

"Blessed are the Flexible"

September 17, 2017

The Book of Acts 11

CORE: Anonymous quote: *"Blessed are the Flexible—for they shall not be bent out of shape."*

Warnings about the foolishness of *"losing our temper"* (i.e., Proverbs 29:11)—our *"temper"* is *"the capacity to remain firm on convictions, yet adaptable to circumstances"*—are a call to be flexible.

This chapter in Acts is an excellent example of wise flexibility.

FLEXIBILITY INCLUDES THE ABILITY TO:

1. CHANGE YOUR MIND (Able to adjust old mindsets)

- Willing to let go of "traditions of men" that served us well "for a season"—but are now "out of season" (i.e., OT → NT)
- After a vision (repeated 3 times—11:10), Peter went with it (and with 3 Gentile strangers) "doubting nothing" (11:11). No longer "double-minded" (The root meaning of "doubt"—notice the "doub" in the word).
- **1 Kings 18:21- "How long halt ye between two opinions?" (KJV)**
- Indecision *halts* us.
- "Change is inevitable—except from vending machines."
- BUT...because change is a principle of life—we must discover how to benefit from it!

2. CHANGE YOUR APPROACH (Able to wisely & patiently share our new perspectives with others—trusting God to make the changes.)

- Peter radically changed his approach to those who opposed him (SEE Acts 11:4ff.).
- In order to go on from "glory to glory, strength to strength"—we must change!
- There comes a time when we must move beyond "that's just the way I am" → choosing the higher ground

3. CHANGE YOUR JUDGMENTS (Able to give others a new opportunity; a fresh start).

- A loaded statement: "And Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul" (11:25) Why had Saul returned to his home town? NOTE: It took a risk-taking encourager to bring him out of hiding.
- Traditions—*solidified judgments founded on past experiences*—are often the greatest hindrance to positive changes.

- NOTE: Nazareth restricted Jesus to being “the carpenter’s son”—failing to see Him as Messiah—limiting His ministry in their lives
 - NOTE: The anointing is covering His body (Psalm 133)—equipping all
4. **CHANGE YOUR DIRECTION** (Able to flex with the HS’s new directives...even when it is costly & inconvenient)
- (11:27-30) Challenged to trust a prophet and contribute to a future need—and then to entrust their gifts to Saul of Tarsus & Barnabas.
 - Willing to “keep in step with the Holy Spirit”; current with the “proceeding word” (i.e., Abraham & Isaac at the altar)
 - One of the subtlest (and most deceptive) temptations is to believe you have “arrived.”
 - Like Laodicea, the church that locked Jesus out, by their blindness to their need for more of Him
 - Total dependence is the only way to navigate change.
 - **Contentment is not about lowering our expectancy—it is refusing to let delays decrease our joy, our trust, or our hope.**

Listen to Paul’s declaration of flexibility:

Philippians 4:12-13 (NIV)

“I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.”