

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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“CLEAVE TO THE LORD”

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Barnabas “...exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord” (Acts 11:23). God’s people always need an encourager. Barnabas served this role effectively in the first century.

His encouraging push in Acts 11 came when the grace of God was spreading effectively to both Gentiles and Jews in Antioch (Acts 11:20). A great number of people were turning to the Lord (Acts 11:21). When he came to the city he saw “the grace of God” for himself and was “glad” (Acts 11:23). Maybe this was a time to just sit back and praise God for the converts to Christ. Why don’t we just be happy for awhile in God’s grace and think about exhorting the new converts later, might have crossed the mind of some. But not Barnabas. He quickly went to work.

New converts need teaching and exhortation from the very beginning to ground them in the faith. Why? Because the Devil is always at work seeking whom he may devour, and must be withstood by a steadfast faith (I Peter. 5:8-9). No one was excluded in Barnabas’ exhortation. All

needed to “cleave to the Lord.”

Different Greek words are translated “cleave” in our New Testaments. For example, A husband is to “cleave” (KOLLAO) to his wife (Matt. 19:5). The word conveys the idea of sticking like glue to convey the closeness of the relationship between the husband and the wife. Barnabas uses the term PROSMENO which denotes the idea of “abiding with” the Lord.

Abiding with the Lord was not some ill defined mission. The Christians were to heed the exhortation with “purpose of heart”. The word “purpose” (PROTHESIS) means literally “show forth.” They were to manifest what was clearly set forth in their heart, and that was: abide with the Lord.

How many times have we pleaded, “Lord, abide with me”? How often have we sung the song, “Abide with Me”, without thinking that we have the responsibility to Abide with the Lord?

We need Barnabas’ exhortation in our day. One way that we “show forth” our heart’s desire to “abide with the Lord” is to be dili-

gent in reading God’s Word. In daily study, we stay close to His mind, reminding ourselves of what he approves and disapproves in our character. With this knowledge, we make corrections, and walk with Him in the light.

By taking to heart Barnabas’ exhortation, We refuse to allow the cares of this world to choke out the word in our hearts. We refuse to be deceived by riches and sabotage our mission to abide with the Lord (Matt. 13:22).

God will always be with those who are submitting to His authority and carrying out His work in His way (Matt. 18:20). Thus we will do what he says and worship with our brethren on a consistent basis (Hebrews 10:22-25). We will carry out his Will in disciplining our fellow brethren in the local church who refuse to repent of their sins (I Cor. 5:4-5). We will carry out his commands in his name, for in doing so we are abiding with him, and He with us. Cleave to the Lord. Let it “show forth” and not lie buried in the heart upon the rubbish heap of good intentions. Heed the exhortation !