

Cleaving unto the Lord

Introduction:

- I In Acts 10 we read of the gospel being preached to Cornelius and his household, an event that marked the first time that the gospel was preached to Gentiles. But even after the conversion of Cornelius, the gospel was not being aggressively preached to the Gentile world. However, in Acts 11 we see all this finally starting to change (**Acts 11:19-21**). This denotes a significant period of time in the history of the church. Here we have the first time that a multitude of Gentiles obeyed the gospel of Christ, and may I say to you that the composition of the church would never be the same.
- II. Now, I want you to notice the reaction to this by the church at Jerusalem (**ver. 22**). It was one thing for a few Gentiles to respond to the call of the gospel, but when the brethren at Jerusalem heard that a Gentile church was established at Antioch, they looked at it with some suspicion. So they decided to send Barnabas to Antioch to check it out. Now notice what happens when Barnabas arrives at Antioch (**ver. 23**).

As Barnabas traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch, he must have wondered what he was going to find when he arrived. He couldn't be sure what he would see. Had the Gentiles truly been converted to Christ? Have they turned away from that which was contrary to the will of God, especially all their idols, and accepted Yahweh as their only God? Were they sincere in what they were doing or were they just experimenting with a new religion, mixing some principles of the gospel with their own philosophy and way of life? Barnabas must have wondered what he would see when he got to Antioch. Much to his delight, what Barnabas saw was that these people were for real. He saw that they had truly become Christians. He saw that they were indeed citizens in the kingdom of God and joint-heirs with Christ for their conversion was genuine. He saw, we are told, the grace of God and it made him glad. But now notice carefully the instruction that Barnabas gives to the church at Antioch in verse 23. Barnabas exhorted them to, "*cleave unto the Lord.*"

- III. The word *cleave* means, "to remain or continue with; to hold fast to, or to tarry or stay" (Thayer). The best advice a non-Christian could ever receive is the obey the gospel before time runs out. But the best advice a Christian can receive is to cleave unto the Lord. Moses told the children of Israel, "*Thou shall fear the Lord thy God; him shall thou serve, and to him shall thou cleave...(Deut. 10:20)*. Joshua gave similar advice to Israel when he said, "*But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the Lord charged you, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to*

cleave unto him...” Lets talk for a little while about this business of cleaving unto the Lord. How might we do this today?

Lesson:

I. We Must Cleave to the Lord’s Book.

Paul once said, **“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needs not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”**

The Greek word for study means, *“to use speed, i.e., to make effort, be prompt or earnest”* (Strong). To study, then, means to labor, to be diligence or to apply oneself to something. To what are we to apply ourselves? Paul says being approved of God. Notice these different translations:

2 Tim 2:15

15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. NKJV

2 Tim 2:15

15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. RSV

Now, an integral part of being approved of God is knowing what it takes to please Him. And where to you go to find that out? There is only one source—the Bible. And make no mistake about it—it is when we stop cleaving to the Word of God that we stop cleaving to the Lord. When we stop studying the Bible like we should, we grow weak in faith for faith comes from hearing the Word of God.

Rom 10:17

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

James 1:21

Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

Luke 8:11-12

Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.

The Hebrews writer referred to some in the first century church who were not what they should have been because they did not cleave to the word of the Lord like they should have been doing. They were babes still drinking milk at a time when they should have graduated to strong meat (**Heb. 5:12-14**). Did you notice that the Hebrews writer told these people

that they should be teachers? We should all be teachers because the religion of our Lord is a teaching religion.

Matt 28:19

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

This doesn't mean that every Christian has to be able to teach a public class but every Christian should be able to teach others about Jesus on a one-on-one basis. But we can't teach if we don't know, and we can't know if we aren't willing to cleave to the Lord's book.

But there is something else involved in this business of cleaving to the Word of God. We need to cleave to God's word by recognizing only it as a standard of authority in religious matters. We don't need the Bible plus man-made creeds. We don't need the Bible plus human manuals. We don't need the Bible plus the disciplines of men. All we need is the bible because the Bible contains all necessary information for pleasing God.

2 Peter 1:3

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

2 John 1:9

Whosoever transgresses, and abides not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abides in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

The holy scriptures of God is all we need to learn the will of God and live a faithful life. Let's cleave to the book and not let anything or anyone come between it and us. Let's study it, abide in it and make application of it in our daily lives.

II. We Must Cleave to the Lord's Work.

That there is work to be done is a foregone conclusion. The Bible that we are to cleave to is full of admonitions to work.

Phil 2:12

Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

We live in a society where *working out* is very important to a lot o people. You drive down the street and you see people jogging up and down the road. They work out everyday whether it is sunny out or 20 degrees. All through the winter, I see people working out. Well, that's great for the physical need of man, but what about our spiritual needs? All the jogging,

all the weight lifting, all the calisthenics in the world won't help the eternal soul of man.

1 Tim 4:8

For bodily exercise profits little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

We must work out spiritually in order to make it to heaven. We must cleave to the Lord's work. Listen to me: Doing the work of the Lord needs to be a top priority in your life. Working for the Lord is more important than anything else you have going on in your life. It must not be secondary, it must be first. Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness..."

Col 1:10

That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

1 Cor 15:58

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Notice it now! Paul said that we should always be abounding in the work of the Lord. The word abound means "*to remain, exceed, excel or increase.*" So that tells us two things; first, the Lord has a work He wants accomplished. And second, we should remain in that work, even increasing in that work steadfastly. We should be doing more all the time. "I will work, I will pray, I will labor ever day in the vineyard, in the vineyard of the Lord." Isn't that what we sing? That's needs to be our attitude. Listen: you can't cleave to the Lord without cleaving to the Lord's work. What is the work of the Lord?

- The work of the Lord is to praise and glorify God.

Ps 86:12

I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore.

Heb 10:24

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

- The work of the Lord is to earnestly contend for the faith.

Jude 1:3

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

- The work of the Lord is to seek and save the lost.

Luke 19:10

For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

So you see, we must not only cleave to the Lord's book, we must make application of it to our lives (**Jas. 1:21-25; Josh. 1:8**).

Josh 1:8

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shall meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shall make thy way prosperous, and then thou shall have good success.

III. We Must Cleave to the Lord's People.

In Eph. 1:22-23 we learn that the church is the body of Christ. That tells us, then, that the church sustains a close relationship with Jesus. The closeness of that relationship was verified by Christ when He asked Saul on the road to Damascus, "...*why persecute thou me?*" The truth is Saul never, so far as we know, laid a hand on Jesus. But when he persecuted the church, he was persecuting Christ. Why? Because the church is the body of Christ. There is a basic and vital relationship between a person and his body. Can you imagine someone assaulting me and then when I press charging against him, he tells the officer, "*I didn't assault Don, I just assaulted his body.*" That would wouldn't work, would it? When he assaulted my body, he was assaulting me because physically speaking my body is a vital part of my person.

What's the point in all this? My point is that the body of Christ, i.e., the church, is a vital part of Christ Himself (**Gal. 3:16, 27-29**). What does all this mean in the context of this sermon? We can't cleave to Jesus without cleaving to His body. If you cleave to the Lord, you will have to cleave to His people too because His people are a vital part of Him. Now, believe it or not, this is not a curse; it's a blessing. We are more fortunate than we sometimes realize because we have brothers and sisters in Christ to lean in times of need. Yes, brethren in Christ are like brothers and sisters in the flesh, sometimes they get all over our nerves, don't they? But they are still a blessing both physically and spiritually (**Acts 2:44-47**)

Phil 4:1

Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.

Heb 3:13

But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Spending time and developing relationships with the people of God is far more rewarding than hanging out with the world. Paul said that bad company corrupts good morals. If he was right about that, and of course he was, then good company must help solidify good morals. I'm convinced that the more time we spend with other Christians, the happier we will be, the stronger we will be and the closer we will be to Jesus. Let's do our best to cleave to the Lord people because that is a part of cleaving to the Lord Himself.

Conclusion:

Are you cleaving to the Lord? Is there anything better to cleave to than to Jesus and the manifold blessings He offers His disciples? Let's not be inconsistent in our Christianity. Let's be steadfast and unmovable. Let's cleave to the Lord.