

Ordination as Missionary Pastor

There is something awesome and wonderful ordination into the Christian ministry. It is a recognition by members of the body of Christ that here is an individual called by God to preach the word, shepherd the flock and lead in the church of Jesus Christ.

Today we have the privilege of recognizing God's calling Luis Sanchez not only to the pastoral ministry but also as a missionary and church planter. For you Luis, we trust this is the beginning of a very fruitful and meaningful ministry for the glory of God and the building of Christ's Kingdom.

Missionaries are often those who leave the comfort of their homes and companionship of their friends and family to preach the gospel to those who might never hear otherwise. Both the pastor and the missionary are called to do the work of an evangelist, "a messenger of the gospel."

Every Christian is compelled by the Great Commission to participate in spreading the good news of Jesus Christ and making disciples of all the nations. But not every Christian is called to leave their own familiar territory and go out as a missionary to another state, or a foreign country.

This evening I want us to take a look at that very special and significant calling that the Lord places the pastor and missionary. We will take a look at the importance of the calling of a missionary, and the significance of both God and the church in the missionary's ministry.

A Missionary Pastor is Called by the Lord (vv. 1-2)

Acts 13:1-3

- 1 Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.**
- 2 As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."**
- 3 Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.**

A good question to start with this evening is,

"What is the call of a missionary?" From verses 1-2, we see that:

1.) The call was God's call. The Holy Spirit called Paul and Barnabas for this work. It is the Holy Spirit's job to call qualified men and women to the work of missions and ministry. It's not up to us to do the choosing.

2.) The call was a particular call. It was not extended to every member of the church. There were five men named in verse 1 as prophets and teachers in the church, but only Paul and Barnabas were called and sent out.

3.) The call was to the Lord's work. We see that Paul and Barnabas were to be set apart as the Holy Spirit says, **"for the work to which I have called them"**. They were called to devote themselves full time to preaching the gospel in the un-evangelized Gentile regions. We are sure that God's call to you Luis is to go to the Hispanic people in the Grand Valley with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The next question we might ask is,

"What kind of people does God call?" He calls

1.) God calls those who are serving. Paul and Barnabas are identified as "prophets and teachers" here. They were busy preaching, teaching, and ministering in the church. I have seen Luis and his servant's heart. Just since he and his family have been in our church they have already been involved in serving in the life of the church. Someone has said, "Don't expect to be called to missionary service unless you can serve the Lord right where you are."

2.) God calls those who are spiritual. Notice in verse 3 the reference to "prayer and fasting." Thomas Chalmers (1780-1874) has said, 'Prayer does not enable us to do a greater work for God. Prayer is a greater work for God'." So what we see is that the people in the Antioch church were involved in some kind of ministry. When God calls workers to His work He is looking for servants, not spectators.

Both verse 2 and verse 3 says they **"fasted."** One preacher says, "Fasting gives evidence of an 'atmosphere of urgent desire' in the church." The church and all who were there earnestly desired to see God move. The reason why God can use missionaries and pastors as He does is because they have learned to seek Christ, to come to Him confessing their emptiness and allowing Him to fill them.

3.) God calls those who are sensitive – Verse 2 also tells us, **"The Holy Spirit said."** The Lord spoke to the disciples through the Spirit because they were sensitive to His will. God spoke to them because they wanted to "know" His will. God spoke to them because they were willing to "do" His Will. George Peters writes,

When the ear is closed, the mind preoccupied, and the will and purposes set, man is outside of hearing distance, and the call of God will never reach him. Many people never receive a call from the Lord, not because the Lord is not calling, but simply because they are not within calling distance. They are out of reach.

A Missionary Pastor is Commissioned by the Church (v. 3)

3 Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

In verse 3, we see what is called the "commissioning" or "ordaining" of a missionary. If the Holy Spirit is the one who actually calls someone, then why does the church have to formally set a person apart for missionary service and

commission the individual? Shouldn't the call to missions be between the individual and God alone? What is the point of involving other Christians?

1.) The church sets apart a missionary or pastor to demonstrate that the church is God's principle sending agency. The church is the body of Christ, the instrument through which God has chosen to accomplish His present work in the world. When the church ordains a man, it assumes its position under the authority of Christ as one responsible for world evangelism.

2.) The church sets apart a missionary or pastor to demonstrate the church's confidence in the person. Only the Holy Spirit can call a missionary, but it is the responsibility of the church to confirm that call. The same Spirit that calls people into ministry also confirms that call to the church as seen back in verse 2. By the laying on of hands, the church is publicly authenticating the call of God and declaring the individual spiritually fit for missionary service.

3.) The church sets apart a missionary or pastor to bind the church and the missionary in a bond of common purpose before God. The message the church received was to release their best for missionary service, and their earnestness was such that they were willing to do so. This is typical of churches that have a missionary vision, churches whose main aim is more than survival or maintenance. Missions is so important to them that they willingly take steps that may seem harmful to the church for the missionary program to thrive. In Greek the phrase "sent them away" literally means "to release them from their duties." We must be ready and willing to let go of them when God calls.

The church should also show its willingness to support the missionary both prayerfully and financially. In reference again to the laying on of hands, over in Acts 14:26 we learn that the laying on of hands symbolizes commending the missionary to the grace of God.

The missionary is bound to the church. He is bound by being held accountable to the church. Over in Acts 14:27 we see that both Paul and Barnabas returned to the church in Antioch and gave a report of what had happened on their journey.

Charge to the Pastor/Missionary and the Church

We, the body of Christ at New Covenant Baptist Church, recognize that you have been active in ministry in our church and community, and seeking the will of the Lord through prayer. We also recognize that you have received a sovereign call from the Holy Spirit to serve as Pastor and church plantering missionary. Right affirm God's calling and lift you up in faith, knowing that God has chosen you to be a part of His work of evangelizing all the nations.