

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 20 October 2025.

(i) Scripture.

Now when the Pharisees gathered to Him, with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, they saw that some of His disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed.

For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands, holding to the tradition of the elders, and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.

And the Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, 'Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?'

And He said to them, 'Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, "This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men". You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men'.

And He said to them, 'You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!

'For Moses said, "Honour your father and your mother"; and, "Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die".

'But you say, "If a man tells his father or his mother, 'Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban' (that is, given to God)"—then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do'.

Mark 7. 1-13 (*English Standard Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

Christ: victorious over death.

'The New Testament writers speak as if Christ's achievement in rising from the dead was the first event of its kind in the whole history of the universe (Acts 26. 23). He is the "first fruits" (1 Cor. 15. 20), the "pioneer of life" (Acts 3. 15).

'He has forced open a door that has been locked since the death of the first man. He has met, fought, and beaten the King of Death. Everything is different because He has done so. This is the beginning of the New Creation: a new chapter in cosmic history has opened'.

(C. S. Lewis, 'Miracles', page 173.)

'He ascended up on high' (Eph. 4. 8).

'Christ has "ascended up on high". Do you think that He would have returned thither with unexpiated sin red upon His garments? Do you suppose that He would have ascended to the rest and to the reward of an accomplished work?

'What?—sit at his Father's right hand to be crowned for doing nothing—and rest until His adversaries are made his footstool, when He has not performed his Father's will?

'Absurd! Impossible!

'His ascension in stately pomp, amidst the acclamations of angels, to the enjoyment of His Father's continued smile, is the sure proof that the work is complete'.

(C. H. Spurgeon, 'Expiation', Sermon 561, preached at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, 1864.)

'He who sits in the heavens shall laugh' (Psalm 2. 4).

'There are three verses in Scripture where we find God laughing. And guess what? The object of God's laughter and its intent are the same in each verse.

'For many, the scriptural reason for God's laughter is surprising. Mockery is the intent, and God's enemies are the object of His laughter. You heard that right. God mocks and laughs at His enemies, those opposing Him!

'Psalm 2 is the first place you find this truth, and, like Psalms 37 and 59 that follow (Psa. 37. 13; 59. 8), the context is consistently this: God is laughing at the attempted coup d'état of His reign in a worldwide Kingdom that's still coming'.

(C. Joyner, 'The Messianic Kingdom Foretold', accessed at <https://www.foi.org/2025/09/26/psalm-2-the-messianic-kingdom-foretold-2/>.)

'The first and the last'

'This epithet is three times ascribed to Jehovah by Isaiah (Isa. 41. 4; 44. 6; 48. 12); three times to Christ in the Book of Revelation (Rev. 1. 17; 2. 8; 22. 13).

'Richard of St. Victor comments: "I am the first and the last. First, through creation, last, through retribution. First, because before me a God was not formed; last, because after me there shall not be another. First, because all things are from me; last, because all things are to me; from me the beginning, to me the end. First, because I am the cause of origin; last, because I am the judge and the end".

(M. R. Vincent, 'Word Studies', comment on Rev. 1. 17.)

Blessings secured by the blood of Christ.

'The biblical significance of the blood of Jesus:

'1. Redemption. (a) Acts 20. 28 – "church of God purchased with His own blood"; (b) Eph. 1. 7 – "we have redemption through His blood"; (c) 1 Pet. 1. 9 – "redeemed...with precious blood"; (d) Rev. 5. 9 – "purchased for God with His blood, men from every tribe".

'2. Propitiation. Rom. 3. 25 – "God displayed Jesus as a propitiation in His blood".

'3. Cleansing. (a) Heb. 9. 14 – "blood of Christ...will cleanse your conscience"; (b) 1 John 1. 7 – "blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin"; (c) Rev. 7. 14 – "washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb".

'4. Forgiveness. (a) Eph. 1. 7 – "redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses"; (b) Heb. 9. 22 – "without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness"; (c) Rev. 1. 5 – "released us from our sins by His blood".

'5. Access to God. (a) Eph. 2. 13 – "brought near to God by the blood of Christ"; (b) Heb. 10. 19 – "confidence to enter the Holy Place by the blood of Jesus".

'6. Reconciliation. Col. 1. 20 – "reconciled, made peace through the blood of the cross".

'7. Justification. Rom. 5. 9 – "having been justified by His blood".

'8. Sanctification. Heb. 13. 12 – "that He might sanctify the people through His blood".

'9. Conquest of evil. Rev. 12:11 – "overcame...because of the blood of the Lamb".

'10. The basis of the covenant. Heb. 13. 20 – "through the blood of the eternal covenant".

'11. The Lord's Supper. (a) Matt. 26:28 – "This is the new covenant in my blood"; (b) 1 Cor. 10. 16 – "the cup of blessing...a sharing in the blood of Christ".

(J. A. Fowler: 'The Blood of Christ', Study Outlines, 1999.)

'Rejoice that your names are written in heaven' (Luke 10. 20).

'Martyn Lloyd-Jones was one of the most influential preachers of the 20th century. A few weeks before he died, someone asked him how, after decades of fruitful ministry and extraordinary activity, he was coping now he was suffering such serious weakness it took much of his energy to move from his bed to his armchair and back.

'He replied in the words of Luke 10. 20: "Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven".

'In other words, do not tie your joy, your sense of wellbeing, to power in ministry. Your ministry can be taken from you. Tie your joy to the fact you are known and loved by God; tie it to your salvation; tie it to the sublime truth that your name is written in heaven. That can never be taken from you.

'Dr Lloyd-Jones added: "I am perfectly content".

(D. A. Carson, 'A Call to Spiritual Reformation', page 141.)

'All your breakers and your waves have gone over me' (Psalm 42. 7).

'The psalmist is deeply discouraged. He says to God that it feels as if all "your waves have gone over me".

'Some adversities are so great that they cannot be handled in the same way as some of the other, more minor disappointments and frustrations of life. This particular type of adversity passes a threshold that the garden-variety trials do not reach.

'Imagine wading out into the ocean. You begin to feel the waves coming against you. First your ankles, then your knees, and so on. As you continue further into the water, eventually a wave comes that cannot be out-jumped. It washes over you. You are now submerged and completely terrified ... When that moment comes, will we believe what we have confessed about God to be true, or will we suspect Him of deserting us? ...

'Above all else, when life implodes, remember that His own dear Son went through the greatest nightmare Himself, in our place. The tidal wave of judgment from God washed over Another so that it need never wash over us'.

(D. Ortlund, 'In the Lord I Take Refuge: 150 Daily Devotions through the Psalms', comments on Psalm 42.)

The heart of man.

'Jesus remarked, when discussing the issue of clean and unclean food, "whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile, since it enters not the heart but the stomach.... It is what comes out of a person that defiles. For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly" (Mark 7. 18–22).

'In sum, in Jesus' view, the heart was the heart of the matter, and humankind desperately needed a heart transplant or transformation, not merely a bypass operation. Dealing simply with behaviours is dealing with the symptoms and manifestations of the problem, not its source.

'In both the Old and the New Testaments, the human heart is seen as the control centre of human personality. It is where one finds thoughts, emotions, and will'.

(B. Witherington III, 'Imminent Domain: The Story of the Kingdom of God and Its Celebration', page 14.)

The measure of the sinfulness of sin.

Consider:

(1) 'We can form none but the most inadequate conceptions of the hideousness of evil. We have no line to fathom it and no measure by which to gauge it. The blind man can see no difference between a masterpiece of Titian or Raphael and the queen's head on a village signboard. The deaf man cannot distinguish between a penny whistle and a cathedral organ. The very animals whose smell is most offensive to us have no idea that they are offensive and are not offensive to one another.

'Fallen men and women, I believe, can have no just idea what a vile thing sin is in the sight of that God whose handiwork is absolutely perfect ...

'No proof of the fulness of sin, after all, is so overwhelming and unanswerable as the cross and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the whole doctrine of His substitution and atonement. Terribly black must that guilt be for which nothing but the blood of the Son of God could make satisfaction'.

(J. C. Ryle, 'Holiness', pages 32-33.)

(2)

'In His spotless soul's distress
I perceive my guiltiness;
Oh, how vile my low estate.
Since my ransom was so great!'

(R. C. Chapman, 'Oh, my Saviour crucified!')

'Do we trust God?

'Imagine the following scene:

The little girl stands at the pool's edge. She is wearing her goggles, water wings, and other float devices. Her father is already in the water with his arms outstretched, urging her to jump: "I'll catch you!"

'Will she jump? It depends on her answers to three questions. (1) Is he good? (In other words, does he have my best interest in view?) (2) Is he strong? (In other words, does he possess the necessary body strength to catch me?) (3) Is he faithful? (In other words, does he keep his word?)

'If the little girl is confident of her answers to these three questions, she trusts her father and will jump into his arms. If, however, she has any doubts concerning her father's goodness, strength, or faithfulness, she won't jump—not in a million years.

'Do we trust God? It depends on our answers to these three questions: Is He good? Is He strong? Is He faithful?'

'What are the three most common assertions concerning God in the Bible? You guessed it.

'(1) He is good: "Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever" (Psa. 106. 1; cf. 1 Chron. 16. 34; 2 Chron. 5. 13; 7. 3; Nahum 1. 7; Psa. 25. 7–8; 100. 5; 135. 3; 136. 1; 145. 9).

'(2) He is able: "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us" (Eph. 3. 20; cf. Matt. 3. 9; 2 Cor. 9. 8; 2 Tim. 1. 12; Heb. 7. 25; Jude 24).

'(3) He is faithful: "God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1. 9; cf. Deut. 7. 9; Psalms 36. 5; 89. 2, 8; Isa. 25. 1; 49. 7; Lam. 3. 3; 1 Thess. 5. 24; 2 Thess. 3. 3; Heb. 10. 23; 1 Pet. 4. 19; 1 John 1. 9).

'His name strengthens the trembling heart, gladdens the grieving heart and calms the troubled heart:
'Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance' (Psalms 42. 5).

(J. S. Yuille, *'The Path of Life: Blessedness in Seasons of Lament'*, pages 199–200.)

The title, 'Saviour', in Paul's letter to Titus.

'Paul wrote to Titus after leaving him on the island of Crete to attend to important matters that remained undone. The fledgling churches across the island were without godly and theologically sound leadership, and in their absence, opponents with errant teaching and ungodly lives were upsetting entire households and dividing the churches.

'In addition to appointing suitable men to lead the churches in every town, Titus himself was to teach what accords with sound doctrine, model godly living, and rebuke those who opposed the truth. The distinctive theology of Paul's letter to Titus serves these purposes.

'The dominant portrayal of God the Father and of Christ Jesus is that of "Saviour"'. In fact, Paul only uses the title "Saviour" twelve times in his letters, and six of those occur in Titus, where, uniquely, the title is applied to both the Father and to Christ in the same letter (Titus 1. 3, 4; 2. 10, 13; 3. 4, 6; cf. Eph. 5. 23; Phil. 3. 20; 1 Tim. 1. 1; 2. 3; 4. 10; 2 Tim. 1. 10).

'Each of the letter's three dense, rich theological segments (Titus 1. 1–4; 2. 11–14; 3. 4–7), first reference God the Father as "Saviour", then, shortly after, reference Christ Jesus as "Saviour". 'These three pairs of titles highlight the Father's and Christ Jesus's joint roles in salvation, in which God is the author, initiator, and source of salvation, and Christ is the agent who accomplishes salvation.

'Each time, the title is accompanied by the possessive pronoun "our", noting the relational bond this divine saving activity has established with those who are saved.

'And the trinitarian nature of salvation is on view as the benefits of salvation are applied to the life of a believer through the cleansing, renewing, and transforming work of the Holy Spirit, whom the Father has richly poured out, through Jesus Christ, on those He has saved (Titus 3. 5).

Notably, the only two divine titles used for the Father in Titus, "God" and "Saviour", are also applied to Jesus Christ. This signals and highlights their shared divine nature and equal contribution to salvation'.

(C. Smith, 'What Is Distinct About the Theology of Titus?' accessed at <https://www.crossway.org/articles/what-is-distinct-about-the-theology-of-titus/>.)

'Jesus said ..., "It is written"' (Matt. 4. 7).

'The Bible was the only book Jesus ever quoted, and then never as a basis for discussion but to decide the point at issue'.

(Attributed to Leon Morris.)

'You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants ... I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you' (John 15. 14–15).

'Observe that Jesus makes a distinction between slaves {δούλους} and friends.

'But the distinction initially surprises us. We are Jesus' friends if we do what He commands. This sounds rather like a definition of a slave.

'Certainly, such friendship is not reciprocal. I cannot turn around to Jesus and thank Him for His friendship and tell Him that He is my friend, too, if He does everything that I command Him.

Strange to tell, not once is Jesus or God ever described in the Bible as our friend. Abraham is God's friend; the reverse is never stated.

'Of course, in one sense, Jesus is the best friend a poor sinner ever had. Nevertheless, that is not the terminology of Scripture, almost as if the Bible is reluctant to descend into the kind of cheap intimacy that brings God or Jesus down to our level'.

(D. A. Carson, *'The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God'*, page 47.)

[Similarly, the Lord Jesus 'is not ashamed to call' believers 'brethren/brothers' (Heb. 2. 11); but this does not entitle them to call Him 'brother'.]

(iii) Go on, smile.

Albert Smith had a job interview at the local factory and was very excited.

The manager wanted to learn something about Albert's personality, so, during the interview, he asked, 'Mr Smith, tell me, if you were able to have a conversation with anybody—whether that person is dead or is alive—who would it be?'

Albert pondered the question for few moments and then answered, 'O, that's easy ...

the person who is alive'.