

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 1 September 2025.

I set out below this week's (resumed) 'Musings'.

Happy reading.

On a personal note, I should perhaps let you know that, following a three-week period of hospitalisation, my much-loved wife of towards 60 years, Linda, went to be with the Lord on the 13th of last month.

Needless to say, I miss her more than I can put into words.

God willing, the Thanksgiving Service for Linda will be held at the Thornhill Church, Cardiff (kindly lent) at 2.30 pm (UK time) on this coming Thursday, 4th September.

We plan to livestream the Service - via both (i) that Church's YouTube channel and (ii) Zoom.

You will understand, I am sure, why there will be **no 'Musings' next Monday**. But, God willing, I will recommence 'Musings' on the following Monday, 15th September.

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

(i) Scripture.

Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name, by the greatness of His might, and because He is strong in power not one is missing.

Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, 'My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God'?

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth.

He does not faint or grow weary; His understanding is unsearchable.

He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might He increases strength.

Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

Isaiah 40. 26-31 (*English Standard Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

'The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary' (Isa. 40. 28).

'The people of God were discouraged under the pressure of adverse circumstances. They felt that the Lord had overlooked both their course and their cause. "My way is hid from the Lord", they sighed, "and my judgement is passed over from my God".

'Alas, such despondent feelings are by no means dead. How many of us, faced with gruelling trials and troubles, have been tempted to doubt the Lord's concern and care? 'In response, the prophet pointed the people of God then—and us today—to the greatness and majesty of God.

'Already, Isaiah had invited believers to lift their eyes and consider both the heavens and who it was that had created the starry host there (verse 26). Only omnipotence can create stars, and only omniscience can 'number' and 'name' them. 'How, Isaiah implied, could One with infinite knowledge fail to remember His people, and One with infinite power lack the ability to help them?

'But, to reinforce the fact that the interests of God's people rest safe in His hands, Isaiah adds more.

'Surely they had both proved in their experience ("Hast thou not *known?*") and been taught by others ("Hast thou not *heard?*") that the Lord, "the everlasting God" (not limited by time) and "the creator of the ends of the earth" (not limited by space) neither fainted nor grew weary.

'And this each of them had known and heard personally and individually; contrast, the double "you" (Hebrew singular in verse 28) with the double "you" (Hebrew plural in verse 21). 'Thank God, He is not too great to care about His people; He is too great not to care!'

('Day by Day: Bible Questions', Precious Seed Publications, page 135; reproduced with kind permission.)

'We walk by faith' (2 Cor. 5. 7)..

'In a German prison camp in World War II, unknown to the guards, the Americans built a homemade radio. One day, news came that the German high command had surrendered, ending the war, a fact that, because of a communications breakdown, the German guards did not yet know.

'As word spread a loud celebration broke out. For three days the prisoners were hardly recognizable. They sang, waved at guards, laughed at the German shepherd dogs, and shared jokes over meals. 'On the fourth day, they awoke to find that all Germans had fled, leaving the gates unlocked. The time of waiting had come to an end ...

'As we Christians face contemporary crises, why do we respond with such fear and anxiety? Why don't we, like the Allied prisoners, act on the good news we say we believe? What is faith, after all, but believing in advance what will only make sense in reverse?'

(P. Yancey, 'Grace Notes : Daily Readings with a Fellow Pilgrim', page 221.)

'Though ... yet'.

(i) 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him' (Job 13. 15).

(ii) 'Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God' (Job 19. 26).

(iii) 'Though the Lord be high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly' (Psa. 138. 6).

(iv) 'Though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies' (Lam 3. 32).

(v) 'But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel' (Micah 5. 2).

(vi) 'Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines ... and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord' (Hab. 3. 17-18).

(vii) 'Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true' (John 8. 14).

(viii) 'Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live' (John 11. 25).

(ix) 'Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day' (2 Cor. 4. 16).

(x) 'Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor' (2 Cor. 8. 9).

(xi) 'Though He was crucified through weakness, yet He liveth by the power of God' (2 Cor. 13. 4).

(xii) 'Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered' (Heb. 5. 8).

(xiii) 'In whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory' (1 Pet. 1. 8).

'Afterward'.

(i) 'Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory' (Psa. 73. 24).

(ii) 'In Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming' (1 Cor. 15. 22-23).

(iii) 'No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness' (Heb. 12. 11).

Two good prayers:

(1) 'We ask not for wealth, reputation, honour, or prosperity; but we pray for a calm and peaceful spirit; for every opportunity of leading a holy life; and for such circumstances in this world as may be most free from temptation. We pray for Thy preserving grace, for holiness of life'.

(Henry Thornton, *'Family Prayers'*, 1834, page 203.)

(2) 'Grant us, in all our duties, Thy help; in all our uncertainties, Thy guidance; in all our dangers, Thy protection; and in all our sorrows, Thy peace'.

(T. J. Crawford, Professor of Divinity, University of Edinburgh; quoted by A. K. H. Boyd, *'St. Andrews and Elsewhere'*, 1894, page 230; the quotation is sometimes attributed wrongly to Augustine of Hippo.)

'Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone' (Mark 11. 25).

'Someone who bears a grudge while he prays is like a person who sows in the sea and expects to reap a harvest'.

(Isaac, Bishop of Nineveh, 7th century; source: A. M. Allchin, *'Daily readings with St Isaac of Syria'*, page 63.)

'Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus' (Heb. 3. 1).

'The first title of our Lord in this chapter is connected with the first part of the epistle; the second, namely, the priesthood, refers to what follows afterwards.

'In chapter 1, we have His qualification for being the Apostle; in chapter 2, His qualification for the Priesthood.

'He was the Divine Messenger for the testimony He was to bring to earth; and He is gone up on high to exercise His Priesthood on behalf of a needy people down here where He has been'.

(J. N. Darby, *'Notes from Lectures on the Epistle to the Hebrews'*, Collected Writings, Volume 27, page 344.)

Jesus' offering.

Jesus, our great high priest, was 'without sin' (Heb. 4. 14-15) and did not need, therefore, to offer up 'sacrifice' for Himself (Heb. 7. 27).

But, during His passion' He did offer up 'prayers and supplications' for Himself (Heb. 5. 7) and, at Golgotha, He did offer 'Himself' without spot to God for us (Heb. 9. 14).

No little sins.

'In a strict sense, there is no sin little because there is no little God to sin against'.

(Thomas Brooks, *'Precious Remedies against Satan's Devices'*, page 45, footnote 32.)

'Without sin' (Heb. 4. 15).

'The Jesus of the gospels knew more about sin than anyone; yet He Himself never betrayed the least consciousness of it.

'Sin in others He saw, He rebuked, He forgave; He grieved over it, He suffered for it; He knew what was in man yet could issue the challenge, 'Which of you convinceth me of sin?' (John 8. 46). With Him, there was no memory of sin's defeat, no trace of sin's scars, no shame of a bad conscience. *He lived all His days without the personal sense of sin's guilt and without the personal fear of sin's consequences ...*

'In very truth, the life of Jesus, as depicted in the Gospels, was pure from any trace of sin, which means that, in His case, there was no derangement of nature or native sickness of soul, as with us from our beginning (cf. Luke 1. 35; Acts 3. 27, 30).

'As we examine the New Testament, we find overwhelming testimony to the fact that in Christ sin found no opportunity to work out its ill deeds and deserts.

'It is a universal saying that "no man is a hero to his valet"; yet, in the case of Jesus, we find that those who were most intimate with Him and closest to Him, were unable to record any blemish.

John, for example, who sets down the statement, 'if we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves' (1 John 1. 8), deliberately excludes Christ, 'in Him is no sin' (1 John 3. 5). Paul is no less assured that his redeeming Lord is a sinless Saviour (2 Cor. 5. 21)'.
(H. D. McDonald, *'Jesus—Human and Divine'*, page 39.)

Psalms 15: 'Who shall dwell on your holy mountain?'

'Psalm 15 verse 1 speaks of dwelling on God's holy mountain.

'Strikingly, this exact phrase is used earlier in the Psalter in what is, according to the New Testament, one of the most Christologically charged psalms—Psalm 2.

'In Psalm 2 verse 6, the Lord says: "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill"—the same Hebrew phrase as in Psa. 15. Verse 1.

'In Psalm 2, though, God is not asking who will dwell on His holy mountain. He is declaring whom He Himself has set there'—a man whom the New Testament identifies as Christ Himself (Heb. 1. 2; 5. 5).

'Who shall dwell on God's holy hill? Jesus!'

(D. Ortlund, *'In the Lord I take Refuge'*, Daily Devotions Through the Psalms.)

Psalm 33: a précis.

'God's character and God's work cannot be separated from his word (Psa. 33. 4–9). This is not only because God's word is as righteous, true, reliable ("faithful"), and loving as He is, but because God's word is effective—something nowhere more clearly seen than in creation: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of His mouth" (Psa. 33. 6).

'God ...foils the plans of the nations; no one ever foils his plans (Psa. 33. 10–11): "the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of His heart through all generations". Although God is sovereign over the entire human race, and is the judge of all, yet He is peculiarly the God of His own covenant people (Psa. 33. 12–15).

'Nations are never saved by mere might, apart from the blessing and sanction of God. Of course, God might well use the big guns, and His providence operates even in the preparation of the mighty empires that chastened His own people. But to trust the big guns is to forget who gives strength and wealth and blessing. Moreover, the Lord is perfectly capable of overturning any nation of any size, of spiking the big guns: "A horse [or a tank!] is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength, it cannot save" (Psa. 33. 17).

'The ultimate hope is in the Lord: "The eyes of the Lord are on those who fear Him, on those whose hope is in His unfailing love" (Psa. 33. 18).

'Granted that this is the sort of God who is really there, that this is the God we worship, the three closing verses are as inevitable as they are jubilant. Here is the proper grounding for godly hope: "We wait in hope for the Lord; He is our help and our shield. In Him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in His holy name. May your unfailing love rest upon us, O Lord, even as we put our hope in you" (Psa. 33. 20–22)'.
(D. A. Carson, *'For the Love of God'*, Volume 2, comment for 25 August.)

Psalm 51: David's four experiences.

I note four things from this psalm. First, that which David found to be pleasant but not good; second, that which he found to be neither pleasant nor good; third, that which he found to be not pleasant but good; and last, that which he found to be both pleasant and good.

1. There was that which David found to be pleasant but not good. The heading of the psalm tells us that David wrote it 'after he had gone in to Bathsheba'. That is, it followed the sad story of David's great sin—his lust and adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, one of his own outstanding warriors. It goes without saying that, at the time, David found his sin to be pleasant. The Bible never pretends that sin isn't enjoyable, speaking in one place of 'enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season ('for a time')' (Heb. 11. 25).

But, although David's actions were undoubtedly pleasurable, they were certainly not good—violating, as they did, two of God's principal commandments: 'thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife' and 'thou shalt not commit adultery'.

2. There was that which David found to be neither pleasant nor good. David pleaded, 'Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God' (verse 14), an unmistakeable reference to the murder of Uriah. David had been loathe and reluctant to slay the good man—one of the most courageous, loyal and faithful of all his men. But, in a desperate attempt to cover up his earlier sins, David added that he plotted and master-minded Uriah's violent death. But, whereas his earlier sins had brought him pleasure, this last and crowning sin (which violated the sixth commandment, 'thou shalt not kill', and so certainly was not good) brought him no pleasure at all.

3. There was that which he found to be not pleasant but good—to be very good for him. From the beginning, David had been troubled by his conscience; 'my sin is always before me', he bewailed (verse 3). His sin haunted him for long months, during which time he went through mental and spiritual agony, feeling, as he said, as if his very bones had been broken. And his prayer, 'Restore to me the joy of your salvation' (verse 12), exposes the loss of all his former joy. We know that David wrote well over 70 psalms during his life, but 'the sweet psalmist of Israel', as he was known, wrote none during this period. His harp lay silent.

Though this experience was hardly pleasant for David, it was decidedly good for him, because it led to his repentance and his confession, and, thereby, to his forgiveness. The book of Samuel reports that, when David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the Lord', Nathan responded, 'The Lord has put away your sin' (2 Sam. 12. 13), words which must have been music to his ears.

4. Lastly, David speaks of several things which he found to be *both pleasant and good*.

I will focus on just one—the reassurance of his salvation, enabling him to speak once more of ‘the God of my salvation’ (verse 14). ‘Blot out my transgressions ... wash me from my iniquity ... cleanse me from my sin’, David had pleaded. And God graciously had done just that. But make no mistake, David’s forgiveness didn’t come cheap—any more than yours and mine did (Rom. 3. 25-26).

(From my personal speaking notes.)

(iii) Go on, smile.

One dark night outside a small town in America, a fire started inside the local chemical plant, which exploded into flames. The alarm went out to fire departments from miles around. When the first fire fighters appeared on the scene, the chemical company president rushed to the fire chief and said, ‘Our secret formulas are in the vault in the centre of the plant. They must be saved. I will give \$50,000 to the fire department that brings them out intact’.

But the roaring flames held the firefighters off. Soon, more fire departments were called in as the situation worsened. When the additional firemen arrived, the president shouted out that the offer was now \$100,000 to the fire department which could retrieve the company’s secret files.

Suddenly, a lone siren was heard as yet another fire truck came into sight. It was from a nearby Volunteer Fire Company, composed entirely of men over the age of 65. To everyone’s amazement, the little run-down fire engine drove past all the modern engines parked outside the plant ... and drove straight into the middle of the blazing inferno.

From safely outside, the other firemen watched in silence as the old timers jumped off the antiquated fire truck and fought the fire around the chemical plant vault. With great effort—and, mercifully, without injury—the elderly firefighters managed to save the secret formulas.

When the blaze was eventually extinguished, the grateful chemical company president announced that, for such an amazing feat, he was upping the reward to \$200,000 and walked over to thank personally each of the courageous ‘golden oldies’ firefighters.

After capturing this event on film, a local TV news reporter asked the elderly heroes, ‘What are you going to do with all that money?’

‘Well’, replied Albert Anderson, the 70-year-old fire chief, ‘the first thing we’re going to do is to

fix the brakes on that decrepit old fire truck!’