

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 4 August 2025.

(i) Scripture.

To the angel of the church of Ephesus write,

'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:

"I know your works, your labour, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have laboured for my name's sake and have not become weary.

"Nevertheless, I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

"Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent. But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God".

Revelation 2. 1-7 (The New King James Version)

(ii) Food for thought.

'We preach Christ crucified' (1 Cor. 1. 23).

'In one of the old-fashioned mansions in the United States there is still to be seen a brass-bound clock upon the staircase-landing with the hands fixed at the minute and hour when George Washington [a Founding Father and the first President of the United States] died.

'The grandfather of the present owner was a pall-bearer at the funeral of the great republican, and set the hands where they have ever since remained.

'Even so, the preacher's finger must ever point the multitude to Jesus Christ and Him crucified.'

(H. O. Mackey, quoted in 'The Biblical Illustrator: St. John', volume 1, page 100.)

'When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished"' (John 19. 30).

'This, the sixth saying from the cross, was literally just one word—"Finished"—and must rank as the most momentous single word ever uttered. How much that cry means to us in terms of a perfected and eternal salvation! But let us meditate briefly on what it meant to Him.

'Undoubtedly, it was to Him (i) **a cry of victory**. Contrary to all appearances, His crucifixion and death represented neither tragedy nor defeat. He was not among those of whom He spoke who undertake a work which they are "unable to finish" (Luke 14. 29-30). "The Lion of the tribe of Judah ... prevailed" (Rev. 5. 5). Hear His word of triumph!

'Certainly, it was to Him (ii) **a cry of great satisfaction and joy**. The greater the task, the greater the satisfaction in completing it. What great pleasure the Son of God must have found in His "finished" work of creation (Gen. 1. 31; 2. 1). How much more pleasure the Son of God must have found in His "finished" work of redemption! Entering the world, He had said, "I delight to do thy will, O my God" (Psa. 40. 7-8; cf. Heb. 10. 5-7). Now, about to leave the world, He could look back on a completed work which represented the ultimate demonstration of both His love for and His submission to His Father (John 14. 31).

'Surely, it was also to Him (iii) **a cry of immense relief**. His very food had been to do the will of the One who had sent Him "and to finish His work" (John 4. 34). Now that He had wholly completed "the work" which the Father had given Him to do, He could leave the world and return to the Father (John 13. 1; 17. 4). This polluted world had not been, and never could be, His proper home. Here He was a stranger. Shortly before, He had spoken longingly about the glory which He had shared with the Father before the world was (John 17. 5). What relief it must have been to Him to know that now, His mission forever accomplished, He would shortly enter that familiar glory again'.

('Day by Day: Moments with the Master', Precious Seed Publications, page 67—reproduced with kind permission.)

'If I by the Spirit of God cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you' (Matt. 12. 28).

'Christ's work was not only a preaching of the long-awaited coming of the kingdom, but also a demonstration of that coming. In His words, and especially in His deeds, Jesus Himself was proof that the kingdom had arrived'.

(A. M. Wolters, 'Creation Regained', page 74.)

'The Lord said to Moses, "Take sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum, sweet spices with pure frankincense (of each shall there be an equal part)'" (Exod. 30. 34).

'If we take the characters of other men, however excellent they may be, they only excel in some one, or possibly some two, points.

'But when you contemplate the Saviour, you find all the virtues enshrined in Him. Other men are stars, but He is a constellation—no, He is the whole universe of stars gathered into one galaxy of splendour. Other men are gems and jewels, but He is the crown imperial, where every jewel glitters ... His character is perfect and matchless.

If I look at Peter, I admire his courage; if I look at Paul, I am amazed at his industry and devotedness to the cause of God; if I look at John, I see the loveliness and gentleness of his bearing—but when I look to the Saviour, I am not so much attracted by any one particular virtue as by the singular combination of the whole. There are all the spices—the stacte, and the onycha, and the galbanum, and the pure frankincense—the varied perfumes combine to make up one perfect confection'.

(C. H. Spurgeon, 'Sweet Savour, a sermon preached on 29 April 1866 at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London.)

'Lift up your eyes to the heavens' (Isa. 51. 6).

'In the earlier years of the work in Dohnavur (a Christian community in Tamil Nadu in South India), we were constantly reminded of how "there came a messenger to Job and said, And while he was yet speaking there came also another, and said, ..." (Job 1. 14–18), for trouble followed trouble very much after the fashion of those messengers.

'One evening, in a brief lull between the messengers, two of us spent an hour with a small telescope looking at the Great Orion Nebula. As I looked into those deeps of darkness lighted by an infinitely far and faint pale flame, a sense of the eternal came upon me.

"The world passes away and the lust thereof (and the grief thereof, and the wrong thereof), but he that does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2. 17), was the word of that breath of flame.

'The transitory appeared (as we know it to be), in comparison with the eternal, of no account at all. I knew then that the only thing that matters when trouble is appointed is our attitude toward that trouble; and I turned from the telescope to meet the next assault with an entirely new peace'.

(Amy Carmichael, 'Gold by Moonlight', 1935, page 151.)

'Them which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him' (1 Thess. 4. 14).

'The apostolic consolation to saints mourning the death of brethren was not, "Be content, they are gone to heaven"; then it would have been "You will go to them".

'But so did the coming of the Lord fill the soul, as a present thing, that he gives this comfort, as it were, at the dying-bed of a Christian, "Be content, God will bring him back, when Jesus comes".

(J. N. Darby, 'Christ's Coming, Faith's Crowning', Collected Writings, Volume 28, page 86.)

'Paul, a prisoner [not of Caesar, but] of Jesus Christ' (Philemon 1).

'A little bird I am,
Shut from the fields of air:
And in my cage I sit and sing
To Him who placed me there:
Well pleased a prisoner to be.
Because, my God, it pleases Thee.

'My cage confines me round,
Abroad I cannot fly;
But though my wing is closely bound,
My heart's at liberty.
My prison walls cannot control
The flight, the freedom of the soul'.

(Madame {Jeanne Bouvier de la Mothe} Guyon, 'Poems', translated by W. Cowper, pages 110-111.)

[When imprisoned for almost seven years for her faith, Madame Guyon wrote:

'I passed my time in great peace, content to spend the remainder of my life there, if such should be the will of God. I employed part of my time in writing religious songs. I and my maid, La Guntièrre, who was with me in prison, committed them to heart as fast as I made them.

'Together we sang praises to our God! It sometimes seemed to me as if I were a little bird whom the Lord had placed in a cage, and that I had nothing to do now but to sing'. ('Poems', page 25.)]

‘Thus says the Lord: “... let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me”’ (Jer. 9. 23-24).

‘We are cruel to ourselves if we try to live in this world without knowing about the God whose world it is and who runs it. The world becomes a strange, mad, painful place... for those who do not know about God.

‘Disregard the study of God, and you sentence yourself to stumble and blunder through life blindfolded, as it were, with no sense of direction and no understanding of what surrounds you. This way you can waste your life and lose your soul’.

(J. I. Packer, ‘*Knowing God*’, page 19.)

Seven things for us to ‘consider’.

(i) ‘Consider the wondrous works of God’ (Job 37. 14; cf. Eccles. 7. 13).

(ii) ‘Consider what great things He has done for you’ (1 Sam. 12. 24).

(iii) ‘I will consider Thy testimonies’ (Psa. 119. 95).

(iv) ‘Consider your ways’ (Hag. 1. 5, 7).

(v) ‘Consider the ravens ... consider the lilies’ (Luke 12. 24, 27; cf. Prov. 6. 6).

(vi) ‘Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus’ (Heb. 3. 1; cf. Heb. 12. 3).

(vii) ‘Consider one another’ (Heb. 10. 24).

‘The tree of life was in the midst of the garden’ (Gen. 2. 9).

‘This tree represented more than sustenance. The fruit of this tree enabled one to live forever. We know this because of God’s words when he expelled the rebellious couple from Eden: “lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever” (Gen. 3. 22).

‘Adam and Eve left the garden in their perishable bodies, and they would experience what God said: “for you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Gen. 3. 19).

‘The tree of life held out the hope of physical immortality, which was something Adam and Eve didn’t have but were made for. The problem of sin corrupts God’s good design, so they died outside of Eden. Barred from access to that tree, their bodies eventually returned to the dust.

‘The question for sinners, then, is this: “will the perishable ever put on imperishable, so that the hope of immortal bodily life might be attained after all?” Resurrection life is how sinners will experience the fruit from that Edenic tree (Rev. 2. 7; 22. 14). The hope of immortal bodily life was not lost forever’ ...

‘Through the glory of resurrection, we will feast on the fruit from the tree of life. Because of our union with Christ, the last Adam, we will experience what we were made for: embodied immortality. Because God is faithful to His people and has the power to fulfil His promises, we can trust that death will surely die (Rev. 20. 14)’.

(Adapted from M. L. Chase, ‘*Resurrection Hope and the Death of Death*’.)

‘To him that overcomes, I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God’ (Rev. 2. 7).

“To him who overcomes” at Ephesus is promised something far better than either:

(i) the food dished out at the idol banquets frequented by the Nicolaitans at Ephesus (Rev. 2. 6, 14-15): “In each letter the character of the promise ... corresponded to the character of faithfulness displayed. Those who had abstained from the idol meats and sinful dainties of the world, as offered by Nicolaitanism, were promised a corresponding reward or compensation. They would eat of the tree of life”.

or

(ii) the fruit from the date palm: “The date-palm was the characteristic symbol of Artemis on the coinage (of Ephesus)” and was regarded by the worshippers of the goddess as “the tree of life”.

‘Rather, the overcomer is promised that he will ‘eat of the (real) tree of life, which is (not in the garden surrounding the temple of Artemis, which garden was called the “paradise of **Artemis**”, but) “in the paradise of **God**”.

‘Indeed, the overcomer is promised something far more wonderful even than eating of “the tree of life” which once stood in Eden, in the *earthly* “paradise of God”, access to which man lost after his “fall” ... “Paradise is better than Eden”.

‘And no cherubim will ever bar the way to “the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God”.

***“No longer flame or sword shall guard
The gate by Jesus’ hand unbarred”***

(Reproduced from the document, 'The Church at Ephesus, Revelation 2. 1-7: Part 2', which was attached to the 'Monday Musings' for 30 August 2021 and which can be accessed at <https://voicesforchrist.org/writings/205>.)

(iii) Go on, smile.

Mr Warren, the owner of an up-market jeweller's shop in London prided himself on putting customer service above all else. One very hot and sultry day, he overheard one of his Sales Assistants speaking to an American tourist who clearly was not short of money.

'No, ma'am', he heard the Sales Assistant say, 'we haven't had any for some weeks now, and it doesn't look as if we'll be getting any soon.'

Alarmed by what he heard, Mr Warren rushed after the customer as she was walking out the door of the shop. 'That isn't quite right, ma'am', he said, 'In fact, we are expecting to have some soon ... we placed an order for a large supply only last week'.

Pulling the Sales Assistant to one side, Mr Warren growled, "Never, never, never tell a customer that we don't have something. If we don't have it, say we have ordered it and that it's on its way. Now, what was it that the lady said that she wanted?"

The Sales Assistant replied,

'Rain'.