

## Malcolm's Monday Musings : 14 September 2020

### (i) Scripture.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Romans 12. 1-2 (*King James Version*).

### (ii) Food for thought.

#### **Transformed, not conformed (Rom. 12. 1-2.)**

'To offer up our bodies in living sacrifice to God means conforming no longer to the pattern of this world, but being transformed by *the renewing of our minds*. In other words, what is at issue is not merely external behaviour, while inwardly we remain in the grip of carefully masked hate, lust, deceit, envy, greed, fear, bitterness, and arrogance. What is at issue is the transformation of the way we think, bringing our minds in line with the ways and Word of God'.

(D. A. Carson, *'For the Love of God'*, 22 August.)

#### **Feeding the mind.**

'Just as what we put in our mouths affects our emotions, thoughts, and hearts so what we put in our ears and eyes has emotional, intellectual, and spiritual consequences. Many of us live as if Philippians 4. 8 says, "Whatever things are false, whatever things are sordid, whatever things are wrong, whatever things are filthy, whatever things are ugly, whatever things are terrible, if there is any vice, if there is anything worthy of criticism—meditate on these things"'.  
(Shona and David Murray, *'Refresh'*, Station 1, page 47.)

See the attached 'Philippians 4. 8' picture.

#### **Humility.**

'True humility does not so much consist in thinking badly of ourselves as in not thinking of ourselves at all. I am too bad to be worth thinking about. What I want is, to forget myself and to look at God who is indeed worth all my thoughts'.

(J. N. Darby, *'Why do I groan?'* Collected Writings: Evangelic 1, page 197.)

#### **The incomparable God.**

God is incomparable in:

(i) Purity: 'Who is like you, glorious in holiness?' (Exod. 15. 11).

(ii) Pity: 'Who is like you, delivering the poor from him who is too strong for him?' (Psa. 35. 10).

(iii) Power: 'Who is a strong Lord like you?' (Psa. 89. 8).

(iv) Place: 'Who is like the Lord our God, who sits on high' (Psa. 113. 5).

(v) Pardon: 'Who is a God like you, who pardons iniquity' (Mic. 7. 18).

#### **'God is my ...'.**

(i) 'My helper' (Psa. 54. 4).

(ii) 'My defence' (Psa. 59. 9, 17).

(iii) 'My salvation' (Psa. 62. 7).

(iv) 'My portion' (Psa. 73. 26).

(v) 'My King' (Psa. 74. 12).

#### **Miracles at Bethesda and Siloam.**

These are the names of two pools in Jerusalem, which are linked with the miracles described in chapters 5 and 9 (of the Gospel according to John).

(i) The first involved an impotent man and the second a blind man.

(ii) The first man had been impotent for thirty-eight years. The second had never seen at all ...

(iii) The first man could see but not walk. The second could walk but not see.

(iv) The first man's condition was due to sin in his life (John 5. 14) ... The second man's condition was not directly due to sin in his life (John 9. 3) ...

(v) Before the first man was healed he was looking to men for help, hoping that someone would assist him into the pool at the right time. Before the second man was healed he too was looking to men for help as he sat and begged for alms ...

(vi) The first man was healed and then walked. The second man walked and then was healed ...

(vii) As the first story closes, the healed man is seen still within the fold of Judaism and co-operating with the Lord's enemies. As the second story closes the healed man is seen outside the fold of Judaism and in conflict with the Lord's enemies.

(viii) The first miracle resulted in persecution for the Lord. The second resulted in persecution for the man born blind'.

(Tony Renshaw, *'Meditations in John's Gospel; Part 2'*, Precious Seed magazine, Volume 53 Issue 1.)

***'Beneath the cross of Jesus I fain would take my stand' (Elizabeth C. Clephane).***

'In Lübeck Cathedral ... there is a fine altar-piece representing the crucifixion, painted by Hans Memling in the fifteenth century. Shortly after the war, the curator of the Museum of Fine Arts came to see me and said, "I have the famous Memling altar-piece stored in the cellar. If you are interested, I would gladly show it to you" ... The curator took me, along with a friend, down to the cellar.

It was a magnificent painting: soldiers with spears on horses, gambling mercenaries, a motley crowd, women in tears, Pharisees with their mocking look.

And there, high above the crowd, three crosses. Suddenly a very strange detail caught my eye; right in the middle of the throng, at the foot of Jesus' cross, there was a blank space.

I remarked to the others, "How strange that in the middle of the throng, directly at the foot of the cross, there should be something like an empty space. I wonder what the artist could have been thinking of?" Those medieval painters always tried to convey some message through their paintings.

My friend suggested an explanation. "This is what I think he wanted to say: at this spot, right at the foot of Jesus' cross, there is a free space. You may place yourself there, if you wish" ...

How I rejoice that beneath the cross of Jesus there is a free spot - a place for me'.

(Wilhelm Busch, *'Jesus our Destiny'*, pages 151-152.)

***Three 'day' titles of the Lord Jesus.***

(i) The Dayspring: incarnation ... 'the dayspring from on high has visited us' (Luke 1. 78).

(ii) The Daysman: reconciliation ... 'neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay His hand upon us both' (Job 9. 33; cf. 1 Tim. 2. 5).

(iii) The Daystar: illumination ... 'until the day dawn, and the day star arise' (2 Pet. 1. 19).

***Christian men and women are equal in terms of the blessings of the gospel.***

'In all likelihood, prior to his conversion (the apostle Paul) had recited many times the consecutive benedictions of the synagogue prayer book: "Blessed be Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast not made me a heathen; blessed be Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast not made me a bondman; blessed be Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, *who hast not made me a woman*".

[These particular benedictions go back a long way. Jewish tradition ascribes them to the so-called 'Men of the Great Synagogue', who were active between the fifth and third centuries B.C. (T. W. Manson, 'The Companion of the Bible', page 455.)]

'But all this was now a thing of the past for Paul. Such distinctions had no relevance at all when it came to a person's standing in Christ. Paul believed, and taught, that 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, *there is neither male nor female*; for you are all one in Christ Jesus', Gal. 3. 28. (Note that the apostle there follows the same order as the synagogue prayer book.)

'*Studies in First Corinthians*', Precious Seed, page 97.

***Heaven.***

'That place where sorrow cannot live, and where joy cannot die!'

Thomas Watson, *'Body of Divinity'*, page 273.

***'All things' in the future.***

(i) The 'restitution' of all things (Acts 3. 21).

(ii) The 'subjection' of all things (1 Cor. 15. 28; Heb. 2. 8).

(iii) The 'summing up' of all things (Eph. 1. 10).

(iv) The 'subduing' of all things (Phil. 3. 21).

(v) The 'reconciliation' of all things (Col. 1. 20).

(vi) The 'end' of all things (1 Pet. 4. 7).

(vii) The 'remaking' of all things (Rev. 21. 5).

***Preaching.***

'If a sermon isn't worth preaching twice, it probably wasn't worth preaching once'.

(Fred Craddock, *'Craddock on the Craft of Preaching'*, chapter 7.)

***'Noah built an altar to the Lord' (Gen. 8. 20).***

'The man (i) who has walked with God, (ii) who has worked for God, (iii) who has witnessed for God, and (iv) who has waited for God, is now seen (v) to worship before God'.

(This is an extract from the attached Word document.)

**Detailed notes.** [See the attached Word document, 'Noah'.](#)

(iii) Go on, smile.

One night, Patrick was walking home when, all of a sudden, a thief jumped on him. Patrick and the thief wrestled on the ground. Patrick put up a tremendous fight, but the thief managed to get the better of him and pinned him down. The thief then went through all of Patrick's pockets and searched him. But all the thief could find on Patrick was 50 pence. The thief was astounded, and asked Patrick why he had bothered to fight so hard for just 50 pence. 'Now to be sure', Patrick replied, 'was that all you wanted? *I thought you were after the five hundred pounds I've got hidden in my shoe!*'

***A transcript of a witness examination in Court.***

Prosecuting lawyer: 'Doctor, tell the Court, did you check for a pulse before you performed the autopsy?'

Witness: 'No'.

Prosecuting lawyer: 'Did you check for blood pressure?'

Witness: 'No'.

Prosecuting lawyer: 'Did you check for breathing?'

Witness: 'I did not'.

Prosecuting lawyer: 'Then I put it to you that it is possible that the patient was still alive when you began the autopsy'.

Witness: 'Certainly not'.

Prosecuting lawyer: 'How can you be so sure, Doctor?'

Witness: 'Because his brain had already been extracted and was sitting on my desk in a jar!'

Prosecuting lawyer: 'Point taken, but, tell us, isn't it just possible that a man can still be alive even though he has no brain?'

Witness: 'Well, I can't deny that there is evidence that *such a man could still function as a member of the legal profession.*'

*Finally, brethren,*

whatsoever things are true,  
whatsoever things are honest,  
whatsoever things are just,  
whatsoever things are pure,  
whatsoever things are lovely,  
whatsoever things are of good report;  
if there be any virtue,  
and if there be any praise,  
think on these things.

Philippians 4:8