

## Malcolm's Monday Musings : 2 May 2022.

### (i) Scripture.

Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever! Let the redeemed of the Lord say so ...

Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to a city to dwell in; hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them.

Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them from their distress. He led them by a straight way till they reached a city to dwell in.

Let them thank the Lord for His steadfast love, for His wondrous works to the children of man!

For He satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul He fills with good things.

Psalms 107. 1-9 (*English Standard Version*)

### (ii) Food for thought.

#### **'The beginning'.**

(i) 'And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thine hands' (Heb. 1. 10).

(ii) 'And He answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female' (Matt. 19. 4).

(iii) 'For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be' (Matt. 24. 21).

#### **'He first loved us' (1 John 4. 19); '... not as Cain' (1 John 3. 12).**

'A person's life is his most precious possession. Consequently, to rob him of it is the greatest sin we can commit against him, while to give one's own life on his behalf is the greatest possible expression of love for him (cf. John 15. 13; Rom. 5. 6-10).

'This, then, is the ultimate contrast: Cain's hatred issued in murder, Christ's love in self-sacrifice'.

(John Stott, 'The Letters of John (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Revised Edition)', page 146.)

#### **The death of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10. 1-5).**

(i) 'Moses did not identify Nadab and Abihu's exact offence in the text. However the "strange fire" seems most likely to have been an incense offering that somehow violated God's will ...

'The same fire that had sanctified Aaron's service [Lev. 9. 24] brought destruction on Nadab and Abihu because they had not sanctified God [Lev. 10. 3]. Previously it had fallen only after all the sacrifices had been offered, but now it fell instantly. Then it signified God's blessing, but now it manifested His judgment. Then the people rejoiced, but now they were silent'.

(Thomas Constable, 'Expository Notes', on Lev. 10. 1-7.)

(ii) 'Like Daniel's three friends in the fiery furnace, the priests' clothes were untouched. How do we know? Aaron's cousins, Mishael and Elzaphan, were instructed to carry them "by their tunics out of the camp" (Lev. 10. 5) ...

'The very next story shows Eleazar and Ithamar, two other sons of Aaron, making a mistake about a goat offering [Lev. 10. 12-20]. The apology was accepted, and so the difference is made clear between the wilful rebellion of the first story and the inadvertent mistake of the second'.

(J. B. Nicholson Jr, 'The Fallout', Taste and See: Uplink Ministries', for 25 April 2022.)

(iii) 'The garments that symbolized their high calling (Lev. 8. 13) were now used as shrouds for their ignominious burial'.

(G. J. Wenham, 'Leviticus (NICOT)', on Lev. 10. 5).

(iv) 'By fire they had sinned, and by fire they died ... The same fire which had come out from before the Lord to consume the offering, now came out from the Lord to devour the offerers. That which had signified God's approval and acceptance now signified His disapproval and rejection. Both men died childless (Num. 3. 4; 1 Chron. 24. 2); God thereby effectively blotting out their names'.

(Day by Day with Bible Characters (Precious Seed Publications), page 74.)

(v) 'By their presumption they had reproached God's name, and God justly blotted out their names'.

(Matthew Henry, 'Commentary on the Whole Bible', on Lev. 10. 1-2.)

**'And the Word was made flesh' (John 1. 14).**

'In six simple words, the apostle states the most profound mystery of human thought—how deity could cross the gulf separating what is God from what is not God.

'Although man in all of his scientific advancement has made the world very complex, John the apostle breaks down the entire universe into two things: God and not God. To explain this mystery in as simple words as possible, let me say that the universe is made up of that which is God and that which is not God, and all that which is not God was made by God, but God was made by none'.

(A. W. Tozer, 'And He Dwelt Among Us', page 54.)

**Jesus: seven contrasts in the Gospel according to Matthew.**

- (i) 'Jesus is hungry (Matt. 4. 2) but feeds others (Matt. 14. 13-21; 15. 29-39);
- (ii) 'He grows weary (Matt. 8. 24) but offers others rest (Matt. 11. 28);
- (iii) 'He is the King Messiah but pays tribute (Matt. 17. 24-27);
- (iv) 'He is called the devil but casts out demons (Matt. 12. 22-32);
- (v) 'He dies the death of a sinner but comes to save His people from their sins (Matt. 1. 21);
- (vi) 'He is sold for thirty pieces of silver but gives His life a ransom for many (Matt. 20. 28);
- (vii) 'He will not turn stones to bread for Himself (Matt. 4. 3-4) but gives His own body as bread for people (Matt. 26. 26)'.

(D. A. Carson, 'Matthew (The Expositor's Bible Commentary', page 112.)

**The sinlessness of Jesus.**

'There is a great gulf between external blamelessness and [our Lord's] sinless perfection.

'Herod (Luke 23. 15), Pilate (John 19. 4), Pilate's wife (Matt. 27. 19), the dying robber (Luke 23. 41), the centurion (Luke 23. 47) and Judas (Matt. 27. 4) bear individual yet concerted testimony to His blameless character.

'But, in the light of His own teaching, the only two valid witnesses to His sinlessness are God and Himself ... at Jordan, as He emerges from obscurity, the heavenly voice declares, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3. 17), and thus the seal of divine approval is placed upon the years of childhood, of youth, and of opening manhood.

'On the Mount of Transfiguration, the teachings, testings and toils were searched in the light of God, and approved: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him" (Matt. 17. 5).

'At the close of His public ministry there was another heavenly testimony ... "Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified [my name], and will glorify it again" (John 12. 28)' ...

'This perfect Man ... can confidently look into the face of God after thirty-three years, twelve thousand days, conscious that between His soul and the stainless Throne there had not come one shadow or cloud to dim their communion (John 17. 1-4)'.

(John Rollo, 'The Son of Man', in 'The Faith: A Symposium', pages 57-58.)

**'The Lord God ... wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear' (Isa. 50. 4).**

'Nothing could be more beautiful than the attitude of the Lord Jesus as listening morning by morning with the opened ear of a subject will, to take instructions from His Father ere He went forth to fulfil the assiduous service of each recurring day!

'Thus, also may we understand ... His reluctance or refusal to do at one time what He really does shortly afterwards, three instances of which in John's gospel will probably occur to the reader.

(i) In the second chapter His mother, as they sit together at the marriage in Cana, says to Him significantly, "They have no wine." In His answer He affirms, "Mine hour is not yet come." But we seem to gather from the narrative that there was but a short break, a trifling pause, before He wrought the kindly miracle that manifested forth His glory [John 2. 1-11].

(ii) Also in the seventh chapter, when His brethren suggest His going up to the great feast of tabernacles, "Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready," indicating surely to us that while they gave the rein to their own will, doing as they listed, He of the opened ear waited upon the will of Another. So He abides in Galilee; but a day or two afterwards, probably to be in time for the closing day, which was the feast of ingathering, He goes up to Jerusalem [John 7. 1-10] ...

(iii) Again, in John 11, after receiving from the beloved sisters of Lazarus the pathetic message concerning the sickness which had invaded the home in Bethany, He abides two days still in the same place where He was. "Then after that" He gives the unexpected word to His disciples, "Let us go into Judea again" [John 11. 1-7] ...

'He is unmoved (i) by His mother's suggestions, (ii) by His brethren's entreaties; and (iii) by His own heart's promptings ... As the perfect Servant, in absolute submission of will and perfect self-surrender, He waits upon Jehovah's word and, having that, He treads the hitherto untrodden path of a perfectly obedient and dependant man'.

(W. Rickards, 'The Opened Ear', The Christian Friend, 1879, pages 248-251.)

**'It was necessary for the Christ to suffer' (Acts 17. 3 ESV).**

'All other martyrs laid their lives down for a cause they believed worth dying for, but their deaths weren't inherently necessary to their cause. Given different circumstances, their aims conceivably could have been achieved through other means. But Jesus's death was inherently necessary to achieve His aim: "to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1. 15)'.

(Jon Bloom, 'Behold the Man Upon the Cross', accessed at <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/behold-the-man-upon-the-cross>.)

**'Taken down' and 'raised up'.**

(i) Man could take the Lord Jesus down from the cross: 'Joseph of Arimathaea ... bought fine linen, and took Him down' (Mark 15. 46).

(ii) Only God could raise the Lord Jesus up from the dead: 'This Jesus has God raised up' (Acts 2. 32).

**'We believe that Jesus died and rose again', 1 Thess. 4. 14.**

(i) The death of Christ is the supreme commendation of God's love, Rom. 5. 8.

(ii) The resurrection of Christ is the supreme demonstration of God's power, Eph. 1. 19-20.

**'How much more ...'.**

'Does God give us a Christ, and will He deny us a crust? ... If God does not give us what we crave, He will give us what we need'.

(Thomas Watson, 'The Godly Man's Picture', in 'A Servant of God', Use 2. 6).

**'Sufficient for you' (2 Cor. 12. 9).**

'Christ is always sufficient. Paul found it so (Phil. 4. 11-13). He had gone through perils of all kinds, but Christ was always sufficient. (Paul) was in abundance now, but Christ in all things was sufficient.

'It is a blessed truth that ... whether it be the church or individual saints, it is impossible to be in a place for which Christ is not sufficient'.

(J. N. Darby, 'Brief thoughts on Philippians', Collected Writings, Volume 17, page 405.)

**'With me'.**

(i) 'Father, I desire that they also whom you gave me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory' (John 17. 24).

(ii) 'They shall walk with me in white' (Rev. 3. 4).

(iii) 'To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with me on my throne' (Rev. 3. 21).

**'Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth' (Col. 3. 2).**

'It is said of William (Holman) Hunt, the artist, that he never allowed the spiritual in his work to be obscured by the material or earthly quality. With him thoughts, ideas, duties must always come before things.

'Once, one of Mr Hunt's pupils was engaged in sketching a landscape bathed in the glory of the setting sun. In the foreground stood a large barn. Mr Hunt watched the young man quietly for a while, and then said to him most impressively, 'If you spend so much time painting the shingles on that barn, you'll never have time to paint that sunset. You will have to choose between the two'.

(James Russell Miller, 'Thinking Soberly', in 'The Ministry of Comfort', pages 226-227.

**'Fight the good fight of the faith' (1 Tim. 6. 12).**

'We shall have all eternity to celebrate the victories, but we have only the few hours before sunset in which to win them. We are not winning them as we should ... The work is not a pretty thing, to be looked at and admired. It is a fight. And battlefields are not beautiful'.

(Amy Carmichael, 'Things as they are', page 158.)

**'Where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal?' (1 Cor. 3. 3).**

'A Church in Dallas was divided. The division became so serious that each faction entered a lawsuit against the other to dispossess it from the Church and to claim the Church property.

'This litigation came into newspapers, and many watched the court proceedings with interest. The judge finally ruled it was not in the province of the civil court to settle this matter until it had first been

aired before the Church courts. So, the matter was referred to the higher authorities in the denomination.

'Eventually a Church court assembled to hear both sides. Later the court made up its mind and awarded the property to one of the factions. The losers withdrew and formed another Church in the area.

'It was reported in the newspapers for all Dallas to read that, in *tracing this squabble to its sources*, the court found the trouble began when a bishop at a Church dinner received a smaller slice of ham than a child seated next to him!

(J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Joy of Living: A Study of Philippians*, page 55.)

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

Shirley and Doreen, two elderly ladies in a Retirement Home, were enjoying the sunshine on a bench outside the Home. This had been their daily ritual on every sunny day for the past nine years, chatting and enjoying each other's friendship.

On this particular day, Shirley turned to Doreen and said, 'Please don't be angry with me. I feel rather embarrassed after all these years but what is your name? I have been trying and trying to remember it and I just can't'.

Doreen gave a very distressed look, said nothing for two full minutes, and finally broke the silence by asking, '*How soon do you need to know?*'

Billy Higgins had a most strange phobia. After a while, he felt compelled to see a psychiatrist about it.

'Every time I get into bed', he told the psychiatrist, 'I am frightened that there's somebody under it and it takes me ages and ages to get to sleep'.

'Come to me twice a week for a whole month', the psychiatrist said, 'and I guarantee that I will cure your fear'.

'How much will that cost me?' Billy asked cautiously. 'The charge will be £150 a visit', the psychiatrist replied.

Billy said that he would think about it.

Two months later, Billy happened to meet the psychiatrist in the street. The psychiatrist asked Billy why he had not come back to him.

'Well', Billy said, 'Do you know the barber in the village? He cured me for nothing'.

'How on earth did he do that?' queried the psychiatrist.

*'He told me to take the legs off the bed.'*