

Glad Tidings

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

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4 Steps to Peace and Eternal Life

(Jerry Fite)

The above title is on a pamphlet I received recently from a nice young man. After a brief Bible study, he left with my promise to review the teaching contained within the tract. Below is my response:

Three of the four steps to peace and eternal life are “realizations”. The steps of realization include recognizing God’s love with His promise of peace and eternal life in heaven; acknowledging man’s sin and separation from God in spiritual death; and understanding that Jesus is the solution for man’s sin.

Following the pamphlet, I certainly read of God’s love in John 3:16; his promise of eternal life in heaven in I Peter 1:3,4; and the peace God offers through Christ in Romans 5:1. The fact of my sin with its penalty of death is clearly brought to my attention in Romans 3:23 and Romans 6:23. Knowing Jesus paid the penalty for my sin and is the only way to the Father is certainly established in I Corinthians 15:3-5 and John 14:6.

These are distinctive facts, but how are they distinctive “steps” moving us ever closer to the goal of peace and eternal life? Could I do step three before step one? Both of them are “realizations”. Could it be possible to realize that Jesus is the solution to man’s sin before I realize that eternal life is promised in heaven? Must I take the step of realizing God’s love before I realize His solution for sin?

Biblically speaking, these are all characteristics of one step. The Gospel message speaks of God’s love, the reality and consequences of our sin, and Christ’s sacrifice of himself as God’s solution (*Romans 5:6, I Peter 4:6*). These are not distinctive steps - taking step one and then step two - but one: acknowledging the truth of the Gospel.

The pamphlet offers Scripture to the stranger. Therefore the “realization steps” must come through reading the passages, not a direct power of the Holy Spirit apart from the word.

The fourth step I read is to personally believe Jesus died for

my sins. Jesus said He who “believes” the Gospel message and “is baptized” “shall be saved” (*Mark 16:15-16*). Peter answered those convicted of sin, as what to do next, by commanding them to “repent” and “be baptized” for the remission of sins (*Acts 2:38*). Paul affirms “confessing with our mouth Him as Lord” is essential to salvation (*Romans 10:9-10*). The pamphlet never mentions repentance and confessing Jesus as Lord, and even claims baptism will not get you to heaven.

Hearing the message (*Romans 10:17*), believing, confessing, repenting and being baptized are the Gospel’s five steps to peace with God. Paul reminds us “we are sons of God by faith, for as many as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ” (*Galatians 3:26-27*). Being baptized is not separate from faith, but the submission that brings us into Christ- the object of our faith. The young man said he would have to think about this passage of Scripture. In reviewing the pamphlet, I have fulfilled my promise to him. I hope he fulfills his.