



1 I will love thee, O LORD, my strength. 2 The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. 3 I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies. 4 The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. 5 The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me. 6 In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears. (Psalm 18:1-6)

Man's dream of flight has ever been a constant desire to occupy his fertile imagination. Because it was first conceived in the mind of man, it was finally accomplished by the work of men's ingenuity and labors. The same has been true of travel beneath the surface of the sea. Crude submarine design began with bell divers as early as the sixteenth century. There was even a battleship sunk – the first such event in history - by submarine during the American War Between the States. On a cold February night (17th) in 1864 just beyond the harbor limits of Charleston, S.C., the USS HOUSATONIC was sunk by a man-powered submarine (CSS HUNLEY) as a desperate attempt of the Southern States to break the crippling Federal blockade. Not only was the Housatonic sunk, but HUNLEY and her eight-man crew as well in this engagement.

Since that time, submarine technology has advance at an unbelievable pace to include nuclear powered submarines that can remain at sea almost without limit of time. For all of the modern advancements in technology, perhaps the most efficient of all submarines was developed approximately six thousand years ago on the Fifth Day of Creation. *“20 And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. 21 And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good. 22 And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply*

in the earth. 23 And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.” Gen 1:20-23 (KJV) That earliest of submarines was the WHALE. Like modern day conventional submarines, the whale must surface periodically. The whale is a mammal and an air breather. Conventional submarines must surface regularly to replenish battery power with air breathing engines. The nuclear submarine must surface less frequently to replenish crew provisions.

I am sure you have now guessed who the first submariner was? It was Jonah – almost 1,000 years before the birth of our Lord. You might say that Jonah was ‘conscripted’ into God’s navy while aboard a sailing vessel on the Mediterranean Sea bound for Spain. Jonah was a reluctant sailor as well as a reluctant prophet; but he was more inclined to being thrown overboard than to obey the command of God to go and preach to Nineveh. He was, like so many men called of God, trying to escape the calling until God made his nest too prickly to remain aloof.

When a man disobeys God calling, there is only one direction for him to go – and that is DOWN! *Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. 3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. (Jonah 1:1-3) Jonah hated the people of Nineveh. He feared that his preaching there might cause those wicked people to repent and be accepted in the same way his own people were accepted before God. This, Jonah could not stomach owing to inordinate jealousy; so he believed he could escape the face of the Lord by going DOWN from Jerusalem to Joppa. The Almighty God of the land is also the Master of the Ocean Seas. Once Jonah had his ticket to Tarshish (Spain) he again went DOWN into the ship. Once onboard, he again went DOWN into the “sides of the ship” and went to sleep believing all was well. He believed he had made his escape from the Lord.*

4 But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. 5 Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them (Jonah 1:4-5) When you are in a deadly storm on the high seas, all of your little gods combined cannot lift a finger to save you – there is only One who can do that; and that God is the Maker of the Seas. These rough seamen did all in their power to bring the ship under steady sail, but lacked the strength . . . and the faith. The tiny spark of faith they possessed at least informed them of the insufficiency of their own idols and gods.

6 So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not. (Jonah 1:6) The mark of a backslider is that he does not regard the fate of others. Jonah had the audacity to sleep while the whole crew fought the rains and billows of the sea in desperation. Finally, in an attempt to bring the matter to focus, the seaman drew lots to see to whose responsibility the immoderate seas belonged. “7 And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. (Jonah 1:7) There are many things that a rat simply will not do, but when cornered, a rat may come clean as Jonah finally does. 8 Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou? 9 And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land. (Jonah 1:8-9) Jonah now realizes that God is also on the high seas as well as dry land. No escape!

Note that even these rough seaman had a better conscience than did Jonah: *10 Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them. (Jonah 1:10)*

In spite of Jonah's confession, these hardened men did not want innocent blood on their hands (if Jonah's blood could barely be considered innocent). *11 Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous. 12 And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you. 13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them. 14 Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee.* (Jonah 1:11-14) Their response above forces me to respect these heathen more than Jonah – an unwilling prophet of God.

Finally, the Lord's Will shall be done in spite of our haggling, equivocation, and disobedience. There are too many who claim to be called of God who are not, but also many who are called and deny the calling; but God will get the person whom He has called whether they like it or not. *15 So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging. 16 Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows. 17 Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.* (Jonah 1:15-17) Jonah paid for his first passage on the ship, but this second vessel (the Whale) is compliments of the Lord. Once again, Jonah went DOWN into the sea; and he then went Down into the belly of the whale; and then the whale went DOWN into the depths of the sea. This is a very messy predicament in which to find one's self. Suddenly, Jonah remembered the Lord. Jonah's Prayer: *1 Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly, 2 And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice. 3 For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me. 4 Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple. 5 The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. 6 I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God. 7 When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple. 8 They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. 9 But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.* (Jonah 2:1-9)

Like Jonah, we often failed to pray when it is most opportune, and we do pray when it is most inopportune. This was Jonah's case. But even in Hell, the Lord heard Jonah's prayer (*out of the belly of hell cried I*). Even if it escapes our notice, even a whale has dignity and a sense of taste. The sour and salty nature of Jonah gave the whale indigestion and the Lord allowed the whale to vomit Jonah out on dry land. Jonah was then willing to do exactly as the Lord commanded. God works with us in the same way. He may be calling us to a certain ministry, and we try to escape. The Lord may then fill our comfortable nests with sharp twigs and shards (as does the great Eagle) until we vacate the nest and learn to fly for our Lord. In negative terms, Jonah was a type of Christ: *40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth* (Matt 12:40)

Let's not waste unnecessary hours in the belly of a whale escaping the Will of God.