



# You Have To Fight With Love To Break Traditions

Acts 11:1-18

**BETTER**

Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1  
(Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 447-451.

# Acts 11:1–18 (NKJV)

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

2 And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him,

3 saying, “You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!”

4 But Peter explained it to them in order from the beginning, saying:



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5 “I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object descending like a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came to me.

6 When I observed it intently and considered, I saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air.

7 And I heard a voice saying to me, ‘Rise, Peter; kill and eat.’

8 But I said, ‘Not so, Lord! For nothing common or unclean has at any time entered my mouth.’



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9 But the voice answered me again from heaven, 'What God has cleansed you must not call common.'

10 Now this was done three times, and all were drawn up again into heaven.

11 At that very moment, three men stood before the house where I was, having been sent to me from Caesarea.

12 Then the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered the man's house.



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13 And he told us how he had seen an angel standing in his house, who said to him, 'Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter,

14 who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.'

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

16 Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'



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17 If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?"

18 When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."



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When We Do The  
Right Thing, We  
Sometimes Have To  
Deal With Contention.



# Acts 11:1–3 (NKJV)

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

2 And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him,

3 saying, “You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!”



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- It is heart disturbing when you do the right thing to help others and there are some who stand on the outside wanting to fight the good you do because of their cynical and traditional beliefs.
- Peter is now facing such a people, but he shows us how to deal with such people through the spirit of God, so they might be won as well.
- We must recognize all will not be quickly filled with joy because of the good work God does through those who are obedient.

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- Peter no sooner returned to Jerusalem when he was met by members of the strong legalistic party in the church of Judea (*“they that were of the circumcision”*) who rebuked him for fellowshiping with Gentiles and eating with them.
- Keep in mind that these Jewish believers did not yet understand the relationship between Law and grace, Jews and Gentiles, and Israel and the church.



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- Keep in mind these are still many of the Christians we face today who are locked into the laws rather than the grace of God!
- It was not only a matter of religion, but also of culture, and cultural habits are tough to break.



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# Contend

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- The phrase “contended with him” comes from the same word translated “doubting nothing” in Acts 10:20 and 11:12. It means “to make a difference.”
- Peter had no doubt even if others did, and he was determined to make a difference even if he had opposition!



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# Nehemiah 8:10 (NKJV)

Then he said to them, “Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”

- Doing what the Lord asks us to do brings joy in the midst of contention!
- Jesus said to the disciples:



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# Jesus Talks To The Disciples After Giving The Samaritan Woman Salvation.



## **John 4:27–34** (NKJV)

27 And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, “What do You seek?” or, “Why are You talking with her?”

28 The woman then left her water pot, went her way into the city, and said to the men,

29 “Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?”

30 Then they went out of the city and came to Him.



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31 In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.”

32 But He said to them, “I have food to eat of which you do not know.”

33 Therefore the disciples said to one another, “Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?”

34 Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.



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- People will always come to their personal conclusions, but it does not need to change the joy you have when the Lord is doing a great work through you.
- There will always be contentious people.
- These legalists were making a difference between the Gentiles and the Jews after Peter had demonstrated that “there is no difference!”



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We Must Handle  
Contentious  
People With The  
Word Of God.



## **Acts 11:4** (NKJV)

But Peter explained it to them in order from the beginning, saying:

## **Acts 11:9** (NKJV)

But the voice answered me again from heaven, 'What God has cleansed you must not call common.'



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- God had declared the Gentiles “clean,” that is, accepted before God on the same basis as the Jews—through faith in Jesus Christ.
- Peter had nothing to fear. After all, he had only followed orders from the Lord; and the Spirit had apparently confirmed the salvation of the Gentiles.
- Peter reviewed the entire experience from beginning to end; and, when he was finished, the Jewish legalists dropped their charges and glorified God for the salvation of the Gentiles (Acts 11:18).



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- Even after the Jerusalem meeting, legalistic teachers continued to attack Paul and invade the churches he founded.
- They wanted to woo, and trick the believers into a life of obedience to the Law.

## **Galatians 1:6** (NKJV)

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel,



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# Philippians 3:1–3 (NKJV)

1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.

2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!

3 For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,



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Sadly, The Word  
Of God Satisfied  
Some Of Them  
For The Moment.



# **Ephesians 6:10–13** (NKJV)

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

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- It is possible that many of these contentious legalists were genuine believers, but they did not understand their freedom in Jesus Christ.

## **Galatians 5:1** (NKJV)

Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.



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The Word Of  
God Will Come  
To Fruition.



# Acts 11:16 (NKJV)

Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, ‘John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’

- In his personal defense in Acts 11, Peter presented three pieces of evidence:
  - ✓ the vision from God (*Acts 11:5–11*)
  - ✓ the witness of the Spirit (*Acts 11:12–15, 17*)
  - ✓ the witness of the Word (*Acts 11:16*)



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- None of these men had seen the vision, but they trusted Peter's report, for they knew that he had been as orthodox as they in his personal life (*Acts 10:14*).
- He was not likely to go to the Gentiles on his own and then invent a story to back it up.
- The witness of the Spirit was crucial, for this was God's own testimony that He had indeed saved the Gentiles.



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- It is interesting that Peter had to go all the way back to Pentecost to find an example of what happened in the home of Cornelius!
- This suggests that a dramatic “baptism of the Spirit” (*Acts 11:16*), accompanied by speaking in tongues, was not an everyday occurrence in the early church.
- God gave witness and evidence to His supernatural work with the gentile nation!



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- Cornelius and his household received the Spirit the moment they trusted Christ. This is the pattern for today.
- From beginning to end, the conversion of the Gentiles was God's gracious work.
- He gave them the gift of repentance and the gift of salvation when they believed.



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God Would Use The  
Letters Of Paul To  
Explain The “One Body,”  
How Believing Jews And  
Believing Gentiles Are  
United In Christ



# Ephesians 2:11–16 (NKJV)

11 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—

12 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

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14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,  
15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,  
16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.



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- Christians are to receive one another and not dispute over cultural differences or minor matters of personal conviction (*Rom. 14–15*).
- Some of the Jewish Christians in the early church wanted the Gentiles to become Jews, and some of the Gentile believers wanted the Jews to stop being Jews and become Gentiles!
- This attitude can create serious division in the church even today, so it is important that we follow the example of Acts 11:18 and the admonition of Romans 14:1, and receive those whom God has also received.

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## **Romans 14:1** (NKJV)

Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things.

- Jesus also said to the disciples.

## **Mark 9:40** (NKJV)

For he who is not against us is on our side.



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