



Except They Be Sent

Romans 10:15, *“And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”*

The word “ministry” and “minister” carry with them differing definitions drawn from their use in the subcultures of Christianity. Some refer to the full time, official, or paid minister in contrast to the volunteer or lay minister. Lost in the various cultures of Christianity and the franchise churches is the foundational structure of the authority of Christ through men and means. God has an order that is clear when studied from the New Testament. When we violate that order we operate in contrast to, and sometimes in opposition to, the revealed written word of God. This was what Apollos needed to learn from Aquila and Priscilla, (Acts 18:24-19:5). When we say the Word of God is our only rule of faith and practice, it would be wise to consult this divinely inspired and preserved new covenant document for instructions.

Baptists, historical Baptists, have long held to the proper order in the exercise of the authority of Christ on Earth. We recognize a heavenly authority exercised through a commissioned officer sent by a scripturally organized body of baptized believers gathered and commissioned by Christ. In the sermon preached at the ordination of John Gano, in 1794, by Isaac Eaton, the following were affirmed. There must first be an internal call by the Holy Spirit. That should be followed by recognition of God’s providential gifts given personally towards ministry. Thirdly, that it being a gift to the church (local), they should qualify them through examination. And lastly, that man should be set aside by the careful act of ordination by that same qualifying body and its ordained helped. I believe this is the biblical pattern and it is necessary that *“they be sent.”*

I. The Connection

A. The matter of sending

1. They must be sent before they can go. You can't do one without the other "*except ye be sent.*" There is a necessary connection from one thing to the other. How shall they call who do not believe?
2. The manner of sending is under the direction and leadership of the Holy Spirit through the church. In this case it was the church at Antioch, (Acts 13:3, "*And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.*")
3. The church recognizes the gifts and callings (Acts 1:2) of God's grace to the individual for the purpose of ministry.
4. There is an order and the connection is obvious. The New Testament gives us our guidelines and it is through the Spirit impressing a call upon the individual and then giving confirmation through the examination and sending of the local church.

B. The motive of sending

1. Recommended to the grace of God; (Acts 14:26, "*... from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.*")
2. Both the called and the sender were attentive to the providential workings of the Spirit and the necessity of preaching the Gospel and administering the ordinances.
3. The ordained have orders, (Acts 16:4, "*And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.*")
4. Saul had a commission and motive when he "*commended them to prison*" (Acts 8:3). His motive was to devastate and destroy that church.

5. Later Paul and Silas, after controversy, were selected and recommended by the church. This appears with an obvious silence concerning the ministry of Barnabas and John Mark, (Acts 15:40). The motive is not personal, but providential and purposeful to fulfilling the work to which they have been called, (Acts 13:2).
 6. It is to God's grace and by God's grace that we are appointed to preach the ministry of reconciliation, (II Cor. 5:18), a ministry and message of grace.
- C. The mandate of sending
1. The mandate of sending; (Acts 14:23, *"And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed."*)
 2. The church recognizes, qualifies, and ordains a man before sending them to the work he has been called to by the Holy Spirit.
 3. This was the pattern they were taught by their own pastor; (I Cor. 12:25; Mark 3:14, *"ordained... that he might send them forth to preach."* Acts 10:42, *"he commanded us to preach unto the people"*)
 4. The first London Baptist Confession, 1646 clarifies that the commission was not given to the Apostles as Apostles, but as disciples (Paragraph # 41); this is clarified more fully by Hansard Knollys in the following.
 5. *"Nor do we judge it meet, for any Brother to baptize or to administer other Ordinances; unless he have received such gifts of the Spirit, as fitteth, or enables him to preach the Gospel. And those gifts being first tried by and known to the Church, such a Brother is chosen and appointed thereunto by the Suffrage of the Church."* (The Shinning of a Flaming Fire in Sion; London, 1646) *"Except they be sent."*

II. The Conveyance

- A. Of a kingdom that cannot be shaken
 - 1. Heb. 12:27-29, this kingdom is built upon Christ and cannot be removed or destroyed.
 - 2. The natural end of all man, death, cannot destroy the Church that Jesus has built, (Mat. 16:18).
 - 3. The one sent must be done so by the biblical order we find in scripture. Either one must claim an immediate ministry from heaven (as John or Jesus) or a mediate ministry, through John then Jesus.
- B. Of an order that must be kept fast
 - 1. Their orders were delivered by apostolic authority, (I Cor. 11:2, *"Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you."*)
 - 2. The word *"delivered"* is the same word translated commended (Acts 14:23, 26 & 15:40).
 - 3. The word *"keep"* means to hold, down, to hold fast, to keep in memory; take what is handed down to you and keep it to hand down to others also.
 - 4. Christ alone calls and sends out, through his ordained body, (Mat. 28:19; John 4:2), men to administer the ordinances of preaching, baptizing and an orderly observing of the Lord's Supper.
- C. Of a love that cannot be denied
 - 1. I Cor. 1:21-23, our love for Christ, God's love for Christ and Christ's love for his lost sheep.
 - 2. Our orders are clear. Our method, manner, motives and mandates have been delivered. Our duty is to keep them as they have been delivered.
 - 3. We are commanded to preach the gospel to the whole world. *"How shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent."* There is an order to God's purpose.