

# To Whom Am I Sent?

by Chip Brogden

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding to whom we are sent by God in our ministry efforts rather than merely responding to perceived needs.*

**Scripture:** Luke 4:42

**Topics:** "Spiritual Discernment", "Holy Obedience"

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## Description

Chip Brogden preaches on the critical component of being sent in Christian work and ministry, emphasizing the importance of not just responding to needs but identifying to whom we are specifically sent by God. Using the example of Elijah and Elisha, he illustrates how being sent by God overrides responding to general needs, highlighting the need for spiritual discernment and obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit in all aspects of ministry.

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## Transcript

"Then Jesus said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian'. So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way" (Luke 4:24-30, NKJV).

In Scripture we find a principle that governs all spiritual work. This principle applies to anyone and everyone who undertakes to do something on behalf of the Kingdom of God, whether it is preaching, teaching, writing, prophesying, or planting churches. This principle even applied to the Lord Jesus during His earthly ministry. So it is critically important that we identify this principle to ensure that we, too, are cooperating with God as we go about the work He has called us to do.

### THE CRITICAL COMPONENT: BEING SENT

When it comes to Christian work and ministry, many workers, ministries and churches are motivated by a perceived NEED. We feel there is a need for something, whether it be a specific ministry, a missionary outreach, a new church, or a Bible study; and so we rise up to meet that need. However, this manner of

undertaking spiritual work is purely a human concept. It is of the flesh; it is of the world. It is the same basis upon which a business discovers a need and then creates a product or service to meet that need. The Kingdom of God, however, does not conduct itself according to the principles of business, economics, marketing, or salesmanship.

While teaching in the synagogue of Nazareth, Jesus perceived that the people expected Him to cure the sick and perform miracles just as He had done in other places - after all, Nazareth is where He grew up. However, Jesus did not respond to their expectation. Instead, He pointed out that there were many widows and lepers in Israel during the time of the prophets Elijah and Elisha. The widows needed food, and the lepers needed healing. Naturally speaking, it made sense for Elijah and Elisha to help those who were right in front of them. But Elijah went to a widow in Zarephath, and Elisha went to a leper in Syria, ignoring all the widows and lepers in their own nation who needed help.

How did Jesus explain this? The answer He gave is quite simple: "But to none of them was Elijah sent." The critical component was not the many who were in NEED, but the one to whom he was SENT. Although not specifically stated, the same principle applied to Elisha as well. Then, Jesus applied the principle to Himself, and refused to perform any miracles in Nazareth. Of course this angered the people, and their subsequent attempt to kill the Lord Jesus only demonstrated that they were, in fact, not worthy of Him.

So the question is not, "Who has a need?" but rather, "To whom am I sent?" Although the two sound very similar, in actual experience the difference is like day and night.

#### RESPONDING TO NEED VERSUS RESPONDING TO GOD

"Early the next morning Jesus went out into the wilderness. The crowds searched everywhere for Him, and when they finally found Him, they begged Him not to leave them. But He replied, "I must preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God in other places, too, because that is why I was sent" (Luke 4:42,43, NLT).

If we are primarily motivated by what other people want, expect, and need then we will be tempted to stay longer than we should stay, or say more than we ought to say. When the crowd is begging for more, most Christian workers and preachers are only too eager to accommodate them. But Jesus had an acute sense of purpose because He knew to whom He had been sent. As a result, He did not bow down to the will of the people and go beyond the time and place appointed Him by His Father, even though they begged Him to stay. He was responding to what God needed, not what the people needed.

A Christian should realize that he or she is a unique member of the Body of Christ and not the entire Body all at once. We are many parts that together make up the whole. Each individual member has its own unique purpose, function, and role. The responsibility for God's work is divided among many members. We are not called to be all things to all people. We are not called to meet every need. God sets each person in the Body of Christ as it pleases Him, and He is the One Who sends us. We do not send ourselves. We do not determine what we would like to do. We do not analyze the situation with our limited understanding and come up with a solution. The Head determines what needs to be done, and the members simply perform it.

Speaking from my own experience, I have noticed three stages of development in my Christian work. In the early days of ministry I would seek invitations to speak. I let it be known that I would go anywhere and

do anything. After I achieved a certain level of recognition I no longer had to seek invitations, I could simply respond to invitations as they came to me. I would go wherever and whenever I was invited. Certainly the Lord honored His Word and people were blessed. However, I recognize now that this seeking and responding is simply the striving of the flesh. For some time now we have been in quite a different season, a season in which we neither seek invitations nor go whenever we are invited. Sometimes we do indeed go when we are invited, sometimes we do not go. Once in awhile we go with no invitation at all.

How do we explain this? Simply put, the governing principle for us is no longer, "Who will have us?" Instead, the question is, "To whom are we sent?" It is one thing to accept an invitation, but it is quite another thing to be sent of the Lord. If I respond solely on the basis of someone's need or invitation then I cannot rest assured that I am being sent - I only know that I am going. Christians in general are much too casual in this regard. Without the definite sending of the Lord we are totally on our own, lacking spiritual discernment, power, and authority. On the other hand, if we are being sent, we are going in the Name of Jesus, and as His representatives, we enjoy all the blessing, power, anointing, and authority of Heaven.

There are three aspects of being sent: going only WHEN you are sent, going only WHERE you are sent, and speaking only to WHOM you are sent. We will look at each three more particularly.

#### GOING ONLY WHEN YOU ARE SENT

"So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed..." (Acts 13:4a).

When Paul and the other Christians in Antioch gathered together there were many souls to be saved, many churches to be planted, and many disciples to be instructed. There was much work to be done, but instead of organizing the work according to the obvious need, they ministered to the Lord and waited until the Spirit gave them instructions. Only when the Spirit spoke and sent them forth did they actually depart.

In the New Testament we do not find a pattern for how the church should evangelize the world, nor do we discover a plan for reaching the lost, or a method for planting churches. Those who focus all their attention on patterns, plans, and methods fail to realize that patterns, plans, and methods are all subject to change and depend upon time, culture, nationality, people, economy, gifts, personalities, and a myriad of other variables. There is a maxim that says, "Methods are many, but principles are few; methods will change, but principles never do."

So the key is not trying to imitate a New Testament pattern from two millenniums past, but practicing a New Testament principle that never changes. What is the principle? Simply this: they were completely governed by the Spirit; and since we, too, have the same Spirit, we likewise may be led of Him. Undoubtedly the Spirit may lead us to do some similar things, but our commonality is not in what is being done, but rather, Who is doing it. Either we are going to come up with a plan and do it ourselves or we are going to let the Spirit do it through us as He sees fit. When the Day of Pentecost came the Spirit Himself filled them. From that day forward, it was the Spirit that anointed them, gave them words to speak, appointed elders, sent apostles, and raised up local churches.

In fact, the very word "apostle" means "one who is sent". According to popular teaching, someone who goes out to plant churches is an apostle. This sounds correct, but it is misleading. Ironically, an apostle is not simply anyone who goes, but someone who is sent. The one who merely goes travels on his own authority, but the one who is sent travels under someone else's authority. An apostle does not simply take

it upon himself to go out and do something; he waits until he is sent. We have plenty of people who know how to go - what we need now is people who know how to be sent.

#### GOING ONLY WHERE YOU ARE SENT

"Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them" (Acts 16:6,7, NKJV).

Our destination, and well as our departure, must be governed by the Spirit. How intriguing that the Spirit actually forbade them to preach the word in Asia and Bithynia! This ought to be proof enough that "need", in and of itself, is insufficient guidance. The only thing that matters is being sent, and it is critical that we go only where the Spirit sends us.

The apostles were indeed sent forth by the Spirit, yet that same Spirit did not permit them to just go wherever they pleased. The Spirit prevented them twice before they understood that Macedonia, not Asia or Bithynia, was the intended destination. Later we see that Paul indeed went to Asia and a tremendous work was founded. This tells us that a "no" today does not mean a "no" is forever; nevertheless, when the Spirit forbids us, we dare not take matters into our own hands and go where we have not been sent.

Those with an evangelical mindset often assume that since Jesus said, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" they do not have to pray, wait, or be led by the Spirit. Having this word from Jesus they go forth and blaze their own trail.

We must realize, however, that this general command of Jesus does not preclude the necessity to only go where the Spirit is sending us at that particular moment. Generally speaking, the Church is sent to the whole world; but we ought to ask ourselves, as individual disciples and members of the Body of Christ, "To whom, specifically, am I sent today?" It should be obvious that the Church as a whole is commanded to go into all the world, while specific members are sent to meet specific needs in specific parts of the world. God is not the author of confusion, but order.

#### SPEAKING ONLY TO WHOM YOU ARE SENT

"Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them" (Acts 10:20, NKJV).

It was God Who told Cornelius to send for Peter. It was God Who told Peter to go to Cornelius. When God brought these two together, Peter had hardly begun to speak when the Spirit fell on those who were listening. It should be seen that the success of the mission to Cornelius' house had less to do with Peter's ability to speak and more to do with the audience's ability to hear. When we speak only to whom we are sent then we will see dramatic results. Trying to speak to everyone in general and no one in particular is a colossal waste of time and demonstrates poor stewardship. We ought not to give ten coins to someone who can only handle five, and we ought not to give five coins to someone who cannot handle even one. It is clear that much time is wasted trying to convince, persuade, plead, argue, teach, and help people to whom God has not sent us. If we will wait for the Spirit of God we will save ourselves a lot of time, effort and energy. A worker who indiscriminately throws precious seed on rocky ground and gives pearls to pigs is not being a wise, faithful, and profitable servant.

It is very difficult for younger believers to grasp this. They are filled with power, and knowledge, and zeal, and enthusiasm. Often they are very gifted and talented. Most of the time they have a genuine call from

God. What they lack is the patience to wait for the Spirit to send them, and the maturity to know to whom they are sent. So when they see a need they move at once to fill that need, incorrectly assuming that it is their Christian duty and calling to meet every need around them. At times it seems as if God is blessing the work of their hands. At other times it seems as if they are running in quicksand. They work and toil and become weighed down with the meeting of many needs. Before long, the work of the Lord becomes more important than the Lord of the work.

Confronted with a nation full of widows and lepers in need, these young Elijahs and Elishas would no doubt begin to undertake the huge task of feeding all the widows and healing all the lepers, solely on the basis of what they think needs to be done. As a result, they may have some initial successes, but before long they are completely drained of spiritual power and must rely upon fleshly methods to keep everything going. The hasty and the impatient do not enjoy that inner strength that comes to those who only labor in the field that God has sent them.

Many churches, ministries, missionary endeavors, and outreach programs have been birthed, not by the Spirit of God, but by well-meaning "Marthas" who are "cumbered about with much serving." Before long the entire organization is filled with Christians who are "troubled over many things" and there are few if any "Marys" left who know how to sit at the Lord's feet and hear His Word. This whole situation can be avoided if we will stop looking at man's need and simply ask, "To whom am I sent?"

## SUMMATION

"Now as [Paul] reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, 'Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you'" (Acts 24:25, NLT).

When the time is short we must make the most of every opportunity and waste nothing. Ordinarily if we speak the Word to someone and they send us away the best advice is to leave. Unfortunately, Paul was in prison and could not get away. Felix sent for him often but nothing ever changed. In this manner Paul witnessed to Felix for two years without any result whatsoever. Clearly this was a ruse of the enemy designed to frustrate the gifted apostle and sap his strength. Paul the prisoner had no choice but to come when Felix called for him; we who are free ought to be careful lest we find ourselves spending all our time talking to a Felix when there is a Cornelius praying to hear us speak the very words that Felix takes for granted.

Jesus says that His yoke is easy and His burden is light. Often we take the easy yoke and the light burden of the Lord and turn it into a difficult yoke and a heavy burden. This happens when we go beyond the place God has appointed us and take it upon ourselves to do things He has not called us to do, go to places He has not called us to go to, and speak with people to whom we have not been sent.

We cannot afford to become narrow-minded and legalistic in this regard, however. Jesus clearly stated that He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 15:24); but that did not stop Him from ministering to an occasional Samaritan woman or Roman officer. Jesus recognized that these, too, were part of the "other sheep" that needed to be gathered into the fold (John 10:16). How will we know the difference? We will wait for the Spirit to show us.

To whom are YOU sent? Once this issue is settled, you may then go forth in the power and authority of Christ and see His Kingdom increased. Until then, it is better to stay where you are. May the Lord lead us by His Spirit and preserve both our going out and our coming in. Amen.

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