

ARM Prison Outreach International

"Ministers' Minute" Volume XI Number 1

"COMMUNICATING OUR FAITH TO OUR WORLD"

#8: "We Must Communicate God's Plan of Salvation"

Editor's Note: This "MM" is an email sermon, the 1st of 2012 --121st overall-- in a series we are sending as an encouragement to Christians around the world. This is the eighth message in our current series. It is my prayer that this message by my brother, Larry Farthing, will encourage you and honor God. Use it as a devotional, edit it, share it, use it or components of it! May God bless your labors!

-- Rod Farthing, Development Director

ARM QUICK FACTS:

American Bible Academy Update

Nov-Dec 2011 Summary

1,988 courses were sent to NEW ENROLLEES!

3,086 courses were sent to UPPER CLASSMEN!

5,074 total courses were sent to prisoners!

COURSES MAILED JAN THRU DEC 2011: 27,274

An average of 75 courses sent DAILY! New enrollees: 31 per day!

If you can donate toward this worthy cause, please send your gift of any size to:

ARM Bible Courses
3127 Hwy K
Salem, MO 65560

Thanks! And may the Lord bless you for caring and sharing!

"COMMUNICATING OUR FAITH TO OUR WORLD"

#8: "We Must Communicate God's Plan of Salvation"

I want to emphasize that it is God's plan of salvation I am interested in communicating this morning, so let's look at some Scriptures in His Word, beginning in the book of Acts, which is the book of conversions...

Editor's caution... please be aware that, to make his point, the author intentionally misquotes scripture in this intro.

Acts 2:37 and 38 (Peter is preaching on the day of Pentecost...)

"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

When they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

Peter replied, "Repent and PRAY AND ASK JESUS INTO YOUR HEART for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Acts 8:34 through 38 (Philip is traveling with an Ethiopian who is reading from the book of Isaiah...)

The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself, or someone else?"

Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?"

Philip replied, "OH NO! THAT WOULD CONSTITUTE BEING SAVED BY WORKS! JUST PRAY AND ASK JESUS INTO YOUR HEART!"

WHEN THE EUNUCH FINISHED PRAYING, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but he went on his way rejoicing.

How're we doing?

Acts 16:29 through 33 (The jail at Philippi has just been rocked by an earthquake, but prisoners Paul and Silas have not escaped...)

The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household."

Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately

he and his family PRAYED THE SINNER'S PRAYER, INVITING JESUS INTO THEIR HEARTS.

Acts 22:12 through 16 (Paul is telling about his conversion to Christ...)

"A man named Ananias came to see me. He was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there. He stood beside me and said, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' And at that very moment I was able to see him.

"Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. You will be his witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. And now what are you waiting for? Get up, PRAY AND INVITE JESUS INTO YOUR HEART and wash your sins away, calling on his name.'"

Still with me?

Romans 6:3 and 4 (Paul is instructing the Romans about being dead to sin and alive in Christ...)

"...don't you know that all of us who have PRAYED TO RECEIVE CHRIST were PRAYED into his death? We were therefore buried with him through PRAYER unto death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

In Galatians 3:26 and 27 Paul is instructing the Galatians concerning their relationship with God through Christ...

"You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who have PRAYED TO RECEIVE CHRIST AND INVITED HIM INTO YOUR LIVES have clothed yourselves with Christ."

In 1 Peter 3:18 through 21 Peter compares the saving of Noah and his family to our salvation in Christ...

"He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through PRAYER, and this PRAYER symbolizes HOW PRAYING FOR CHRIST TO COME INTO YOUR HEART now saves you also – not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. THAT PRAYER saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

Hopefully, you realize what I've done – that I've substituted "prayer" and "receiving Christ" where the Bible speaks of "baptism." Now, why in the world would I do that? TO EMPHASIZE THAT WHAT SO MANY CHRISTIANS ASSOCIATE WITH THE PLAN OF SALVATION, NAMELY, "PRAYING TO RECEIVE CHRIST," IS NOT A BIBLICAL CONCEPT, AND TO EMPHASIZE THE LENGTHS TO WHICH MANY WILL GO TO ELIMINATE BAPTISM INTO CHRIST FROM GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION!

This morning I want to give you a *biblical* version of the plan of salvation. Our world needs to know, so you need to know.

This presentation of the plan of salvation could be titled: HERE ARE THE FACTS.

Fact one:

GOD'S GOAL FOR YOU IS A FULL LIFE!

Jesus said in John 3:16, "*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*"

He also said in John 10:10, "*I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.*"

In other words, God wants you to live a full and satisfying life here on this earth, and He wants you to live with Him in heaven forever and ever.

But, before we can have that hope, we must deal with fact two:

YOUR SIN SEPARATES YOU FROM GOD.

God created all mankind with free wills with which to choose to obey Him or disobey Him. The Bible says in Romans 3:23 that "*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...*" We have all chosen to disobey, and our disobedience is sin.

The Bible tells us in Isaiah 59:2 that our sin separates us from God, so we need to do something about our sin, which is where Jesus comes in...

Fact three:

GOD'S SOLUTION TO OUR SIN PROBLEM IS JESUS!

We all know that Jesus was crucified – nailed to a cross, where he died. Well, when he died on that cross, he died in our place – he paid the penalty for our sins – he bridged the gap of separation between God and us.

The Bible says in 1st Timothy 2:5 and 6, "*For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men.*"

Romans 5:8 says, "*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*"

Jesus said in John 14:6, "*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*"

But Christ doesn't force Himself on us. We must choose to accept him as God's Son and our Savior and Lord. John 1:12 says, "*...to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...*"

So, we come to fact four:

OUR RESPONSE, IF WE WANT TO HAVE A FULL AND ETERNAL LIFE WITH GOD, IS TO RECEIVE JESUS AS THE CHRIST.

God's gift of forgiveness and life full and eternal is strictly by grace through faith – it can't be bought or earned (Ephesians 2:8 and 9). But we must receive or accept it on God's terms. It's free but it's conditional. Every gift is.

I once received a phone call from a land development company telling me about a free gift they had for me – a color television. But to receive it I had to go out to Lake Buchanan and listen to a 90-minute program about land they would like to sell me. I said, "Okay." So we went to the Village of Buchanan Dam and got our free color television. Did we earn it? No. Did we buy it? No. We received the free television by complying with the conditions of the givers.

So how do we "receive" Jesus as the Christ? How do we "receive" what He died to provide us? By complying with the terms God has set forth in the Scriptures, which are these:

- He asks that we repent of our sins and turn to Him, believing that Jesus is His Son and our Savior;
- He asks that we make our belief in Jesus publicly known; that we confess our belief in Him;
- He asks that we submit to a burial in water called "Christian baptism" that is done, according to Acts 2:38 and Acts 22:16, for the forgiveness of sins; and then
- He expects us to function as a part of a local congregation of believers (Acts 2:42-47).

In the 2nd chapter of the book of Acts, verses 37 through 47, we see these very steps taken by the 3,000 who received Jesus as Lord and Savior.

They were saved by grace through faith as they complied with the terms God set forth through His messenger Peter. They were saved by grace and justified by faith when they received Jesus as Lord and Savior by repenting and being baptized.

I am often asked about those believers who for one reason or another are not baptized. My answer is this: We are simply messengers delivering God's message. Judging people's compliance is God's place, not ours.

CONCLUSION:

In closing, I would like you to consider three questions:

1. Have you responded to God in this biblical way?
2. Can you share this biblical plan of salvation with others?

3. Will you?

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

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

In 2010, 71 ABA Bible courses were mailed from ARM every day!