

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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DOES PSALM 51:5 TEACH TOTAL HEREDITARY DEPRAVITY?

By DAVID GRIFFIN

Those who teach the doctrine of total hereditary depravity cite several passages which they allege to support the doctrine. One such passage is Psalm 51:5. “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me” (NKJV). We will examine this passage to determine whether it truly teaches this doctrine.

As Bible students are aware, to understand any passage one must first consider its context. We begin with the title of Psalm 51. As do many of the Psalms, the 51st Psalm bears a title printed before verse one. Sometimes these titles can help establish the historical context of a Psalm. Although such titles are generally not considered part of the inspired words, they are quite ancient, and have been part of the Hebrew text for many centuries. Hence, they carry at least some historical significance. The title appended to Psalm 51 says: “A Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba” (NKJV)

Second Samuel 12 depicts David’s emotional frame of mind when composing Psalm 51. After Nathan the prophet had indicted David first for his sin with Bathsheba, then for arranging the death of Uriah, Bathsheba’s husband, David is confronted face to face with his sins. Second Samuel 12:13 records David’s response: “I have sinned against the Lord.” Nathan then informs David that because of his sins, the child conceived by his illicit relationship with Bathsheba will die. During the following seven days, David is so remorseful of these sins and the consequences to the child, that his servants, upon observing his behavior, are concerned about his emotional welfare. Verse 19 depicts them as “whispering” among themselves as to how they should deal with David during this heart-rending

time. When after seven days, the child ultimately dies as Nathan foretold, “...David arose from the ground, washed and anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. Then he went to his own house; and when he requested, they set food before him, and he ate.” It was during those seven days of distress, prior to the death of the child, that David presumably composed Psalm 51.

Verses 1-3 read as follows...“Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your loving kindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.”

In these opening words, David, appealing to the Lord’s “loving kindness” and “tender mercies,” begs the Lord not to deal with him as he deserves, but rather to “have mercy” on him, to “blot out” his transgressions, to “wash me thoroughly,” and to “cleanse me from my sin.” Clearly, David is overwhelmed with the guilt of his sin, and not only his guilt, but with the realization that such guilt has alienated him from his God. The emotional force of this Psalm is thus evident from the opening line throughout!

Verse 5, however, is the passage at issue. The advocates of total hereditary depravity assert that it must be taken literally. The following paragraphs will challenge this assumption by demonstrating two things: 1) That the advocates of total hereditary depravity do not in reality take the passage literally, as they claim, and 2) given the poetic nature of the Psalms generally and the context of Psalm 51:1 specifically, the passage should not be taken literally.

First, contrary to their claims, the advocates of total hereditary depravity do not take it literally. The

continued on page 7

CONTENTS

Vol. XC No. 11



ADVOCATE

Does Psalm 51:5 Teach 1

Editorial2

Querist Column3

Ten Things I Want My Children to Know.....4

Pages From The Past.....6

All We Like Sheep7

Field Reports 10

WALKS THROUGH THE BIBLE..... 12

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Editorial

“A LITTLE FOR THE LORD, AND A LITTLE FOR THE DEVIL, BUT NOT MUCH FOR EITHER ONE”

By DON L. KING

Revelations 3:14-16

The above title is a quote from a point my father used to make in sermon about Laodicea in Revelation 3:14-16. Our Lord was referring to lukewarm church members. We see some of this in our own time; but from what the Scriptures tell us, we know it was occurring in Bible times as well.

Jesus said the Laodiceans were “neither cold nor hot,” a perfect description of church members who are “a little for the Lord and a little for the Devil, but not much for either one.” Another way to describe the Laodiceans is to simply say they were apathetic. An apathetic person is one who has or shows “1...little or no emotion. 2 not interested or concerned; indifferent; unresponsive.” (Webster) The lukewarm or apathetic member often shows little excitement about the work of the church. When told of many baptisms in a foreign work, a simple nod may be all the response shown. However, if the subject of non-spiritual matters come up such as padding the church pews or repaving the parking lot, you might see a different reaction. What causes such behavior? The answer is pretty simple: apathy.

Through the years we have been asked, on occasion, what is the greatest danger facing the church today? My answer has always been “apathy and worldliness.” Sometimes it is difficult to know which came first. The two conditions are often cause and effect. Either one seems to bring about the other. An apathetic church member will often become worldly simply because they have little interest in the church. They are more excited about things in the world such as games, recreation, etc. More than once we have traveled several thousand miles to hold a meeting only to learn that some have chosen that week to go to a large amusement center on vacation. Why is this? The answer has to be they are more interested in that than in spiritual matters. On the other hand, a worldly church member, if they aren’t already lukewarm, will become that way because their love of the world overcomes their love for the Lord. This is another reason we all need to beware of the Devil’s lures through the world. Many things in the world are completely harmless in and of themselves.

continued on page 9

QUERIST COLUMN

BY CLINT DEFRANCE

Question: If I invite you to get together for “a cup of coffee” does that singular language mean that we will be drinking from the same cup?

*This question was sent in by a preacher from Texas who advocates for individual cups in the Lord’s Supper. It was intended as an argument in favor of their use.

Answer: No. “Getting together for a cup of coffee” is an idiom for socializing or visiting and drinking coffee at the same time. Just so, the Biblical idiom “breaking bread” (Acts 2.46) does not imply ‘that all who participated in the common meal shared only one loaf, nor even that bread was the only element in the meal. In the same way, “getting together for a cup of coffee” does not imply that only coffee will be consumed at the meeting.

However, it is noteworthy that the idiomatic synecdoche in Acts 2.42 and 20.7 for the Lord’s Supper is grammatically different than the idiom in 2.46, and several Bible scholars see significance in the difference.

Alexander Campbell writes: “But to break a loaf or to break bread, was a phrase common among the Jews to denote ordinary eating for refreshment. For example, Acts 2.46 - ‘Daily, with one accord, they continued in the temple and in breaking bread from house to house. They ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart.’ Also, after Paul restored Eutychus at Troas, we are informed he brake a loaf and ate. Here it must refer to he himself, not only because it is used indefinitely, but because he that eats is in the same number with him that breaks a loaf. But when an established usage is referred to, the article or some definite term ascertains what is alluded to. Thus Acts 2.42, is the ‘the breaking of the loaf.’ And Acts 20.7, it is ‘They assembled for the breaking of the loaf.’ This loaf is explained by Paul (1 Cor. 10.16), ‘This loaf which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?’” (The Christian System, p. 273-4).

Ultimately, the point is that the modern idiom, “getting together for a cup of coffee” is not the same kind of

phrase as the language of the New Testament in giving the account of Jesus’ institution of the Lord’s Supper: “Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you” (Matthew 26.27). The latter is an historic record of what Jesus did and commanded the disciples to do in perpetual remembrance of Him.



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TEN THINGS I WANT MY CHILDREN TO KNOW

By DAVID MACKEY

THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY - GUEST ARTICLE
CONTINUED FROM LAST MONTH

6. Keep a positive attitude: It is easy to become discouraged, cynical and negative. The development of a sense of humor with a balanced way of seeing things will help my children to be positive in nature. I want them to choose to look at life through eyes that try to see the best, not eyes always looking for the worst. I want them to know that as much as they can, to follow the Apostle Paul's advice in, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you" (Phil4:8-9).

When was the last time we met someone who was truly content and at peace with the world? There are many such people. They usually got the wisdom to be that way by learning to follow God. They discovered a sense of inner peace and contentment through their walk with God. I want my children to know that peace, contentment, and a positive life in large part start with a life centered on God. They will not be able to buy a house big enough, a car fast enough, or a lifestyle entertaining enough to satisfy this deepest of needs.

I want them to avoid at all cost the "If only" disease: If only I had more money. If only I could make better grades. If only we owned a nicer house. If only we hadn't made that bad investment. If only I hadn't come from such a bad background. If only she would have stayed married to me. If only our preacher was a better preacher. If only we could have children. If only we didn't have children. If only the business could have succeeded. If only my husband hadn't died so young. If only I had said no to drugs. If only they would give me a break. If only I was prettier, more popular, more outgoing, better looking. The list is endless. Woven through the fabric of all these words is an attitude that comes from the simplest choice to see the negative side of life, the choice to be unhappy about almost everything

that happens. Taken far enough, it leads to the dead end street of self-pity. One of the most distasteful, useless, and inexcusable of all human attitudes.

Contentment, on the other hand, comes from another one of those simple choices, one that doesn't allow ourselves or others to concentrate on our woes. We simply choose to create a different kind of list - a positive one - for if we won't, people won't stay around very long. Discontented souls soon become lonely souls.

I want my children to know that they can make the church better, their community better, their home better, and their workplace better, by refusing to become cynical and actively pursuing a positive commitment to spiritual growth and development through personal participation and involvement.

7. Pay attention to older people and little children: Our society values and admires youth. The cosmetic industry alone confirms this sad fact. In truth, the life I enjoy, and they enjoy, was in large part built upon the sacrifices, sweat, and toil of our older generation. My children will someday be where I am now and those who are blessed to be older than me. It is my prayer that they appreciate those that are their elders, those that the calendar has marked as being older.

Courtesy, respect and interest are but small tokens to offer to older people whose greatest joy in life is often the company and comfort of people. We read in Job, "With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding" (Job 12:12). I want my children to always remember that older people often have wisdom, insight, and understanding based upon years of learning and experience. Far from being a burden, they often bring insight and wisdom into our daily lives if we will but take the time to be around them and listen.

It truly is a spoiled, self-centered, self-indulgent young person who does not have the time for nor interest in the aged. A visit, a meal, a call, a card, an outing, are all just a few moments focused upon someone else. I want my children to know that the aged deserve and need to be remembered.

8. Realize the importance of a balanced life: Solomon said, "Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die: Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say,

Who is the Lord? or lest be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain” (Proverbs 30:7-9).

Solomon seems to be asking God to strike a balance between his needs and his wants. I know that all of us can slip into extremes that can harm our spiritual lives. We all need to pray to God to help us create balance in our lives. We need a healthy balance between work and play (too much of either is unhealthy and unbalanced). We need a balance between time alone and time with others. (Too much of either takes a toll on us). We need a balance between independence and dependence. (Either one all alone leads to problems). We need a balance between kindness and firmness, between waiting and praying, between resisting and cooperating. We need a balance between spending and saving. Between taking in and giving out. Between wanting too much and expecting too little. Between warm acceptance and keen discernment. Between grace and truth. Between faith and works.

It is interesting that Solomon had distilled his life and boiled it down to this: “Keep me from deceiving and lying. Give me neither too little nor too much.” An unknown author wrote about a balanced life,
 “Self-reliant, but not self-sufficient.

Steadfast, but not stubborn.

Tactful, but not timid.

Serious, but not sullen.

Unmovable, but not stationary.

Gentle, but not overly sensitive.

Tenderhearted, but not touchy.

Conscientious, but not a perfectionist.

Disciplined, but not demanding.

Generous, but not gullible.

Meek, but not weak.

Humorous, but not hilarious.

Holy, but not Holier-than-thou

Discerning, but not critical.

Progressive, but not pretentious.

I want my children to know that God is imminently capable of creating proper balance that can keep them healthy spiritually, emotionally, and even contribute to their health physically.

9. Give to the things in which you believe: Look for honorable opportunities for contributing. Paul reminds us of this great duty, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10).

We are to be happy when we give and feel the joy in giving. Give to those who are Christians and cannot repay us. Give to those in need that we become aware of. I want my children to know that there is a much larger world out there than themselves.

I fear that some of our people have forgotten this. One of the great blessings of having good jobs and good income is the privilege of helping others. Never mind the reason for their need. It is a satisfaction that is rewarding to the giver and encouraging to the receiver.

A man once said, “Do all the good you can, By all means you can, In all the ways you can, In all the places you can, At all the times that you can, To all the people you can, As long as ever you can.”

10. Keep a clear vision of your life: In Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12, the Apostle Paul wrote about our gifts. I want my children to identify their strengths and build upon them. I want them to make a difference. When they near the end of their lives I want them to look back and be able to say as Paul said: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

Using 2 Timothy 4: 7-8 as his inspiration, my Dad [Paul Mackey] wrote these words: “The supreme attainment of life is to know God, the noblest purpose of life is to glorify God, the greatest aim of life is to please God, the greatest achievement of life is to be as Godlike as is humanly possible. The greatest need of life is to have an obedient faith in God and Christ. The highest goal in life is to be with God forever. Man’s most valuable possession is his soul. The most coveted prize is the crown of life which God will give to all who have “fought the good fight...finished the course...and kept the faith.”

God gave Moses instruction on how to rear youngsters in the law of God. “And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates” (Deuteronomy 6:7-9).

We read that parents were to teach God's laws to their children at all times throughout the day. My prayer is that God will help me to be that kind of father to my children. Wherein I have failed, I ask their forgiveness. It is my hope they will honor me in considering some of the spiritual values I have attempted in some small way to share today. May all of us as Godly parents and grandparents ever set before our children and grandchildren the model and example of a people who in word and deed, "Seek first the kingdom of God" and who above and before all, "Love the Lord with all our heart, with all our mind, and with all our strength."

PAGES FROM THE PAST

The following article by Brother Homer Gay, is from the April 1956 Issue of the Old Paths Advocate. In his column, Timely Suggestions, Brother Gay writes about making sure that we use today as if it is the only day we have. He also answers a question about the women keeping silent in the church, and about them teaching in singing. He ends his column by offering some advice on the sin of talebearing. —Rick Martin

TIMELY SUGGESTIONS

Today is the tomorrow when you promised to do that good deed yesterday! "Behold, now is the accepted time; Behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor.6:2). We have more on this thought in the Hebrew letter, "Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts: ***But exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*** While it is said, today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." (Heb. 3:7-15).

We should all realize that the "now" is all the time we really have. Yesterday is forever gone-tomorrow is yet to come, if we have another day. So, only NOW we live. Let us live, and work as though today would be the only day we will ever have. It is called "today," now, but some day, time will not be-and it will be ETERNITY-What then?

Suggestion: A good sister from Texas writes me: "Bro Gay, I would like for you to write in your Timely Suggestions about the women keeping silent in the

church, and about them teaching in singing." There is more to her question, but this covers the ground, and here is my answer, and suggestion: "As in all churches of the saints. Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law" (1 Cor. 14:33-34). This sister wants to know what the law said about it, did the Law say they could sing and teach? Well, the Law said, "for her to be under obedience," (Gen. 3:16). The women did sing, "And they had two hundred forty and five singing men and singing women" (Neh. 7:67). The women also taught, but in a private capacity (2 Tim. 3:15), also remember that this knowledge, and firm faith came from Timothy's grandmother, and his mother (2 Tim. 1: 5). I do not believe that there "is a certain amount of teaching in singing." We are to "sing with grace in our hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3: 16), and we are to "Speak to ourselves in songs" (Eph. 5:29).

Now I do not believe that anyone thinks we teach God when we sing. And if we teach one another in the singing, it would have to be in the music (melody): for we all sing together the same words. I could not teach you "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" while singing it to you, with you singing the same words to me. It would be just as unreasonable to think we teach one another in singing as it would be to think that two of us could read the Scriptures aloud to each other-both reading the same words at the same time.

Some contend that because we read in the common version, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16), that the singing is a part of the teaching service. But our Sunday School brethren know better than that, for they will have their women to sing in what they call the "hour of worship" and will not allow them to teach there. The Revised Standard version is punctuated thusly: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and as YOU sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Col. 3:16). Down through the years many able men (among them Brethren Trott and Harper) have shown that the punctuation in the common version should be changed to make the sense the Apostle intended to convey.

In other words, teaching is one thing, and singing is

another. In all public teaching, the men are to teach one at the time (1 Cor. 14:34-55); while in the singing we all sing (Eph. 5:19, Col. 3:16). Paul says in 1 Cor. 14:15, "I will sing with the spirit and I will Sing with the understanding also." We understand what we are singing, especially the words, hence, we do not teach one another "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," "There Is Power in The Blood"; "Take the Name of Jesus With You," etc., etc. We already understand that.

Suggestion: Let us all put forth an effort to learn to sing with the spirit and with the understanding also.

Talebearing: "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so, where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth" (Prov. 26:20). Where strife continues to exist among brethren, there is bound to be a talebearer. This, to me, is the lowest-down business that one can engage in—peddling tales! Why not tell something good? The devil and his imps can think of plenty of bad things to tell to, and about, our brethren, so, let us try to always tell the good. I would hate to think that I am responsible for any of the strife that exists between brethren. One of the six things that God hates is the one that "sows discord among brethren" (Prov. 6:16-19). Final suggestion: "Speak not evil one of another, brethren" (Jas. 4:11).

ALL WE LIKE SHEEP

BY AARON BOONE

As my wife and I finished praying for our meal while out one evening, a man came over to us and sat down to talk about prayer. This man, as I have now come to find out after multiple other studies with him, is a long-time sheep farmer. This may not seem like much but studying with him has helped me in my own understanding of the times when Christ and both Old Testament and New Testament writers used the illustration of God's people being like sheep. Maybe most famously, Jesus said in John 10:27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me". We can learn a lot from looking into sheep and what Christ meant by calling us His sheep. First, sheep are directionless; they have no internal compass or moral code to guide them when someone isn't leading them. They can easily find themselves lost without a guide or boundaries. In like manner we, without Christ, are directionless, we are lost. The Psalmist would say "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord" (Psalms 37:23). Without God and His word, and Christ as our Shepherd we are left

groping in the dark for a direction. That is why Jesus, the Great Shepherd, said "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life..." (John 14:6) Because without His way, we like sheep would be directionless. Secondly sheep, while young have to be weaned off of milk in order to take on solid food. This idea of maturing to take on solid food is seen throughout the New Testament. That was the writer of Hebrews point when he speaks of solid food belonging "to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised" (Hebrews 5:13). Christians are expected to mature to take on solid food (Hebrews 5:12), this growth is an important part of the Christians life, and if sheep aren't trained to take on solid food they won't gain the weight to make it through the winter. If Christians refuse to grow and mature, they won't have the sustenance needed to endure the storms. Thirdly, sheep will leave food and safety if something catches their eye. This can be one of the biggest mistakes found in a Christian's life, Isaiah spoke of how "all we like sheep have gone astray" (Isaiah 53:6), and we are constantly warned of the cunningness of the Devil lest we "may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3). As Christians we have everything we need in Christ and His Word, yet sometimes we channel our inner sheep and go astray leaving behind everything, for nothing. This even surprised Paul when some would turn to another gospel which was not the Gospel of Christ (Galatians 1:6).

We see then that the analogy of sheep that Christ uses in reference to His people is not something that is used lightly or for comedic relief. Instead, Christ as the Master Shepherd is showing us how drastically we need Him and His Word to survive. Without Christ we would be directionless, un nourished, and driven off course by every whim and empty promise this life offers. Yet with Christ leading us, we can have full assurance that the Shepherd will look after His flock, and as long as we obey Him we can rest assured in the hope of Salvation.

DOES PSALM 51:5....continued from page one

expressions, "I was brought forth in iniquity" and "in sin my mother conceived me" are indeed a far cry from the language of the creeds teaching total hereditary depravity. According to the Westminster Confession of Faith, when Adam and Eve sinned they became "wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body," and since they are "the root of all mankind," they, in

turn, “imputed...the same death in sin, and corrupted nature...to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation” (The Westminster Confession of Faith Chap. 6, Sections II & III; the other Protestant Creeds teach essentially the same).

It appears that if David had intended to teach total hereditary depravity, he would have indicted Adam and Eve in verse 5 rather than his mother. He says, “I was brought forth in iniquity,” and “in sin my mother conceived me.” Taken literally, the language naturally suggests David’s mother was guilty of sin in David’s conception and birth. It is evident that if the creeds are correct, and total hereditary depravity is true, then Adam is the one at fault here! It is surely not the fault of David’s poor unsuspecting mother, who likely never had a clue that having a son by her own husband (in keeping with the law of God) would involve her in such a crime as this. Here are some more things to consider. If David is indicting his mother as responsible for passing on total hereditary depravity to him, why does David not also include his father Jesse in the indictment? Was not David’s father involved in the conception? Is his mother alone responsible for David’s supposed total hereditary depravity? All of this demonstrates that total hereditary depravity advocates do not take the passage literally as they claim, but simply accommodate its language in support of cherished Reformation dogma.

Now, I am aware that the advocates of the dogma would likely characterize the above as a “straw man” argument. In response, I would say that since this passage is so often quoted as a blanket statement unequivocally proving total hereditary depravity, then these questions are not irrelevant. I posit all these thoughts simply to emphasize that, if taken literally, all that Psalm 51:5 says is that David was “brought forth in iniquity” (where the agent is evidently his mother) and that she conceived him “in sin.” The passage says nothing overtly about either David’s depravity, or “Adam and Eve” or “all their posterity,” or their supposed “corrupted nature” being “imputed by ordinary generation” to the whole human race! Yet the verse is constantly quoted as proving such, when in reality one must assume the doctrine, in order to derive it from the passage. This, I would say, is essentially “begging the question.”

Now concerning David’s mother, there is no indication in the historical record of the Bible that she committed sin in conceiving a child by her husband and in giving birth to that child. David’s mother is in fact never

named in the Scripture, although the Jewish Talmud gives her name as Nitzevet. However, all indications in the Old Testament are that David’s father, Jesse, was a godly man, and although we do not know much about David’s mother, we may assume the sanctity of the union between Jesse and David’s mother, at least based upon our knowledge of his father. It is hard to see then how David’s mother committed sin in David’s conception and birth, especially when two parties are involved in the conception, but the other party (David’s father) receives no blame in the matter.

Second, it is for these and other reasons we conclude that verse five cannot be taken as a “raw,” literal statement. When thus taken, it presents the absurdities demonstrated by the above questions and reasonings. Therefore, we must look elsewhere than a “literal” interpretation for Psalm 51:5.

All one hundred-fifty of the Psalms are poetic. This means that the Psalms throughout employ language that is characteristic of poetry, including simile, metaphor, hyperbole, and parallelism (which is especially common in Hebrew poetry), as well as many other devices of poetic expression. Poetic passages therefore are not like “doctrinal treatises” that spell out doctrinal principles in literal and logical propositions. Poetic language is tinged with emotion and pathos; its expressions are often lofty and elevated above the literal, compared to texts written in prose. I believe this is the case with Psalm 51:5.

None of this means, of course, that no line in the Psalms (or other poetry for that matter) can be taken literally. It only means that poetry is especially given to figurative language and exaggeration, and one must be on the alert for these characteristics when reading and interpreting poetry such as the Psalms and many other parts of the Bible (particularly the Old Testament).

That said, for a variety of reasons I feel compelled to understand Psalm 51:5 as hyperbole (pronounced, hy-PER-bo-ly). Hyperbole (already mentioned in an above paragraph) is a rhetorical device defined as “exaggeration or extravagant language used as a figure of speech” (The Collegiate Dictionary 1984).

Applying this concept to Psalm 51:5 means this. David, when composing Psalm 51, is immersed in the throes of his emotions and realizes the impact of his sin both on God and all the human characters drawn into his sordid

affair with Bathsheba. In this state of mind, while he composes a song, only the most elevated exaggeration can capture his sense of remorse.

“I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin my mother conceived me” is simply the way David expresses how engulfed he is in sin. He is overwhelmed with the realization that his sins brought so much bad to so many people. He is not writing a treatise on hereditary total depravity; he is not composing a Psalm to teach that his mother had a “corrupted nature” inherited from Adam, passing it on to her son. He is simply expressing in poetic terms the sense of guilt and remorse he feels for his sins related to Bathsheba.

As further evidence that verse 5 is hyperbole, consider that verse 4 also expresses a similar exaggeration. Speaking to the Lord, David says, “Against You, You only have I sinned” (Ps. 51:4). Yes, David did sin against the Lord, but not the Lord ONLY! This fact is evident, given all the consequences of David’s sin with Bathsheba. It involved not only sin against the Lord in the heavenly realm, but sin against his fellow actors on the human stage. David sinned against Bathsheba, a married woman, by committing adultery with her. He sinned against Uriah the Hittite (Bathsheba’s husband), both by the affair itself, and later by deliberately sending Uriah into the forefront of a hopeless battle to make sure he was eliminated. He sinned against Joab by involving him, unknowingly, in the maneuver of putting Uriah in harm’s way. One can also say David sinned even against the child of the illicit affair whose little life was cut short as judgment upon David himself. And there may be others against whom David sinned in this whole mess. Yet, verse 4 says “Against You, YOU ONLY have I have I sinned.” This is obvious hyperbole intended to emphasize the depth of transgression David has committed against the Lord. This hyperbole continues into the next verse-verse 5. Therefore, Psalm 51:5 fails to provide Biblical support for the doctrine of total hereditary depravity.

A LITTLE FOR THE LORD....continued from page two

However, they may take over a person’s life to the point that church services, and even gospel meetings, can be missed and eventually there are no regrets whatever. It is always disappointing to see members show so little love for the church purchased by the blood of our Savior. Can this problem be cured?

The Lord warned the brethren at Ephesus (Revelation 2:4) that He had somewhat against them because they had “left their first love.” It appears the church in Ephesus had not left the truth at all. They apparently were still worshiping correctly. However, they were not doing so under the influence of first love. In verse 5 they were told to return and do the first works or He would remove their candlestick. Obviously, He meant they would eventually cease to exist. Think of when you first obeyed the gospel. Do you recall how fervent you were? During worship you paid close attention to all that was taking place. During the prayer, it was your prayer. During the communion you made a point of remembering the body and blood of the Lord. During the singing you were careful to sing and pay attention to the words. During the teaching you paid close attention and likely followed along in your personal Bible. You were very much in tune with all that was done, you were worshiping God. Fervency, to which God wants us to return, must be reclaimed, if necessary. Our first works are accomplished under the influence of our first love. To put it in common terms, Jesus wants us to serve him with fervency. It must be real in our hearts. He wants us to be excited about the church and her work. When brethren become apathetic, or lukewarm, it is usually evident by their lack of excitement even in worship. Songs are dragged (slow) and often sung too low, which drains the life out of our singing. Lessons are sometimes poorly studied as well as delivered, prayers can become ritualistic, and the whole service lacking fervency. We recall the old story of a boy who was often asked by his father to give thanks at the dinner table. He soon became bored with saying the same thing every time, so he wrote it down and placed it on the table. He then said, “There you are Lord, read it for yourself.”

Apathy almost always manifests itself in a lack of Bible study, attendance, and interest in the church because there is no interest on the part of the apathetic or lukewarm person. Once the condition matures and is finished, the person is not concerned with anything seen by others as dangerous. A little social drinking, dancing, gambling, bad language, immodest dress, women cutting their hair, etc., doesn’t particularly bother them because in some places they frequent such things are common.

Notice a few passages: Romans 13:11, “And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now, is our salvation nearer than when we believed.”

1 Corinthians 15:14 “Awake to righteousness, and sin not, for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.”

The Lord is not satisfied with us if we are “a little for the Lord and a little for the Devil but not much for either one.” It is time for those who are in such a condition to wake up and make some changes. Think on these things. DLK

Field Reports

BRETHREN, PLEASE NOTE

We are reprinting a single page (one of several) from the March, 1940 issue of Old Paths Advocate. This is in order for all to see how enjoyable the field reports are to read. There were many more reports in that issue, of course, as the reports were a major feature of the paper in those days. Wouldn't it be wonderful to bring back this feature as it once was? If the preachers would send a brief report each month, or nearly so, we could have this again. Brethren enjoyed knowing where the preachers had been and what the results were. Keep in mind that everyone worked together for the common goal of enlarging the borders of Zion and all were eager to read the reports every month. Give this some thought, and let us know if you would like to see more of these old-time reports from time to time. Consider sending a report next month, please. DLK

James R. Stewart, Star Rte., Belton, Texas, February 16. - In January I visited the congregation at Woodson, Texas, delivering four sermons. I enjoyed the stay in the home of Brother Saudles. I was invited back for a meeting in the near future. My next was at Austin, Texas, with nice crowds and interest. Last Lord's day the Bellmead church, in Waco, and found the church moving along nicely. My home church, White Hall, is getting along nicely, and the young members are taking a great interest in the work. I expect to begin my evangelistic work early in the spring. 'Pray for me, brethren.

Ervin Waters, 422 Whittier Blvd., Montebello, Cal., Feb. 16. - I closed an 18 days meeting at Denair, Calif., January 31, with 4 baptisms and 1 restoration, leaving the congregation there “rooted and grounded” more firmly in the primitive faith, and began to assist the brethren at Greenfield, Calif., in a meeting February 4. This meeting is now 13 days old and continues with

2 confessions for baptism and 2 restorations to date. I go from here to Lodi, Calif., for a meeting beginning Feb. 25. Then I go to Stockton, Corcoran, etc. The work here in California is lining up nicely and our movement to return to the “Old Paths” seems to be gaining momentum. Let us :Thank GOD and take courage.”

John T. Chambers, Harrodsburg, Indiana, February 14. - The church at this place is progressing nicely in the Lord (not away from Him), being satisfied with what is written, without addition or subtraction, We being a Gentile church, are under the instruction of the Apostle to the Gentiles, who had care of all the churches (2 Cor. 11:28), and who gave us our instruction, leaving us free from the Jewish church of Acts 2:42. Brethren; let us rightly apply the word, that we may be free, indeed, in Christ Jesus. I am sending my renewal to the Old Paths Advocate.

D.E. Stone, Rte. 1, Box 678, Rivera, Calif., Feb. 12. - Love predominates more and more in our ranks. We have learned to seek peace and unity, and have found that it is to be obtained in the law of God only. Brethren here are improving in ability, both in teaching and in song as leaders. It is our earnest desire to become a model church, and that we may at all times exemplify the true Apostolic church. Not that we may boast within ourselves, but of God. We are starting Rudiment study in music at Montebello. Our aim is to instruct the young men in song directing, that they may become more useful in this needy field.

Homer A. Gay, Lebanon, Mo., Feb. 17 - We appreciate beyond expression the means sent us with which to build an office for the OPA. We hope to soon be able to announce that the OPA has an office of its own. In the singing normal taught here in January by Frank Grammer and me, there were several second and third grade certificates awarded, and three first grade certificates were awarded: viz. Clovis Cook, C.H. Lee, and myself. The snow and bad weather continues to keep the most of the preachers in this part at home.

George Bowman, Alpena Pass, Ark., Feb. 13 - By the help of the church in Montebello, Calif., we were able to have a meeting here in 1938, conducted by Brother Frank Cope, who is one of the ablest young men I ever heard, and we are praying that we may be able to get someone to come back to this place this year. We are few in number, but we want a man, who has no creed but the Bible and no way but Christ's way. We pray that all may continue the good work as in the past.

Homer L King, Lebanon, Missouri, February 20. - I recently preached at the home church on Sunday night, with one restoration. Also, recently conducted the funeral of an elderly sister, Mary Richardson. It now seems that my first evangelistic work in the spring will be in Oklahoma, unless it be a mission meeting or two in Missouri. I expect to be very busy throughout the year, the Lord willing. Let us pray that 1940 will be our greatest achievement of any in the past. May we all "endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." Pray for me and the work.

Joe H. Howard, Lone Rock, Ark., Feb. 11 - I closed a mission meeting today at McPhearson, Ark., with the "seed" sown. My next will be at Martin Spring, another mission effort. The little band here is moving along nicely. We now have some young brethren taking an active part in the public work of the church, and it looks as though we may be sending out some young preachers in the near future. I expect to be at home while Brother Waller is with us. My son, James, directed the singing in the meeting at McPhearson and will assist in my next effort. We hope to continue this work just as much as finances will permit. For the effort at McPhearson we received \$3.61, for which we are thankful.

John L. Reynolds, Box 249, Crockett, Calif., Feb. 14. - It seems that new fields are opening up for us now. Brother Banton, of Stockton, and a few more brethren, have started a loyal congregation there. They invited me over to preach, and last Lord's day, I preached in the fore-noon, and also afternoon. They had a basket dinner. The house was full of people, among the number, six preachers. We have some faithful brethren at Lodi, about ten miles from Stockton. We expect Brother Waters to hold meetings at both places. At my home church we have bought a house and moved it on a lot near my residence, and we have it all paid out, except \$90.00.

Don L. King, 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550, email: oldpaths@juno.com, October 13. The church at home is doing well and working in peace which is wonderful. Several meetings are in progress at area congregations and brethren are getting ready for the winter. My health is slowly gaining strength and I am happy to be able to preach again. I appreciate the good news we hear from brethren around the Brotherhood. The Philippines have suffered a devastating typhoon recently and we are praying for their welfare. Livermore has sent some relief and we are waiting to hear how

they are doing now. Crops were lost as well as homes in the winds and floods. Lord willing, we plan to make the 38th trip there this January. Lord bless the faithful.

Carl M. Johnson, 1400 Northcrest Drive, Ada, OK 74820, cmjthebackpage@gmail.com, Oct. 10. Since my last report we have conducted meetings at Greenville, Pennsylvania, the California Labor Day Meeting at Livermore, California, and the Lee's Summit, Missouri congregation. All of these meetings were well attended and I believe some good was accomplished at each place. We had a great meeting here at Ada last month with Cullen Smith. We had excellent attendance and four young women were baptized after the last service. I have just published a new book titled, For Such A Time As This (and Other Essays from The Back Page). The book is a compilation of the brief essays I wrote over a 15 year period on The Back Page of the Old Paths Advocate. Litho Printing did a beautiful job on the publishing. The book is 416 pages, with a red, leather-like hard back cover, embossed with gold letters. The cost of the book is \$20 plus postage.

Clinton De France, 2121 S. Columbia, Ave., Suite LL2, Tulsa, OK 74114, October 5, 2018. The work is going well here in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The church has grown in the last two years from around 65 to nearly 100 in attendance most Lord's Days. We have had several baptism from the outside and three families come over from digression. We have young Noah Howard working with us and he is doing very well. He will begin assisting the congregation in Muskogee with their evangelism goals this month. I just finished a good meeting with the brethren at Walnut Grove congregation in Kentucky. Brother Zac Evans does a very good work there. During that time I also had a Bible study in Missouri with a young preacher and his family. We discussed the communion and have continued our communication about it for the weeks since. Please pray for that discussion to produce good fruit. In the last two years I have been blessed to help spread the gospel and help to establish congregations in Portland, Maine; Cairo, Egypt; Ajman, UAE, and Kipanga, Zanzibar. Many of these congregations are made up primarily of babes in Christ. They have a long way to go and many dangers and snares threaten them. Please pray for their well-being and security. I am thrilled to hear of good work being done all over the country and all over the world. Please join us for the New Year Meeting in Alabama if you are able.

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WALKS THROUGH THE BIBLE...

TALKING TO YOURSELF

By JERRY DICKINSON

“Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.” (I Samuel 30:6) Do you ever talk to yourself? I know you do. Everyone talks to themselves, even asking themselves questions or engaging in internal debates when important decisions and vital issues confront and challenge. There is not only nothing wrong with talking to yourself, you absolutely need to talk, reason, and even challenge yourself so that you can make the right decision based upon a good conscience, informed by God’s plan for your life as revealed in His Word.

David faced a critical situation and a pivotal moment in the history of Israel when he decided to talk to himself. He had fled Israel because Saul sought his life and was living under the protection of the Philistines in a city called Ziklag. David’s faithful men had followed him along with their wives and children. While David and his men were away, the Amalekites raided the city and took all their wives, sons, and daughters as captives. When David and his men returned, they discovered, to their horror, that their families were gone and they despaired that they would ever see them again. These were some tough men, but this was more than they could bear, and the Bible says they lifted up their voices and wept until they had no more power to weep. Then, they began to talk to each other about stoning David. No doubt they blamed David for bringing them to live with the Philistines in the first place, and now look what has happened. “Let’s kill him!” they cry.

David had many low points in his life, but this has to have been one of the lowest. He has lost his wives and children, he is an exile in a foreign land, and now his faithful men are talking about killing him. You talk about depression and despair! But then comes this extraordinarily remarkable statement, “But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.” In other words, he talked to himself and gave himself strength and encouragement in the Lord. It is a remarkable and revealing picture of how to deal with depression and overwhelming challenges in life. Notice that there are two parts to this amazing statement about what David did.

1. First, he talked to and encouraged himself. After all, there was no other person there for him to talk to. His wives were gone and his faithful men blamed him for the situation and they were talking about killing him. But instead of giving up, he talked to himself. When there is no one else to talk to you have to talk to yourself. When you look around for someone to encourage you, and there is no one, you have to encourage yourself! In Matthew 9:21 the woman with an issue of blood said to herself, “If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well.” This poor woman had been ostracized because of her condition and apparently had no one to talk to, so she talked to herself and encouraged herself to touch His garment. She was wondrously healed as a result! The prodigal came to himself and then talked to himself. He told himself to go home and beg his father’s mercy. He did and we know how his father accepted and restored his lost son. When there is no one else to talk to, you must talk to yourself!

2. Note, also however, that David encouraged himself in the Lord. David did not encourage himself in himself, or in his own strength. He did not say, “I am a strong man and I’ll just pull myself up by my own bootstraps I” No. He encouraged himself “in the Lord!” He inquired of the Lord what he should do and the Lord assured him he and his men would get their wives and children back. He trusted in the strength of the Lord and this empowered him to overcome the despair of the moment. Because David was able to strengthen himself he was then able to encourage his men. What a wonderful lesson! Sometimes families, and even churches, sink into despair and depression. Don’t you despair! If you give up hope all is lost. Talk to yourself. Strengthen yourself in the Lord, and then you will be able to encourage others to overcome the challenge and circumstances and move forward with courage and optimism.

Are you not living the life that you know the Lord wants you to live? Are you disheartened and discouraged because things have not worked out the way you planned? I hope there is someone you can talk to who will encourage you and help you to get on the right road and be the person the Lord wants you to be. Go to that trusted Christian friend and just talk. However, my friend, you must talk to yourself! Tell yourself it is time to make an about face and turn your life over to the Lord. No, you cannot do it by yourself. Be like David and, “Encourage yourself in the Lord.”