

Our purpose is to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,” and to “prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

OLD PATHS ADVOCATE

“To continue speaking the truth in love,” “endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace,” “keeping the ordinance as delivered.”

“Thus saith the Lord, ‘stand ye in the ways, and see and ask for the Old Paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest of your souls.’ (Jer. 6:16) “And they that be of Thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Paths to Dwell in.” (Isa. 58:12).

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CONFESS AND...

By GREG GAY

The two previous articles in this series on salvation have addressed the concepts of Faith and Repentance to explain what the Bible says about these important topics.

Our next requirement in God’s plan of salvation is Confession, also known in the Bible as the Good Confession.

Some religions have potential members make statements prior to baptism (supposedly a confession) as a proclamation about having their sins already forgiven. An example of this error is seen by examining the beliefs of the Seventh Day Adventists. Along with their 27 fundamental beliefs, one of which is that Ellen G. White must be accepted as a prophet of God, they also have thirteen required vows prior to baptism. One of the vows is: “I renounce the world and its sinful ways, and have accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior, and believe that God, for Christ’s sake, has forgiven my sins and given me a new heart” (<http://www.bible.ca/cr-SDA.htm>).

Such a pronouncement should seem strange to a student of the Bible because it has no scriptural support and therefore cannot be the Good Confession of the word of God.

Many religions have also taken the liberty of creating official statements of beliefs for their denominations called Confessions of Faith or Creeds.

Rev. Dr. Justin Holcomb, an Episcopal priest and a professor of theology, helps us understand the difference between creeds and confessions. “In contrast to creeds, which are basic statements of belief, confessions represent more detailed inquiry into the things of God. The creeds are the boundaries of the faith that separate orthodoxy from heresy, while the confessions color in the picture, tying theology

to everyday life in all sorts of ways” (<https://www.biblegateway.com/blog/2014/05/why-creeds-are-still-a-big-deal-an-interview-with-justin-holcomb/>).

Confession of Faith supporter Dr. Robert Paul Martin, a Baptist Pastor, defends the practice saying, “Nothing short of a confession of faith will satisfy the legitimate claims of a church and its members on one another...A church without a confession of faith may as well advertise that it is prepared to be a harbor for every kind of damning heresy and to be the soil for any who are given to growing the crop of novelty. A church without a confession of faith has the theological and ecclesiastical equivalent of AIDS, with no immunity against the infectious winds of false doctrine” (http://www.thehighway.com/confessions_Martin.html).

While such documents may help adherents understand what they are supposed to believe in these religions, they do not reflect the Good Confession found in the scriptures. Our argument against creeds and confessions has always been that any of them containing less than the Bible contains too little to be credible, and any containing more than the Bible has too much.

Paul was inspired to write to Timothy, “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession [confession] before many witnesses” (1 Timothy 6:12). The Good Confession that Timothy proclaimed before others is associated with laying hold “on eternal life,” so it is very important to understand. We need to know what it is that Timothy proclaimed and when it happened in his pursuit of salvation.

Vines explains the word translated profession or confession means “to speak the same thing” (homos, “same,” lego, “to speak”), “to assent, accord, agree with,” and refers to the use in 1 Timothy 6:12, “to declare openly by way of speaking out freely, such confession being the effect of deep conviction of facts” (http://studybible.info/vines/Confess,%20Confession)).

continued on page 6

CONTENTS

Vol. LXXXVIII No. 12



ADVOCATE

Confess And... 1

Editorial 2

Querist Column..... 3

Here and There 4

Jonah’s Messianic Prayer (Part Three) 5

Our Departed..... 9

Field Reports 10

THE BACK PAGE..... 12

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Editorial

THE SIN UNTO DEATH

By DON L. KING

The passage under consideration is 1 John 5:16, 17. “If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death,”

There is no question that these verses contain some difficult matters. If one reads commentaries; he will find a number of theories, some of which seem a bit outlandish. However, though we may stumble in our understanding, it is certainly possible to know the answers to a few things at least. As with most editorials; it is understood that some may differ with the writer’s position; but a study of the scriptures is always in order.

The apostle had a great deal to say about sin in 1 John. He writes of it both positively and negatively; and in the very first chapter, he plainly tells us how the erring child of God may be forgiven. “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:7-9) So, if we never understand anything more we can be sure all unrighteousness can be forgiven as long as confession is made of the sin. Obviously, it is understood that repentance and prayer are also a part of the matter. However, it is imperative that one is “... walking in the light...” (Verse 7). To walk in the light has to mean that one is living according to the truth of God’s Word. This tells us that this matter deals with members of the church and not the world. Those who walk in the light have fellowship with one another and the blood of Christ cleanses them from all sin (also verse 7). Hence, those who walk in the light and confess their sins are promised forgiveness.

Now we may understand some things. Every sin confessed by a contrite child of God will be forgiven. This truth is clearly taught in other passages as well.

continued on page 4

QUERIST COLUMN

By RONNY F. WADE

Question: Would you please explain Matthew 5:42. Is it wrong to refuse someone a loan, if they are not worthy of trust because of previous actions?

Answer: The verse in question reads “give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.” While this verse teaches that we are to be aware of and attentive to the needs of others, it certainly does not teach that we are to enable a man who wants money for wrong purposes such as, to buy alcohol to support his drunkenness or money with which to purchase illegal drugs. Nor is Jesus saying that we should loan money to someone who is too lazy to work and support his family. In fact Paul teaches the very opposite in 1 Timothy 5:8 “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” The apostle also stresses this same point in 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 “For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner; not working at all, but are busybodies. Now these who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.” Notice that Paul quotes “our Lord Jesus Christ” who declared that these busybodies should “work in quietness.” Nor are we required to loan money to someone who is dishonest and refuses to pay his debts. Hence the admonition is not saying that we should give or loan money to just anyone who asks for it. What then, does the verse teach? The obvious meaning, seems to be that we should look for opportunities to serve and influence others by rendering service to those Christians who are truly in need. It would be wrong for any of us to turn someone away who fits the description given by our Lord in this verse. If given the opportunity to aid and assist some Christian we should always be ready to do so.

Question: Please explain Acts 10:36-38.

Answer: The verses in question read “The word which God sent to the Children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ, He is Lord of all--that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.”

The word that came to Israel through Jesus was a message of peace. Through Christ they learned that their sins could be forgiven if, in obedience they submitted to Him. These verses essentially explain how God sent spiritual freedom to those who were willing to hear and obey the teachings of Christ. God was actually working through the ministry of Christ. In Luke 16:16 the scriptures affirm that “the law and the prophets were until John, since then the kingdom of heaven has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it.” This passage alone refutes the idea that some advance contending that Jesus taught only the law of Moses. This verse introduces a new dispensation which was drawing near. The “law and prophets” belonged to the old dispensation. The kingdom of God began to be preached first by John then by Jesus and then by His disciples. There was often a contrast between what Jesus taught and what the law had taught. The Sermon on the Mount recorded in Matthew chapters 5-7 is a prime example of such teaching. To suggest that Christ taught only the law of Moses is to deny much of his teaching. For example in Matthew 18:15-18 Jesus teaches that if a brother sins against someone he should be approached and given the opportunity to repent of his sin. If he refuses to do so, then he should be approached by two or three brethren about his sin. If he refuses to hear them, the church is to then be involved. What church? Obviously the one Jesus promised to build in Mt. 16:18. Jesus came preaching the coming kingdom was at hand. To deny that is to deny plain revelation. (Send all questions to Ronny Wade P.O. Box 14352 Springfield, MO 65814 or ronnywade36@gmail.com)

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HERE AND THERE*By RICK MARTIN*

This story comes from a mother in Texas: On the first day of school the mother had a peanut butter sandwich in her son's lunch. She was unaware that the school was a "peanut free" school. Her son was not allowed to eat in the lunchroom and had to take his lunch and eat in a teacher's room. The teacher said he got his lunch out and just sat there. She then told him to go ahead and start eating. He told teacher, he was waiting for someone to pray. The teacher informed him that she could not lead him in a prayer, but he could pray at school anytime. The teacher relayed to the mother that he started praying a really sweet prayer and then ate his lunch. She told the mother she had done a great job instilling a love for Christ in her son and she was so glad he ate lunch in her room that day!

People who don't believe in trying to change people ought to stop trying to change people who believe in trying to change people.

Brother Clint DeFrance recently baptized a young man, who is 20 years old and who had no religious conviction or standing before visiting their assembly. Clint has been studying with several from the community under the age of 25 and this young man also lives near the Tulsa meeting house. He said, "It's encouraging seeing young people with virtually no religious background taking a mighty interest in the Bible. Studies that began in the summer are continuing now. The kids get together with me right after school, which shows me the level of their interest." May the Lord continue to bless this work.

Lord willing, the New Year's meetings will soon be here. I want to urge you to attend, especially if you have children. It will be well worth your time. We must keep our children in the church. They are our mission field in this country. A man once asked my boys what we did as parents to keep them in the church. Their response was, "they took us to meetings." They said, "We are doing this so much, there must be something important about it." I am afraid that down the road there are going to be some parents who regret some decisions they have made by not taking their children to meetings.

That's all for now; pray for the brotherhood.

THE SIN UNTO DEATH.... continued from page two

i.e. "Confess your faults one to another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (James 5:16) This passage may also have some points about which argument arises, but it certainly illustrates the benefit of confession.

It would seem, then, that the conclusion is pretty simple. If every sin we repent of and confess is forgiven, then the sin unto death is a sin which a brother will not confess. The word "confess" here means to admit or declare one's self guilty of what one is accused. (Thayer page 446). I read a syllogism one time that said: "1. The Lord will forgive every sin a brother confesses; but: 2. there is a sin which the lord will not forgive; 3. Therefore, the sin which the lord will not forgive is a sin which the brother will not confess. Both the major and minor premises are clearly stated in the Scriptures which means the conclusion is inescapable.

If we see our brother or sister commit a sin which is not unto death, (we observe their repentance) we should pray for them on their behalf. If, however, our brother or sister manifests a stubborn attitude and simply refuses to admit their wrong that is another matter. As Lynwood Smith used to say, "We may as well save our breath to cool our soup." Our brother has himself shut the door of forgiveness in his own face. It would appear that the sin unto death, like the willful sin we wrote of last month, may be committed only by a child of God. While there are admitted similarities of the willful sin and the sin unto death, they don't appear to be the same sin. The willful sin involved an apostasy from the truth while the sin unto death is brought about by a stubborn disposition of mind.

There are few things more disappointing than to deal with a person who simply refuses to see, or admit, their mistakes. How frustrating that is. There is no shame in admitting wrong. The shame is in NOT admitting wrong. The Lord isn't just waiting to find an excuse to condemn us. He loves us. After all, He died so that our sins might be forgiven and we can live forever with Him in Heaven. There is a story about a fellow who said he had never been wrong except for one time. That was the time, he said, when he thought he was wrong and it turned out that he wasn't. Of course, that is only a story but the way some try to excuse their behavior gives us cause to wonder. Think on these things. -DLK

**JONAH'S MESSIANIC PRAYER
(PART THREE)**

By BART SHAW

Is the prayer that Jonah uttered in a fish's belly miles beneath the surface of the ocean a prayer of repentance? Jonah's petition to God certainly came amidst excruciating and agonizing conditions which should have been very instrumental in provoking heartfelt supplication to the Creator, but sadly, this seems not to be the case with Jonah.

What does every sinner do when truly repentant? The Greek word rendered "repent" is *metanoeo* and it denotes a change of thought. It involves both sorrow and a determination to behave differently. The remorseful soul confesses guilt before God and then makes a change in action. Jonah's transformation lacked both of these elements. In Jonah's prayer there is no acknowledgement of sin, confession, or evidence of authentic conversion to God's agenda. Nowhere in the prayer does Jonah exclaim "I have sinned!" The closest Jonah comes to contrition is verse 7:

"When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord..." (Jonah 2:7)

Additionally, when Jonah emerged from his living aquatic tomb, he did not bear the fruits of repentance but continued to sulk and kick against God's goading. Despite his harrowing ordeal in the ghastly gullet, Jonah's heart was resistant and he preached only unwillingly. Consider Jonah chapter four:

But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. So he prayed to the Lord, and said, "Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness, One who relents from doing harm. Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!" Jonah 4:1-3

Jonah was not reformed and penitent. He was 'displeased' and angrily prayed that he would rather die than face the future where Nineveh is saved. God raised up a shade-providing gourd as an object lesson for Jonah-and when it died, Jonah mourned. When God asked Jonah if it was right for him to be angry, he obstreperously responded:

"It is right for me to be angry, even to death!" (Jonah 4:9)

His sullen heart refused to accept the reality of God's

love for the now chastened and pious Assyrians. Similarly, many of the Jews refused to accept Jesus and His faith-filled Gentile church and as a result were angry 'even to death' at the hands of the Romans in 70 A.D.

Jonah's recalcitrant attitude is hard to understand. In fact, it is very difficult to accept that a man in Jonah's situation would fail to wholeheartedly beg God for forgiveness.

Impious and shortsighted skeptics often say the most difficult thing to believe in Jonah is that a man could be swallowed by a fish for three days and live. How unimaginative and irrational! Actually, the most difficult thing to believe in this short book is not that God could keep a person alive without air (with God nothing is impossible, babies live in the womb without inhaling air for nine months) but that a man would keep his angry rebellious spirit alive when he has so obviously fallen into the hands of the living God. The reader should be stupefied and incredulous at the shocking resistance of Jonah against God's will to save the Gentiles.

So, why then is the prayer of chapter 2 recorded? Since Jonah was not converted, the prayer must have another purpose.

It is the objective of this article to demonstrate that Jonah's prayer is Messianic in nature. Jonah's prayer, while authentically spoken by Jonah, much better fits the perfect and sinless Savior who in His agony was taken into the deep waters of sorrow and cried out to His Father.

To prove this assertion, let us begin by noticing the striking similarities between Jonah's prayer and some of the psalms, most notably Psalm 18. Remember that many of David's psalms speak prophetically of Jesus. In fact, we know that Psalm 18 is Messianic in character because Paul quotes from Psalm 18 in the epistle to the Romans and confirms that the words speak of Christ and the coming expansive Gentile conversion (pre-shadowed by the city of Nineveh):

Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: "For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And sing to Your name." Romans 15:8-9

While Psalm 18 speaks of David's own typical efforts to bring Gentiles into his earthly kingdom, it more importantly prophesies of the coming Messiah and His

continued on page 7

CONFESS AND continued from page one

In keeping with that explanation, Paul writes, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:9-10). As we can learn from this passage, belief is internal, from the heart, and the confession is external, an audible pronouncement of that inward belief or faith.

In Romans 10:10 we see the word "unto" used twice in the phrases, "unto righteousness" and "unto salvation." The Greek original of this small word, "eis," is used hundreds of times in the New Testament. Thayer comments that the word is "a preposition governing the accusative, and denoting entrance into, or direction and limit." (Thayer's Greek Lexicon, PC Study Bible). Translated into English in the New Testament, it becomes: unto, into, to, toward, for, among, etc.

In looking into Bible translations, Romans 10:10 can indicate the translator's view of when and how salvation is granted. Some translations indicate that faith and confession are equally essential and point in the direction of salvation. Others want the reader to think salvation is only through faith and twist this verse to make the confession a declaration of having been saved through faith only.

Translations of Romans 10:10 indicating the believer is moving in the direction of salvation: King James Version: For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. New King James: For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. Wesley's New Testament (1755): For with the heart man believeth to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation. Living Oracles: For with the heart man believes to justification; and with the mouth confession is made to salvation.

Translations of Romans 10:10 indicating the believer is saved by faith only: New American Standard Version: For with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. New International Version: For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. New Life Version: When we believe in our hearts, we are made right with God. We tell with our mouth how we were saved from the punishment of sin. Phillips: For it is believing in the heart that makes a man

righteous before God, and it is stating his belief by his own mouth that confirms his salvation.

When we dig deeper into the scriptures, we find that Timothy "professed a good profession, or confession" in 1 Timothy 6:12 and that it corresponds to what Jesus confessed to Pilate. Paul writes, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession" (1 Timothy 6:12-13).

At this point in our study, we cannot know what Timothy's Good Confession is, but whatever we confess, it must agree with what Christ revealed to Pilate. A review of Christ's conversation with Pilate indicates the exchange was about the proper identification of Jesus.

Luke's account explains that the Jews had accused him of claiming himself to be the Christ, the Son of God. "Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe: And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go. Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God. Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am. And they said, What need we any further witness? For we ourselves have heard of his own mouth" (Luke 22:67-71).

When the Jews presented Jesus as worthy of death to Pilate, they said of him, "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King. And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it" (Luke 23:2-3).

Jesus' response is to agree with all the ways that the Jews and Pilate had identified him, that he is the Son of God, he is the Christ. Pilate's interpretation of this as an earthly threat was immediately diffused by Jesus when he told Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36).

Whatever was said by Timothy prior to his baptism then has to agree with what is revealed about Jesus, that he is the Christ, that he is the Son of God.

Robertson's says Timothy's confession is "the public confession in baptism which many witnessed" (http://www.studyLight.org/commentary/1-timothy/6-12.html#jump_list).

A confession of Jesus being Christ and Son of God agrees with the King James Version report of the conversion of

the Ethiopian Eunuch. The Lord directs the evangelist Philip to join himself to the chariot of the Ethiopian as he rides along on the desert road from Jerusalem to Gaza after having worshipped in Jerusalem. He was the Treasurer for Queen Candace of Ethiopia, an individual of great responsibility and worthy of trust. The Ethiopian is reading the Old Testament scroll of Isaiah in a place that prophesied the coming of the Messiah.

In response to his question to Philip about the passage, the Bible says, "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him" (Acts 8:35-38).

While it is true there are textual challenges to the confession passage of Acts 8:37, it is certainly in agreement with what Timothy confessed before his baptism. In addition, it agrees with what Peter revealed about Christ when Jesus asked the group, "But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:15-16).

Dunagan quotes Reese's comments on Acts 8:37, "Now many believe that this verse was not part of the original book..But in response: (a) From a readers standpoint, there definitely is a gap between 36 and 38 without this verse. For without 8:37, according to the text, Philip never answers the eunuch's question. (b) Early "Christian" writers quote Acts 8:37. "It was found in a text which Irenaeus used (he lived from 170 to 210 A.D.). Cyprian (200-258 A.D.) also was familiar with the reading of verse 37." (Reese p. 340) (www.studylight.org/commentaries/dun/acts-8.htm).

Finally, notice the little word "and" as an important point in our study. When Paul mentions faith and confession in Romans 10:9 the word "and" forever joins them in equal importance in our pursuit of salvation.

So far in our series we have learned that Faith is essential, which comes from hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17) and Repentance is essential, without which we perish (Luke 13:3). Now to those we add the knowledge that we also must make our own Good Confession before witnesses, that we believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. However, there is more we must do to complete God's requirements to forgive our sins.

Next, we will pursue Baptism's place in God's plan of salvation. 5109 Chicago Ave., Fair Oaks, CA 95628 916-804-3787

JONAH'S MESSIANIC.... continued from page five

glorious mission to save the Gentiles as well as the Jews. Written some 200 years before Jonah was born, it was undoubtedly well known to the waterlogged prophet who had perhaps memorized many of the lyrics. In his hour of living entombment, Jonah's heart turns to words he had heard all his life. Observe the following parallels between Jonah's prayer and David's psalm:

Jonah says in 2:2: "I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction, And He answered me."

David says in Psalm 18:6: "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried out to my God; He heard my voice from His temple, And my cry came before Him, even to His ears."

Jonah says in 2:2 "Out of the belly of Sheoll cried..."

David says in Psalm 18:5: "The sorrows of Sheol surrounded me..."

Jonah says in 2:3,5 "For You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the floods surrounded me; all Your billows and Your waves passed over me." "The waters surrounded me..."

David writes in Psalm 18:4: "The pangs of death surrounded me, and the floods of ungodliness made me afraid."

Jonah mentions the holy temple in verse 4. David mentions the temple in verse 6.

Jonah says in 2:6: "Yet you have brought up my life from the pit, O Lord, my God."

David writes in 18:6,19: "He drew me out of many waters." "He also brought me out into a broad place; He delivered me because He delighted in me."

So it appears that Jonah was guided by the Holy Spirit to use David's psalm as a starting point for his distressed and forlorn prayer. Encased in a fish flesh sarcophagus and in great torment, Jonah's mind goes to words that seem to have been written for him. Jonah needed to be 'drawn out of many waters' and delivered onto the 'broad place.' Words he had heard recited countless times spring to his lips in a song of hopeful entreaty.

Notice some of the words from David's psalm that

could not apply to either David or Jonah. Listen to how the Speaker in the psalm asserts His innocence:

The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; According to the cleanness of my hands He has recompensed me. For I have kept the ways of the Lord, And have not wickedly departed from my God. For all His judgments were before me, and I did not put away His statutes from me. I was also blameless before Him, And I kept myself from my iniquity. Therefore the Lord has recompensed me according to my righteousness, According to the cleanness of my hands in His sight. Psalm 18:20-24

Certainly neither Jonah nor David could claim that they were blameless before God. Both David and Jonah were egregious sinners. David was a murderer and Jonah was a mutinous prophet. These words, however, do obviously apply to the sinless and perfect Savior.

Jonah chapter 2 forms a fascinating parallel with a scripturally attested Messianic Psalm. Because we know Christ refers to Jonah's fish interment as a type of His own death and burial, we can logically conclude the prayer spoken by Jonah in his Esau-like desperation to be free of earthly sorrow (Hebrews 12:17) is used by the Holy Spirit to portray the agony and eventual victory of the matchless Savior over death.

Like Paul and Silas in the Philippian prison at midnight, Jonah's prayer echoed in the dark, an earthquake shuddered the piscine captor, and God delivered forth the captive up from the foundations of the deep into a broad place. Jesus similarly was delivered by His Father out of the clutches of death into resplendent life.

However, the similarities end there in that Paul, Silas, and the Lord graciously emerged from the dark to console and woo Gentiles to obey God, but Jonah emerged (wiping off fish bile) to grudgingly, maliciously, and unenthusiastically preach to the people he wished to see die without mercy.

Paul and Silas rejoiced that God had brought the jailer and his family to salvation but Jonah sorrowed and mourned that salvation had come to Ninevah. He spitefully begged God that animosity and hostility would swallow up the people of Nineveh.

Here is the irony which is obvious to everyone except Jonah (and the hostile Jews of Christ's day). As a template for his prayer, xenophobic Jonah had ironically chosen a psalm full of themes which herald and declare redemption for the Gentile world. In verses 43-44 the psalmist writes of how Jesus would be the Head of the nations, a people yet not born would serve Him, and foreigners would submit to His will. A similar theme

is present in Psalm 22 when the psalmist declares: "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before You." (Psalm 22:27-28)

Spectacularly unaware of the true nature of the psalmist's poetry, Jonah pronounces these final words which form the metaphorical and literal center of the book of Jonah:

"Salvation is of the Lord." (Jonah 2:9)

Despite his obstinate and intractable attitude, Jonah speaks the eternal truth that 'salvation is of the Lord.' God wishes to see that all men should come to repentance, even those considered by Jonah to be beyond the pale of salvation.

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

What conclusions can we reach from studying Jonah's tragic mistakes?

1. God is sovereign and His purpose will be achieved in this world. We are not the arbitrators or referees of salvation, but rather the humble earthen vessels which carry the gospel to the world. Let us never dare to decide who is worthy of the gospel or dissimulate with partiality. Jonah and the Pharisees refused to accept the inevitable outcome of God's extension of mercy to all the human family, but we can joyfully accept God's grace.

2. The Bible is Divinely inspired and speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ in ways marvelous and breathtaking to behold. The book of Jonah (written some eight centuries before Christ) stands as an extraordinary and monumental witness to the veracity of scripture! It points with unerring prophetic aim to the Son of David and His Messianic conquest.

3. Believers should reject the devilish spirit of rebellion against God. Jonah exerted his greatest strength with the objective of denying and repudiating an aspect of revelation which he found abhorrent. Is that true of us? Is there a part of God's revelation that you find disgusting? Is there a specific command that your heart rebels against and that turns your stomach when preached from the pulpit? Have you fled to Tarshish to escape obedience to that ordinance? If so, wake up from the belly of defiance, starve your rebellious carnal man of oxygen, confess your sin, and return with humility to the truth of God's sovereignty over every aspect of your life. May God have mercy on us as we do His will.

Our Departed

ALLEN: Willa Dean McKeand Shy Allen triumphantly left this earth on October 28, 2016 to enter her eternal mansion, the one for which she had been preparing and eagerly anticipating the past 85 years of her life. She was born November 18, 1930, along with her identical twin sister, Wilma Jean, to James and Ruth Johnson McKeand. At the young age of 16, she obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ and was baptized for the remission of her sins, the decision that molded the rest of her life into the steadfast, faithful Christian woman she became.

In September 1948, she married her high school sweetheart, Joe H. Shy. Together, they raised their four children whom she loved more than life itself. Life was not easy for her, and she worked tirelessly to care for her family, seeing that their every need was met. She beamed with pride as she saw her children grow, mature, and excel in their education and careers, and establish four beautiful families of their own, giving her 9 grandchildren, who were her absolute pride and joy.

Later in her life, following the death of her husband, she met and married Harland Allen (who treated her like his queen). Together they spent many happy years traveling, attending church meetings, playing dominoes with the senior citizens, tending their garden, occasionally bickering with each other (she'd roll her eyes if she could hear me say that), and generally enjoying their twilight years together.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Jim and Ruth, her first husband and the father of her children, Joe Shy, her identical twin sister, Wilma Jean Nichols, another sister, Glenna Wellman, and her second husband, Harland Allen.

Survivors include her 4 loving children and their spouses, whom she also loved as her very own: Joe Allen and his wife, Sara of Rome, Georgia; Stephen Craig and his wife, Nancy; Vickie Lynn and her husband, David; and David Grant and his wife, Tracy, all of Huntington, WV. Also surviving are the nine apples of her eye, her grandchildren: Stephen Craig Shy II, Stacey Shy, Ryan Shy, Jennifer Smith Leonard, Stephanie Shy McCloud, Natasha Shy Wall, Jessica Smith Peek, Jayme Shy, and Joseph Shy. Her grandchildren succeeded in filling her heart with pride in the later years of her life by adding 19 great-grandchildren, whom she cherished with her every breath. Her face would light up, and she beamed with love and adoration when any one of them would enter the room. In addition to her grandchildren, she is survived by two sisters, Alfreda Wade of Springfield, Missouri, and Lillian Stephens of Mt. Dora Florida, as

well as a host of nieces and nephews, and brothers and sisters in Christ, at her home congregation of the 5th Street Church of Christ in Huntington, all of whom she loved with her whole heart. Her absence will leave a gaping hole in the hearts of all she leaves behind, and we will miss her fiercely.

Mamaw Deanie, as she was affectionately known to her grandchildren, was not famous in a worldly sense. She didn't do anything so significant or noteworthy that she became a household name. She was not the mastermind behind a ground-breaking scientific discovery. She did not win a Nobel Prize. She did not invent a life-saving vaccine and eradicate a deadly disease. She didn't win Season 6 of The Voice. But her legacy far exceeds that of the individuals who achieved all of these accomplishments combined.

The tribute above was presented by Willa Dean's great grandson Kaleb Leonard at the service where friends, family and brothers and sisters in Christ gathered to pay tribute to a remarkable woman. It was an honor along with Kaleb Leonard and Bob Hayes to officiate what was clearly a celebration of Willa Dean's life in Christ.—David Smith, 46 Walnut Lane, Huntington, WV 25704

WILKS: Glyn Noble Wilks - The Green Oaks congregation in Arlington, Texas, lost one of its longtime members in September. Glyn Wilks was born March 24, 1929, in Burnet, Texas, and passed away September 27, 2016, in Fort Worth, Texas, at the age of 87. Glyn was the son of K.G. and Cora Wilks, who preceded him in death several years ago. Glyn married the love of his life, Joyce Dennis, January 15, 1950, who survives him; they were married 66 years. Having been brought up by Christian parents, Glyn obeyed the gospel as a teenager and spent his life preparing for his earthly departure. Besides his time of service at the Green Oaks congregation, he also attended the Fossil Creek congregation in Fort Worth for a number of years, having served as both a treasurer and a deacon. Glyn was a staunch member of both congregations where he attended, always present at every church service when he was able and always ready to help in any way he could. He was employed at Lockheed Martin in Fort Worth for 45 years. In addition to being with his family, he enjoyed reading and working outside. Besides his wife, Glyn is survived by his four children: Roy, Pamela Little and husband Randy, Richard, and Lisa. Also surviving are nine grandchildren and fourteen great-grandchildren, plus one sister, Nell Duvall, and one brother, Don Wilks. It was my pleasure to share with Bro. Melvin Blalock the opportunity of speaking words of encouragement and comfort at the service. -Joe Norton

PHELPS: Jonett Phelps was born April 14, 1930 in the Hanford part of Rockcastle County, KY. She was the daughter of Joe and Sible (Vance) McClure. She was preceded in death by her parents and her husband James T. (of 53 years), her brothers Howard, William, Floyd, Ova and sisters Laura Comer and Liza Smith. Those she left to mourn her passing are a son Greg, and daughters Gloria Robbins, Gail Jones, and Gilda. Three sisters also remain, Marie Doan, Rena Boone, Christine Kirby and Wilma Renner. In addition, there are 15 grandchildren, 14 great grandchildren and two great, great grandchildren. She was a faithful member of the Blue Springs church and as long as her health permitted Jonett could be counted on at the hour of worship. Her alto voice rang out during the singing. She enjoyed the simpler things in life: being a housewife, spending time with her family, gardening and just being outdoors. To the credit of her children they saw to the needs of their mother until the end. A large gathering came to pay their respects with her nephew Brent Boone and his children supplying the singing. As a longtime friend of the family, Marcus Reppert and I spoke words of encouragement to faithfulness and warning to those unprepared for the Judgement. -Barney Owens

BASS: Velda McGinnis Bass, wife of the late Joseph Alva Bass, passed away on September 17, 2016. She was born on March 20, 1925. She and Joe were married for 60 years and were members of the Temple church of Christ. Cooking, sewing, and gardening were some of her favorite activities. Her love of cooking led to a career as the cafeteria manager at Temple High School in the 70's. Preachers and their families were frequent guest in her home. I and my family were often recipients of her gracious hospitality. Velda is survived by five children; Chuck, Hugh, Tim, Chip Bass, and Debbie Sampler. She was also survived by 16 grandchildren and 22 great-grandchildren. Her funeral service was held at the Temple church of Christ with Terry Langley officiating. She was laid to rest at the Center Point Cemetery. The graveside service was conducted by Steve Sampler and John Bass. -Rick Martin

Field Reports

Ronny F. Wade - P. O Box 14352 Springfield, MO 65814 or ronnywade36@gmail.com, November 15 - During the past several weeks, I have been privileged to conduct a number of gospel meetings with churches located in various parts of the USA. September 18-25 we were in Cave City, AR. for a very enjoyable effort. Austin McConnell works with this group and is doing an outstanding job both in his preaching and visitation program. Our crowds were large. We had several from the community attend and brethren from various churches drove several miles to be present and help us out. Our next was at Claxton near Competition, MO.

It has been my privilege to work with these brethren numerous times in the past and it is always a privilege to go back.

We next went to Greenville, PA. The brethren here are very special to me and to assist them in gospel efforts is always a privilege. From here we went to Wayne, WV where Wyn Baker works. We had a great meeting with good attendance from various churches in the area and three people were baptized the next Sunday as a result of their attending the meeting. From Wayne we went to Sharonville, OH where Barney Owens lives and labors. Barney has spent his life in this area and is to be commended for holding the fort for many years as he contends for the faith once delivered. While there we made our home with long time friends Jearl and Bernice Cromer. We could not have been treated better. During this week Alfreda lost her sister Willa Allen. We returned after the meeting to Huntington, for the visitation the next night. This leaves only two of the original McKeand girls alive. Our next meeting was in Arlington, TX where I enjoyed the company and hospitality of Joe Norton and his good wife. The meeting was well attended and we were privileged to visit with Nathan Battey who lives and labors with this church. Currently we are at home and enjoying just being home for awhile. Our prayers are with all those who travel and give themselves to the preaching of the gospel.

Darrell Crawford - 208 E Baldwin Rd Unit S, Panama City, FL. 32405 bugz1955@hotmail.com, It has been a while since my last report to the OPA. We are growing here in Panama City. The Lord has been blessing us here. We have been having visitors from the community attending regularly. One young lady moved in across the street, her grandmother told her to find a church and to start going, She did this and seems very interested in learning all she can, she is from the country of Panama and has lived in the USA over 20 years. Another lady found us and has been coming regularly for a few months now, she also seems very interested, and is taking lots of notes! She recently asked my wife if she needed to bring extra clothes to be baptized in?

We recently enjoyed a gospel meeting with brother Art Lynch from Glendale Az. He did some very great gospel, preaching. Also, with all the visitors we had the singing was wonderful. Please pray for the work here and that the Lord will give us wisdom in doing His work. I can be available for two or three gospel meetings a year, I can't be gone much due to the members not being as strong as I would like them to be, but, we are working on that. I solicit your prayers. May we all stick to the Old Paths and may the Lord bless His church everywhere.

Rick Martin - 300 Clubview Terrace, Woodstock, GA 30189, mmartin@bellsouth.net. It was my pleasure

to recently hold a meeting in Turlock, CA. I enjoyed the association with all the brethren there. This is the longtime home of Brother Richard DeGough. Unfortunately, Richard and his wife, Glenda, were sick during the meeting. They were able to be there on the weekend. I appreciate the hospitality and encouragement of the congregation. Several preachers attended the meeting; Don King, Alan Bonifay, Greg Branch, Greg Cardoza, and Ron Jordan. I am thankful for their attendance. I also just closed an enjoyable meeting in Monticello, MS. Jane and I enjoyed being in the home of our longtime friends Darrell and Diana Smith. The meeting was well attended by the local congregations and I appreciate the support of fellow preachers, Al Fielder and Slade Powell. I pray that both of these meetings were of benefit to the members and the congregations as well. Please continue to pray for me and the work everywhere.

Douglas T. Hawkins - 409 Worthington Pl, Richmond, KY 40475 (859) 353-2538, douglast69@bellsouth.net, November 5, 2016 - At this writing I am in Longwood, FL enjoying the company of Dan and Robin Paulson, a family who is truly the salt of the earth. I have had a very busy fall in meetings and have been a bit derelict in writing a field report to the OPA. I'll spare you all the details since my last writing. I enjoyed our Eastern Labor Day meeting at Blue Springs and the company of Bro. Clint DeFrance. I often wish I could be in more than one place at a time. I, in times past, have been able to enjoy the Labor Day meetings in TX, TN, and once in CA. I've often thought I would like to get back to CA for their Labor Day meeting to see friends and loved ones there. In September, I held a weekend meeting for the congregation at Lexington, KY. One of my clients was able to come. I had given them the book, *Muscle And A Shovel*. I'll be following up with them as I go forward. I've been in the following locations September through November: Livermore, CA, Athens, AL, Nashville, TN, Wichita Falls, TX, Huntington, WV, and now Longwood, FL. Each visit in each location has been memorable and special; however, I'm not sure my membership card is still good at Blue Springs (my home congregation). I know the brethren are ready for me to get back home to shoulder my part of the teaching and work at home. Overall, I am greatly encouraged by what I've seen in all the places I have been able to visit lately in the Lord's work. Much good is being done in many places. Let's continue to do our part in the work of the Lord. May God bless you in his Kingdom.

Greg Gay - October 31, 2016. Since last report, we have moved from one Sacramento suburb to another. We are now at 5109 Chicago Ave., Fair Oaks, CA 95628. We dropped having a home phone and our old number is no longer in service with no forwarding information given. My cell # remains 916-804-3787; Cassie's is 916-804-3788. We were at Lee's Summit, near Lebanon,

MO October 9-16 to excellent crowds including area visitors. We were busy every day enjoying the wonderful hospitality of the members. It was great to see preaching brethren David Griffin, who is now working with the congregation, plus Ron Alexander, Brad Shockley, Billy Dickinson, and Ronny Wade. Cassie and I stayed with Dave and Lela Doing, dear friends whose hospitality is superb and well-practiced. My stepfather and mother, Bill and Maxine Gum, along with my sister, Vicky Holt, came from Oklahoma for the last weekend of the meeting and stayed over for a few days to visit. We enjoyed our reunion and our travels to our family's old home places. From there we were in Columbia, MO October 19-23. We stayed with Shahe and Elizabeth Gergian (and baby Ethan) and enjoyed every minute of our brief stay. In addition to Shahe, who works with the congregation, it was good to see preaching brethren Brandon Stephens and Mike Criswell along with all who came to the meeting. Our crowds included area visitors, which is always encouraging. Back home now in California, our work continues at 64th St. in Sacramento. We have had some new interest including two baptisms in recent months, for which we are very thankful. Please note again our change of address and phone: 5109 Chicago Ave., Fair Oaks, CA 95628, 916-804-3787, papagreg@aol.com.

P. Duane Permenter - 274 Davis St., Summertown, TN 38483, (931) 629-8980, Oct 25 - Our plan is to finish here in Tennessee by November 20 and be with our family for Thanksgiving in Oklahoma City. Ron Wood of Field Stone, Missouri and I will travel to Mozambique to help with some issues in the work in December. The Lord willing, we will be over there for about two weeks and then we will return. Our work in Tennessee has been one of the most rewarding and successful works that I have encountered in the USA. We have baptized many during the last several years and restored some to the faith. The congregational teaching has improved considerably. This is a good work and we praise God for anything that has been accomplished. We know that only by God's infinite grace have we accomplished anything. We praise God and thank every person who has put forth the effort to help make this work a success. We have many close friends that we are leaving. While this makes our hearts sad, we know that there will be new friends and people in the work in Waipahu, Hawaii. We are scheduled to be with Knoxville, GA for a meeting December 14-18. We plan then to be with our children for a few days, at the Oklahoma New Year's meeting. The schedule will also include a meeting at Apache Junction, Arizona, January 5-8, and Tucson, Arizona, January 13-15. We plan to spend a few days with my parents in California and January 23 we will fly over to Honolulu to make our home in Waipahu, Hawaii. Our new address: 94-371 Ikepono St., Waipahu, HI 96797, Telephone: (808) 600-5909. Email: Duane_and_laurie@yahoo.com

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THE BACK PAGE...

FAR ABOVE RUBIES

By CARL M. JOHNSON

It has often been said that “the person you marry can make you or break you.” The truth of that maxim is expressed several times in Proverbs and is illustrated in the life of elder Walter Scott, one of the brightest figures in the American Restoration Movement.

According to William Baxter (Elder Walter Scott) Scott was first married to Sarah Whitsett in 1823 at age 26. She was a jewel and the perfect compliment to Walter. She inspired his ministry, overlooked his lack of money-sense and endured his poverty. After she died suddenly and unexpectedly in 1849, Scott wrote of her, “Best of wives, tenderest of mothers, the most faithful of friends, a Christian in faith, works and charity.”

In 1850 Walter began working with the church in Mays Lick, Kentucky. The loss of Sarah whose encouragement Walter depended upon so much and the fact his grown children lived in Pittsburgh left him extremely lonely. In an effort to fill the void he married a young woman named Nannie B. Allen. Walter was fifty-four at the time, but Nannie was many years younger. When friends cautioned her that she would outlive him she replied, “I would rather be Walter Scott’s widow than the wife of any other man.” Annie was beautiful, affectionate, truly pious and deeply devoted to Walter. While he still grieved over the loss of Sarah, Walter learned to love Annie with great affection. It was Annie, however, who died first. After only four years of marriage she succumbed to tuberculosis.

At the age of 60, Walter married Eliza Sandidge, a rich widow who had been a member of the Mays Lick congregation for several years. Walter moved into the Sandidge mansion and for the first time he found himself in financially comforting circumstances. The marriage itself, however, was never congenial. Eliza lived all of her days in affluent surroundings and had a strong need for the finest material possessions. Walter, however, did not understand such a lifestyle. He believed money was to use, or even better, to be given away. In financial matters Walter was impractical and impulsive. Often he would go to a store for a basket of groceries, and give them all away before he got home. Once he had two cows and he gave a neighbor one cow, because the neighbor had none. Such impulsive behavior by Walter irritated Eliza at first, but eventually it became unbearable to her. Blinded to the poetic fineness and spiritual saintliness of Walter, she became shrewish in her role as wife. On occasions she would rage at him, drive him from the house, lock him out and forbid him to return. On such occasions he would spend the night sitting on the doorstep of a neighbor, and in the early morning he would ask, “I wonder if you would take me in for some breakfast this morning? The little lady isn’t feeling well.” On one occasion after Eliza had driven him from the house Walter was so depressed he disappeared from Mays Lick and was gone for several days. Eventually, a couple of brethren found him wandering the streets of Cincinnati in a daze.

Fearing a scandal in the brotherhood if such a great leader of the Restoration Movement separated permanently from his wife, the brethren persuaded Walter to return home where they helped work out a truce between the two. Subsequently, the two lived together behind the imposing doors of Eliza’s mansion in an uncertain marital climate until Walter died with typhoid pneumonia on April 23, 1861.

Scott’s marital life vividly illustrates the maxim, “the person you marry can make or break you.” In his first two marriages Scott learned the truth of Solomon’s words in Proverbs 31:10, “Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies.” In his third and final marriage Scott learned the truth of Solomon’s words in Proverbs 21:9, “It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house.”

In particular Scott’s story should serve as a warning to preachers contemplating marriage and to women who are contemplating marrying preachers. While I would not trade my vocation for any other, preaching does involve some sacrifice for all members of the family. Most preachers are required to spend time away from their families, and they are probably not going to be able to afford the very finest in material possessions. However, if you find the right companion, life can be especially gratifying. If I have accomplished anything for the glory of God in the thirty-five plus years I have been preaching, it is primarily due to the fact God has blessed me with a wife who is the perfect compliment to our vocation. Solomon says, “her price is far above rubies.” I know Walter Scott would agree. (This column first appeared on “The Back Page” of OPA in February 2004. I thought it would be appropriate to revisit it as Phyllis and I anticipate our 50th wedding anniversary December 30, 2016.)
cmjthebackpage@gmail.com