

# Why Did You Send For Me?

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On the instruction of an angel of God, Cornelius, the Roman centurion, sent men to Joppa to locate Simon Peter and bring him to the house of Cornelius. Peter himself had received a vision in which he was told not to call common or unclean what God had cleansed. The next day, Peter and six Jewish brethren accompanied these messengers to Caesarea to the house of the centurion. Upon arrival, they found a collection of kinsmen and friends of Cornelius. Peter said, "Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?" (Acts 10:29).

That was a fair question then and it is a fair one now when brethren send for a preacher either to come and live along them or for a gospel meeting. Sometimes the expectations of the preacher and those of the people who sent for him are not the same. Therein lies the cause of misunderstandings, friction, and sometimes division.

## Why He Did NOT Send For Peter

Peter did not come to be idolized and venerated and to establish a cult built around his personality. In fact, when Cornelius fell down before Peter when he arrived, Peter quickly told him to "stand up; I myself also am a man" (v. 26). There is no indication that Peter delayed for a few moments to savor this adulation. If a preacher comes to a place expecting to be put on some sort of pedestal to be adored but never questioned, then there are going to be some rough times. There is something wrong with the general view that the preacher alone is responsible for the success or failure of the work. He may well be a contributing factor in either case, but the work must not be built around him. Peter was a messenger of the gospel. The message was not his. He was obligated to deliver it without change.

He did not send for Peter to entertain and amuse himself, his kindred or his friends with bursts of eloquence, one-liners, and pitiful stories to make them cry. The motive in sending for him was much nobler than that. Sadly, that is what untaught or worldly-minded church members want and expect. They will come in droves to hear such delivered by gifted speakers but they will stay away when such adornments are missing.

He did not send for Peter to take over his God-given responsibilities. That is what some think the work of a preacher to be. They want an official socializer who will be visible at all the right times and places to enhance the image of the church before the world. You know, someone who can convince the community that he is a "good-ole boy." They want someone to do all their personal work for them. Sometimes brethren will advertise for a preacher and will say "it doesn't matter if he is able in the pulpit as long as he is a good personal worker." Is this an advertisement for mediocrity in the pulpit? Paul told Timothy to commit what he had learned to "faithful men who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). Does this mean that a man is expected to do his part personally in teaching the lost, or does it mean that they are going to fulfill their work by proxy through this hired

hand? Cornelius did not depend on Peter, after his arrival to round up his relatives and friends. He did that himself.

He did not send for Peter to organize sports and entertainment for the young people. Peter was not expected to organize some sort of mountain or wilderness survival expedition or lead an adventure to see who could be the first to cross the Mediterranean in a rowboat. He was not to arrange for surfing contests down at the sea. No, his motives were higher than that.

### **Why DID He Send For Peter?**

The angel had said to Cornelius that "he shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" (Acts 11:14). That very statement told Cornelius that he and his house were lost. The means out of that peril involved the speaking of words. Notice that the angel did not tell him what to do. That was not in the divine plan. God purposed to use human agency in delivering the necessary words. "Preach the word" (2 Tim 4:2). This same Peter said once, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). Such words are of the utmost importance and urgency. They must be heard at all cost. "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

Cornelius said, "Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God" (Acts 10:33).

Observe that he sent "immediately." It could not wait. "Thou hast done well that thou art come." Cornelius did his part in sending for Peter. Peter did his part by coming even though his entrance into that house violated every principle of separateness that Peter as a Jew had always observed. Both men showed great faith in God. The Lord's plan was to bring a faithful messenger of the word together with a man and his house which needed to hear the message. That is how it worked with the Ethiopian treasurer in Acts 8, with the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, with the conversion of Lydia and her house, and other cases in the book of Acts. A faithful preacher was brought together with honest hearts ready to receive the word.

Cornelius and his house were ready to "hear all things commanded thee of God." How refreshing. If all preachers would go with the determination to deliver a "thus saith the Lord" and be prepared to produce the very place in Scripture where the Lord said it and then had an audience with the mind set of Cornelius and those he gathered to hear Peter, think what great things could be done for the Lord. Maybe I am missing something, but it appears to me that many congregational troubles and stress in the lives of preachers, grow out of a failure of either the preacher to faithfully deliver the message or the audience who arrives with a desire for something other than that message.

Do you have a preacher living and working among you? Why did you send for him? Preacher, why did you go?