

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 10 February 2025

(i) Scripture.

Then Elisha spoke to the woman whose son he had restored to life, saying, 'Arise and go, you and your household, and stay wherever you can; for the Lord has called for a famine, and furthermore, it will come upon the land for seven years'.

So the woman arose and did according to the saying of the man of God, and she went with her household and dwelt in the land of the Philistines seven years.

It came to pass, at the end of seven years, that the woman returned from the land of the Philistines; and she went to make an appeal to the king for her house and for her land.

And the king talked with Gehazi, the servant of the man of God, saying, 'Tell me, please, all the great things Elisha has done'.

Now it happened, as he was telling the king how he had restored the dead to life, that there was the woman whose son he had restored to life, appealing to the king for her house and for her land. And Gehazi said, 'My lord, O king, this is the woman, and this is her son whom Elisha restored to life'.

And when the king asked the woman, she told him. So the king appointed a certain officer for her, saying, 'Restore all that was hers, and all the proceeds of the field from the day that she left the land until now'.

2 Kings 8. 1-6 (*The New King James Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

'Rejoice in the Lord always ... I have learned in whatever situation I am, to be content' (Phil. 4, 11).

'Two religious persons lived in one place, who had been intimately acquainted in early life.

'Providence favoured one of them with a tide of prosperity. The other, fearing for his friend, lest his heart should be overcharged with the cares of this life, and the deceitfulness of riches (Mark 4. 19), one day asked him whether he did not find prosperity a snare to him. He paused, and answered, "I am not conscious that I do, for I enjoy God in all things".

Some years after, his affairs took another turn. He lost, if not the whole, yet the far greater part of what he had once gained, and was greatly reduced. His old friend being one day in his company, renewed his question, whether he did not find what had lately befallen him to be too much for him. Again, he paused, and answered, "I am not conscious that I do, for now I enjoy all things in God".

(John Whitecross, *Anecdotes: Illustrative of a select passage in each chapter of the Old Testament*, Volume 2, 1835, page 233.)

Seven occasions recorded in the New Testament when people ran.

(i) A worshipping demoniac. 'When he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped Him' (Mark 5. 6).

(ii) An enthusiastic questioner. 'There came one running, and kneeled to Him, and asked Him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' (Mark 10. 17).

(iii) An earnest seeker. 'He ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him' (Luke 19. 4).

(iv) A considerate soldier. 'One ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar' (Mark 15. 36; cf. Luke 23. 36).

(v) Two concerned disciples. 'They ran both together' (John 20. 4).

(vi) A diligent evangelist. 'Philip ran to him' (Acts 8. 30).

(vii) A joyful maid. 'She opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in' (Acts 12. 14).

(Adapted from F. E. Marsh, *Five Hundred Bible Readings*, pages 227-228.)

Philippians 2. 5-11: a contrast between Christ and Adam.

'Adam, in wishing to exalt himself to be like God, was disobedient unto death; Christ - who was God - emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondman, and, even when He was in fashion as a man, became obedient and obeyed even unto death.

'There are two degrees in Christ's humiliation. He first strips Himself of His own glory, and becomes a man: then, being man, He goes down even unto the death of the cross'.

(J. N. Darby, *Brief Notes on the Epistle to the Philippians*, Collected Writings, Volume 27, page 173.)

Perfect timing: God at work 'behind the scenes'.

'Although God is personally free from all limitations and constraints imposed by time, yet He recognizes it, and always acts at precisely the right moment. Consider:

(i) David was surrounded by Saul's men; his case was hopeless (1 Sam. 23. 26, 27). But then, with split second timing, God intervened to deliver His servant. A messenger brought Saul urgent news of a Philistine invasion and occasioned David's would-be murderer withdrawing from him that he might tackle the Philistines (1 Sam. 23. 28).

(ii) David prayed that God would turn to foolishness the counsel of Ahithophel (2 Samuel 15. 31-32), whose counsel was as sound as if one "inquired at the oracle of God" (2 Sam. 16. 23). No sooner had David finished praying, than he met Hushai the Archite. This was the man later used "to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel" (2 Sam. 17. 14), and to bring about Absalom's downfall and Ahithophel's suicide.

(iii) It was while Gehazi related "the great things" which Elisha had done that the Shunamite woman came with her request to the king (2 Kings 8. 3-6). How timely this proved for her!

(iv) The fate of Mordecai and all the Jews was in the balance (Esther 3. 13; 5. 14). For Mordecai at least, any later night would be too late! So, "on that night" the sleep of Ahasuerus fled from him (Esther 6. 1 *lit*). God's name may not be in the book of Esther, but God's providential working is too obvious to be missed. Again, His timing was exact.

(v) Later, it was the life of the apostle Paul which was in the balance (Acts 23. 12-16). The Jews' plans were laid; tomorrow Paul was to die. But God used the apostle's nephew to reveal the plot just in time, and Paul was escorted safely to Caesarea that very night (Acts 23. 17-33).

'Are these cases to be dismissed as incredible coincidences? Or are they not rather examples of God's perfect timing as He works all for the good of those who love Him?'

(An extract, reproduced with kind permission, from an article headed '*This is our God—The Eternal God*', published in the Precious Seed magazine, Volume 38, Issue 5.)

Perfect timing: God's answer to prayer—as reported by C. H. Spurgeon.

'Some two years ago a poor woman, accompanied by two of her neighbours, came to my vestry in deep distress. Her husband had fled the country; in her sorrow she went to the house of God, and something I said in the sermon made her think I was personally familiar with her case. Of course, I had known nothing about her. It was a general illustration that fitted a particular case.

'She told me her story, and a very sad one it was. I said, "There is nothing that we can do but to kneel down and cry to the Lord for the immediate conversion of your husband". We knelt down, and I prayed that the Lord would touch the heart of the deserter, convert his soul, and bring him back to his home. When we rose from our knees I said to the poor woman, "Do not fret about the matter. I feel sure your husband will come home; and that he will yet become connected with our church". She went away, and I forgot all about it.

'Some months after, she reappeared with her neighbours and a man whom she introduced to me as her husband. He had indeed come back, and he had returned a converted man.

'On making inquiry and comparing notes, we found that the very day on which we had prayed for his conversion he, being at that time on board a ship far away on the sea, stumbled most unexpectedly upon a stray copy of one of my sermons. He read it. The truth went to his heart. He repented and sought the Lord, and as soon as possible he returned to his wife and to his daily calling.

'He was admitted a member, and last Monday his wife, who up to that time had not been a member, was also received among us. That woman does not doubt the power of prayer. All the infidels in the world could not shake her conviction that there is a God that answers prayer'.

(C. H. Spurgeon, quoted in '*C. H. Spurgeon. His Life and Ministry*', by J. Page, 1893, pages 146-147.)

Five reasons Jesus gave expressly for His having come.

(i) To give His life as a ransom: 'the Son of man came not to be ministered to, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many' (Mark 10. 45).

(ii) To call sinners: 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance' (Luke 5. 32; cf. 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners', 1 Tim. 1. 15).

(iii) To do the will of the Father: 'I came down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of Him who sent me'. (John 6. 38).

(iv) To save the world: 'If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I came not to judge the world but to save the world' (John 12. 47).

(v) To bear witness to the truth: 'For this cause I was born and for this cause I came into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth' (John 18. 37).

'The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven' (1 Cor. 15. 47).

'Adam was made from the dust and, therefore, was "dusty".

'But the verse then does not say that Christ is from heaven and, therefore, "heavenly". Unlike Adam, He wasn't a product of His environment! He is "the Lord from heaven".

(J. B. Nicholson Jr, 'The Ephod', Taste and See, Uplook Ministries, 21 January 2022.)

Seven things which do not fail.

The Lord's:

(i) Presence: 'The Lord thy God, He it is that doth go with thee; He will not fail thee' (Deut. 31. 6).

(ii) Promise: 'There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken' (Josh. 21. 45).

(iii) Faithfulness: 'Nor suffer my faithfulness to fail' (Psa. 89. 33).

(iv) Compassions: 'His compassions fail not' (Lam. 3. 22).

(v) Heavenly host: 'Not one fails' (Isa. 40. 26).

(vi) Recompense: 'A treasure in the heavens that fails not' (Luke 12. 33).

(vii) Law: 'It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail' (Luke 16. 17).

The Gospels and the love of God.

'The men who wrote the four Gospels devoted an altogether disproportionate amount of space to the passion and death of their Master, because to them and their fellow-Christians this was of supreme importance. But they also took a great deal of trouble to prepare for that climax by giving vivid and elaborate reminiscences of the words and deeds of Jesus throughout His public career ... because the meaning of the Cross could not be understood without some knowledge and understanding of the person who died on it ...

'We find the death of Jesus not only connected with a divine purpose, but quite expressly traced to the working of the love of God ...

'In one place Paul speaks of how rare a thing it is for anyone to be ready to lay down his life even for a good man who deserved it: and then, when he goes on to speak of Christ laying down His life for sinners, we should have expected him to take this as proving signally the love of Christ. But, instead of that, we find him, without any explanation, taking it as a signal proof of the love of God: 'God commends His own love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us' ...

'In the Old Testament ... it was God Himself who was regarded as having mercifully appointed the means of expiation, though man had of course to supply the victim. The amazing fact that emerges when we come to the New Testament is that God even provides the victim that is offered, and the victim is His own Son, the Only-begotten'.

(D. M. Baillie, 'God was in Christ', pages 180-186).

'We may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge' (Heb. 6. 18).

'We need a refuge on a four-fold account:

1. Guilt contracted. The avenger of blood, that is, God's offended justice, is in pursuit of us, at our very heels, though we see him not. If he overtakes us before we get into Christ, we are undone.

2. Temptations assaulting. The world, the flesh, and the devil, are all busy, by fair means, by foul, by allurements, by alarms; setting upon us, to draw us from God and duty, to sin and folly. Temptations are sometimes of one kind, sometimes of another. Where is our refuge?

3. Troubles befalling. Sufficient for each day is the evil of it; one event or other happens that crosses and grieves us. Have we no refuge that may help to bear us up?

4. Dangers threatening. Besides what present evils we meet with, there are others afar off. "What will you do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far? to whom will you flee for help?" (Isa. 10. 3)'.
(Philip Henry, 'Christ all in all to believers', pages 68-69.)

[Philip Henry lived in the 17th century. He was the father of Matthew Henry, the famous Bible commentator. 'To encourage himself and others to works of charity', Philip Henry 'would say, "He is no fool who parts with that which he cannot keep, when he is sure to be recompensed with that which he cannot lose";' quoted from, 'The Life of the Rev. Philip Henry, A. M. by the Rev. Matthew Henry', page 53.

This was, of course, three centuries before Jim Elliot made those words—with slight variation—famous by entering them in his journal on 28 October 1949. A fuller history of the saying is detailed in

the 'Monday Musings' of 10 January 2022 and can be accessed at <https://voicesforchrist.org/writings/225>.]

'His servants shall serve Him' (Rev. 22. 3).

'The service we render in eternity will depend on the kind of service we rendered during our lifetime here on earth. Scripture does not go into detail, but it does make it clear that how we serve today determines the ministry the Lord will give us in the new heaven and the new earth (Matt. 25. 14–30). It is not easy to determine the details, but the fact is there that the Lord has ministries prepared in the new heaven and the new earth for all His faithful servants.

'The Greek word translated "serve" in Revelation 22. 3 is a word used for the worship of God (*latreuō*). At the entrance of some church buildings there is a sign that reads "Enter to Worship", and when you leave you see a sign that says "Depart to Serve". But in heaven, service and worship will be united: our service will be worship and our worship will be service'.

(W. Wiersbe, *'Truth on its Head: Unusual Wisdom in the Paradoxes of the Bible'*.)

The Lord and 'the broken-hearted'.

The Lord's:

- (i) Consoling presence. 'The Lord is near to the broken-hearted' (Psa. 34. 18).
- (ii) Healing touch. 'He heals the broken-hearted'. (Psa. 147. 3).
- (iii) Therapeutic bandage. 'He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted'. (Isa. 61. 1).

'Give me understanding according to Thy word' (Psa. 119. 169).

'Holy Scripture, read appropriately, will form, not merely inform us ...

'Many Bible studies seek rapidly to move from reading the text to extracting the devotional nuggets, doctrines, or moral teachings within it, at which point the actual words of the text can be left behind. Yet Holy Scripture charges us differently, calling us to tarry with, memorize, chew over, and treasure its words ...

'In Jesus Christ the teaching of the word of God finds its goal: our devotion to the study of the word of Holy Scripture must be growth in devotion to Him'.

(A. Roberts, *'The Bible Is Not Just a Book'*, accessed at ...

<https://www.plough.com/en/topics/faith/bible-studies/warning-the-bible-is-not-just-a-book>.)

(iii) Go on, smile.

Gilbert's mother-in-law.

1. Gilbert and Judy Montgomery were admiring their garden from the kitchen window.

'Sooner or later', Judy said, 'you're going to have to get a proper scarecrow to keep the birds off the flower beds'.

'What's wrong with the one we've got?' questioned David.

'Nothing much', Judy replied. 'It's just that *my mother's arms are getting tired*'.

2. It was a beautiful summer's day and Gilbert decided to take his wife Judy and her mother Muriel for a drive.

Judy and Muriel sat in the back seats of the car and Gilbert waited until they had both buckled on their seat belts.

Then, almost as soon as he put the car into gear, Judy shouted out to him, 'Gilbert, you're going too slow! Can't you go a little bit faster?'

But then, within minutes, Muriel bawled out, 'Gilbert, slow down—you're driving far too fast'.

A little later, Judy called out, 'Gilbert, you need to keep closer to the curb'.

Almost immediately, Muriel screamed, 'Gilbert, you are far too near the curb. You likely to hit it'.

Shortly after, Judy burst out, 'Gilbert, please put on the radio'.

Seconds later, Muriel yelled, 'Gilbert. I don't like the radio on. I want peace and quiet when I'm in the car'.

Gilbert's fuse blew. Leaning back, he moaned, 'Judy, *who is driving this car, you or your mother?*'

