

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 24 May 2021

Greetings.

This is my 'Monday Musings' email.

A new song.

Last Friday marked the anniversary of the conversion of Charles Wesley on the 21st of May in 1738.

Due to limitations of space, I pick up Mr Wesley's story in 1737, when, as an ordained (but unconverted) preacher, he fell ill and was visited by Peter Boehler, a Moravian Christian, who prayed for him and asked him (according to Mr Wesley's own Journal): "Do you hope to be saved?" "Yes", I replied. "For what reason do you hope it?" "Because I have used my best endeavours to serve God". He shook his head and said no more. I thought him very uncharitable and said in my heart: "What, are not my endeavours a sufficient ground of hope? ... I have nothing else to trust to".

Things came to head shortly after, when Charles was staying with a friend, John Bray, whom he describes as 'a poor ignorant mechanic who knows nothing but Christ, yet by knowing Him, knows and discerns all things'. Mr Bray shared with him Luther's commentary on Galatians, which clearly expounds the doctrine of justification by faith. Charles was especially moved by Luther's comments on Galatians 2 verse 20, where Luther stresses the words 'for me'.

'At midnight', Mr Wesley wrote on the 21st of May, 1738, 'I gave myself to Christ...I now found myself at peace with God'. On that very day, he opened his Bible for a word from God and put his finger on the words of Psalm 40 verse 3: 'He hath put a new song in my mouth.... Many will see and fear and will trust in the Lord'.

In the light of the vast number of 'new songs' which later came from his pen, I think we can say that those words proved to be prophetic for a man who is said to have written 6,500 hymns and spiritual songs, spanning more-or-less every doctrine of the Christian faith.

Well do we cherish such timeless compositions from Mr Wesley as: 'And can it be?', 'Hark! the herald angels sing', 'Jesus, lover of my soul', 'Lo! He comes with clouds descending', 'O for a thousand tongues to sing', 'O love divine, how sweet thou art!', 'Rejoice, the Lord is king!' and 'Ye servants of God, your Master proclaim'.

A half-swansong.

Many of you will not be aware of the fact but this week's 'Monday Musings' represents the fifty-second in the series; a 'Musings', that is, one for each week of the year.
(The entire series can be viewed at <https://voicesforchrist.org/writings/speaker/370.>)

I have decided that this is the appropriate time for me to make one fundamental change.

In the past, each 'Monday Musing' has comprised (i) 'Scripture', (ii) 'Food for thought' and (iii) 'Go on, smile'. By far the majority of the Musings have attached a Word document – of varying length.

God willing, for the foreseeable future, each weekly email will comprise **EITHER** (i) 'Scripture', (ii) 'Food for thought' and (iii) 'Go on, smile' [with no attached document] **OR** (i) 'Scripture' and an attached document [with no 'Food for thought' and 'Go on, smile' sections].

Yours, as ever, in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

(i) Scripture.

I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined to me, and heard my cry.

He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps.

He has put a new song in my mouth—praise to our God; many will see it and fear, and will trust in the Lord.

Blessed is that man who makes the Lord his trust, and does not respect the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.

Many, O Lord my God, are your wonderful works which you have done; and your thoughts toward us cannot be recounted to you in order; if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.

Psalm 40. 1-5 (*The New King James Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

Three Spring-Feasts of the Lord which were divinely honoured.

(i) The Son honoured and fulfilled the *Feast of Passover* by His death (1 Cor. 5. 7).

(ii) The Father honoured and fulfilled the *Feast of Firstfruits* by raising up the Lord Jesus from death and the grave (1 Cor. 15. 20, 23).

(iii) The Holy Spirit honoured and fulfilled the *Feast of Weeks/Pentecost* by His descent fifty days after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus (Acts 2. 1, 4).

'I will build my church' (Matt. 16. 18).

'In the 1920s, Lord Reith helped to establish the British Broadcasting Corporation and served as its first director-general. He was a somewhat severe man from the highlands of Scotland.

As the BBC began to be carried along by the tide of secularism that swept through Britain in the 1960s, a young producer stood up in a meeting and said to Lord Reith that the world was changing, and that the BBC did not need to continue with its religious programming. People were no longer interested in religion, he said, and the church was becoming increasingly obsolete.

Lord Reith, who was 6'6", told this young man to take his seat. Then he stood up and said: "The church will stand at the grave of the BBC".

(Alistair Begg, 'Welcome to Exile'; accessed at ... <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/exile-ok/>.)

'If God is for us, who can be against us?' (Rom. 8. 31).

Philip II, the father of Alexander the Great, ruled as king of Macedonia in northern Greece. He wanted to conquer all of Greece and was on the verge of doing so. Only Laconia remained unconquered.

According to the first-century Greek historian, Plutarch, when Philip attempted to intimidate the Spartans of Laconia to surrender by sending them the message: 'If I invade Laconia, I shall turn you out', the Spartans responded with a terse one-word reply, 'If'.

(Source: Plutarch, 'De Garrulitate', Section 17.)

I cannot vouch for the truth of this story; it may well be legendary. But I know that, when the apostle Paul says, 'If God is for us', he is not speaking of that which is in doubt or is conditional. The apostle is reasoning from absolute certainty, saying, in effect, 'Since God has proved Himself to be most definitely for us, who or what adverse power can possibly prevail against us?'

The cost of our salvation.

(i) The Holy One made sin for us!

(ii) The Light of the World plunged into darkness!

(iii) The Lord of Life tasting death!

(iv) The Beloved One forsaken!

Three objects to 'consider' in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

(i) 'Consider the Apostle and High Priest' (Heb. 3. 1).

(ii) 'Consider Him who endured' (Heb. 12. 3).

(iii) 'Consider one another' (Heb. 10. 24).

'Now faith is the substance of things hoped for' (Heb. 11. 1).

Commenting on the word translated 'substance', the Greek scholars Moulton and Milligan wrote, 'In all cases [in the ancient papyri] there is the same central idea of something that underlies visible conditions and guarantees a future possession. And as this is the essential meaning in Heb. 11. 1, we venture to suggest the translation, "Faith is the title-deed of things hoped for".'

(J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, 'The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament illustrated from the Papyri', page 660.)

Three 'little' things.

(i) A 'little *flock*' cared for and enriched (Luke 12. 32).

(ii) A 'little *strength*' to serve faithfully (Rev. 3. 8).

(iii) A 'little *while*' to endure patiently (Heb. 10. 37).

Some precious 'Shall Nots' enjoyed by all believers.

(i) 'Shall not come into judgment' (John 5. 24).

(ii) 'Shall not walk in darkness' (John 8. 12).

(iii) 'Shall not want' (Psa. 23. 1).

(iv) 'Shall not be afraid' (Psa. 112. 7).

'Where are the nine?' (Luke 17. 17).

On the morning of September 8th, 1860, the PS Lady Elgin, a wooden schooner, sank in Lake Michigan when a smaller boat collided with it. Over 300 passengers had been enjoying a round-trip sightseeing tour from Milwaukee to Chicago. Only a handful of people were able to reach the lifeboats. A student lifeguard, Edward Spencer, rescued seventeen people over a six-hour period before he finally collapsed and the ship went down.

'The hardships of that wild day made Edward a semi-invalid for the rest of his life' (source: his obituary, February 1917).

Many years after, in Los Angeles, the evangelist, R. A. Torrey told the story about this young man's concern and his heroic deed. To his astonishment, he found that Edward Spencer, then an old man, was in the audience. In talking with the rescuer, he asked him what stood out most in his memory about the rescue. The rescuer replied, '*Not one said, "Thanks"*'.

'Base ingratitude', you may well say. Let us see to it that we take the time today (in the words of the apostle Paul) to 'thank Christ Jesus our Lord' (1 Tim. 1. 12).

(Main sources:

http://wesclark.com/burbank/did_i_do_my_best.html,

<https://dailynorthwestern.com/2020/09/07/campus/did-i-do-my-best-the-mythology-of-edward-spencer-hero-of-the-lady-elgin-disaster/> and

<https://hisunmeasuredgrace.com/happens-forget-gratitude/>.)

Three 'full' saints in the Book of Acts.

(i) *Stephen*: 'full of faith and power' (Acts 6. 8).

(ii) *Dorcias*: 'full of good works and charitable acts' (Acts 9. 36).

(iii) *Barnabas*: 'full of the Holy Spirit and faith' (Acts 11. 24).

'Always'.

(i) Always *abounding* in the work (1 Cor. 15. 58).

(ii) Always *praying* in the Spirit (Eph. 6. 18).

(iii) Always *rejoicing* in the Lord (Phil. 4. 4).

'By doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men' (1 Pet. 2. 15).

'It is always God's will that Christians by doing good "should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men". Behaviour stamped by courtesy, respect, and integrity is not itself preaching the Gospel, but it wins a hearing for the Gospel, simultaneously preparing a way for it and authorizing it'.

(D. A. Carson, '*For the Love of God: volume 2*', on 15 May.)

'Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him' (Prov. 13. 24).

'A little fellow was once asked why he was such a model of behaviour in the Chapel service, and answered, "That's easy. My father is on *speaking* terms with God and my mother is on *spanking* terms with me". Sometimes the order is reversed.

'A man who attained a high position in life attributed his success to two factors. He said, "I was brought up *at* the knees of a devoted mother and *across* the knees of a determined father". It has been said that a child's character can be improved by a pat on the back provided that pat is administered often enough, hard enough and low enough"'.
(A. Naismith, '*1200 More Notes, Quotes and Anecdotes*', page 35. Sadly, in both the country from which this author came and in my own country the smacking of children either has been or is to be banned.)

'They shall walk with me in white' (Rev. 3. 4).

'To those for whom He had once *prayed* that they may "*be* with me" (John 17. 24), the Lord now *promises* they shall "*walk* with me".

What a promise this is! One day to walk in glory with Him:

(i) who, before sin entered the world, walked with Adam in Eden's garden;

(ii) who, before the flood, walked with godly Enoch and righteous Noah;

(iii) who once walked on earth's soil and through earth's streets (John 1. 36); and

(iv) who now walks in the midst of the lampstand-churches (Rev. 2. 1).

(*'Day by Day: Bible Promises (Precious Seed Publications)*', page 364.)

'More beyond'

'When Spain had extended her conquests to the ends of the then-known world and controlled both sides of the Mediterranean at the Straits of Gibraltar (the fabled Pillars of Hercules), her coins proudly pictured the Pillars framing a scroll inscribed with the Latin words "Ne Plus Ultra" — "No More Beyond." The Pillars gated the end of the earth. But "In 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue" and discovered the New World. The proud nation then admitted her ignorance and struck the negative "Ne" from her coinage, leaving the words "Plus Ultra" — "More Beyond"'.
(R. Kent Hughes, '*2 Corinthians: Preaching the Word*', page 103.)

In Valladolid, Spain, where Christopher Columbus died in 1506, stands a monument commemorating the great discoverer. Perhaps the most interesting feature of the memorial is a statue of a lion destroying one of the Latin words that had been part of Spain's motto for centuries.



The word being torn away by the lion is "Ne" or "No" ... Columbus had proven that there was indeed "more beyond".

But I have read of an empty tomb which proves far more; namely, that there is "more beyond" this present life and "more beyond" death and the grave!

(iii) Go on, smile.

Length of life.

1. When Ethel White celebrated her 103rd birthday party, her family gathered around for cake and words of wisdom.

'I am already looking forward to seeing you all again at my 104th birthday party', Ethel declared.

'I hope you are right', grandson Eric responded, 'but what makes you so confident that you are going to live that long?'

'Well, it stands to reason', Ethel replied, 'I am told that official statistics show that *very few people die between the ages of 103 and 104*'.

2. For once in his life, Henry felt adventurous. He booked himself a Skydiving Experience. He would be jumping from around 12,000 feet.

Prior to the actual Experience, there was a Safety Briefing Session.

Towards the close of the Session, the instructor, Gordon, invited questions.

Never one to look on the bright side, Henry asked, 'Gordon, if for any reason both the parachute and the reserve parachute fail to open, how long do we have until we hit the ground?'

Gordon looked at Henry and, without so much as a smile, replied, '*The whole of the rest of your life*'.

See the attached 'Good try' picture.