

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 5 August 2024

(i) Scripture.

It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night ...

For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands, I sing for joy.

How great are your works, O Lord! Your thoughts are very deep! ...

The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They are planted in the house of the Lord; they flourish in the courts of our God. They still bear fruit in old age.

Psalm 92. 1-14 (English Standard Version)

(ii) Food for thought.

'I ponder the work of your hands' (Psa. 143. 5).

'It's our human nature to fret and stew and try everything in the world to satisfy ourselves, but that is never going to be the answer. I myself have found tremendous comfort and joy in observing God's creation'.

(Elisabeth Elliot, quoted by B. Dunn and K. Leonard, 'Through a Season of Grief', page 303.)

'All things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him' (Matt. 11. 27).

'Frequently have Christians expressed their gratitude to God the Father for giving His Son, but far too seldom do we express gratitude to the Son for giving us the Father ...

'He did not come to stimulate our struggling God-consciousness; He came to deal with our deeper sin-consciousness. His purpose in the world is not to inspire men at their best but to redeem men at their worst'.

(H. D. McDonald, 'Jesus—Human and Divine', page 105.)

'Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him' (Isa. 53. 10)

'We have no problem understanding:

(i) that God should be pleased that the divine fulness should dwell in the Son of His love (Col. 1. 19);

(ii) that the Father found unbounded pleasure in His beloved Son—both during the years of obscurity at Nazareth (Matt. 3. 17), and during the few years He was in the public eye (Matt. 17. 5); and

(iii) that the Father was afforded unbroken pleasure by all that Jesus did (John 8. 29).

'But what are we to make of the statement that 'it pleased the Lord to **bruise** Him'?

We rejoice to know that in due time the God of peace will bruise Satan (Rom. 16. 20; cf. Gen. 3. 15), but what are we to say of God bruising His own Son?

'It was not that God found pleasure in His Servant's suffering in and of itself. God's pleasure derived entirely from the end He had in view in bruising Him.

'God's pleasure is to be understood in terms of His great purpose to save the world. God, who declares that He has no pleasure in the death of sinners (Ezek. 33. 11) was pleased to bruise the only sinless One—because there was no other way by which sinners could escape eternal death.

'How great God's love for us that He should bruise His own Son rather than let us perish. Measure such love if you can!'

('Christ Foreshadowed', Precious Seed Publications, page 310.)

'You are my friends' (John 15. 14).

'How precious even on earth to have a heavenly Friend, for this brings the joys of heaven in a little degree into our hearts now! This is just what our heavenly Father desires regarding His children—that they might be as happy as they are capable of being while here in the body ...

'For sixty-two years and five months I had a beloved wife, and now, in my ninety-second year I am left alone. But I turn to the ever-present Jesus, as I walk up and down in my room, and say, "Lord Jesus, I am alone, and yet not alone—Thou art with me, Thou art my Friend. Now, Lord, comfort me and strengthen me, give to Thy poor servant everything Thou seest he needs".

(George Müller, quoted by J. R. Caldwell in 'Excellent Things', New Series XVIII, 08, page 120.)

'Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself' (Luke 24. 27).

'We are blessed to be able to read our Bibles from back to front. The explanations of the New Testament allow us to understand passages from the Old. They help us to see how everything points to the Lord Jesus'.

(A. Begg and S. B. Ferguson, *'Name above all Names'*, page 136.)

'That in everything He might be preeminent' (Col. 1. 18).

'There remains for ever the infinite distance between the Son and the sons, the Firstborn and the firstborn ones. He is the one Son of the Most High within the Deity (Mark 14. 61, 62), and they are the many sons of the heavenly Father within the created universe.

'He is Himself the only-begotten (John 1. 14, 18; 3. 16), the heir of all things (Heb. 1. 2), "God over all, blessed for ever" (Rom. 9. 5); they are the objects of grace, rescued out of sin and misery.

'And therefore, the Lord never used the expression "our Father" as joining together Himself and His people, but only "My Father and your Father" (John 20. 17)'.

(Eric Sauer, *'The Triumph of the Crucified'*, page 82.)

'By Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses' (Acts 13. 39).

'God never intended to save man by the law: that was not His purpose in giving it. He never meant to save any other way than by Christ'.

(J. N. Darby, *'The Accepted Man'*, Collected Writings, Volume 12, page 336.)

Three times when God said 'No' to His servants' requests.

'It is an interesting fact that there are three instances in scripture of unanswered prayers which were offered by God's beloved servants. But, while He did not answer them in their way, He gave them, as He ever does, that which was better for them.

(i) 'The first is that of **Moses**: "I besought the Lord at that time, saying, O, Lord God ... I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon". (Deut. 3. 23-25). But his earnest prayer was not granted; the only answer was, "Speak no more unto me of this matter" (Deut. 3. 26) ...

(ii) 'The second instance is that of **Elijah**: "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers" (1 Kings 19. 4) ... And does he die? God takes him up by a whirlwind into heaven (2 Kings 2. 11).

'And when Moses stands on the mount with the Lord Jesus, Elijah is there too (Matt. 17. 3). He, too, is in the land, and that in the scene of the glory of Christ, when He reaches the highest point that it is possible for a man to reach on earth. Thus, both these petitions were set aside, and far more than that which was asked was given ...

(iii) 'The third instance is that of **Paul**: "there was given to me a thorn in the flesh ... for this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me" (2 Cor. 12. 7-8) ... Here the apostle goes to God to change his circumstances ... He prayed: "Lord, change my circumstances". The answer came: "Do you really want me to put you in circumstances where you will not need my power?"

'To any pressed one, I would say, "Would you take from God occasion for displaying His power in your weakness, and from yourself all opportunity for turning to and leaning upon that power?" This is really the answer of God here. He says, "I will not take away the thorn, but I will give you my power".

(W. T. Turpin, *'My thoughts are not your thoughts'*, Food for the Flock, Volume VI, pages 93-101: slightly adapted.)

'I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you' (Phil. 1. 23-24).

'The sweetest thought in connection with the Rapture is that "So shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4. 17) ...

'Paul does not speak of resignation or submission; he expresses a desire that burned with fervour in his soul. The earth was for him the poor polluted scene of man's sin and Satan's power, and he longed to be away from it—"with Christ".

'The only thing that detained his heart here was the Church. Christ's treasure -- the members of His body -- was here, and for their "furtherance and joy of faith" he was willing to remain'.

(C. A. Coates, *'The Christian's Desires'*, The Paths of Life, pages 121-122.)

'Now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials' (1 Pet. 1. 6).

'God will not send trial without the intention of blessing; therefore, where the trial is great, we may be sure that the blessing intended is great also. If the trial were to be allowed to lengthen itself out beyond the possibility of fruit bearing, it would become simply an evil, an objectless infliction.

'Therefore, say to yourself, "This day's trial could not be spared. God has still further blessing in store for me".'

(P. B. Power, 'A Book of Comfort for Those in Sickness', page 80.)

'When we were dead in our trespasses ... that in the coming ages He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus' (Eph. 2. 5-7).

'Doubtless this will be our everlasting admiration, that so rich a crown should fit the head of so vile a sinner!'

(Richard Baxter, 'The Saint's Everlasting Rest', published 1828, page 48.)

'A tale of two (depraved) cities'.

'One cannot read Judges 19 without remembering Genesis 19. In that passage Lot offered hospitality to two visitors ('angels'); a mob eager for homosexual relations with the visitors surrounds his house; Lot counters by offering his two virgin daughters to the crowd; his visitors rescue him and strike the mob with a baffling blindness (Gen. 19:1-11). Unfortunately for the concubine, there were no delivering angels that night in Gibeah.

'Different outcomes to be sure, but the similarity between Genesis 19. 1-11 and Judges 19. 22-26 is unmistakable. And deliberate. The writer wants you to view Judges 19 this way. "Yes, that's right", he says, "it sounds exactly like Genesis 19 ... only here you have Sodom-in-the-land-of-Benjamin. Gibeah is "New Sodom" ...

'Even in Israel, some have plunged into the moral abyss of Sodom and eagerly wallow in its twisted depravity'.

(Dale Ralph Davis, 'Judges (Focus Commentary)', page 213.)

Seven things 'not' to do.

1. 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth' (Matt. 6. 19).
2. 'Lean not unto thine own understanding' (Prov. 3. 5).
3. 'Let not your heart be troubled' (John 14. 1).
4. 'Look not at the things which are seen' (2 Cor. 4. 18).
5. 'Lose not those things which we have wrought' (2 John 8).
6. 'Love not the world' (1 John 2. 15).
7. 'Lie not one to another' (Col. 3. 9).

(F. E. Marsh, 'One Thousand New Bible Readings', page 109, number 230.)

'I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas ... But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother' (Gal. 1. 18-19).

'It appears from Paul's own account that the chief reason for his return to Jerusalem at this time was to make Peter's acquaintance and ascertain from him as much as he could about Jesus.

'A record of the conversations which the two men had with each other during that fortnight would make interesting reading. "We may presume", as Professor Dodd says, "they did not spend all the time talking about the weather" (C. H. Dodd, 'The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments', page 26). Nor did that topic monopolize Paul's conversation with James the brother of Jesus, whom he also met on that occasion.

'He met none of the other apostles at that time, and it is no accident that, in his famous summary of the appearances of the risen Christ, the only persons whom he mentions by name as being granted such appearances are Peter, James and himself (1 Cor. 15. 15, 17, 18)'.

(F. F. Bruce, 'The Spreading Flame', page 87.)

'May you be strengthened with all power ... unto all endurance (hupomoné) and longsuffering with joy' (Col. 1. 11).

'The great virtue 'endurance' (hupomoné) it is not the patience which can sit down and bow its head and let things descend upon it and passively endure until the storm is past ...

It is the spirit which can bear things, not simply with resignation, but with blazing hope; it is not the spirit which sits statically enduring in the one place, but the spirit which bears things because it knows that these things are leading to a goal of glory; it is not the patience which grimly waits for the end, but the patience which radiantly hopes for the dawn.

'It is the quality which keeps a man on his feet with his face to the wind. It is the virtue which can transmute the hardest trial into glory because beyond the pain it sees the goal. George Matheson, who was stricken in blindness and disappointed in love, wrote a prayer in which he pleads that he might accept God's will, "not with dumb resignation, but with holy joy; not only with the absence of murmur, but with a song of praise". Only 'endurance' (hupomoné) can enable a man to do that'.

(William Barclay, 'New Testament Words', pages 144-145.)

(iii) **Go on, smile.**

Food for thought.

1. Dr Sawyer was a psychiatrist. He was having trouble calming down Willie Smith, a new patient who was terribly distressed.

'It is really awful, Doc', Willie explained. 'For as long as I can remember, I've liked shoes much more than I've liked boots'.

'Believe me, there is nothing for you to worry about', replied Dr Sawyer reassuringly. 'Most people like shoes better than they do boots. As a matter of fact, so do I'.

Willie was greatly relieved. 'That's wonderful, Doc', he said. 'But, tell me, *how do you like them, fried or scrambled?*'

2. When Henry arrived home from work, his wife, Ethel, greeted him with the news, 'Honey, you've arrived just in time. I have just finished baking two different types of cookies for us. You can take your pick'.

'I don't know about that, Eth', Henry replied. '*I think I'll try my hammer first*'.