, our view of people, our grasp of our role, and our understanding of God's love for people around the world with a clear understanding of the gospel.

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Amen? Amen. Let me pray. Lord Jesus, move us out in gospel love. Move us out in an understanding of what's at stake.
We thank you, Lord God, for this astonishing offer of your salvation. Help us in our view of people. See them with the potential that they can become redeemed people of God, your children.
Help us take hold of our role. give us a right view of the world. And most of all, oh Lord God, give us a clear understanding as we talk and meet with people about the meaning of your gospel and its worth.
[45:10] in Jesus name we pray Amen Amen

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