

ARM Prison Outreach International

"Ministers' Minute" Volume 8 Number 7

"A Simple -- Not Easy -- Plan for Christian Stewardship"

Editor's Note: This "MM" is the 7th email message of 2008 in a series that ARM is sending as an encouragement to preachers, chaplains, and Christian workers around the world. It is a message based on four familiar scriptures -- a lesson of how stewardship is the result of our dying to self as we become a Christian. It is my prayer that this message will encourage you and those you teach. May God bless your labors! -- Rod Farthing, Development Director

WE GET MAIL!

Rod, Thank you so much for this sermon. It was a great blessing to me. I liked all the illustrations, but was particularly impacted by the one about Jimmy Durante and the one about Larry Doby and Joe Gordon. May God continue to bless you in your ministry and in your family. In Christ, JM (Bible College President)

Rod, Thanks for the message on "Old Time Religion"---great message. Hope all is well with you. KC (Sunday School teacher)

Good application of a great story in Joshua--one of my favorite books! Your illustrations are new to me, except for the humor in the intro. LP (Former Bible College President)

"A Simple -- Not Easy -- Plan for Christian Stewardship"

Here is the simple outline ... the printed texts and an illustration for each follows below.

1. Die to self! (Romans 6:1-4)
2. Stay dead! (Romans 12:1,2)
3. Remember that you are dead to self and alive unto God! (Galatians 2:20)
4. Live like you are dead! (2 Corinthians 1:3-10)

1. Die to self! (Romans 6:1-4)

Rom 6:1-4

1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase?

2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?

4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. (NAS)

A converted native was to be baptized in a river. The missionary took a long spear with him into the swift current to steady himself. Inadvertently he stabbed the foot of the convert beneath the water. The man neither spoke nor moved. After the baptism when the accident was discovered, the convert was asked why he had kept silent. "I thought it was part of being baptized," he replied. In a way he was right. Baptism should be an expression of willingness to suffer for the Lord Jesus Christ in whose Name the believer is baptized.

2. Stay dead! (Romans 12:1,2)

Rom 12:1-2

1 I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (NAS)

A part of "staying dead" is putting ourselves on the altar as a living sacrifice every day and resisting compromise. When an individual or a congregation has the attitude of compromise in regard to spiritual values and truths, dark days are ahead. All who strive to be Christians feel a certain amount of pressure from the world. Through the strength that Christ gives, we can overcome the world and its temptations.

A man starting a fish business put out his sign that read, "Fresh Fish For Sale Today" and invited all to visit his place of business on opening day. Many came and congratulated him on his new business, but one suggested that he change his sign. "Why the 'Today'? It is today." So he removed the "Today". Someone else said, "Why, 'For Sale'? Everybody knows you have fish for sale--or else why the store?" The words "For Sale" came off the sign. Another said, "Why the word 'Fresh'? You are a man of integrity, that guarantees your fish to be fresh." "Fresh" came off the sign. Only one word was left, "Fish" and one complained about it. "Why do you have a sign that says, 'Fish?' I could smell your fish two blocks away."

The individual or congregation that tries to satisfy everybody ends up by pleasing nobody. If we start compromising, we will end up serving the devil. The man should have put up his sign and then stood by it. This is

what we are to do in life. Accept God's will for our lives and stand on His promises.

3. Remember that you are dead to self and alive unto God! (Galatians 2:20)

Gal 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me. (NAS)

The Apostle Paul reckoned that life only began when Jesus was born in his soul. In Galatians 2:20 he wrote, "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live: and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me."

He would agree with that old man who came to Christ at the end of his life, and who reckoned that the couple of years he had spent in Christ's service were the only years in which he had *really* lived. He therefore left orders that on his tombstone they should write:

John Evans -- Born 1850
Died to Sin in 1913 -- Born Again 1913
Left for Heaven in 1915 at the age of 2 years

4. Live like you are dead! (2 Corinthians 1:3-10)

2 Corinthians 1:3-10

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort;

4 who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

5 For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.

6 But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer;

7 and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort.

8 For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life;

9 indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves in order that we

should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead;
10 who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us.. (NAS)

I love the story of John Patten, the Englishman who was the first missionary to the New Hebrides Islands in the South Pacific. These islands were inhabited by cannibals. Before he left England a Mr. Dixon wrote urging him not to go. He wrote back and said, "Mr. Dixon, you write and say that if I go I will be eaten by cannibals. You are an aged man. Soon you will die and you will be eaten by worms. As long as I can follow the Lord, it makes no difference whether I am eaten by cannibals or by worms."

So he got on the ship and sailed halfway around the world. As he got to the islands, the captain of the ship tried to keep Patten and his wife from getting off the boat. He said, "SIR, IF YOU GO INTO THAT ISLAND YOU WILL DIE."
Patten replied, "Sir, I died before I came."

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

Rod Farthing, ARM National Development Director rodfar@arm.org
RR 5 Box 159, Salem, MO 65560

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