

## Malcolm's Monday Musings : 15 June 2020

First, a history lesson for you.

It is *500 years to the day* since, on 15 June 1520, Pope Leo X sent an official document known as a '*papal bull*' to a certain German priest/monk. This sealed document threatened the priest/monk (Martin Luther, of course) with excommunication from the Catholic Church if he refused to renounce his teachings. In that event, Luther would be branded a heretic and liable to be burned.

Putting it bluntly, Luther thought that the document was '*a load of bull*', and, characteristically, when he received it, he threw it into a bonfire and burned it. Needless to say, Pope Leo was not amused. He excommunicated Luther. And the rest, as they say, is (Reformation) history.

Your history lesson is now over. Have a good day.

---

### (i) Scripture.

What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

Romans 8. 31-32 (*King James Version*)

### (ii) Food for thought.

#### **Gossip versus flattery.**

Gossip involves saying behind a person's back what you would never say to his or her face.

Flattery means saying to a person's face what you would never say behind his or her back.

#### **Faith versus explanations.**

'Faith does not demand explanations; faith rests on promises'.

(Warren Wiersbe, '*Be Obedient*' on Genesis 22. 3-5.)

#### **The interpretation of scripture.**

'To search for [scripture's] contemporary message without first wrestling with its original meaning is to attempt a forbidden short cut. *It dishonours God* (disregarding his chosen way of revealing himself in particular historical and cultural contexts), *it misuses his Word* (treating it like an almanac or book of magic spells), and *it misleads his people* (confusing them about how to interpret Scripture)'.

(John Stott, '*Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today*', page 221.)

#### **'Thank you for your patience'.**

'Years ago, Ruth Bell Graham, wife of evangelist Billy Graham, saw a sign by the road: "*End of Construction—Thank you for your patience*". Smiling, she remarked that she wanted those words on her gravestone. After her death in June 2007, her desire was carried out. Her grave marker bears the Chinese character for righteousness [Mrs. Graham was born in China], followed by the words that made her smile ... Today, we're in the construction zone ... One day our construction will be complete, a prospect that's worth so much more than a smile'.

(David C. McCasland, '*Our Daily Bread*', 14 September 2008.)

#### **Death.**

'Death is either a full stop or a comma. In the Christian worldview, *it is a comma*'.

(Ravi Zacharias, '*Life Beyond the Grave: An Easter Meditation*', written a few weeks before his recent homecall.)

#### **Christians ought to walk:**

(i) In newness of life (Rom. 6. 4).

(ii) In the Spirit (Gal. 5. 25).

(iii) As children of light (Eph. 5. 8).

(iv) Worthy of God (Col. 1. 11).

(v) Honestly (1 Thess. 4. 12).

#### **Precious things:**

(i) The death of God's saints (Psa. 116. 15).

(ii) God's thoughts (Psa. 119. 17).

(iii) Israel (Isa. 43. 4; Lam. 4. 2).

(iv) Faith (1 Pet. 1. 7; 2 Pet. 1. 1).

- (v) The blood of Christ (1 Pet. 1. 19).
- (vi) Christ the corner stone (1 Pet. 2. 4).
- (vii) God's promises (2 Pet. 1. 4).

**'Christ ... makes intercession for us' (Rom. 8. 34).**

'It is a consoling thought that *Christ is praying for us*, even when we are negligent in our prayer life; that He is presenting to the Father those spiritual needs which were not present to our minds and which we often neglect to include in our prayers; and that He prays for our protection against the dangers of which we are not even conscious, and against the enemies which threaten us, though we do not notice it. He is praying that our faith may not cease, and that we may come out victoriously in the end'.

(Louis Berkhoff, 'Systematic Theology', page 403.)

'I ought to study Christ as an Intercessor. He prayed most for Peter, who was to be most tempted. I am on His breastplate. If I could hear *Christ praying for me* in the next room, I would not fear a million enemies. Yet distance makes no difference. He is praying for me'.

(Robert Murray M'Cheyne, 'Memoir and Remains', edited by Andrew Bonar (1892), page 154.)

**An inspired preface to the Book of Acts.**

To some extent, the first eight verses of Acts provide us with the seed-plot for the rest of the book:

- (i) 'Until the day when He was taken up' (Acts 1. 2) looks forward to Acts 1. 9-11;
- (ii) 'Wait for the promise of the Father' (Acts 1. 4) looks forward to Acts 1. 12-26;
- (iii) 'You will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now' (Acts 1. 5) looks forward to Acts 2. 1-4;
- (iv) 'You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem' (Acts 1. 8a) looks forward to Acts 2. 5-7. 60;
- (v) 'And in all Judea and Samaria' (Acts 1. 8b) looks forward to Acts chapters 8-12;
- (vi) 'And to the end of the earth' (Acts 1. 8c) looks forward to Acts chapters 13-28.

**'This man' in the Epistle to the Hebrews.**

'This man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses' (Heb. 3. 3).

'This man ... has an unchangeable priesthood' (Heb. 7. 24).

'This man ... sat down on the right hand of God' (Heb. 10. 12).

**The Lord Jesus 'loved righteousness, and hated iniquity' (Heb. 1. 9).**

At His baptism, He did the same as He always did – He fulfilled 'all' righteousness (Matt. 3. 15).

At His temptations, He did what He always did – He resisted 'all' iniquity (Luke 4. 13).

**'In the beginning ... with God ... was God' (John 1. 1).**

According to verse 14, the One 'in the beginning' came into time ... the One 'with God' dwelt among men ... and the One who 'was God' became flesh.

**'Christ loved the church ...' (Eph. 5. 25).**

When the Lord Jesus declared His love for His bride-to-be, He did not stoop down *onto one knee*; He stooped down *to death on a cross*.

**'In all things ... like'.**

'In all things' ('in every respect' - *κατὰ πάντα*) it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren' (Heb. 2. 17).

'In all points' ('in every respect' - *κατὰ πάντα*) tempted like as we are, yet without sin' (Heb. 4.15).

**Panic or prayer.**

'When everybody seemed panic-stricken, and nobody could tell what was going to happen, oppressed by the gravity of our affairs, I went into my room one day and locked the door and got down on my knees before Almighty God and prayed ... And after that, I don't know how it was and I can't explain it, but soon a sweet comfort crept into my soul'.

(Abraham Lincoln, when recounting his actions and feelings before the Battle of Gettysburg. Source: D. E. and V. Fehrenbacher, 'Recollected Words of Abraham Lincoln', page 388.) (See the attached 'How big' picture.)

**Which is easier?**

'To him who can save, to create is but a small matter'.

(H. D. McDonald, 'Jesus – Human and Divine', page 72.)

**The books of Job and Lamentations.**

The book of Job grapples with the issue of sufferings which befell a righteous man; the book of Lamentations grapples with the issue of sufferings which befell an unrighteous nation.

**'Conformed'.**

The God who has *prohibited* His people from being conformed to this world (Rom. 12. 2), has *purposed* that His people will be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8. 29).

**God's wisdom in salvation.**

'The *wisdom of God* has ordained a way for the *love of God* to deliver us from the *wrath of God* without compromising the *justice of God*'.  
(John Piper, 'God's Wise Mercy' (a devotional)).

**'No sin': the One exception.**

'If we say that we have *no sin*, we deceive ourselves' (1 John 1. 8).  
'He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is *no sin*' (1 John 3. 5; cf. 2 Cor. 5. 21; 1 Pet. 2. 22).

**Looking 'at', 'for', and 'to' Jesus.**

Look at Him: 'consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession' (Heb. 3. 1).  
Look for Him: 'to them that look for Him shall He appear the second time' Heb. 9. 28).  
Look to Him: 'looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith' (Heb. 12. 2).

**The first mention of 'love'.**

The word 'love' occurs for the first time in the *Old Testament* when describing the feelings of a *father for a son* (of Abraham for Isaac): 'your only son Isaac, whom you love' (Gen. 22. 2).  
Interestingly, the first reference to love in the *New Testament* is also of a *Father for a Son*, when the Father declared His Son to be His 'beloved' at the time of His baptism (Matt. 3. 17).  
(This comparison appears verbatim in one of the footnotes to the attached document.)

**'He did not take hold of angels ...' (Heb. 2. 16).**

'From heaven the sinning angels fell,  
And wrath and darkness chain'd them down;  
But man, vile man, forsook his bliss,  
And mercy lifts him to a crown.

'Amazing work of sovereign grace  
That could distinguish rebels so!  
Our guilty treasons call'd aloud  
For everlasting fetters too'.  
*Isaac Watts*

**Detailed notes.** [See the attached Word document, 'He spared not His Son'](#).

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

One evening, a British police motorcyclist stopped a motorist who was driving at 40 miles per hour in a 30 mph zone.

'Not only have you been driving too fast', he told the driver, 'but I saw you cross double white lines to overtake another vehicle. What is more, your lights aren't working, and several of your tyres are worn well below the legal limit'.

'I must warn you', the policeman continued, 'that you are going to be in serious trouble, my lad. Now, first, give me your name?'

'Waldhramm Reginheraht Wolfeschlegelsteinhausenbergerdorff', the visiting German driver replied.

'Ahh, I see', the police officer said, 'Well, this time *I'm going to let you off with a warning*, but don't do it again'.

(See the attached 'Driving carefully' picture.)

George went to see his supervisor in the office. 'Boss', he said, 'I hardly know how to ask you this, but we're doing some house-cleaning at home tomorrow, and my wife needs me to help her all day moving some heavy stuff in the attic and the garage'.

'Look, George', the boss replied, 'we're desperately short-handed at present. So I'm sorry, but I just can't give you the day off tomorrow'.

'Thanks, boss', George responded, '*I knew I could count on you!*'

A Scotsman phoned his local private dentist to ask about the cost of a tooth extraction.

'It'll be £150 for an extraction, sir', the receptionist quoted.

'£150!' the Scotsman exclaimed loudly, 'Huv ye no'got anythin' cheaper?'

'I'm sorry but that is the standard charge', the young woman explained.

'Whit about', the Scot asked, 'if ye didnae use any anaesthetic?'

'That's not really advisable', she said, 'but, without anaesthetic, the price would fall to £120'.

'Whit about', the Scot persisted, 'if ye used one of your dentist trainees, and still without any anaesthetic?'

'Well, in that case', the girl replied, 'we couldn't give any guarantee about their professionalism, and it would likely be very painful. But, if you want to go ahead with it, the cost would then reduce to £95'.

The Scot thought about this for a moment, and decided to have one more go. 'How about', he said, 'if ye make it a trainin' session, and 'ave yer one student do the extraction with other students watchin' and learnin'?''

'The dentist is with me at the moment', the receptionist replied, 'I'll put it to him'. Half a minute later, she continued the phone call, 'The dentist says that it would be positively traumatic, but if that's what you want, he would drop the charge right down to £50'.

'Och aye, now yer talkin', lassie!' responded the Scotsman. 'Can yer *book in me wife* for next Tuesday afternoon then?'

Don't tell God how **big**  
your **problems** are.  
Tell your problems how **big God** is.

