

WHY SEND FOR A PASTOR?

ACTS 10:29: "I ask then why you sent for me?"

(Peter to Cornelius) *Read vs. 1-8, 19-21, 27-29.*

INTRODUCTION

I. NEGATIVELY, Why NOT send for or call a pastor.

A. Not just because it is the customary thing to do.

B. Not because he can be entertaining.

C. Not because he might attract great throngs of people.

D. Not because he might seem to be a magician and work miracles.

E. Not to tickle ears and always to preach what you want him to.

II. Note that the "sending for" or "calling for" is a vital part of the divine process of the ministry of the gospel.

A. The "SENDING" originates in the mind of God.

Vs. 5, The angel of God said to Cornelius, "and now SEND men to Joppa, and bring one Simon who is called Peter."

The sending or calling of a pastor, preacher, or missionary, must begin with God, not man.

B. The "SENDING" is implemented on a practical level by people in tune with God's leadership.

Vs. 7, Cornelius "SENT" two of his servants and a soldier to Joppa to find Peter.

Similarly, a spiritual church must have dedicated people on its pastor search committee, in whom they have confidence, and support and pray for them and give them time to do a thorough job and find the prepared pastor whom they believe God has called.

C. God PREPARES the divinely chosen preacher to serve as pastor in each particular place of ministry.

I believe this is true. When a church makes a mistake and calls a man whom God has not prepared and called, the problem is not with God; it is with their committee, or the church body, or the minister, or possibly all three, in failing to be perceptive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Note that in vs. 9-16 Peter was praying (incidentally, not a bad practice for a prospective minister!), and he fell into a supernaturally-induced trance and saw a special revelation from God which convinced him that his narrow-minded Jewish scruples were not justified, and that he should fellowship with Gentiles in order to preach to them and win them to Christ. This was an unbelievably difficult decision on Peter's part, but he was teachable and pliable in God's hands, and was prepared to go when the call came. God said, "Three men are right now looking for you. Rise up and go with them without hesitation, for I have sent them," (vs. 20).

The reference to the pivotal word "send" is repeated in vs. 22 where we read that the 3 men tell Peter that Cornelius was directed by a holy angel to SEND for Peter to come to his house.

III. Peter's searching question is first proposed to the committee of three as they approach him: he said, I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for your coming?"

Then again, in vs. 29, when he meets Cornelius himself, he says, "I ask then why you sent for me?"

A. This text readily lends itself to consideration by a congregation or pastor just about to enter a shepherd/flock relationship under God.

1. The congregation must be absolutely clear as to why it is calling this particular man for this particular ministry at this particular time.

2. The prospective pastor or new pastor must be sure he clearly and correctly perceives the church's intention in calling him as their pastor.

3. The prospective pastor or new pastor must be convinced that the call is from God, not merely from other human beings, and that his responsibilities for his message and his life and ministry come from God and not from people. He gets his marching orders from the Lord, the Commander in Chief, for He is ultimately the One who has sent him and called him.

B. A Church should carefully avoid the unworthy reasons for calling for a pastor, which have already been discussed. It should concentrate, on the other hand, on the proper scriptural principles of being the kind of church and carrying out the ministry God wants from it in its field of service.

IV. We can learn why they called for Peter as we note some things about this remarkable congregation.

A. They were expectant, vs. 24, "Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his kinsmen and close friends." This is not a bad way to begin a new mission church, is it?

B. They were Respectful, vs. 25.

Cornelius, because of his pagan background, was a little over-respectful here, but he meant well. The Man of God used to command great respect in the community. I know things have changed, but the real man of God should be respected for his position and his calling, and the church and the community lose something very important when they lose this proper respect for the man of God, and thus for the God who has called him and uses him in the work of the church.

C. They were all present, vs. 33.

I like that! "Now therefore, we are all here, present in the sight of God."

No preacher can do much with a church unless they are all present. It is hard to get excited trying to preach to a bunch of disembodied spirits! Yet, lots of church members say, "Preacher, I won't be there in body Sunday, but I'll be there in spirit!"

D. They were all open to the message.

Cornelius continued, saying, "We are all present... to hear all that you have been commanded by God." See also 11:14, Cornelius related how the angel had originally told him that the angel said to him that if he would send for Peter, he would come and declare to them a message by which they would be saved.

They were a prepared congregation, open to the gospel message to be preached to them by a divinely called and prepared man of God.

Every preacher longs for opportunities like this.

E. Finally, they were RESPONSIVE.

They responded to the message even before an invitation was given. In 10:44 we read that while Peter was still preaching his sermon, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word, obviously because they heard it with genuine repentance and faith, and without an invitation or public confession of faith, or baptism, or formal church membership, God accepted their penitence and faith, and the Holy Spirit fell on them as Gentile Christians, as it happened to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem at Pentecost.

Every pastor longs to see this kind of response to his preaching!

V. Now we can look at this unique event in the larger purpose of God in SENDING these men for Peter; it was to open the door of Christian fellowship to the Gentiles and change forever the composition of the chosen people of God. See 10:43-48 and 11:1-18. This is too big a subject to go into now in any detail, but just let it be said that this was a crucial turning-point for the early church. It shows us that any crisis can prove a crucial turning-point for any church if they will let God have His way. WILL YOU DO THAT RIGHT NOW?

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