

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 26 August 2024

Greetings,

This coming Saturday marks the anniversary of the death of John Bunyan on 31 August 1688.

I cannot let this occasion pass without treating you to **three notable quotations from 'the Tinker of Bedford'**—the first of which was among 'his dying sayings':

1. 'When you pray ...' (Matt. 6. 5-6).

'When thou prayest, rather let thy heart be without words, than thy words without a heart. Prayer will make a man cease from sin, or sin will entice a man to cease from prayer ... Prayer is a shield to the soul, a sacrifice to God, and a scourge for Satan'.

(John Bunyan [among his dying sayings], 'A Discourse upon the Pharisee and Publican', the twelfth edition, page 162.)

2. 'Jesus came and said to them, "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth' (Matt. 28. 18).

'You are not yet out of reach of the gunshot of the Devil ... Let the Kingdom be always before you, and believe steadfastly concerning things that are invisible. Let nothing that is on this side the other world get within you; and above all, look well to your own hearts and to the lusts thereof ... Set your faces like a flint; you have all power in Heaven and Earth on your side'.

(John Bunyan, 'The Pilgrim's Progress', 1679, pages 145-146.)

3. 'Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out' (John 6. 37).

'They that are coming to Jesus Christ are oft-times heartily afraid that Jesus Christ will not receive them ...

'This word, 'in no wise', cutteth the throat of all objections ...

"But I am a great sinner", sayest thou.

"I will in no wise cast out", says Christ.

"But I am an old sinner", sayest thou.

"I will in no wise cast out", says Christ.

"But I am a hard-hearted sinner", sayest thou.

"I will in no wise cast out", says Christ.

"But I am a backsliding sinner", sayest thou.

"I will in no wise cast out", says Christ.

'But I have served Satan all my days", sayest thou.

"I will in no wise cast out", says Christ.

"But I have sinned against light", sayest thou.

"I will in no wise cast out", says Christ.

"But I have sinned against mercy", sayest thou.

"I will in no wise cast out", says Christ.

"But I have no good thing to bring with me", sayest thou.

"I will in no wise cast out", says Christ.'

(John Bunyan, 'Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ', 1688, pages 124-125.)

The Musings for this week follow.

Happy reading.

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

(i) Scripture.

When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, 'Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am?'

So, they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets'.

He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?'

Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God'.

Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven'.

Matthew 16. 13-17 (*The New King James Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

'When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi ...' (Matt. 16. 13).

'It was here that Jesus asked His greatest question and flung down His greatest challenge, and surely there could be no more dramatic set of circumstances.

'Here was a wandering Galilean preacher, who had begun as a carpenter in Nazareth and who had now no place to lay His head. With Him, there was a little company of men without education, without money and without prestige. At that very moment the orthodox religious authorities were resolved on His death as a dangerous heretic, and He was well on the way to being an outlaw for whom a cross was waiting.

'He stood in a place surrounded by the memories of the ancient gods of Canaan, a place where men worshipped the gods of Greece, a place around which the memories of the history of Israel gathered, a place where the eye could not miss the white splendour of the temple where men worshipped the majesty of imperial Rome.

'There against the backcloth of the world's religions, the world's history and the world's power, Jesus asked the question which demanded the answer that He was the Son of God.

'It sounds like preposterous madness. But the fact remains that the ancient gods are but a memory. Great Pan is dead. The Empire of Rome is dust ... the great white marble stones of the imperial temple have become building material for the house of an Arab sheik. But Jesus Christ is still gloriously and triumphantly alive'.

(W. Barclay, *The Mind of Jesus*, page 178.)

'The word of the Lord abides for ever' (1 Pet. 1. 25).

'The empire of Caesar is gone; the legions of Rome are mouldering in the dust; the avalanches that Napoleon hurled upon Europe have melted away; the pride of the Pharaohs is fallen; the pyramids they raised to be their tombs are sinking every day in the desert sands; Tyre is a rock for bleaching fishermen's nets; Sidon has scarcely left a wreck behind; but the word of God still survives.

'All things that threatened to extinguish it have only aided it; and it proves every day how transient is the noblest monument that man can build, how enduring is the least word that God has spoken. Tradition has dug for it a grave, intolerance has lighted for it many a fagot; many a Judas has betrayed it with a kiss; many a Peter has denied it with an oath; many a Demas has forsaken it, but the word of God still endures'.

(J. Cumming; quoted by D L Moody in *'One Thousand and One Thoughts from my Library'*, 1898, pages 361-362.)

Symbols of the Word of God

1. 'The mirror, to show us ourselves as we are and may be. (Jas. 1. 25.)

2. 'The laver, to wash away our sin and defilement. (Ephes. 5. 26.)

3. 'The lamp and light, to guide us in the right way. (Psa. 119. 105.)

4. 'The milk, bread, strong meat, and honey—affording sustenance and satisfaction to the believer, at all stages of spiritual development. (Heb. 5. 12-14; Psa. 19. 10, etc.)

5. 'The fine gold, to enrich us with heavenly treasure. (Psa. 19. 10.)

6. 'The fire, hammer, and sword, to be used in the work and warfare of life. (Jer. 23. 29; Heb. 4. 12; Eph. 6. 17.)

7. *'The seed*, to beget souls in God's image and to plant harvest fields for God. (Jas. 1. 18; 1 Pet. 1. 23; Matt. 13.)'

(A. T. Pierson, *'Keys to the Word'*, 1887, pages ix-x.)

'They bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth' (Jer. 9. 3).

'If you want truth to go round the world you must hire an express train to pull it; but if you want a lie to go round the world, it will fly: it is as light as a feather, and a breath will carry it. It is well said in the old proverb, "*A lie will go round the world while truth is pulling its boots on*".

(C. H. Spurgeon, *'Joseph Attacked by the Archers'*, 'Sermons of Rev. C. H. Spurgeon', Volume I, page 203.)

'The Jews answered Him, "... you, being a man, make yourself God"' (John 10. 33).

'While He subordinated Himself to God, as the Son to the Father, yet He claimed to be one with the Father, *placing Himself on the other side of the chasm that separated God from man, the Creator from the creature* ...

'High as His claims are, they are grounded in the truth of His being and His mission ... He is not "making Himself God"; *He is not "making Himself" anything*, but, in word and work, *He is showing Himself to be what He truly is*—the Son sent by the Father'.

(F. F. Bruce, *'The Gospel of John'*, page 234.)

'Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross' (Phil. 2. 8).

'When I read that "He humbled Himself", I cannot help but link Paul's statement with the words of Psalm 113. 5-6: 'Who is like the Lord our God, who dwells on high, who humbles Himself to behold the things that are in the heavens and in the earth?' The psalmist was pointing out that, on account of the infinite distance which exists between God and the most elevated of His creatures, *it is an act of enormous condescension for Him even to notice His creatures*.

'I have often wondered what that psalmist would have made of John's words concerning the One "who dwells *on high*", namely, that He deigned to dwell "*among us*" (John 1. 14). And what, I wonder, would that psalmist have made of Paul's words here—that *the One who stood on level ground with God, not only stooped to "behold" us but also actually took our nature and then, in that nature, further "humbled" Himself and became obedient to the extent of death and that to death on a cross!*

(Personal notes on Phil. 2. 8.)

'When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh' (Gen. 9. 14-15).

'The whole creation rests, as to its exemption from a second deluge, on the eternal stability of God's covenant, of which the bow is the token.

'It is happy to bear in mind, that when the bow appears, *the eye of God rests upon it* (cf. "when I see the blood", Exod. 12. 13); *and man is cast, not upon his own imperfect and most uncertain memory, but upon God's*. "I", says God, "will remember".

'How sweet to think of what God will, and what He will not, remember! *He will remember His own covenant, but He will not remember His people's sins* (Heb. 10. 17). The cross, which ratifies the former (2 Cor. 1. 20), puts away the latter (Heb. 9. 28)'.
(C. H. Mackintosh, *'Notes on the Book of Genesis'*, pages 97-98—references added.)

'We may be knocked down but we are never knocked out!' (2 Cor. 4. 9—J. B. Phillips, 'The New Testament in Modern English').

'One of the most powerful illustrations I ever heard was given at the beginning of a sermon. The preacher began with the story of the third epic fight between Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier. He mentioned how Frazier looked asleep until the fifth round. In the tenth round Ali hit Frazier in the eye and Frazier's eye began to swell. Before the final round as both men were in their corners, Frazier's manager looked at his boxer and decided to not let the fight continue—Ali had won.

'In concluding the illustration, the preacher said, "The ironic thing is that Ali, sitting across the ring in the other corner, had told his trainer that, if Frazier came out to fight, he would not continue".

'Then the preacher punctuated the illustration by saying, "*All Frazier had to do to win the fight was to stay in the fight*".

(V. Charette, *'Keeping Your People Glued to Jude'*, Southwestern Journal of Theology, Volume 58, Number 1, page 49.)

'We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out' (1 Tim. 6. 7).

1. *'Riches may leave us while we live; but we must leave them when we die'*.

(Thomas Fuller, 'Joseph's Party-coloured Coat', 1640, page 128.)

2. 'Archaeologists at Pompeii have recovered well-preserved skeletal remains of a man and woman who died clutching treasures of the time'.

(A. Mitchell, 'Skeletons of man, woman clutching coins found', article in the New York Post, 13 August 2024.)

A threefold 'fret (k)not' to untie.

'Three times in the first eight verses of Psalm 37 we are told "fret not" (Psa. 37. 1, 7, 8).

'When you spend time with God, you get to know God better, trust Him more, and love Him best. When you know Him and trust Him and love Him, you can rest in Him.

'Don't get worked up with anxiety. Wait patiently for Him to work things out in your life. This is one of the powerful benefits of personal, private time in worship with the Lord—it teaches you to replace worry with worship'.

(J. Merritt, '52 Weeks Through the Bible', page 84.)

'His hands refuse to labour' (Prov. 21. 25).

'Between the great things we cannot do and the small things we will not do, the danger is that we shall do nothing'.

(Attributed to Adolphe-Théodore Monod, 1802–56, considered by many to be the foremost Protestant preacher in 19th-century France.)

'Him that is able' (Jude 24).

'Throughout all ages the confidence of God's people has rested in God's ability to meet their every need. We can rejoice in the God who 'is able':

(i) to deliver us (Dan. 3. 17);

(ii) to make us stand (Rom. 14. 4);

(iii) to make all grace abound toward us (2 Cor. 9. 8);

(iv) to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think (Eph. 3. 20); and

(v) to 'keep' ('to guard', 'to protect') us from falling' (Jude 24)

The world says, 'I will defile and corrupt you' (Jam. 1. 28);

The flesh says, 'I will disappoint and fail you' (Matt. 26. 41); and

The devil says, 'I will devour and destroy you' (1 Pet. 5. 8); but

God says, 'I will defend and keep you' (Jude 24).

'We can rejoice also in the Saviour who 'is able':

(i) to subdue all things to Himself (Phil. 3. 21);

(ii) to keep that which we have committed to Him until 'that day' (2 Tim. 1. 12);

(iii) to succour those who are tempted (Heb. 2. 18); and

(iv) to save to the uttermost all who come to God through Him (Heb. 7. 25)'.

('Day by Day: Bible Promises' page 357—slightly adapted.)

(iii) Go on, smile.

On a reservation in New Mexico in July 1945, a young Indian brave by name Grey Wolf fell in love with a young squaw.

This created a problem for them because the girl, Little Fawn, lived on the other side of the reservation to him. In order to communicate with each other, they revived the ancient tradition of sending smoke signals. Grey Wolf would send smoke signals to Little Fawn and she would reply the same way.

After a while, communication by smoke signals caught on across the reservation. It became a pleasant pastime for members of the tribe to sit outside to see what others were saying.

It so happened that, during this time, the United States tested its first atomic bomb in a desert some way off.

Grizzly Bear, a deaf old Indian, was sitting on the front porch with his wife. Suddenly, he looked up at the massive mushroom cloud with disbelief and was heard to exclaim, 'Geronimo—now that sure is one loud shout!'