

Acts 13:1-12

The true and false leading of the Spirit

(What does a Spirit led ministry look like?)

Introduction:

- We hear lots of people talk about being called into ministry. What does this mean?
- How should we recognize a call that comes from God?
- The nature of the Spirit's speaking to God's people is somewhat subjective. This subjective element makes discernment of true and false messages difficult.
- In this passage we have an example of how a call came to the early church and how the early church treated false "messages from God."

1. God calls to a ministry.

Hearing and responding to God's call to service is a community responsibility.

"¹ Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was {there}, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³ Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

- a. Notice that the Spirit speaks to the church as the church worships. Does worship suggest a posture of listening to the promptings of the Spirit? What might this experience be like in our day?
- b. Fasting is almost always linked to some positive form of spiritual discipline. We fast in order to worship and pray more effectively.
- c. How did the Spirit speak to the early church? A prophetic voice within the church may have been used.
- d. Notice that the call of the Lord came to two groups.
 1. Paul and Barnabas – Paul and Barnabas had already been called to mission work (see Paul's experience in Acts 9). There is no indication that they volunteered for this ministry.
 2. The prophets and teachers of the church
- e. We should expect that the calling of God is not just to those who are going out. A call by God to missionary ministry (or any ministry) should be notarized by the church. There is a balance needed and described in this text.

Individual call	Institutional call
By itself can become "individualism" that does not respect the role of the "Body of Christ" in ordaining ministry.	By itself can become "institutionalism" which does not respect the role of the personal call to ministry.

- f. Human ordination follows Divine appointment. The phrase "sent them away" (vs.3) can be translated "let them go" or "released."

- g. The ordination was a setting apart for God and for the work that was their calling. In this case the calling may have been missionary work in general or a specific mission in particular. The text is not clear.
- h. The question is raised – How do people today view “a call” to ministry? What should we learn from this example about valid and invalid calls?

2. Not every claim to speak “in the Spirit” is of God.

Discerning false spirits is a necessary part of charismatic life.

4 So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus. 5 And when they reached Salamis, they {began} to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; and they also had John as their helper. 6 And when they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they found a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet whose name was Bar-Jesus, 7 who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence. This man summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. 8 But Elymas the magician (for thus his name is translated) was opposing them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. 9 But Saul, who was also {known as} Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze upon him, 10 and said, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord? 11 "And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time." And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand. 12 Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord.”

- a. In this story we are introduced to a third type of opposition to the Gospel. This opposition comes from within the charismatic community of Judaism and the early church. It is in many ways the most sinister and difficult to identify and combat.

Three types of resistance to the Gospel

Secular	Traditionalist	Charismatic
Philosophers	Legalists	False Prophets

- b. The Spirit had spoken to the disciples in a charismatic encounter while they were “ministering to the Lord.” What happens when someone claims to be speaking for God in a charismatic sense and the message is not of the Spirit of Christ but rather of Satan?
- c. First, not every voice that claims to come from God is authentic. We must
- d. Second, we note that there was a charismatic ministry in ancient Israel that included “false prophets.” Tests to identify a false prophet were a part of Israel’s religion.

Matt.7 “15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. 16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 17 Even so every good tree bringeth

forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. ²⁰ Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. ²¹ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³ And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

- e. Third, the sign of the “authentic Spirit” was not in the “form” but in the content of the message.

I Cor.12 “¹ Now concerning spiritual {gifts,} brethren, I do not want you to be unaware. ² You know that when you were pagans, {you were} led astray to the dumb idols, however you were led. ³ Therefore I make known to you, that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.”

Gal.1 “⁶ I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; ⁷ which is {really} not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed. ¹⁰ For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.”