



## Called and Sent 1 Cor 13:1-5 & 14:24-28

### TITLE

Today we are going to commission Steve and Pam Lineham to go from this church to do mission work with the OM Ship Logos Hope for a period of two years. The practice of commending people called to Christian service goes back to the New Testament and we read a very famous example a few moments ago. How God calls people varies hugely. Sometimes it's like what happened in Antioch where God brings a prophetic word to others that someone is called. Sometimes the individual themselves are called of God – I recall us considering the call of Samuel one Sunday morning a couple of months back.

### LOGOS HOPE

We've already heard on a previous occasion how Steve and Pam had for some time been considering a call to serve abroad and that ended up as a call to serve on the OM ship, Logos Hope. This morning we are going to commission them just as the church at Antioch sent out Saul and Barnabas.

So what can we learn from the mission story of Paul & Barnabas we read that will encourage Steve and Pam and encourage us too?

### CALLED - VERSE

Saul and Barnabas were called. Traditionally we have seen a call to missionary work as something of a long term thing, but this passage indicates that call can be something quite different. "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul, to do the work to which I have called them." This was a sending out on a journey. It had a start and end.

On the other hand Paul had a personal and lifelong call to be apostle to the Gentiles and this trip was just the start of a life of a travelling missionary life for him.

One of the things we tell all new disciples is that God has a plan for your life. When we accepted Christ, it wasn't the end of a journey, but the beginning of one. I believe that each of us are called to follow Jesus and go wherever He leads. There is one sense in which the path is lifelong because in deciding to follow Jesus, He is with us for the rest of our lives. Whether it is on a ship on the other side of the world, or whether it is to serve God within our families, or our community, or as part of the fellowship of the church: there is a plan for each of us. As we go through different phases of our lives, we are called to follow Jesus in different ways, changing ways. Steve and Pam have gone through different phases in their lives together – being married, having children, following careers and now they are coming to this phase in their lives together where they will serve God in a specific way for two years. And after that? Whatever He leads them to next.

The interesting thing about the way that Paul and Barnabas were called and went on their journey is that they don't seem to have an exact map for where they were going. They had some idea and we'll get to that in a minute. They trusted that the one who called them on the journey would take them to the end.

So the challenge I bring to each of us this morning is: where is our call for now. What is He calling us to do? If we know our call as of now; great. I know that many of you have a clear idea. If we don't then – have we asked? Asking is a great start. Another clue when we see following Jesus as a journey is that we know at least one point – start! What are my current gifts and talents? What am I experienced in? What gifts or even callings have others identified in me?

### MAP

Saul and Barnabas were called and sent on a journey. Where? Firstly to Cyprus. Why Cyprus? Well, Barnabas came from Cyprus. He was a Cypriot Jew. It was his stomping ground. It was not alien territory. He knew people, had contacts.

Secondly, they went to Asia Minor. Saul came from Asia Minor – from Tarsus in Cilicia. They didn't visit Tarsus on this journey but a lot of the towns nearby. Saul may well have known these towns, the Jewish people whose synagogues they visited and the culture of the people. It was relatively familiar ground.

To be called of God, you don't have to be called to some far-flung land like Steve and Pam. The vast majority of us are called to be a testimony of Jesus in our street, our family, our neighbourhood, our

workplace, our town. So if you're wondering about where you are called, then start at home because that's where you are now.

But also recognise that call can change. Where you are now may not be where God wants you for the rest of your life. Steve and Pam reflect a development in mission in recent years for people who are older and at the end of their working life, to bring their expertise and maturity to mission – you're never too old.

After this journey, Paul and Barnabas headed off in different directions. Barnabas ended up back in Cyprus, Paul went off on a more ambitious journey with a new partner, Silas.

#### CHALLENGED

That's the good news. Now let me bring you the bad news. The enemy doesn't like it when we try to follow Jesus. And the more obvious we make ourselves, the greater the opposition. So as Paul and Barnabas visited the various towns, they found they hit various problems and here's the list:

Cyprus – satanic opposition

Antioch of Pisidia - driven out of town

Iconium – plot to kill themselves

Lystra – Paul was stoned

Derbe – everything went OK!

Steve and Pam, you will find that all will not go smoothly with your boat trip! There will be those great days where you will see people saved, where you will see lives changed, where you'll learn some deep things about God, where you'll see miracles. But there will be those days where nothing will go right, where you'll find rough edges with others on the crew, where the technology will break down, where you may face hostility from local people, where your family will be attacked back home – and you'll feel you wondered why you bothered ever getting on the plane in the first place.

All these are normal for Christians wanting to serve the Lord. You are on the front line – expect to get shot at. But know this, God has provided you with all the equipment you need to deal with the enemy and all his fiery darts and evil schemes!

And church it's our responsibility to pray daily for Steve and Pam that they may be protected and that they will have the strength and ability to resist the evil one, that they may be a blessing in the ministry God has called them too.

The same applies actually to all Christians who take following Jesus seriously. Problems and opposition will come. If you know you're being faithful and get problems as a believer, know that you are doing something right.

#### CHANGED

The final part of our reading this morning concerned the arrival home of Paul and Barnabas. They related all God had done. For them, the journey was a revelation. It was a watershed in the history of the church; where someone had been sent out with the express desire to reach Gentiles – and Jews of course were the ones that produced all the problems whilst the Gentiles received Christ with joy! Paul and Barnabas were changed by the trip and the church at Antioch was changed and as we get into the next chapter, we find the whole body of Christ was changed.

When you follow what God wants in your life, expect the Holy Spirit to change you. Steve and Pam, we look forward to your news, perhaps not in 2 years time as technology allows us to find out about what God is doing as often as you want to send us prayer information. Expect God to change you. Expect that change in your life to impact on others.

We have a God who changes people. This service is about commissioning Steve and Pam, but I hope it has served to challenge all of us that God has a plan for each of us and we need to follow His call, whether that be the end of the world or the end of our street. When we are serious, we understand we have a God who changes lives, including ours and His kingdom is built up in people's lives.

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