

## Christmas 2010: "Reflections On Sam Stone," Reprise

"We spend our years as a tale that is told." (Ps. 90:9 KJV)

In the spring of 1973, I was a freshman at Vanderbilt University. I was at the commons one day with my homeboy Barry Gillespie, who was a sophomore at the time. I made the remark to Barry that I did not believe "all of that Jesus stuff."

Shortly thereafter, Stan Oakes, who was a staff-member of the Nashville chapter of Campus Crusade for Christ, knocked on my dorm-room door and gave me a forceful sales-pitch for the cause of Christianity. Stan told me that God loves me and has a wonderful plan for my life. In order for me to activate the plan, Stan told me all I had to do is to accept Jesus as my Lord and Savior.

At the same time, I was taking a literature course, and a visiting-professor gave a guest-lecture on Kierkegaard's leap-of-faith. The end-result is that, in the spring of 1973, I took the leap-of-faith and accepted Jesus as my Lord and personal Savior. Approximately three years later, I was sentenced to the Mississippi State Penitentiary for the rest of my natural life. To this day, I still believe that everything that has unfolded since my conversation with Barry in the commons that day has been a part of God's plan!

Oprah Winfrey says that forgiveness is letting-go of the hope that the past could have been any different.

The members of the legal community around the globe know that the Mississippi court system is neither fair nor impartial, and that Mississippi court decisions are rife with political interference. The average Mississippian knows that the corrections system is too expensive; that it keeps people locked-up for too long, and that it is not doing what it is designed to do.

I have made it my life's-work to articulate the workings of the Mississippi court system and the workings of the Mississippi corrections system to anyone who will listen with ears to hear.

It is not my responsibility to persuade anyone to do anything: it has only been my responsibility to bear-witness and to deliver the message.

During this season of the year, we celebrate the fact that Jesus Christ came to Earth in order to die so that we may obtain mercy and forgiveness for our sins!

In the 1970s folk-song entitled "Sam Stone," the singer John Prine intones the following words:

There's a hole in daddy's arm where all the money goes;  
Jesus Christ died for nothin', I suppose.

I refuse to believe John Prine!

I choose to believe that the final chapter on my life-story will tell the tale of mercy and forgiveness! In order to realize this goal, I plan to "stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD." (Ex. 14:13)

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen!**

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