

ARM Prison Outreach International

"Ministers' Minute" Volume IV Number 11

IN ALL THINGS, GIVE THANKS!

Editor's Note: This "MM" is the 11th email of 2005 in a series that ARM is sending as an encouragement to preachers and Christian workers around the world. This message was originally sent in November of 2003. But so many have joined out list, I wanted to send it out again. After all, Thanksgiving is coming and this sermon uses scriptures about gratitude. It is my prayer that this message will encourage you and those you teach. Seven PowerPoint slides (49 KB) that accompany this sermon are also available -- just reply with your request.

May God bless your labors! -- Rod Farthing, Development Director

IN ALL THINGS, GIVE THANKS!

I Thessalonians 5:18

1 Thes 5:18 Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (NIV)

In the middle of President Lincoln's service to our nation, an elderly lady made an appointment to see him. As she entered his office, he inquired, "How can I be of service to you, Madam?"

The lady answered, "Mr. President, I know you are a very busy man, and I have not come to ask you for anything. I simply came to bring you this box of cookies."

There was a long silence. Tears overflowed the President's eyes as he began, "Madam, I am greatly moved by what you have done. For since I have become President, people have come into this office one after another asking for favors and demanding things from me. You are the first person who has ever entered these premises asking no favor but bringing a gift. I thank you from the bottom of my heart."

I think of how often I go to the Lord with petitions and request, yet sometimes forget to enter His throne room with simply a gift of praise. Could we just show love and gratitude to our Heavenly Father at times, touching His heart?

- 1Thes 5:18 Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.
- Col 3:17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

- Eph 5:20 ... always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

When we are overwhelmed, we are tempted to give up – but give thanks! When we are overmatched, we are tempted to give in – but give thanks! When we are overcome, we are tempted to give out – but give thanks! Don't give up ... in ... or out – GIVE THANKS!

I. Overwhelmed? Don't give up – Give thanks! John 6:5-11

1. The disciples were overwhelmed!
2. The victory came after Jesus gave thanks!
3. Our lives get hectic! E.G. After my youngest daughter's birth, ALL those dirty dishes on the kitchen counter! Dirty dishes without end! Don't be overwhelmed – Give thanks!

Thank God for Dirty Dishes! They have a tale to tell.
 "While other folks go hungry, we're eating very well.
 With home and health and happiness we shouldn't want to fuss;
 For by this stack of evidence, God's very good to us.

4. How often are our 'obstacles' actually evidences of our being blessed and reasons to give thanks!

Job with its difficulties –HOW MANY UNEMPLOYED?
 House needing repairs – HOW MANY HAVE NO HOME?
 Kids who are ill – HOW MANY ARE CHILDLESS?
 Church having problems – HOW MANY WITH NO CHURCH HOME?

Overwhelmed? Don't give up – Give thanks!

ARM "FAST FACT" -- Encouraging Response from the wife of an ABA Student

This is a beautiful testimony of how the Spouse Scholarship Program and the ABA strives to minister to the incarcerated and his/her family members. Listen as a wife describes what ARM's Bible courses mean to her AND her husband in prison....

"My husband sent me valuable information. I say valuable, not just for me, but for my family. My husband and I were struggling on our marriage prior to his incarceration and when he got arrested I thought of ending my marriage. I was confused and afraid without him. He believed at that point that there was no existing God. I would send him articles and verses from the Bible to calm his anger. Today, he has sent me this information that has prompted me to write this letter at once. I would like to be part of your Spouse Scholarship Program, so I can save my marriage through the years that my husband must serve. And I can't mention enough how

my husband enjoys reading your materials. In behalf of my family and me, we would like to thank you and congratulate you for a wonderful program."

II. Overmatched? Don't give in – Give thanks! Luke 22:14-19

1. When overmatched, facing the cross, Christ gave thanks!
2. "Overmatched" here is used to mean the underdog. Christ was a "voluntary underdog."
3. When the odds are stacked against you, GIVE THANKS!
4. A thief once overmatched Matthew Henry, the great Bible scholar!

A thief broke into the modest dwelling I of Matthew Henry, the celebrated Bible scholar and stole his purse. The busy cheerful old gentleman, far from being down cast, turned to his diary and entered a cheerful observation. "Let me be thankful, first, because he never robbed me before. Second, because although he took my purse, he did not take my life; third, because although he took all I possessed, it was not much; and fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed.

5. Paul practiced what he preached. (Review three 'text' verses)

Do you have difficulty in expressing gratitude for people who do not deserve it? Follow the example of Paul toward the Corinthians. The devil had almost taken over the Corinthian church. No New Testament church had more problems – sexual, doctrinal, physical, spiritual. Despite all these, Paul started his letter to the Corinthians, "I thank my god always on your behalf." (1 Cor. 1:4).

Overwhelmed? Don't give up – Give thanks!

Overmatched? Don't give in – Give thanks!

III. Overcome? Don't give out – Give thanks! Acts 27:27-35

1. Paul was a prisoner on a sinking ship! And he was giving thanks!
2. He had lots of troubles that could have impeded gratitude – II Cor 11:23ff
3. But he believed and practiced what he wrote in Romans 8:35-39
4. It's all in your perspective – on what do you focus?

I read of a man-- Claude Powell -- who lived with his six children in the suburbs of Philadelphia. Just before school was to start all of his children were in need of new shoes. At the same time the washing machine played out. To top it all off, because of bad weather his work had been reduced. He was able to manage the shoes but finally ran an ad for a used washing machine. He answered a call concerning a used

washing machine and found the home filled with all the comforts anyone could ever want. After arranging to pick up the old washer, the conversation got around to children. Claude Powell commented on the challenge of raising six children and keeping them in shoes. The woman of the home ran out of the room crying. The father explained that they had one child who had been paralyzed from birth, and he had never needed a pair of shoes. And Claude says: "When I got home I picked up the worn-out shoes worn out from skipping rope, kicking rocks, and jumping puddles, and I went off to be by myself. Kneeling by my bed gave thanks to God for the worn-out shoes in our house."

How many of your gripes in your life should be grounds for gratitude? -- Give thanks to the Lord by the way you give, serve, work, pray, and witness. Give thanks to the Lord by the way you LIVE!

Prayer

"Remain faithful unto death .." Rev. 2:10B

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Check out our web sites: www.arm.org www.abarc.org www.raphahouse.org

In 2005, 136 ABA Bible courses have been mailed from ARM every day!
In 2005, an ABA Bible course has been mailed from ARM to a prisoner EVERY 10.5 minutes!