

## Malcolm's Monday Musings : 31 March 2025

Greetings.

A week last Wednesday marked the anniversary of the birth of the famous nineteenth century Scottish missionary and explorer, David Livingstone, on 19 March 1813, in Blantyre, Scotland.

The following are two well-known quotations attributed to Dr Livingstone:

(i) A missionary society wrote to David Livingstone and asked, "Have you found a good road to where you are? If so, we want to know how to send other men to join you". Apparently, he wrote back, "If you have men who will only come if they know there is a good road, I don't want them. I want men who will come if there is no road at all".

(This particular anecdote is quoted by many but I have failed, as yet, to trace it to any reliable historical source.)

(ii) On more solid historical ground, Dr Livingstone wrote, on 30 October 1843, 'Though I should be delighted to consider [this place] the centre of my sphere of labour, I shall try to hold myself in readiness to go anywhere provided it be forward'.

(G. Seaver, 'David Livingstone: his life and letters', page 77.

The following is an anecdote recorded about Dr Livingstone:

'While Mr. Spurgeon continued his services in the (Surrey Gardens) Music Hall, many persons, especially among the nobility, who probably would not have entered a chapel for public worship, attended his ministry. As noble as any of them, was a man who sprang from the people and who had won honours far beyond coronets as a pioneer missionary and discoverer—Dr Livingstone.

'On the occasion of one of his visits ... on the platform, near the pulpit, the Dr Armitage of New York, was sitting ... Nearer the pulpit sat Dr Livingstone.

'The sermon was one of great power, full of earnest appeals and heart-searching utterances ... Immediately the sermon was over, Dr. Livingstone's presence was announced to Mr. Spurgeon. As Dr Livingstone approached, Dr Armitage came forward to offer his congratulations and to shake hands with the preacher. Mr. Spurgeon withdrew his own hand, remarking pleasantly to the American divine, "No, shake hands first with Dr. Livingstone; he is the worthier man" ...

'During the brief conversation which followed, Dr Livingstone remarked that no religious service he ever remembered had so deeply impressed his own mind as that he had witnessed and participated in that morning. He added that when he had retired again into the solitudes of Africa, no scene he had ever witnessed would afford him more consolation than the recollection of the man God had raised up, who could so effectively and impressively preach to congregated thousands, while he should have to content himself by preaching to units, or, at most, tens, under a tropical sky in Africa'.

(R. Shindler, 'From the Usher's Desk to the Tabernacle Pulpit; the Life and Labours of Charles Haddon Spurgeon', 1892, pages 102-103.)

I have decided that this is a suitable opportunity for me to pull together various (hopefully profitable) references which I have made to Dr Livingstone in previous 'Monday Musings'. The first note below does just that.

You will find the main 'Musings' for today in the second note.

Happy reading.

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

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### 1.

## DAVID LIVINGSTONE

(Extracts reproduced from earlier 'Monday Musings'—the emphases are mainly original.)

### 1. 22 June 2020

(Taken from the then attached document, entitled, 'The Great Commission'.)

I speak of a famous pioneer medical missionary and explorer in Africa ... almost certainly the first European to view the Victoria Falls and who gave them their name in honour of his Queen. Yes, you may well say (in words supposedly uttered by Sir Henry Stanley at their famous meeting), 'Dr Livingstone, I presume?'<sup>1</sup>

I said that David Livingstone was a medical missionary and so he was. Some time ago, I came across something which he wrote to his father when he (David Livingstone) was in his thirties.<sup>2</sup> In writing about a proposal made by his brother, Charles, that he (David) should go and settle in America, he penned the words, 'I am a missionary, heart and soul. God had an only Son, and He was a missionary and a physician ... In this service I hope to live, in it I wish to die'.<sup>3</sup> And many were the times he nearly *did* die.

In the first volume of his autobiography,<sup>4</sup> David Livingstone tells of one such occasion. He records how, on the evening of 14th January 1856, he was on the bank of the Zambesi River, surrounded by savages who were acting most suspiciously.<sup>5</sup> At any moment spears might come hurtling through the darkness. Or, for all he knew, the attack might come at dawn.

Let him tell his own story:

'I felt some turmoil of spirit in the evening at the prospect of having all my efforts for the welfare of this great region and its teeming population knocked on the head by savages tomorrow, who might be said to "know not what they do" ... But I read that Jesus said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth: go ye therefore, and teach all nations ... and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world". I took this as His word of honour, and then went out to take observations of latitude and longitude, which, I think, were very successful'.

And, praise His name, the same Lord who stood alongside David Livingstone in the wilds of Africa is 'honour bound' to be with us too! And I note that, in the good Doctor's journal, the words, 'I am with you always, even unto the end of the world' were written in *italics* for emphasis.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. 16 November 2020

### ***The care of the Lord Jesus for 'each of His people'.***

'The Gospels reveal Jesus ... He exercises a vigilance more constant, complete, and comprehensive, every hour and every minute, over each of His people than their utmost self-love could ever attain. His tender love is more exquisite than a mother's heart can feel'.

(David Livingstone, 'The Last Journals of David Livingstone, in Central Africa, from 1865 to His Death', page 454.)

## 3. 15 November 2021

This past Wednesday marked the anniversary of the date in 1871 of one of the most famous meetings in recent centuries. For, according to Henry Stanley's journal, it was 150 years ago, on 10<sup>th</sup> November 1871, that he greeted the pioneer missionary, David Livingstone, with the now famous words, "Dr Livingstone, I presume?"<sup>7</sup>

This is Henry Stanley's own account of that memorable meeting on the shores of Lake Tanganyika in present-day Tanzania, Africa:

'I pushed back the crowds, and, passing from the rear, walked down a living avenue of people, until I came in front of the semicircle of Arabs, before which stood the white man with the grey beard.

'As I advanced slowly towards him, I noticed he was pale, looking weary, had a grey beard, wore a bluish cloth cap with a faded gold band round it, had on a red-sleeved waistcoat, and a pair of grey tweed trousers.

'I would have run to him, only I was a coward in the presence of such a mob--would have embraced him, only, he being an Englishman, I did not know how he would receive me; so, I ... walked deliberately to him, took off my hat, and said: "**Dr Livingstone, I presume?**"

"Yes," said he, with a kind smile, lifting his cap slightly. I replaced my hat on my head, and he puts on his cap, and we both grasp hands, and I then say aloud: "I thank God, Doctor, I have been permitted to see you". He answered, "I feel thankful that I am here to welcome you".

(Henry Morton Stanley, 'How I found Livingstone' {published in the summer of 1872}, pages 411-412.)

That meeting took place just 18 months before David Livingstone's departure to be with Christ (on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1873); characteristically, he died kneeling in prayer.

I suppose that 'Dr Livingstone' has many claims to fame. For example:

- (i) he narrowly survived death after being mauled by a lion;
- (ii) his body was eventually laid to rest in Westminster Abbey, London;
- (iii) by means of his writings, he stirred up considerable public support against African slavery; and
- (iv) that which was perhaps his most awe-inspiring discovery, the great waterfall, 'Mosi-oa-Tunya' ('The Smoke That Thunders'), which he renamed, 'Victoria Falls', in honour of the then Queen.

But I want us to focus our attention rather on a few of his sayings and expressions which have been a special blessing to me:

**(i)** his journal entry on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1853:

**'I will place no value on anything I have or may possess, except in relation to the kingdom of Christ.** If anything will advance the interests of that kingdom, it shall be given away or kept, only as by giving or keeping of it I shall most promote the glory of Him to whom I owe all my hopes in time and eternity.

'May grace and strength sufficient to enable me to adhere faithfully to this resolution be imparted to me, so that in truth, not in name only, all my interests ... may be identified with His cause'.

(David Livingstone, quoted in W. G. Blaikie, *'The Personal Life of David Livingstone'*, 1880, page 116.)

**(ii)** his journal entry on 19th March 1872:

**'Birthday.** My Jesus, my King, my life, my all; **I again dedicate my whole self to Thee.** Accept me, and grant, O Gracious Father, that ere this year is gone I may finish my task. In Jesus' name I ask it. Amen, so let it be'.

(David Livingstone, quoted in John S. Roberts, *'The Life and Explorations of David Livingstone'*, 1874, Page 487.)

**(iii) (a)** his reference to his daughter Agnes:

'Mr Stanley used some very strong arguments in favour of my going home ... My daughter Agnes says, "Much as I wish you to come home, **I would rather that you finished your work to your own satisfaction** than return merely to gratify me".

'Rightly and nobly said, my darling Nannie. Vanity whispers pretty loudly, "She is a chip of the old block"'.

(David Livingstone, quoted in Horace Waller, *'The Last Journals of David Livingstone, in Central Africa, from 1865 to His Death'*, 1875, page 410.)

**(iii) (b)** his journal entry on 25th March 1873:

**'Nothing earthly will make me give up my work in despair.** I encourage myself in my Lord my God, and go forward'.

(David Livingstone, quoted in John S. Roberts, *'The Life and Explorations of David Livingstone'*, 1874, Page 576.)

**(iv)** A 'sacrifice'?

'For my own part, I have never ceased to rejoice that God has appointed me to such an office. People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called a sacrifice which is simply paid back as a small part of a great debt owing to our God, which we can never repay? ... Away with the word in such a view, and with such a thought! **'It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say rather it is a privilege.**

'Anxiety, sickness, suffering, or danger, now and then, with a foregoing of the common conveniences and charities of this life, may make us pause, and cause the spirit to waver, and the soul to sink, but let this only be for a moment. All these are nothing when compared with the glory which shall hereafter be revealed in, and for, us. **'I never made a sacrifice'.**

(David Livingstone, 'Lecture delivered before the University of Cambridge, in the Senate-House, on Friday, 4th December, 1857', page 23.)

**4. 22 May 2023**

Below are two testimonials to that which (with my eyes on 1 Pet. 2. 5) I may well call, *'the Christian character of a true "living stone"'*.

(i) 'For four months and four days I lived with David Livingstone in the same house, or in the same boat, or in the same tent, and I never found a fault in him. I am a man of quick temper, and often without sufficient cause, I dare say, have broken the ties of friendship; but with Livingstone I never had cause for resentment, but each day's life with him added to my admiration for him'.

(Henry Stanley, *'How I Found Livingstone'*, pages 627-628.)

(ii) 'It is the man who is the missionary; it is not his words. His character is his message. In the heart of Africa, among the great Lakes, I have come across black men and women who remembered the only white man they ever saw before—David Livingstone. And, as you cross his footsteps in that dark continent, men's faces light up as they speak of the kind Doctor who passed there years ago. They could not understand him; but they felt the love that beat in his heart'.

(Henry Drummond, *'The Greatest Thing in the World'*, page 17.)

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## 2.

### (i) Scripture.

My heart became hot within me. As I mused, the fire burned; then I spoke with my tongue:

O Lord, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am. Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing before you. Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath! Selah.

Surely a man goes about as a shadow! Surely for nothing they are in turmoil; man heaps up wealth and does not know who will gather!

And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you.

Psalm 39. 3-7 (*English Standard Version*)

### (ii) Food for thought.

***'The measure of my days' (Psa. 39. 4).***

Consider the consistent prayer requests of:

(i) David: 'O Lord, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am. Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing before you' (Psa. 39. 4-5).

(ii) Ethan: 'O remember how short my time is' (Psa. 89. 47).

(iii) Moses: 'Teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom' (Psa. 90. 12).

And the comparison struck by James:

'What is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away' (James 4. 14).

It is claimed that ...

'After a major military victory, the triumphant military generals were paraded through the streets to the roars of the masses. The ceremonial procession could span the course of a day with the military leader riding in a chariot drawn by four horses. There was not a more coveted honour. The general was idolized, viewed as divine by his troops and the public alike.

'But riding in the same chariot, standing just behind the worshipped general, was a slave. The slave's sole responsibility for the entirety of the procession was to whisper in the general's ear continuously, "Respice post te. Hominem te esse memento. Memento mori!" ... "Look behind. Remember you are mortal. Remember you must die!"

'The slave served to remind the victor that, at the peak of glory, this god-like adoration would soon end, while the truth of his mortality remained'.

(Source: <https://dailystoic.com/history-of-memento-mori/>.)

***'The Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me' (Gal. 2. 20).***

'When in Mark's Gospel the first human to recognize Jesus as "the Son of God" is the centurion at Jesus's death (Mark 15. 39), we are led to a greater understanding of Mark 1. 1: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God".

We see only then that Jesus' nature and role as God's Son is understood, not chiefly in His teaching or His miracles but in His death. The Son of God is the one who died for us'.

(D. Stevens, 'Songs of the Son', page 6.)

**'To know the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge' (Eph. 3. 19).**

'We can know that Christ loved us and gave Himself for us.

'We can know the faithfulness of His love as manifested in countless ways every day of our lives—its tenderness as it comforts us in suffering and sorrow, its fellowship as it shares with us everything it possesses, its patience as it forgives us the seventy times seven.

'We can also daily add to our knowledge of the love of Christ as we company with Him in prayer and in the study of His Word, as we fellowship with other saints who know and experience deeply the love of Christ ...

'But there is a love of Christ that is knowledge-surpassing. The expression of Christ's love is knowable, but the essence of it is unknowable'.

(R. Paxson, 'The Wealth, Walk, and Warfare of the Christian', page 77.)

**'He who dwells in the secret place ('shelter') of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty' (Psa. 91. 1).**

**1.** 'Rest under His shelter, the ultimate protective covering for any storm ... under God's shelter, there is impenetrable safety. It is the mightiest forcefield around. It is greater than the Iron Dome. It is stronger than the best iron-built fortress'.

(K. Balarie, 'A Prayer for Protective Clothing', Crosscards Daily Prayer, 23 March 2025.)

**2.** 'I wonder what the safest place in the world is. A bomb shelter? A bank vault? Perhaps a prison surrounded by an army? According to Psalm 91, the safest place in the world is a shadow. ... My shadow is not much protection for anyone. But when it belongs to the Almighty, a shadow is a strong protection'.

(W. Wiersbe, 'Prayer, Praise and Promises', Day 227.)

**3.** 'Those who commune with God are safe with Him, no evil can reach them, for the outstretched wings of His power and love cover them from all harm. This protection is ... all-sufficient, for it is the shadow of the Almighty, whose omnipotence will surely screen them from all attack ... The Almighty Himself is where His shadow is, and hence those who dwell in His secret place are shielded by Himself. What a refuge in the hour of deadly storm!'

(C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, Volume 1, page 231.)

**'The law of the Lord is perfect ... the precepts of the Lord are right ... the judgements of the Lord are true ... more to be desired are they than gold, yea than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb' (Psa. 19. 7-10).**

"More to be desired are they than gold, yea than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb"; one can well understand this being said of God's mercies, God's visitations, His attributes. But what the psalmist is actually talking about is God's Law, His commands—His "rulings" as Dr Moffatt well translates in verse 9 (for "judgements" here plainly means decisions about conduct)

...

'I can understand that a man can, and must, respect these "statutes", and try to obey them, and assent to them in his heart. But it is very hard to find how they could be, so to speak, delicious, how they exhilarate ... men may respect the "statute" but, surely, it could be more aptly compared to the dentist's forceps than to anything enjoyable and sweet ...

'But, when the subject is sacred, proud and clever men may come to think that the outsiders who don't know it are not merely inferior to them in skill but lower in God's eyes; as the Pharisees said, "All that rabble who are not experts in the Torah are accursed" (John 7. 49) ... Thus, the Law can take on a cancerous life of its own ... This morbid condition of the Law contributed to—I do not suggest it is the sole or main cause of—Paul's joyous sense of Christ as the Deliverer from Law (Rom. 7. 6; Gal. 3. 13) ...

'But let the Psalms show me again the good thing of which this bad thing is the corruption ... "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes" (Psa. 119. 5). The psalmist's effort to keep God's statutes does not spring from servile fear. The order of the Divine mind, embodied in the Divine Law, is beautiful. What should a man do but try to reproduce it, so far as possible, in his daily life?

'His "delight" is in those statutes (Psa. 119. 16); to study them is like finding treasure (Psa. 119. 14); they affect him like music, are his "songs" (Psa. 119. 54); they taste like honey (Psa. 119. 103); they are better than silver and gold (Psa. 119. 72).

'As one's eyes are more and more opened, one sees more and more in them, and it excites wonder (Psa. 119. 18).

'This is ... the language of a man ravished by a moral beauty ... in the Law you find the "real" or "correct" or stable, well-grounded, directions for living. The law answers the question "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" (Psa. 119. 9). It is like a lamp, a guide (Psa. 119. 105)'.  
(C. S. Lewis, *'Reflections on the Psalms'*, pages 49-53.)

***'My eyes fail while I wait for my God' (Psa. 69. 3).***

'When our circumstances scream, "God is absent" (Psa. 69. 3, 17), our prayers will reflect the confidence that "the Lord hears the needy" (Psa. 69. 33).

'David may have felt like his old friends were now offering him poison for food and sour wine for drink (Psalm 69. 21), but Jesus literally put his lips to a sour sponge on the cross (Matthew 27. 48; John 19. 29-30). David sings Psalm 69 well, but Jesus sings it better ...

'Those who swim in the ocean of that love which, as the old hymn says, is "vast, unmeasured, boundless, free, rolling as a mighty ocean in its fullness over me" ("O the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus") ... may wince at their ugly travel scrapbook, but they count on a last page that glitters'.  
(J. B., *'Deeply Disappointed, Greatly Loved'*, accessed at <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/deeply-disappointed-greatly-loved>.)

***'Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by powerful works, and wonders and signs, which God did through Him' (Acts 2. 22).***

'That divine power which dwelt in Christ:

- (i) restored, as in the case of the sick and blind;
- (ii) it multiplied, as the bread in the wilderness;
- (iii) it ennobled, as the water at Cana;
- (iv) it quickened, as Lazarus and others;
- (v) it brought together by wonderful coincidences, the already existing (Matt. 17. 27).

'But, as far as we can see, it formed no new limbs; it made no bread, no wine, out of nothing; it created no new men.

'It did not, as far as our records reach, pass over on any one occasion into the region of absolute creation'.

(R. C. Trench, *'Notes on the Miracles'*, page 414.)

***"Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20).***

'He did not say, "Teach them all my commandments". He said, "Teach them to observe all my commandments".

'You can teach a parrot all of Jesus's commandments. But you cannot teach a parrot to observe them. Parrots will not repent, and worship Jesus, and lay up treasures in heaven, and love their enemies, and go out like sheep in the midst of wolves to herald the kingdom of God.

'Teaching people to parrot all that Jesus commanded is easy'.

(J. Piper, *'All That Jesus Commanded'*, pages xv-xvi—*emphases original*.)

***'Fourfold peace'.***

'Remember:

1. Christ has made our peace (Col. 1. 20).
2. Christ is our peace (Eph. 2. 14).
3. Christ preaches peace (Eph. 2. 17).
4. Christ gives peace (John 14. 27)'.  
(F. E. Marsh, *'One Thousand New Bible Readings'*, page 170.)

***'Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God' (Eph. 5. 21).***

'In the original, this is the last of a string of participial expressions that fill out what it means to be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5. 18) ...

'The words "submit ... to one another" should **not** be taken in a mutually reciprocal way, as if exhorting all Christians to submit to one another reciprocally.

For:

(a) the verb "to submit" in Greek always refers to submission in some sort of ordered array, never to mutual deference;

(b) the idea is then picked up in the following "household table" of duties: wives submit to husbands, children to parents, and slaves to masters (Eph. 5. 22–6. 4);

(c) the same vision of submission is repeated in the New Testament (Col. 3. 18–19; Titus 2. 4–5; 1 Pet. 3. 1–6);

(d) the Greek pronoun rendered "one another" is often not reciprocal (e.g., Rev. 6:4).

(D. A. Carson, '*For the Love of God*', Volume 2, meditation for 25 March.)

### **(iii) Go on, smile.**

A group of tourists from Wales is visiting many of the famous sites in England. On this lunchtime, they are visiting Runnymede.

Their guide tells the party, 'You can count yourselves privileged to be standing at this spot. For here was signed the Magna Carta—one of the most important legal documents in the world'.

'Wow! when was it signed?' asks Rhys, one of the Welsh tourists.

'1215', the guide replies.

Rhys glances at his watch. "Would you believe it", he exclaims, '*we missed the signing by half an hour*'.

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> David Livingstone (19 March 1813 – 1 May 1873).

<sup>2</sup> His letter is dated 5th February, 1850.

<sup>3</sup> W. G. Blaikie, '*The personal life of David Livingstone LL.D., D.C.L., chiefly his unpublished journals and correspondence in the possession of his family*', Chapter 6—'1849-1852'.

<sup>4</sup> '*Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*'. The quotations come from chapter 29.

<sup>5</sup> 'Mburuma's people had behaved so suspiciously, that ... we were by no means sure that we should not be attacked in crossing the Loangwa. We saw them here collecting in large numbers'.

<sup>6</sup> Source: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1039/1039-h/1039-h.htm#2HCH0029>.

<sup>7</sup> In his journal, Dr Livingstone reports the famous meeting as having taken place earlier, around 14th October that year. But, later in his journal, he acknowledged that his dates were as much as 'twenty-one days too fast in my reckoning'. (Horace Waller, '*The Last Journals of David Livingstone, in Central Africa, from 1865 to His Death*', 1875, pages 400 and 410.) Sadly, many biographers have failed to note this and have, therefore, wrongly dated the meeting as taking place over two weeks earlier than it did.