

## Malcolm's Monday Musings : 24 February 2025

### (i) Scripture.

He came therefore again unto Cana of Galilee, where He made the water wine.

And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judaea into Galilee, he went unto Him, and besought Him that He would come down and heal His son; for he was at the point of death.

Jesus therefore said unto him, 'Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will in no wise believe'.

The nobleman saith unto Him, 'Sir, come down ere my child die'. Jesus saith unto him, 'Go thy way; thy son liveth'.

The man believed the word that Jesus spake unto him, and he went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him, saying, that his son lived. He inquired of them the hour when he began to amend. They said therefore unto him, 'Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him'.

So the father knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus said unto him, 'Thy son liveth': and himself believed, and his whole house.

John 4. 46-53 (Revised Version)

### (ii) Food for thought.

#### **'We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works' (Eph. 2. 10).**

'If we are not saved by good works, we are assuredly saved for good works. For this purpose (among others which this epistle mentions) God fashioned us as His new creation "in Christ Jesus".'

'We are his "workmanship" (Gk. *poiema*), His work of art, His masterpiece. And we shall show that we are his workmanship by the works which we perform.

'Those who continue to "walk" in the trespasses and sins which characterize the unregenerate state (Eph. 2. 1-2) show that they are not God's workmanship, whatever professions they may make. But those who "walk" in those good works which God has preordained for His people (Eph. 2. 10) give ample evidence of the power of a new life which operates within them'.

(F. F. Bruce, 'The Epistle to the Ephesians', 1973, page 52.)

#### **'To depart and to be with Christ; which is far better' (Phil. 1. 23).**

1. 'Health and life, I would say, in the full and final sense of those words, are not what we die out of, but what we die into'.

(J. I. Packer, the foreword to David Watson, 'Fear No Evil', page 7.)

2. 'This vale of tears is but the pathway to the better country: this world of woe is but the stepping-stone to a world of bliss'.

(C. H. Spurgeon, 'Morning and Evening', meditation for Morning, 7 February.)

3. 'In God's hands even our death is a victory, an upgrade over our present condition'.

(Excerpted from Mark Clark's, 'The Problem of Life'.)

#### **'Sodom and Gomorrah ... serve as an example' (Jude 7).**

'These two cities were not only cesspools of immorality but had acted like a moral cancer which had already infected other cities of the plain, such as Admah, Zeboim and Zoar (Gen. 14. 2; Deut. 29. 23), and would have spread their contagion further afield.

'Moral standards among the Canaanites generally left a great deal to be desired, but, evidently, they had not sunk as low. The Amorites were bad but their iniquity had not reached the stage where judgment could not be deferred (Gen. 15. 16). There were communities where conditions were a good deal better, to judge by the fact that Abraham was confederate with some of the Amorites (Gen. 14. 13) ...

'Beyond the immediate purpose of arresting the growth of gross perversions, the overthrow was intended as a salutary warning to future generations. The many references to the overthrow in the later prophets (e.g., Isa. 1. 9; Jer. 23. 14; Amos 4. 11; Zeph. 2. 9) leave the impression that the memory of it lingered on in that part of the world.

'In Jonah's day, perhaps a thousand years after the destruction of Sodom, the Lord said of the great city of Nineveh: "their wickedness is come up before me" (Jonah 1. 2) which almost sounds like an echo of His words to Abraham regarding Sodom and Gomorrah: "the cry of it which is come unto me" (Gen. 18. 21)'.

(J. H. Large, 'From Idolater to Friend of God', pages 172-173.)

***'I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah I was not known to them' (Exod. 6. 3 RV).***

'The name Jehovah or Yahweh is a part of the verb "to become", and its real significance is its revelation of God as becoming what His people need in order to meet that need.

'The statement, "By my name Jehovah I was not known to them" does not mean that this name was not known in the sense of being employed by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but that they had not apprehended its full significance. The interpretation of it in fulness came with the redemption of the people from slavery'.

(G. Campbell Morgan, *'This Was His Faith: Expository Letters'*, edited by J. Morgan, pages 36-37.)

***'Stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God' (Job 37. 14).***

'Sometimes, our spiritual struggles come not because we have neglected God's word but because we have neglected His world. *We have walked through life wearing sunglasses and wondered at the darkness. We have lived with headphones on and questioned why we can't hear.*

'We may indeed have spiritual issues to address. But our first solution may simply be this: open your eyes and ears and wonder at the world God made ... *some of us rarely look through "the window of wonder"*.'

(S. Hubbard, *'Be Still and Wonder'*; accessed at <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/be-still-and-wonder>.)

***'One' in Galatians 3.***

(i) *One seed*: 'to Abraham and to his seed the promises were spoken. It does not say, "And to seeds", as of many; but as of one, "And to your seed", which is Christ' (Gal. 3. 16).

(ii) *One God*: 'a mediator is not of one, but God is one' (Gal. 3. 20).

(iii) *One church/body*: 'you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Gal. 3. 28).

***'In your seed shall all nations ... be blessed' (Gen. 22. 18); "'your seed", which is Christ' (Gal. 3. 16).***

1. What is interesting about the Hebrew of Gen. 21. 13 is that, while "seed" seems to be a collective noun, in the second half of the verse, the word, "seed", refers specifically to Ishmael: "the son of the handmaid will I make a nation, because *he is your seed*". This makes clear that *Paul is not making up the idea that the word "seed" could refer to a particular individual* (Gal. 3. 16)'.  
(B. Witherington III, *'The Abraham Saga- Part Twelve'*, accessed at ...  
<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/bibleandculture/2025/01/28/the-abraham-saga-part-twelve/>)

2. 'The Hebrew word for "seed" or "offspring" is *a collective singular that can refer either to one descendant or many descendants*. An English collective singular, for example, is "sheep", that can refer to one sheep or many sheep. Both "seed" and "offspring" are also collective singulars in English'.

(T. E. Constable, *'Expository Notes on the Bible'*, comment on Gal. 3. 16.)

***'A land that the Lord your God cares for. The eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year' (Deut. 11. 12).***

'The privileged position of Israel (i) was not merely to have been kept from the destroying angel by the blood of the lamb (Exod. 12. 13); neither (ii) was it merely to have been secured from Pharaoh by the power of Jehovah (Exod. 14. 3-5); nor (iii) was it to have been kept by the cloud behind them, that their incensed enemies should not approach them, even as they were conducted by the same cloud when it went before them (Exod. 14. 19-20).

This is what characterised Israel, that *they were guaranteed by God that He would care for them in the wilderness*, where they had to walk after having been delivered ...

*'Dear friends, those who dwell in spirit in the heavenly country ... enjoy all that God has given, which is doubtless very precious; but, above all, they can enjoy God Himself'*.

(J. N. Darby, *'The Earnest of the Inheritance'*, Collected Writings, Volume 16, pages 207-208.)

***Seven references to 'our sins'.***

1. *Confession*. 'If we confess our sins' (1 John 1. 9).

2. *Propitiation*. 'He is the propitiation for our sins' (1 John 2. 2).

3. *Substitution*. 'Who His own self bare our sins' (1 Pet. 2. 24).

4. *Cancellation*. 'He was manifested to take away our sins' (1 John 3. 5).

5. Emancipation. 'Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us' (Gal. 1. 4).

6. Supplication. 'Purge away our sins, for Thy name's sake' (Psa. 79. 9).

7. Absolution. 'Washed us from our sins in His own blood' (Rev. 1. 5; cf. Rev. 7. 14).

(F. E. Marsh, 'One Thousand New Bible Readings', page 283, number 602.)

**'Your Father who sees in secret' (Matt. 6. 4, 6, 18).**

The first three sections of Matthew 6 (which is the central chapter of the Sermon on the Mount) deal with three fundamental acts of piety in Judaism: giving to the needy (traditionally called "alms-giving"), prayer, and fasting (Matt. 6. 1-18).

The common link is striking: Jesus recognizes how easy it is for sinners to engage in worthy, philanthropic and even religious activities, less in order to do what is right than to be admired for doing what is right.

(i) **If** being thought generous is more important than being generous,

(ii) **if** gaining a reputation for prayerfulness is more important to us than praying when no one but God is listening,

(iii) **if** fasting is something in which we engage only if we can disingenuously talk about it,

then these acts of piety become acts of impiety.

The fundamental way to check out how sound we are in each of these areas is to perform these acts so quietly that none but God knows we are doing them.

'So be generous, but tell no one what you are giving (Matt. 6. 1-4). Insist that even the recipients be silent. Pray far more in secret than you do in public (Matt. 6. 5-8). By all means, fast—but tell no one you are doing so (Matt. 6. 16-18)'.  
(D. A. Carson, 'For the Love of God', Volume 1, meditation dated 6 January.)

**'There was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick' (John 4. 46).**

A comparison of the Lord's dealings with this nobleman and with the centurion of the other Gospels is instructive (Matt. 8. 5-13; Luke 7. 1-10). Assuredly, He has not men's persons in admiration who comes not, but only sends, to the son of this nobleman (John 4. 50; cf. 2 Kings 5. 10-11), Himself visiting the servant of that centurion (Luke 7. 6) ... By not going (John 4. 50), He increases this nobleman's faith; by offering to go (Matt. 8. 7), He brings out and honours the centurion's humility ...

At the height of his faith, the father had looked only for a slow and gradual amendment: "Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend" (John 4. 52a). But "they said unto him, 'Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him'" (John 4. 52b).

It was not merely, they would imply, that at the hour they name there was a turning-point in the disorder and the violence of the fever abated but that it 'left' him altogether, as in the case of Simon's wife's mother, who, at Christ's word, 'immediately arose and ministered unto them' (Luke 4. 39).

(R. C. Trench, 'Notes on the Miracles', pages 129-130.)

**Our Lord's word and hand in Matthew chapter 8.**

Several incidents are related which illustrate that "where the word of a king is, there is power" (Eccles. 8. 4).

(i) The authority of **the King's word** extended over the ravages of sickness (Matt. 8. 5-13). A servant was paralysed and grievously tormented, but his master had unbounded confidence in Christ. "Speak the word only", he asked. Great was the centurion's compassion (Matt. 8. 5-6), great was his humility (Matt. 8. 8 with Luke 7. 4), and great was his faith (Matt. 8. 10).

The Lord marvelled at "so great faith", much as His disciples were later to marvel at so great power (Matt. 8. 27). The centurion's faith surpassed even that of the leper (Matt. 8. 2) and totally eclipsed the "little faith" of the disciples (Matt. 8. 25- 26).

(ii) The Lord's word had power also over the representatives of Satan. "He cast out the spirits with His word" (Matt. 8. 16). One example is given of His mastery over Satan's forces and kingdom (Matt. 8. 28-34). The demons could submit their petition (Matt. 8. 31) but, ultimately, they were dependent on His command (Matt. 8. 32). One word from the King was sufficient. "Go", He said—and "they went" (Matt. 8. 32).

(iii) Finally, His word controlled the raging of the sea (Matt. 8. 23-27). During the storm He slept "on a pillow" (Mark 4. 38). We observe that, a little while before, He had stated that He had "not where to lay His head" (Matt. 8. 20). Possibly some devoted ear had heard, some loving heart been touched and some caring hand had supplied a cushion for His head.

He arose and muzzled (Mark 4. 39; the significance of the word translated "Be still") the tempest. It was a case of "stormy wind fulfilling His word" (Psa. 148. 8).

'His word was all powerful. He needed nothing more. It is delightful therefore to observe the two occasions on which He extended His hand ("Jesus put forth His hand, and touched" the unclean leper, Matt. 8. 3; "He touched" the "hand" of Peter's unclean mother-in-law, Matt. 8. 15). How tender was His touch! How appreciated!

(Reprinted, with kind permission, from 'Day by Day through the New Testament', Precious Seed Publications, 1979, page 18).

**Meaning: sought and found.**

1. 'Despite the clarity with which the Bible speaks, vast numbers of men and women have been deceived by the Evil One about both their beginning and their ending. Inevitably, they become confused about both their past and their future. In the great cities of the world as well as in the vast hinterlands ... men and women search for meaning'.

(A. Begg and S. B. Ferguson, 'Name Above All Names', page 159.)

2. 'Once, an elderly man consulted me because of his severe depression. He could not overcome the loss of his wife who had died two years before and whom he had loved above all else. Now, how can I help him? What should I tell him?

'Well, I refrained from telling him anything but instead confronted him with the question, "What would have happened, if you had died first, and your wife would have had to survive you?" "Oh", he said, "for her this would have been terrible; how she would have suffered!"

'Whereupon I replied, "You see, such a suffering has been spared her, and it was you who have spared her this suffering—to be sure, at the price that now you have to survive and mourn her".

'He said no word but shook my hand and calmly left my office. In some way, suffering ceases to be suffering at the moment it finds a meaning'.

(Viktor E. Frankl, 'Man's Search for Meaning', page 91. Mr Frankl was the sole survivor of his family through the Holocaust.)

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

Noisy or drowsy during the preaching.

1. After the Family Service was over, the preacher (Bob Taylor) stood at the door to thank people for coming.

Among those leaving were Lauren Hooper and her young son, Sam.

'I'm terribly sorry', Lauren apologised to the preacher, 'that my little Sam was so noisy during the early part of your sermon'.

'That's alright, Lauren', Bob responded, 'these things happen. But tell me, how did you manage to get Sam to keep quiet for the second part?'

'Oh, it was quite easy really', Lauren replied, 'I leaned over to him and whispered in his ear, "Sam, now listen to me carefully. If you don't stop making so much noise, the preacher is going to lose his place in his sermon and, if he does, *he will have to start his sermon all over again!*"

2. The 'Eutychus third-storey' ditty.

The colour of the preacher's eyes  
I could not well define.  
For, when he prayed, he closed both his,  
*When he spoke, I closed both mine.*