

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 26 April 2021

Greetings.

This is my 'Monday Musings' email.

It was a little less than a month ago that I came across the following quotation in a Daily Devotional: 'Great is the cost of devotion, but cheap is the price of betrayal'. It was that quotation which prompted me to choose today's attached document, 'The Plot, the Betrayer and Love's Extravagance'.

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

(i) Scripture.

Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning His Son.

And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

And this is the confidence that we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of Him.

1 John 5. 10-15 (*English Standard Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

'The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen' (Rom. 1. 20).

'There is evidence for an intelligent Creator everywhere you look. To say there is no evidence for this Creator is like saying the thousands of paintings in an art museum couldn't have been painted because there are no artists visible in the gallery'.

(Rice Brooks, 'God's Not Dead', Preface, page x.).

Man-made 'aprons' ('girdles') of 'fig leaves' versus God-provided 'coats of skins'.

'The attempt (of Adam and Eve, Gen. 3. 7) proved two things; first, that they had no idea of procuring a covering by killing any animal; and second, that man's own thought of that which is sufficient to cover his nakedness falls short of what is needed, as well as of God's gracious provision on his behalf.

The guilty pair formed *girdles of fig leaves*; the Lord God made *coats of skin*, and clothed them (Gen. 3. 21). A coat is more than a girdle (*), and it clothed them; but the coats were of skin. The life of an animal which was not needed for their bodily sustenance (Gen. 1. 29) had to be taken that the nakedness of the transgressors should be covered'.

(C. E. Stuart, 'The Institution of Animal Sacrifice', The Christian Friend (1879), page 104.)

(*) A 'coat' ('tunic') 'was a long shirt reaching the knees or ankles ... Whereas the first couple could only produce inadequate loincloths, God provided them with a proper outfit'.

(Gordon J. Wenham, 'Genesis (Word Biblical Commentary): Volume 1', page 84.)

The seriousness of sin in the sight of God.

Consider the judgments which befell those who:

- (i) Offered profane fire (Lev. 10. 1-3).
- (ii) Gathered sticks on the Sabbath (Num. 15. 32-36).
- (iii) Struck a rock twice and spoke sharply to God's people (Num. 20. 11-12).
- (iv) Gazed into the ark of the covenant (1 Sam. 6. 19).
- (v) Despised God's king for his enthusiastic worship (2 Sam. 6. 20-23).
- (vi) Mocked God's prophet (2 Kings 2. 23-24).
- (vii) Lied (2 Kings 5. 20-27; Acts 5. 1-10).
- (viii) Entered the Holy Place to offer incense (2 Chron. 26. 16-21).

Well did the men of Beth-shemesh ask, 'Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?' 1 Sam. 6. 20.

God's love and power.

'Power belongs to God, and ... to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love' (Psa. 62. 11-12 ESV).
About two thousand seven hundred years after David wrote those words, Joseph Hart (the Minister of an Independent Chapel in London) composed the lines:

How good is the God we adore!
Our faithful, unchangeable Friend:
His love is as great as His power
And knows neither measure nor end.

God could not have done more.

'*Last of all* he sent his son' (Matt. 21. 37); by means of His parable, the Lord Jesus teaches us that, to save us, God exhausted all His resources. He could give no more.
In effect, God asks us today, 'What could have been done more ...?' (Isa. 5. 4).

'The Holy Spirit shall come upon you' (Luke 1. 35).

'The framing, forming, and miraculous conception of the body of Christ, in the womb of the blessed virgin, was the peculiar and special work of the Holy Ghost . . . although it was effected by an act of infinite creating power, yet it was formed or made of the substance of the blessed virgin'.
(John Owen, '*A Discourse concerning the Holy Spirit*', pages 162-164.)

Pleased not Himself.

'In Christ there was nothing selfish; whatever He did, He did for others. He had a marvellous power of working miracles, but He would not even change a stone into bread for Himself; He reserved His miraculous power for others; He did not seem to have a particle of self in His whole nature.

In fact, the description of His life might be written very briefly: "He saved others, Himself He did not save".

He walked about; He touched the poorest, the meanest, and those who were the most sick; He cared not what men might say of Him; He seemed to have no regard for fame, or dignity, or ease, or honour. Neither His bodily nor His mental comforts were in the least regarded by Him. Self-sacrifice was the life of Christ'.

(C. H. Spurgeon, '*Hatred Without Cause*', 'The New Park Street Pulpit Sermons, Vol. II', page 284.)

'He was despised'.

'Twice in Isaiah 53. 3 the Messiah is spoken of as 'despised'. And when here, He certainly was that. Men hurled every conceivable kind of insult at Jesus.

(i) They referred to Him as a glutton and drunkard (Matt. 11. 19) – to the One who at times hungered and thirsted for us (Matt. 4. 2; John 19. 28).

(ii) They attributed collusion with Beelzebub to Him (Matt. 10. 25; 12. 24) – to the One who had come to undo the works of the devil and who performed His miracles in the power of the Spirit of God (Matt. 12. 28; 1 John 3. 8).

(iii) They sniggered at Him, with obvious innuendo, "We were not born of fornication" (John 8. 41) – at the One who was 'that holy thing', born of a virgin (Luke 1. 34-35).

(iv) They sneered at Him, "You are a Samaritan" (John 8. 48) – at the One who was of the royal house of Israel (Luke 2. 4).

(v) They scoffed at Him, "You have a demon" (John 7. 20) – at the One who cast out unclean spirits with absolute authority (Mark 1. 27).

(vii) They branded Him as "that deceiver ('impostor')" (Matt. 27. 63) – the One who was everything He claimed to be and the very "truth" itself (John 8. 14, 25; 14. 6).

No insult or term of contempt was too bad for Him; He was well and truly 'despised'.

'*Christ Foreshadowed (Precious Seed Publications)*', page 298.)

Christ rejected, in favour of

'Every dispensation closes with failure as a striking testimony to the character and nature of man. Tried in every way, without law and under law, under grace, and at last under the personal reign of the Messiah, he shows that he cannot be improved, that the flesh remains the same ...

The Jews chose (i) a *Caesar* (John 19. 15), yea, (ii) a *Barabbas* (John 18. 40), in preference to Christ; and, finally, man accepts (iii) *Satan* himself (Rev. 20. 7-8), and under his leadership goes to attack and destroy "the camp of the saints ... and the beloved city" that are under the special protection of the glorified Messiah. The issue could be but one ... "fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them" (Rev. 20. 9).

(E. Dennett, '*The Kingdom of Christ*', being chapter X of 'Plain Papers on the Lord's Coming'.)

His resurrection and ours.

'*The Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our body of humiliation so that it may be fashioned like His glorious body, according to the working of His power, even to subdue all things to Himself*' (Phil. 3. 20-21 MKJV).

On the basis of Paul's words, we can safely say that the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is:

(i) the proof of our resurrection;

- (ii) the pattern of our resurrection; and
- (iii) the power of our resurrection.

The price of freedom.

'A prisoner in Scotland was brought before the Judge. As the culprit entered the box, he looked into the face of the Judge to see if he could discover any mercy there. The Judge and the prisoner exchanged glances, and then there came a mutual recognition. The prisoner said to himself: "It is all right this time", for the Judge had been his classmate in Edinburgh University twenty-five years before. When sentence was pronounced, it was [a very large fine], the limit of the law for the misdemeanour charged, and the culprit was sorely disappointed as he was led away But the Judge went at once and himself paid the fine, telling the clerk to write the man's discharge. This the Judge delivered in person, explaining that the demands of the law must be met, but having been met, the man was now free'.

(A. H. Strong, 'Systematic Theology', pages 767-768.)

'I will ...'.

- (i) The world says, 'I will defile and corrupt you' (Jas. 1. 27).
- (ii) The flesh says, 'I will disappoint and fail you' (Matt. 26. 41).
- (iii) The devil says, 'I will deceive and devour you' (2 Cor. 11. 3; 1 Pet. 5. 8).
- (iv) The **Lord** says, 'I will defend and keep you' (Jude 24).

Knowledge.

Our vision is often more obstructed by what we think we know than by our lack of knowledge. (Krister Stendahl, 'Paul Among Jews and Gentiles', page 7.)

Prayer and the will of God.

'What do we see as the purpose of prayer? Do we see it as a means of imposing our will on God and of bending His will into line with ours? Certainly not! Correctly understood, prayer is not a means of getting our will done in heaven, but of getting God's will done on earth. God wants us to discern His will through His word and to pray His will into action. For the God who appoints the end appoints the means also. In His grace, He has chosen to work out His plan and purpose through our prayers. Our petitions therefore form as much a part of God's will as do His answers. If we pray aright, we become God's instruments to give effect to His will. And that is how godly men of old viewed it; e.g. 2 Sam. 7. 25; Ezek. 36. 36-37'.

('Day by Day: Bible Promises (Precious Seed Publications)', page 356.)

Peter sleeps.

1. The Mount of Transfiguration.

'He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray ... But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake ...' (Luke 9. 28-32).

The glory of the kingdom spread
Over the mountain's lofty head,
Lighting the mountain steeps;
And Jesus' robes were glistening white,
His face—the Sun in all its might,
And—Peter sleeps!

2. The Garden of Gethsemane.

'They went to a place called Gethsemane ... and He took with Him Peter and James and John ... and He came and found them sleeping, and He said to Peter, "Simon, do you sleep?"' (Mark 14. 32-37).

'Tis night, and in Gethsemane
A prostrate form, in agony,
With bitter crying, weeps;
The 'darkness deepens at His groan
(The darkest night this world hath known),
And—Peter sleeps!

3. The Prison of Herod.

'Peter was kept in prison ...when Herod was about to bring him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains' (Acts 12. 5-6).

He lies upon the dungeon floor,
A guard, quadrupled round the door,
Its midnight vigil keeps;
Two chains of iron bind him fast;
Tomorrow's morn shall be his last:
And—Peter sleeps!

(E. L. Bevir, 'Poems by Edward Lawrence Bevir'.)

Thirty shekels of silver.

'I said to them, "If it seems good to you, give me my wages; but if not, let it go". And they weighed as my wages thirty shekels of silver. And the Lord said to me, "Cast it to the potter", the goodly price that I was priced at of them' (Zech. 11. 12-13).

'Under the Mosaic law, if a slave were killed by being gored by an ox, the master of the slave was to be recompensed by the payment of thirty shekels of silver by the owner of the ox (Exod. 21. 32). Thirty shekels of silver were therefore regarded as the equivalent of a slave. And such was the sum at which the Lord of glory was valued by the people whom He had come to bless! They regarded Him as of no more value than a slave.

Was His heart indifferent to this contemptuous valuation of Himself? Does not His grief find vent in the exclamation of pained surprise: the "goodly price that I was priced at of them!"

(H. P. Barker, 'Christ in the Minor Prophets: Zech. 11. 12-13'; accessed at ...

[https://www.stempublishing.com/authors/various/Barker_MP.html#a10.](https://www.stempublishing.com/authors/various/Barker_MP.html#a10))

See (i) the attached 'The Plot, the Betrayer and Love's Extravagance' document, and (ii) the attached 'Extravagant love' picture.

(iii) Go on, smile.

After hearing a particularly inspiring sermon at the local Chapel, Henry Atkins went over to speak with the elderly preacher.

'My dear brother', he said, 'that was an outstanding sermon. I really think you should have it published'.

'Well, actually', the preacher replied, 'I'm in the process of arranging for all my sermons to be published posthumously'.

'That is wonderful news', Mr Atkins enthused, '*I simply can't wait to get a copy!*'

When old Angus McTavish died, his widow, Elspeth, rang the local newspaper to have his obituary printed.

'Well', the man at the newspaper said gently, 'adverts 'n' notices cost £10 per word'.

'Och, in that case, just put "Angus died"', Elspeth replied.

'I'm sorry', the man said, 'but it's a minimum o' five words'.

Elspeth thought about this for a few seconds.

She then replied, 'Please put, '*Angus died. Bagpipes for sale*'.

See the attached 'Dead end' picture.



