



ACTS: ENDS OF THE EARTH ACTS 15:19-35

STUDY GUIDE
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ACTS 15:19-35 ESV

19 Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, 20 but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood. 21 For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues." 22 Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brothers, 23 with the following letter: "The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the brothers who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings. 24 Since we have heard that some persons have gone out from us and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions, 25 it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. 28 For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: 29 that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell." 30 So when they were sent off, they went down to Antioch, and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. 31 And when they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement. 32 And Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words. 33 And after they had spent some time, they were sent off in peace by the brothers to those who had sent them. 34 35 But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

STRUCTURE

- I. James Renders Judgment (19-21)
 - a. Gentiles are saved apart from the law—by grace, not works (19)
 - b. Gentiles should submit to parts of the law—out of love, not duty (20-21)
- II. The Church Affirms It (22-29)
 - a. The apostles, elders, and church send delegates to communicate the decision (22)
 - b. The apostles and elders authorize a letter to communicate the decision (23-29)
 - i. *Greeting*: from the Jewish leaders to the Gentile churches (23)
 - ii. *Problem*: unsanctioned false teachers (24)
 - iii. *Solution*:
 1. Sanctioned true teachers (25-27)
 2. Advice on the Mosaic Law in their context (28-29a)
 - iv. *Farewell* (29b)
- III. Unity Results (30-35)
 - a. Response to the letter—encouragement (30-31)
 - b. Response to the delegates—encouragement (32-35)

GENERAL COMMENTARY:

The story begins with division and ends with unity. It begins with the mission threatened; it ends with the mission resumed. We'll never succeed in spreading the gospel if the church is not united around the gospel. Unity precedes mission. As our Lord prays near the end of His life, "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:20-21). If the church is unified, the world will believe.

Therefore, we must understand what it means to be unified and how to maintain that unity. In this passage, the apostles and elders divided from the hypocrites who tested the LORD and compromised the gospel. They even

wrote a letter to other believers, distancing themselves from these men. Unity is not just holding hands and singing kumbaya. It is not just agreeing to disagree on issues of sin and false doctrine. Unity means aligning our hearts with the truth of the gospel. Like musical instruments tuned to the same key, *truth* tunes our hearts to one another.

The nature of their dispute centered on the truth of the gospel, which the church refused to compromise on. Nevertheless, they still compromised—not truth, but preferences, for the sake of love. The early church models in this story how to compromise and how not to. Never compromise the gospel; always compromise preferences for the sake of the gospel. Gentiles would have preferred their strangled meat and unclean foods, but James asked them to honor the Jewish culture to avoid offending consciences. Notably, James did not demand they be circumcised because that would have compromised the gospel, suggesting that Gentiles aren't saved unless they submit to laws that Jesus already fulfilled. Again, we never compromise the gospel, but for the sake of the gospel, we always compromise preferences. James displays wisdom in his judgment, and everyone affirms the decision, which leads to unity.

Speaking of James, this story also displays the importance of leadership in resolving disputes. James speaks decisively as the leader of the Jerusalem church; the apostles and elders unanimously agree with his decision; the whole church ultimately affirms that decision too. Churches need leaders, leaders need teams, and leadership teams need the rest of the church. The story in Acts 15 shows how each interrelates. Leaders lead, but within the context of a team, and wise teams gather feedback and from the rest of the church. By following this approach, the church in Jerusalem avoids a split.

When I say they avoid a split, I'm not talking about their own split—Jerusalem seemed pretty safe at the moment—but rather a split for the church in Antioch. Antioch is where the dispute first erupted. Jerusalem got involved because the problem got bigger than what Antioch could handle. Herein lies another principle for maintaining unity: close relationships between churches. If churches are too independent, they'll be like married couples on the brink of divorce but with no access to counselors. Sometimes churches face blowups bigger than themselves. The church in Antioch had become the new missions hub, even more than the church in Jerusalem. But the mission was threatened by a split. By God's grace, they had the wisdom to look for help beyond themselves. Churches must not be islands. We will struggle to maintain unity *within* local churches if we don't also have unity *between* local churches. Churches should relate closely with one another so that it's natural to reach out for help when problems become too big for one church.

The story ends with sanctioned leaders replacing the unsanctioned ones who raised such a ruckus. Peace and encouragement result, and continued preaching flows out of that. If we want to sustain our mission to make disciples, we must make every effort to maintain unity—not false unity that ignores sin and compromise, but true unity that is achieved by tuning our hearts to the gospel.

VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENTARY:

19 Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, 20 but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood. 21 For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues."

—"Therefore, my judgment":

- James speaks last as the leader in Jerusalem, providing his judgment. The other leaders unite around him, and the decision is unanimous.
- Stott: "The Greek verb *krino* [for "judgment" in ESV] could mean merely to 'express an opinion'. But the context demands something stronger than that. 'I rule, then' (JB), on the other hand, is too strong... So we need a word stronger than 'opinion' and weaker than 'decree', perhaps 'conviction', since James was making a firm proposal, which in fact the other leaders endorsed, so that the decision was unanimous and the letter went out in the name of 'the apostles and elders, with the whole church' (22)."

—"we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God":

- Whatever James lists as requirements all pass through the filter of achieving this purpose: to not trouble the Gentiles. That is James's target.

- James presupposes that the Gentiles “turn to God”. He does not cast shade on their conversion like the Judaizers, as if Gentile uncircumcision places them outside.

—“For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues.”

- There are actually two filters.
 - First, James does not want to “trouble” the Gentiles (15:19) by placing an impossible yoke upon their shoulders (15:10)—namely, of earning their own salvation (15:1, 11).
 - Second, James feels a “Jewish consciousness” of those who have had Moses proclaimed to them every Saturday for “generations.”
 - To be clear, then, the two filters are: (1) not troubling the Gentiles with extra requirements for salvation, and (2) not troubling the Jews who will feel stricken in their conscience by Gentiles who don’t appear to respect Moses.
- In other words, James settles on a compromise. The requirements he sets forth refuse *doctrinal* compromise, but they promote *relational* compromise. Leadership teams should do likewise. We never compromise the gospel. We never compromise our inner sense of right and wrong. But we do “come to the middle” for those who feel different convictions than we do about sensitive matters. This is a recipe for unity.

—“abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood.”

- Now that we have examined the filters of vv. 19 (not troubling Gentiles doctrinally) and 21 (not troubling Jews relationally), let us assess the conclusion of verse 20.
- James presents four abstentions: (1) food sacrificed to idols, (2) sexual immorality, (3) food that has been strangled, and (4) blood. Why these four?
- First, these are not presented as requirements for salvation. By teaching that salvation is free, the Gentiles would no longer be troubled. Second, the rest of these requirements must be for the sake of not offending the conscience of the Jews.
 - *Food sacrificed to idols*: elsewhere, Paul teaches that we can consume such food as long as it doesn’t strike the conscience of some (probably Jewish) believers and lead them to sin. This is right in line with James’s conclusion.
 - *Sexual immorality*: on its face, this appears to be the only ethical requirement in the list (the rest relate to ceremonial Jewish laws). Why would Paul list this and not a million other Christian ethics? Not lying, not murdering, etc. Probably because Gentiles routinely mixed the worship of their gods with food and sex (James’s first two rules). In order to relate to Jews, these Gentile converts need to move away not only from their idols but also to their manner of worshiping idols: idolatrous food and sex.
 - *Food that has been strangled and blood*: these two regulations correlated. If an animal had been strangled, you could not drain its blood as the law stipulated (Deut. 12:16; 15:23). Strangled food was unclean. Therefore, James was commanding the Gentiles to respect Jewish food laws.
 - This does not suggest that James contradicted Jesus, who declared all foods clean (Mark 7:19). Rather, like the Apostle Paul, James taught Gentiles to respect Jewish food laws for the sake of conscience—even though Jesus freed them to eat all food under normal circumstances.
 - James wasn’t saying that people had to follow all the old Jewish food rules forever (see Acts 10-11). He just wanted everyone to be respectful and considerate of the Jewish traditions, especially in situations where it might cause confusion or offense. Jesus had made it clear that, in general, all foods are okay to eat, but James was asking the Gentiles to be respectful of the Jewish customs for peace and understanding.

- Tim Chaffey: "So why did James think that four restrictions should be placed on Gentiles? Was it because Gentiles needed to obey these laws to be saved? Not at all!... The reason for the restrictions was so that the Gentile Christians who were not under the Mosaic law would not unnecessarily offend the Jews. Notice, James did not include circumcision or the entirety of the law in his response. In fact, the four "apostolic decrees," as they have been called, are quite similar to four of the regulations in the Mosaic law placed upon foreigners who wished to remain in the land of Israel. They were to abstain from pagan sacrifices (Leviticus 17:8–9), from blood (17:10–14), things strangled (17:13–14), and sexual immorality (18:6–23)."
- Alexander (quoted by Stott): "The abstinence here recommended must be understood... not as an essential Christian duty, but as a concession to the consciences of others, i.e. of the Jewish converts, who still regarded such food as unlawful and abominable in the sight of God."

—In sum, James compromises relationally but not doctrinally. He refuses to compromise the gospel, saying, "we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God" (Acts 15:20). To trouble them would be placing a "yoke on the neck... that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear" (15:10). He maintains the glorious freedom of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. However, he does offer an olive branch to his Jewish siblings in Christ, asking the Gentiles to respect Jewish culture, with which some of their consciences were bound. James does not require the Gentiles to be circumcised, which represented covenant membership, for this would contradict the gospel, which places us all in the covenant by faith. But he does ask them to maintain a few other Jewish laws for the sake of relational harmony.

—A similar approach appears later in Acts 21:17-26: *When we had come to Jerusalem, the brothers received us gladly. On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. After greeting them, he related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified God. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed. They are all zealous for the law, and they have been told about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or walk according to our customs. What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. Do therefore what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow; take these men and purify yourself along with them and pay their expenses, so that they may shave their heads. Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself also live in observance of the law. But as for the Gentiles who have believed, we have sent a letter with our judgment that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality." Then Paul took the men, and the next day he purified himself along with them and went into the temple, giving notice when the days of purification would be fulfilled and the offering presented for each one of them.*

- Once again, the issue of Paul's "liberal" approach with Moses arises with Jews.
- Once again, Paul's view is mistaken as an outright rejection of Moses.
- Once again, James and the brothers "glorified God" for His work among Gentiles, which affirmed salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone (not requiring circumcision).
- Once again, James nevertheless advises that Paul publicly uphold an element of Jewish law (in this case, a Nazirite vow) to dispel Jewish suspicions.
- James mentions the letter from Acts 15, directly linking the two stories.

—It is a sin to separate over minor matters, but it is a sin NOT to separate over major matters. It requires discernment to know the difference.

—The early church rightly separated over a major matter—the gospel—contending that Gentiles are co-heirs of the promises made to Israel through faith in Christ alone. But they refused to separate over minor matters—Jewish sensibilities—contending for Gentiles to respect the culture and preferences of their Jewish siblings in Christ.

—When some believers broke away from the First United Methodist Church over a redefinition of sexual ethics, this was right and holy. To have refused to separate over such a major issue would have been sinful.

—However, when we divide over minor matters—like the age of the earth, music style, or belief about the end times—we display our spiritual immaturity and carnality (1 Cor. 3:1-4).

—Schreiner: "Gentiles do not need to start acting like Jews, and Jews do not need to start acting like Gentiles, but they should be compassionate and understanding to both perspectives... Jews can practice

the faith in their way, and Gentiles can as well—but all need to be washed in love. Distinguishing what is necessary and what is periphery is paramount for Christian fellowship.”

22 Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brothers,

—“seemed good”: Dr. Keener says this “occurs in Greek decrees in the sense, ‘Be it resolved,’ often associated with votes in citizen assemblies.” We should not interpret this phrase casually (like, “it seemed good that we drop by Pizza Hut on the way home!”). It was a formal decree.

—“to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church”:

- Note the actors involved from the beginning till now:
 - When the dispute erupted, Antioch sent Paul, Barnabas, and others “to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question” (Acts 15:2).
 - When they arrived in Jerusalem, they “were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders” (15:4).
 - By the time the council convened, “the apostles and the elders gathered together to consider this matter” (15:6).
 - After James issued his judgment, we read that “the apostles and the elders, with the whole church” were part of working out the practicalities of the decree—namely, how it would be communicated (15:22).
 - When the letter is sent, it reads that “the apostles and the elders” had come to the decision about the decree (15:23).
- The apostles, elders, and the “whole church” in Jerusalem played a role. Delegates from Antioch (Paul/Barnabas, who were apostles, cf. 14:14) played a role. Within the apostolic band, James played the decisive role—speaking last, validating what had been said before, showing how it aligned with Scripture, and issuing his “judgment” (15:19).
- These diverse actors highlight the need to maintain certain tensions in decision-making:
 - Church leaders and church members
 - Leaders within the circle of leaders
- Putting it all together:
 - Church members, a team of church leaders, and individual church leaders must all be given a proper voice. To exclude any of these is to break from the New Testament model.
 - But how do we define “proper voice”? The New Testament does not model a free-for-all democracy (where only church members decide matters), or an oligarchy (where only a few powerful people decide matters), or an autocracy (where only one powerful leader decides matters). Instead, each group—church members, a team of church leaders, and individuals within that team—each has a voice in the church, but they don’t all operate in the same ways or spheres.
 - In Jerusalem, church members help decide the communication plan, and they are aware of the conflict from the very beginning. They are not left in the dark. They even seem to help validate the decision of the apostles and elders.
 - At the same time, church members were not the chief decision-makers in this council. It was the apostles and elders who conferred, and it was the apostles and elders who sent the letter of decree. Carrying this principle forward, church leaders (elders) will be the primary decision-makers in the church, but they will invite church members to participate in some ways.
 - But then you have the individual church leaders within the team. All leadership team members (apostles and elders) are part of the deliberation. Every member has an equal voice. At the same time, Peter used to be the lead voice, and now James has arisen as the lead voice (I shared Scriptures on this development last week). In other words, there seems to have been a “first among equals.” This means they all had equal authority, but they also

looked to a particular leader. This is why most churches from the first century on have operated in this way.

- Therefore, it seems right for churches to have a leader who operates within a plurality of equally authoritative leaders, and who invite the church to participate in certain aspects of the church's direction.

23 with the following letter: "The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the brothers who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings. 24 Since we have heard that some persons have gone out from us and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions,

—The trouble arose in Antioch, but they wrote also to the Gentiles in Syria and Cilicia. The gospel had spread to Gentiles beyond Antioch so that this had become a bigger issue.

—Syria was the region in which Antioch was located. Cilicia was the region directly east.

—As I mentioned earlier, the letter is from "the apostles and the elders," who made the decision before the "whole church" seemed to in some way validate the decision.

—Verse 24 makes it clear that these troublemakers were not sanctioned by the church. This contrasts with the delegates of verse 22 who had been duly appointed and sent.

—There's a lesson here on unity. In verse 5, these trouble-makers had been called "believers." Yet they perverted the gospel of Christ, nearly splitting the church into heresy. Therefore, the apostles called them out publicly with their letter, which implies separation from them. Had these men repented, the apostles would not have called them out for sin. Unity does not require us to unite with sin. On the contrary, unity requires us to separate from it.

—"unsettling your minds": this was the practical effect of their false, unsanctioned, gospel.

—On one hand, we should be wary of "unsanctioned" teachers who travel from church to church or who teach on podcasts and YouTube, but without any covering. On the other hand, Jesus and John the Baptist preached in the wilderness and on hillsides because they were mostly unwelcomed in synagogues. John Wesley got booted from churches, preached in the open air, and famously proclaimed, "The world is my parish."

—Lord, how do we balance this discerningly? We don't want to give our hearts to disaffiliated mavericks, but sometimes You speak through outside voices....

—God says to watch the fruit (Matt. 7:15-20; Luke 6:43-45). Are they preaching the true gospel? These men were not. Are they preaching repentance? I can think of numerous "prophets" on social media who spout promises of prosperity and call it prophecy, yet they never mention holiness or repentance. In Jeremiah's day, this was a sign of a false prophet.

—To bring it back, then, we should be open to "outside voices" such as those on social media—the modern equivalent of the wilderness and hillsides. God has often raised up prophets in such locations because they get rejected by institutions. We just need to be careful to watch the fruit.

—I would add that our steady spiritual diet should come from our local church. Outside voices can become our input, but it's good that we are locally connected.

25 it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth.

—"it has seemed good to us": see comment on v. 22.

—"having come to one accord": while the Bible seems to allow for decisions by a "majority" (2 Cor. 2:6), the goal is always unanimity. Following such intense division at the beginning, their unity is a sign of the Spirit. Unity is always the Spirit's work (Eph. 4:3).

—"[unnamed] men... beloved Barnabas and Paul... risked their lives... Judas and Silas":

- Barnabas and Paul had been involved in Antioch and would have been trusted. That they are "beloved" and "risked their lives" only adds to their credibility.
- Judas and Silas are less known to us by this point. We met them in verse 22 as "leading men among the brothers." Later in verse 32, we learn that they were "prophets."
- Silas ultimately joins Paul, replacing Barnabas. It is a major theme in Acts that when we are faithful in the little things, God entrusts us with more. Silas proves his faithfulness here, which is why Paul will select him, not Mark, who gave up on their last mission.

—“tell you the same things by word of mouth”: written communication is limited. It does not express tone as well as an in-person meeting. This is why I always (or almost always) convey difficult or weighty news in-person. It is relationally better.

28 For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: 29 that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.

—“For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us”:

- As we’ve observed, “For it has seemed” was the ancient equivalent of “Be it resolved.”
- Luke has twice used this language thus far to depict their decree (vv. 22, 25), but this time is unique because it “seemed good” not only to them but “to the Holy Spirit.”
- Things can “seem good to” the Holy Spirit. He has a mind. He is not an “it” but the Third Person of the Trinity.
- Leadership teams must seek the will of the Holy Spirit.
- Notice the progression in how leadership decisions were made:
 - In Act 1, the apostles needed a replacement for Judas, and they met to discuss it. They cast lots—much like rolling a dice—to decide who would replace the traitor. As a result, Matthias became the twelfth apostle.
 - This was the last casting of lots in the Bible. It was used with some frequency in the Old Testament, which makes sense—the Holy Spirit had not yet been given to all believers. Back then, He visited at various times, on various people, and for short periods of time, for the purpose of fulfilling a specific task. The Spirit came upon Bezalel for the purpose of building the tabernacle (Ex. 34); He came upon the 72 elders to help Moses lead (Num. 11); He came upon Samson and various other judges to deliver Israel. In the New Testament, however, Jesus promises that the Spirit will be with us forever. The pouring out of the Spirit is granted on Pentecost in Acts 2. Ever since then, He has indwelt every believer and empowered us to serve Him.
 - The Spirit also gives revelation so the church no longer needs to cast lots. Instead, when an important decision came up, they said, “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us…” (Acts 15:28).

—“to lay on you no greater burden”:

- Earlier, Peter had felt concern about placing a burden—a “yoke”—on the Gentiles that they would be unable to bear (15:10).
- Here, they freely place a burden on the Gentiles! But they ensure it’s a small burden.
- A great burden would have been upholding the entire Mosaic Law in order to be saved. That’s 613 laws! In contrast, a small burden was fulfilling these four requirements—not to be saved, but to show love and respect for their Jewish siblings in Christ.

—“abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality”: see comments on v. 20.

—“If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well”: not, “you will be saved,” but “you will do well.” Again, these are not requirements for salvation. And again, they did not include circumcision in the list because they viewed it as a compromise to the gospel. Circumcision would have communicated, “People don’t belong in the covenant community—the company of the redeemed—until they receive circumcision.” The church was unwilling to compromise the gospel, but they were willing to compromise preferences for the sake of love and respect.

30 So when they were sent off, they went down to Antioch, and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. 31 And when they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement. 32 And Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words. 33 And after they had spent some time, they were sent off in peace by the brothers to those who had sent them. 34 35 But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

—“having gathered the congregation together”: they did not just deliver the ruling to the elders but to the whole church. While confidentiality has its place, leaders must be careful about becoming “gatekeepers” of what should be public information. In the Roman Catholic Church, for instance, they only allowed the Bible to be read in Latin for hundreds of years. This had the effect of not only malnourishing the people spiritually but also controlling them.

—“rejoiced because of its encouragement”: for the second time, joy marks the presence of the Spirit in this chapter (vv. 3, 31).

—“prophets... encouraged and strengthened the brothers”:

- Keener: “The frequency with which prophets turn up in Acts would seem phenomenal to ancient readers. Although some people in ancient Judaism claimed to be prophets, this was a rare phenomenon, and no group based prophetic activity to the extent that Christians did; most Jews felt that there were no genuine prophets in their own time.”
- Ancient Jews were like many modern evangelicals—limiting God’s Spirit to the past.
- Prophecy encourages and strengthens. Paul argues in 1 Corinthians 14 that this is why we really need prophecy in our corporate gatherings.

—“spent some time”: the New Testament church did not rush through Zoom meetings, checking off their to-do list at a furious pace. They spent loads of time with each other. Do you want a close friendship with God? Spent lots of time with God’s people.

—“sent off in peace”: what started with a conflict ended with peace. What contributed to peace? (1) seeking outside help; (2) interpreting the work of the Spirit; (3) interpreting the Word of God; (4) refusing to compromise the gospel; (5) laying down their rights in compromise for the sake of love and respect; (6) clear communication through both letter and a delegation; (7) prophetic ministry; (8) lots of time spent together.

—“Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching...”: in Acts 11:26, Paul and Barnabas spent a whole year teaching the word of the Lord in Antioch. In Acts 13:1-3, prophets and teachers gathered in Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas among them. Now, after the missionary journey of Acts 13-14 and the council of Acts 15, we have come full circle. Paul and Barnabas are preaching in Antioch again. It’s probably safe to call Antioch their home church.

—Schreiner: “The Antioch church is at peace, and the word continues to be heralded. The Jerusalem Council is not only about the church deciding theological disputes but about the mission of the triune God. A divided church is a missionless church. The Spirit makes the church whole so that the nations can hear the message of Jesus and the temple can fill the earth.”