



DISCERNING GOD'S CALL

THE COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM Acts 15:22-35

BACKGROUND:

Conflict in the early church came to a head in a major council in Jerusalem. The question: “Did Gentiles (non-Jewish people) need to go through the rituals of becoming Jews before they could follow Jesus?” Paul (and Peter, from last week’s reading) argued against it, telling stories of how the Holy Spirit worked in all people. After a robust debate, they wrote the letter in this passage laying out their understanding of God’s will. They revealed their discernment process when they declared: “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us.”

SCRIPTURE:

Then the apostles and the elders, with the consent of the whole church, decided to choose men from among their members and to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leaders among the brothers, with the following letter: ‘The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the believers of Gentile origin in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings. Since we have heard that certain persons who have gone out from us, though with no instructions from us, have said things to disturb you and have unsettled your minds, we have decided unanimously to choose representatives and send them to you, along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.’

So they were sent off and went down to Antioch. When they gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. When its members read it, they rejoiced at the exhortation. Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the believers. After they had been there for



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some time, they were sent off in peace by the believers to those who had sent them. But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, and there, with many others, they taught and proclaimed the word of the Lord.

- How do the people in the story hear God's call to them?
- How open are they to God's call?
- What might this passage say to our community of faith?