SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 11

To the Gentiles Also — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

God tears down the wall between Jew and Gentile, and the men who object to it end up praising Him. Then He builds a new kind of church in Antioch — started by nobodies, strengthened by an encourager, taught by a former persecutor, named "Christians" by its neighbors, and known first for its giving.

00 The Text

ACTS 11 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 Now the apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God.

2 And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those who were circumcised took issue with him,

3 saying,
"You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them."

4 But Peter began speaking and proceeded to explain to them in orderly sequence, saying,

5 "I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object coming down like a great sheet lowered by four corners from the sky; and it came right down to me,

6 and when I had fixed my gaze on it and was observing it I saw the four-footed animals of the earth and the wild beasts and the crawling creatures and the birds of the air.

7 "I also heard a voice saying to me, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.'

8 "But I said, 'By no means, Lord, for nothing unholy or unclean has ever entered my mouth.'

9 "But a voice from heaven answered a second time, 'What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy.'

10 "This happened three times, and everything was drawn back up into the sky.

11 "And behold, at that moment three men appeared at the house in which we were staying, having been sent to me from Caesarea.

12 "The Spirit told me to go with them without misgivings. These six brethren also went with me and we entered the man's house.

13 "And he reported to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house, and saying, 'Send to Joppa and have Simon, who is also called Peter, brought here;

14 and he will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household.'

15 "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning.

16 "And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'

17 "Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?"

18 When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life."

19 So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone.

20 But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus.

21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord.

22 The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch.

23 Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord;

24 for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord.

25 And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul;

26 and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

27 Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch.

28 One of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius.

29 And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea.

30 And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.

Marked in the text

- **v1** "the Gentiles also had received the word of God" — Time / place / contrast
- **v3** "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them" — Sin / warning
- **v4** "in orderly sequence" — Time / place / contrast
- **v9** "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy" — God — His character & actions
- **v12** "The Spirit told me to go with them without misgivings" — Command / instruction
- **v14** "by which you will be saved, you and all your household" — Promise / blessing
- **v15** "the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning" — God — His character & actions
- **v16** "you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit" — Promise / blessing
- **v17** "who was I that I could stand in God's way" — Sin / warning
- **v18** "glorified God" — God — His character & actions
- **v18** "the repentance that leads to life" — Promise / blessing
- **v19** "speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone" — Time / place / contrast
- **v20** "began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus" — Command / instruction
- **v21** "the hand of the Lord was with them" — God — His character & actions
- **v21** "turned to the Lord" — Command / instruction
- **v23** "witnessed the grace of God" — God — His character & actions
- **v23** "remain true to the Lord" — Command / instruction
- **v24** "he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith" — Promise / blessing
- **v25** "to look for Saul" — Time / place / contrast
- **v26** "the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" — Time / place / contrast
- **v28** "a great famine all over the world" — Sin / warning
- **v29** "in the proportion that any of the disciples had means" — Command / instruction
- **v29** "a contribution for the relief of the brethren" — Promise / blessing
- **v19** "Antioch" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v8** "Lord" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

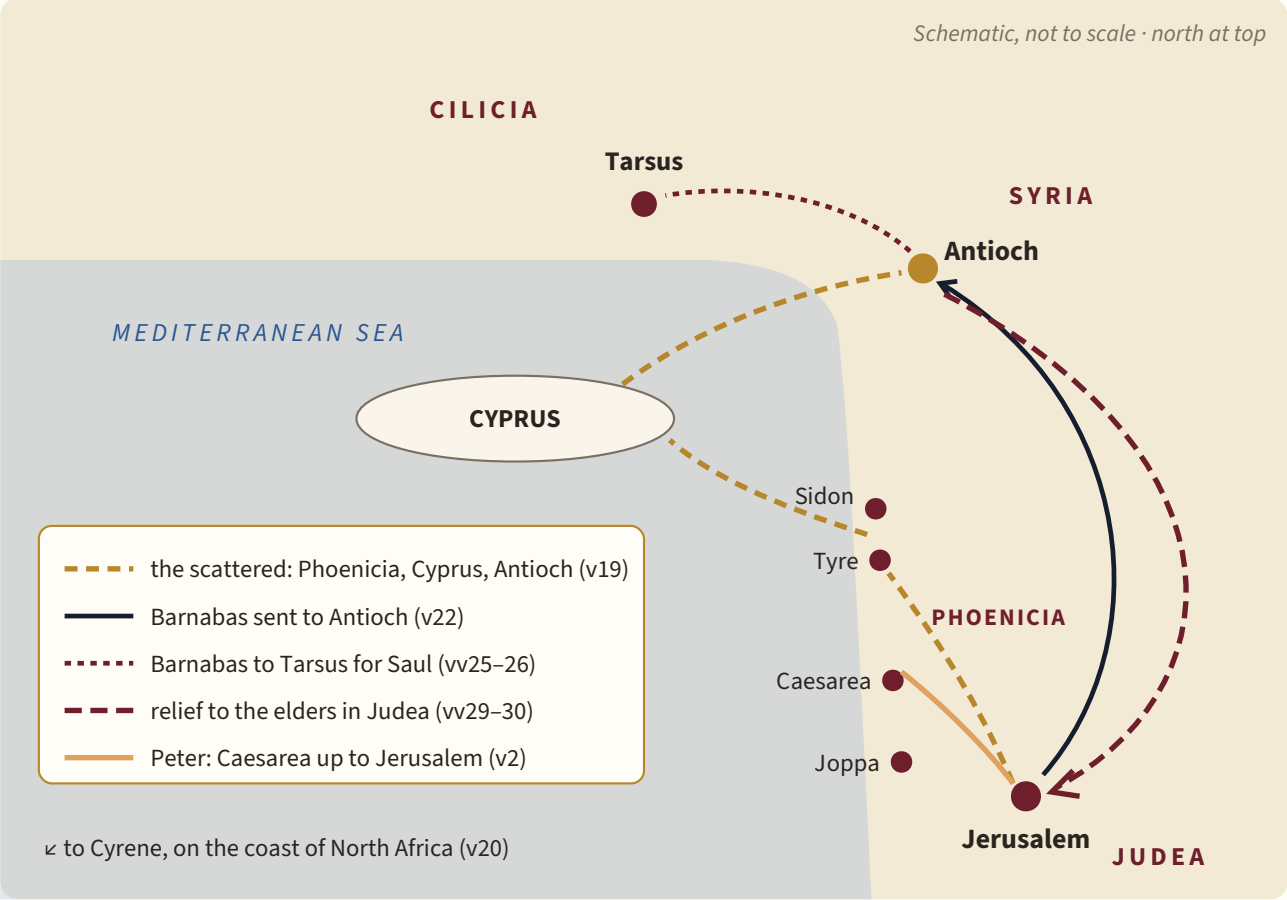
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 11:1

"Now the apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God."

FIGURE · FROM JERUSALEM TO ANTIOCH



Follow the gold dashes as the scattered believers go up the coast, over to Cyprus and on to Antioch; then see Barnabas sent north, his trip to Tarsus for Saul, and the relief carried back to Judea.

Setting. Word reaches the apostles and brethren in Judea that the Gentiles have received the word of God (v1). When Peter comes up to Jerusalem from Caesarea, the circumcised believers take issue with him (vv2–3). He tells them, in order, what happened at Joppa and Caesarea (vv4–17), and they glorify God (v18). Luke then picks up the believers scattered after Stephen's death, who reach Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch (v19). In Antioch the gospel goes to Greeks (vv20–21); Jerusalem sends Barnabas (vv22–24); he brings Saul from Tarsus (vv25–26); prophets come from Jerusalem, Agabus predicts a famine, and relief goes to the elders in Judea (vv27–30).

Structure:

- vv1–10 — **the charge and the vision:** the Gentiles also received the word (v1); "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them" (vv2–3); Peter explains "in orderly sequence" (v4); the sheet, the animals, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat," "By no means, Lord," "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy," three times (vv5–10).
- vv11–18 — **the same gift:** three men from Caesarea (v11); the Spirit says go "without misgivings," with six brethren (v12); the angel in Cornelius' house (vv13–14); the Holy Spirit fell "just as He did upon us at the beginning" (v15); the word of the Lord remembered (v16); "who was I that I could stand in God's way?" (v17); they quiet down and glorify God — "the repentance that leads to life" (v18).
- vv19–24 — **Antioch and Barnabas:** the scattered speak only to Jews (v19); men of Cyprus and Cyrene speak to Greeks (v20); the hand of the Lord, a large number turn (v21); Barnabas sent (v22); he sees the grace of God, rejoices, encourages (v23); a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith; considerable numbers added (v24).
- vv25–30 — **the name and the gift:** Barnabas fetches Saul from Tarsus (vv25–26a); a year of teaching; "first called Christians in Antioch" (v26b); prophets and Agabus — a great famine under Claudius (vv27–28); each according to his means sends relief (v29), carried by Barnabas and Saul to the elders (v30).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "Lord" ×8 — vv8, 16, 17, 20, 21 (×2), 23, 24.
- "God" ×8 — vv1, 9, 17 (×3), 18 (×2), 23.
- "Antioch" ×6 — vv19, 20, 22, 26 (×2), 27.
- "Spirit" ×5 — vv12, 15, 16, 24, 28 ("Holy Spirit" ×3 — vv15, 16, 24).
- "send / sent / sending" ×5 — vv11, 13, 22, 29, 30.
- "speak / speaking / spoke" ×5 — vv4, 14, 15, 19, 20.
- "house / household" ×4 — vv11, 12, 13, 14.
- "gift / gave / granted" ×4 — vv17 (×3), 18.
- "unholy / unclean" ×3 — vv8 (×2), 9; "cleansed" ×1 — v9.
- "brethren" ×3 — vv1, 12, 29; "Jerusalem" ×3 — vv2, 22, 27.
- "Gentiles" ×2 — vv1, 18; "Jews" ×1 — v19; "Greeks" ×1 — v20.
- "baptized" ×2 — v16 (×2); "believed / believing" ×2 — vv17, 21.
- "Barnabas" ×2 — vv22, 30; "Saul" ×2 — vv25, 30; "disciples" ×2 — vv26, 29.

Contrasts: Took issue (v2) ⟷ quieted down and glorified God (v18). Unholy and unclean ⟷ what God has cleansed (vv8–9). The brethren's distinction (v2) ⟷ "without misgivings" (v12). John's water ⟷ the Spirit's baptism (v16). To them ⟷ to us — "the same gift" (v17). Jews alone ⟷ the Greeks also (vv19–20). The gospel out from Jerusalem ⟷ relief back to Judea (vv22, 29–30). Disciples ⟷ Christians (v26).

Shape of the chapter: two halves that mirror each other. In the first, Jerusalem questions what God did among Gentiles and ends in praise. In the second, Jerusalem sends a good man to look at what God is doing among Gentiles, and he rejoices. The chapter starts with an argument about eating and ends with Gentile believers sending food to Jewish believers.

Chapter theme (my words): God gives the Gentiles the same Spirit and the same repentance that leads to life, and nobody — not even good men with good traditions — gets to stand in His way. The church that results is mixed, encouraged, taught, named for Christ, and generous.

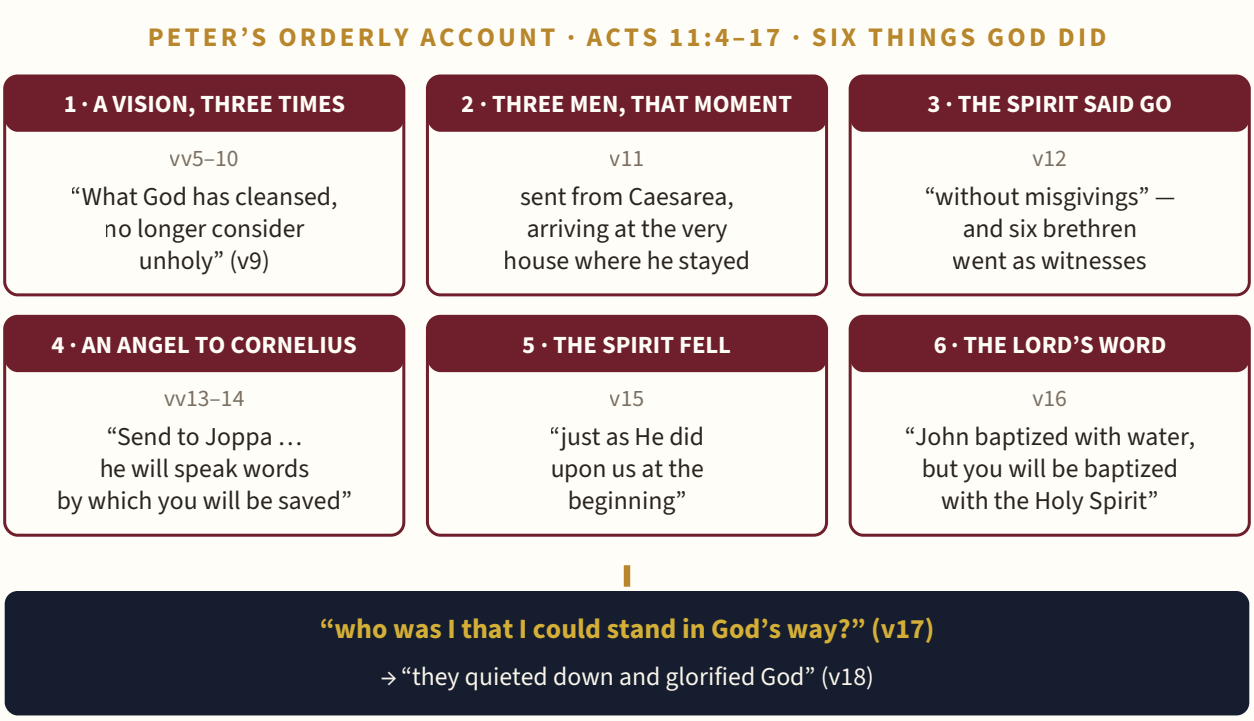
02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 11:17

"Therefore if ⚠ God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, ⚠ who was I that I could stand in God's way?"

FIGURE · PETER'S ORDERLY ACCOUNT



Peter does not argue; he lists, in order, six things God did — and lets the list ask the question in the dark bar.

What was the real objection? Not preaching but eating: "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them" (v3). Guzik: "At first, they were more concerned with what Peter did than with what God was doing with the Gentiles." Henry: "They charged it upon him as a crime." The table was where the wall between Jew and Gentile was most real — which is why Peter later failed at the same point in Antioch (Gal 2:11–12).

Why tell the story again? Luke gives Cornelius' conversion twice (chs. 10 and 11) and alludes to it a third time (15:7–9). Repetition is Luke's highlighter. Peter tells it *kathexēs*, "in orderly sequence" (v4), the word of Luke 1:3. Boice, in Guzik: "Peter did not flaunt his apostolic authority."

What settled it? Not Peter's opinion but God's actions: the vision three times, the timing of the messengers, the Spirit's command, the angel to Cornelius, the Spirit falling, and the Lord's own word (vv5–16). Guzik: "It showed that God's stamp of approval was on this work towards the Gentiles." Peter's question is the verdict: "who was I that I could stand in God's way?" (v17).

Is this a second blessing? Sproul reads the Gentile Pentecost as proof that every believer receives the Spirit: "All the believers at the household of Cornelius received the Spirit," and "Baptism of the Holy Spirit is not the same thing as regeneration" — distinct, but both given at conversion. Pentecostal and charismatic brothers read Acts as teaching a later baptism of the Spirit. Here, at least, the Spirit came while Peter was still preaching, on people who had just believed (v15; 10:44), and Peter calls it "the same gift … after believing" (v17).

Repentance as a gift (v18). The Gentiles did not earn it; God "granted" it, as He granted it to Israel (5:31). Spurgeon: "'Repentance,' my dear friends, is the gift of God," and true repentance is "a hatred of sin, and a forsaking it." Henry: "Repentance, if it be true, is unto life." The word is "also" — Gentiles are added; God has not cast away Israel (Rom 11:1–2). I read the church as Jew and Gentile together now, with a future still promised to national Israel.

"Greeks" or "Hellenists" (v20)? The manuscripts differ. Henry took the "Grecians" as Greek-speaking Jews; Guzik reads Gentiles, and so does the NASB, because v19 says the scattered spoke "to Jews alone" and v20 says "also." I follow the NASB.

The hand of the Lord (v21). Guzik: "A ministry can't turn people to the Lord unless the hand of the Lord is with them." Sproul: growth happens when God puts His hand on a work — but numbers alone prove nothing. Spurgeon: "There is a power abroad as potent as that by which the worlds were made." Henry: "These were not apostles, but ordinary ministers."

Barnabas. He saw grace before problems (v23), encouraged before he corrected, and went looking for Saul (v25). Sproul: "his goodness was a gift of the Holy Ghost." Henry: he brought Saul "though it might be the lessening of himself."

The name "Christian." Probably an outsiders' label, perhaps a jeer (Sproul: "Christian was a derisive term"; Gaebelein in Guzik on Antioch's "readiness to jeer and call names"). Henry: it came "not from the name of his person, Jesus, but of his office, Christ-anointed." Three New Testament uses — Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16.

Agabus and the famine. A prophet foretold it, and it came under Claudius (v28). Bruce, in Guzik: Claudius' reign "was marked by a succession of bad harvests." The church did not wait for the famine to arrive; they gave in advance, "in the proportion that any of the disciples had means" (v29).

Word study (Greek):

- **took issue / without misgivings — *diakrinō* (G1252):** to make a distinction, dispute, waver; vv2, 12; 15:9.
- **in orderly sequence — *kathexēs* (G2517):** one after another; only Luke (Luke 1:3; Acts 11:4).
- **stand in the way — *kōlyō* (G2967):** to hinder; 8:36; 10:47; 11:17.
- **repentance — *metanoia* (G3341):** a changed mind and life; granted by God (5:31; 11:18; 2 Tim 2:25).
- **Greeks — *Hellēnistas* (G1675) / *Hellēnas* (G1672):** a manuscript variant in v20.
- **grace — *charis* (G5485):** what Barnabas saw (v23).
- **encourage — *parakaleō* (G3870):** Barnabas' name and habit (4:36; 11:23).
- **remain true — *prosmenō* (G4357):** to stay with, continue (11:23; 13:43).
- **were called — *chrēmatizō* (G5537):** to bear a name publicly; usually "divinely warned."
- **Christian — *Christianos* (G5546):** 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet 4:16.
- **relief — *diakonia* (G1248):** ministry, service (11:29; 12:25).
- **elders — *presbyteros* (G4245):** first church elders in Acts (v30).

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **The complaint was about the table** (v3).
2. **Tell it in order** — *kathexēs* (v4).
3. **They made a distinction; the Spirit said not to** — *diakrinō* (vv2, 12).
4. **The same gift** — every believer receives the Spirit (Sproul).
5. **Repentance is a gift, not a fee** (Spurgeon, Henry).
6. **Silence, then praise** — good men changed their minds (v18).
7. **Persecution became a sowing** (Henry).
8. **Unnamed men changed history** (v20; Guzik).
9. **An encourager sees grace first** (v23).
10. **A nickname, a badge, a gift** (vv26–29).

Cross-references: Isa 49:6; Joel 2:28; Luke 1:3; 18:16; 24:47; Acts 1:5, 8; 4:36; 5:31; 6:1; 8:1–4, 36; 9:28–30; 10:1–48; 13:43; 15:7–9; 26:28; Rom 11:1–2; 2 Cor 8:9; Gal 2:10–12; Eph 2:14; 2 Tim 2:25; 1 Pet 4:16.

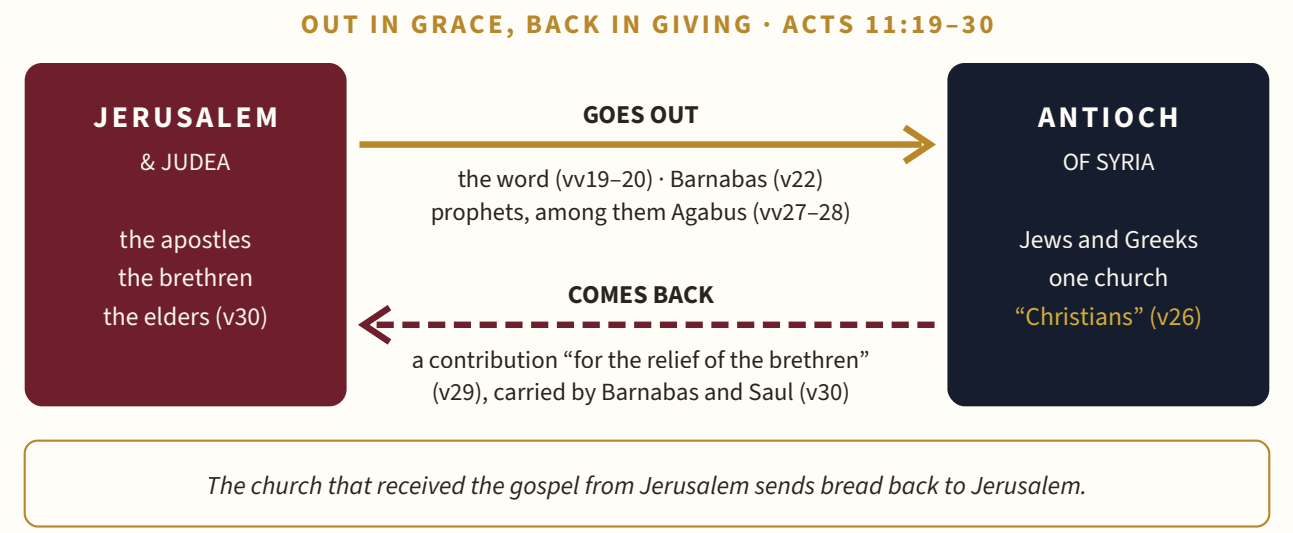
03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 11:23

"Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord;"

FIGURE · OUT IN GRACE, BACK IN GIVING



The top arrow carries the word and the teachers north; the bottom arrow carries the famine relief south — the young church gives back to the mother church.

Sin to confess — guarding the table. I have my own version of "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them." There are men I am slow to sit with — the guy fresh out, the guy with the wrong past, the guy from the wrong church. Guzik says the Jerusalem believers cared more about what Peter did than about what God was doing. I confess that I have done the same, and I ask God to show me whose table He wants me at this week.

Truth to face — I don't get to stand in God's way. Peter asked, "who was I that I could stand in God's way?" If God is giving His Spirit and repentance to a man I have written off, my opinion does not get a vote. Henry: "Those who hinder the conversion of souls withstand God."

Promise to trust — repentance that leads to life is a gift. I cannot argue a man into repentance, and I could not argue myself into it. God grants it (v18). That changes how I pray for the men in my group and for my own family: I ask the Giver. Spurgeon: "Is it not a stupendous act of divine mercy that he actually makes them willing?"

Example to follow — Barnabas. He looked for grace first, rejoiced at it, encouraged men to stay with the Lord "with resolute heart," and then went and found Saul — a man others were still afraid of — and made room for him even if it cost him the spotlight. I want to be that kind of man in our group: look for grace, say so out loud, and go get the guy nobody else is calling.

Command to obey — give according to my means. The Antioch Christians heard of a coming famine and decided "in the proportion that any of the disciples had means" to send relief (v29). Not everyone gave the same; everyone gave. This week I will decide on something concrete to give to a brother in need, and actually carry it, not just commend the idea (Henry: "Many a good motion of that kind is made and commended, but is not prosecuted").

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. The Jerusalem believers objected to who Peter ate with. Whose table would I be uncomfortable sitting at — and what does that reveal about me? (11:2–3; Gal 2:11–12) *More concerned with what Peter did than with what God was doing (Guzik).*
2. Peter answered criticism with an orderly account of what God had done, not with his title. How do I usually respond when my walk with God is questioned? (11:4–17) *Peter did not flaunt his apostolic authority (Boice, in Guzik).*
3. "Who was I that I could stand in God's way?" Where might I be standing in the way of what God is doing in someone else? (11:17; 10:47) *Those who hinder the conversion of souls withstand God (Henry).*
4. If repentance is a gift God grants, how should that change the way I pray for the men I love who are still far from Him? (11:18; 2 Tim 2:25) *Repentance is God's gift (Henry; Spurgeon).*
5. Barnabas looked for the grace of God before he looked for problems. When I walk into a church, a group or a man's life, what do I look for first? (11:23–24) *Be glad to see the grace of God where we did not expect it (Henry).*
6. The name "Christian" started as an insult. What would people around me need to see for that name to fit me — and what did the Antioch church do first? (11:26–30; 1 Pet 4:16) *Live as becomes Christians (Henry).*

Worship. God cleanses what we called unclean, gives the same Spirit to Jew and Gentile, grants repentance that leads to life, puts His hand on ordinary men, and turns a persecution into a harvest. Christ, the Anointed One, gives His name to His people — and teaches them to give.

Prayer. Lord, forgive me for guarding tables You have opened. Thank You for granting me repentance that leads to life; grant it to the men I carry in prayer. Put Your hand on our small work, make me glad when I see Your grace in others, and give me the heart of Barnabas to go and find the brother everyone else has left in Tarsus. Make my life fit the name Christian, and make me generous with what You have given me. Amen.

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