

## Malcolm's Monday Musings : 8 January 2024

Greetings.

Needless to say, this is my 'Monday Musings' email ... with just one exceptional contribution on 18 December last year, the first after a long break. Welcome back.

To celebrate my return, this week you will find two separate sections below.

The one consists of the normal 'Musings' and the other ('Possessed and Possessing!') consists of a reprint (with kind permission) of an article which was published almost 38 years ago in the Precious Seed magazine (Volume 37 Issue 6).

Given that this is the first 'Musings' of the New Year, we do well to remind ourselves of Joseph Hart's words:

How good is the God we adore,  
Our faithful unchangeable friend;  
His love is as great as His power,  
And knows neither measure nor end.

'Tis Jesus the first and the last,  
Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home,  
We'll praise Him for all that is past.  
And trust Him for all that's to come.

I close with a relevant extract from the 'Biography of James Hudson Taylor' (written by Dr and Mrs Howard Taylor):

'It was about this time [1857] that a pair of scrolls made their appearance in the sitting-room at Kuen-kiao-teo that were as new as they were perplexing to the little company of Christians and inquirers gathered there on Sunday morning for worship. Beautifully written in Chinese each character in itself was intelligible, but what could be the meaning of the strange combination, *I-pien-i-seh-er; Je-ho-hua I-la?*

'The young missionary [Hudson Taylor] who had been ill and confined to his room for a month could have explained. For it was there in quiet communion with God that those inspired words had come to him in such fullness of meaning as to make them forever memorable. *Ebenezer* and *Jehovah Jireh*: "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us", and for all coming need "The Lord will provide"—how he rejoiced as strength came back to unfold to his Chinese friends their precious message, leading them on to a deeper knowledge of the infinite God they too were learning to trust'. ('Biography of James Hudson Taylor', page 138.)

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

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### 1. The normal 'Musings'.

#### (i) Scripture.

In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace; wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will: that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ.

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.

Ephesians 1. 7-14 (*The King James Version*)

#### (ii) Food for thought.

***'The man and his wife hid themselves ... among the trees of the garden' (Gen. 3. 8).***

'The terrible, tragic fallacy of the last hundred years has been to think that all man's troubles are due to his environment, and that to change the man you have nothing to do but to change his environment. That is a tragic fallacy. It overlooks the fact that *it was in Paradise that man fell*. It was in a perfect environment that he first went wrong, so to put man in a perfect environment cannot solve his problems'.

(D. M. Lloyd-Jones, 'Studies in the Sermon on the Mount', Volume 1, page 110.)

**'Those who know your name put their trust in you' (Psa. 9. 10).**

'As to *His care*, He feeds the fowls (Matt. 6. 26), clothes the lilies (Matt. 6. 28), thinks of every individual sparrow (Matt. 10. 29) and has numbered the hairs of our heads (Matt. 10. 30).

'As to *His love*, 'He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all (Rom. 8. 32).

'As to *His purpose*, He will have us to be conformed to the image of His Son in glory (Rom. 8. 29) ...

'Why should we not trust Him?'

(C. A. Coates, 'The Paths of Life', page 25).

**'From that time Jesus began ...'.**

In the Gospel according to Matthew, the words, 'From that time Jesus began' ('Απὸ τότε ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς') function as a transitional expression between the three main sections of the book.

The phrase appears at Matt. 4. 17 and Matt. 16. 21, dividing the contents of the book as follows:

- (i) the person of Jesus the Messiah (Matt. 1. 1–4.16);
- (ii) the proclamation of Jesus the Messiah (Matt. 4. 17–16. 20); and
- (iii) the passion of Jesus the Messiah (Matt. 16. 21–28. 20).

**Three great declarations by the Lord Jesus in the Gospel according to Matthew.**

- (i) His Great Invitation ... 'Come to me' (Matt. 11. 28);
- (ii) His Great Commandment ... 'You shall love the Lord your God with all' (Matt. 22. 37); and
- (iii) His Great Commission ... 'Make disciples ... baptising ... teaching them' (Matt. 28. 19).

**The same song: 'The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation' (Exod. 15. 2 and Isa. 12. 2).**

The song which the people of Israel will sing 'in that day', when they finally enter and enjoy the manifested kingdom of the Messiah (Isa. 11. 10; 12. 1-2), will be the very same song which they sang when they were first redeemed (Exod. 15. 1-2).

And what of us? Joseph Swain surely had it right:

*'On earth the song begins;  
In heaven more sweet and loud---  
"To Him that cleansed our sins  
By His atoning blood;  
To Him", we sing in joyful strain,  
"Be honour, power, and praise, Amen".'*

**'Do two walk together, unless they have agreed to meet? ... The lion has roared; who will not fear?' (Amos 3. 3-8).**

'In a culture that loved riddles and proverbs, Amos's questions drew them into his thought before they realized what was up.

'The point becomes clearer with each new question; events have causes ... (i) If people meet and walk together, it is because they have agreed to do so (Amos 3. 3). (ii) If a lion roars, it is because it has killed its prey (Amos 3. 4). (iii) If a trap is sprung, it is because some bird or animal has triggered it (Amos 3. 5). (iv) If a warning trumpet sounds, it is because a dangerous enemy has been sighted (Amos 3. 6). Events have causes.

'So, Amos drives home two points:

'(a) If disaster strikes a city, God must be behind it (Amos 3. 6). Of course, there may be many secondary causes, but, ultimately, God Himself is behind it. Amos does not believe in coincidence,

bad luck, or a finite God who slips up now and then. He believes in providence—and believing in providence means believing that in disasters God is speaking the language of warning or judgment.

'(b) *The warnings God gives correspond with real dangers.* The trumpet blows to warn of a real enemy. God may provide gracious warning through his servants the prophets (Amos 3. 7)—and such warnings are not hot air ... but flags that correspond with imminent danger. So repent: "The lion has roared; who will not fear?" And don't shoot the messenger: "The Sovereign Lord has spoken—who can but prophesy?" (Amos 3. 8)'.  
(D. A. Carson, 'For the Love of God', Volume 2, reflections for 14 November.)

**'It is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure' (Phil. 2. 13).**

'All through the bible we see the interworking of the will of God and the will of man ... All things are so arranged in God's universe that He may work His will through man's exercising his gift of a free will ...

'Here lies the tremendous mystery—that God should be all-powerful, yet refuse to coerce. He summons us to cooperation. We are honoured in being given the opportunity to participate in His good deeds. Remember how He asked for help in performing His miracles: Fill the waterpots ... stretch out your hand ... distribute the loaves'.

(Elisabeth Elliott, 'A Lamp to my Feet', page 21.)

**The Lord Jesus: four stark contrasts.**

(i) The Rich One became poor (2 Cor. 8. 9).

(ii) The Holy One was made sin (Rev. 3. 7 and 2 Cor. 5. 21).

(iii) The Beloved One was forsaken (Eph. 1. 6 and Matt. 27. 46).

(iv) The Living One became dead (Rev. 1. 18).

**'The whole armour of God' (Eph. 6. 11-17).**

'Let all who long for Christ's return (i) fasten the belt of truth as falsehoods spread. Let us (ii) put on the breastplate of righteousness, that we might be above reproach in public and private. (iii) Slip on shoes and take the gospel of peace to the ends of our war-torn world. In all things (iv) wield the shield of faith against the Enemy's whispers of doubt. (v) Guard your mind against deceitfulness by wearing the helmet of salvation. (vi) Pick up the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, where we find Jesus Christ'.

(Collin Hansen, 'Don't Keep Up with the Times', The Gospel Coalition: Editorial of 26 December 2023.)

**'Sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance' (Eph. 1. 13-14).**

'The sealing of the Spirit is, I know that I am God's property. The earnest of the Spirit is that I have got property'.

(J. B. Stoney, 'Ministry', Volume 8, page 464.)

The attached document, 'Possessed and Possessing', expands on Mr Stoney's insightful comment. The document is reprinted {slightly adapted}, with permission, from the Precious Seed magazine, 1986, Volume 37 Issue 6.

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

Telephone calls.

**1.** As Terry left a board meeting at his office, he discovered that he couldn't find his car key. It was not in his pockets. A quick search in the meeting room revealed nothing. He concluded that – oh, no – he must have left the key in the car. Frantically, he raced to the parking lot.

Terry's wife, Claire, had scolded him many times for leaving the key in the ignition. Terry's theory was that the ignition is the best place not to lose it but Claire's theory was that the car was then liable to be stolen. As Terry burst out of the main office doors, he reached the terrifying conclusion: Miriam's theory was right. The parking lot was empty!

First, he called the police. He gave them his location and confessed that he had left the ignition key in his car and that the car had been stolen.

Then Terry made the more difficult phone call. 'Honey', he stammered (he always called Claire, 'Honey', in times like these), 'I left my car key in my car and the car has been stolen'.

There was a moment's silence. And then Terry heard Claire's voice. 'Terry', she said with a sigh, '*I dropped you off at work today!*'

**2.** Andrew was sound asleep when the telephone jarred him awake.

'Hello, Andrew', a voice began. It was his mother-in-law, Maureen ... who proceeded to rattle on about the busy day she had ahead, what she planned to make for dinner and all the things she would be doing for the rest of the week.

'Give it a rest, please, Maureen', Andrew interrupted. 'Don't you know that it is four in the morning!'

'Dear me, so it is', his mother-in-law continued, '*What are you doing up so early?*'

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## 2. 'Possessed and Possessing'.

### Possessed and Possessing.

'Ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory'.

Ephesians 1. 13-14 (The King James Version)

When writing to the saints at Ephesus, Paul referred to the Holy Spirit on several occasions.<sup>1</sup>

This document is concerned with just the first of these references. Paul pointed out that Gentile Christians, 'believing, were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (who is the earnest of our inheritance) until the redemption of the possession'.<sup>2</sup>

The Christian is 'sealed' by God with His Spirit as an indication, among other things, that he is owned by God. That the Christian has received the Spirit as an 'earnest' indicates that he has a glorious inheritance in store for him. The first is the proof that, in the present, he is possessed; the second is the proof that, in the future, he has possessions.

### 1. The Seal ... 'Possessed'.

We are sealed 'with' and 'in' the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup> Two points should be noted:

(i) it is not the Holy Spirit who seals; it is God who does the sealing. Compare 2 Cor. 1. 22.

(ii) it is with the Holy Spirit Himself that we are sealed and not by means (a) of any special act or work on our part or (b) of any special experience of the Spirit.

When are we sealed? The tense of the verb 'believing' (misleadingly translated 'after that ye believed' in the King James Version) 'marks the time when the act of belief first took place'.<sup>4</sup> It indicates that the sealing took place at the point of believing and not on some subsequent occasion. The same tense of the verb occurs also in Acts 19. 2 ('since ye believed', KJV) to which the same comments apply. We were sealed with the Spirit the moment we were converted.

The title employed by Paul when referring to the Spirit is interesting. He speaks of 'the Holy Spirit of promise'. This signifies, 'the Holy Spirit who was promised', 'the promised Holy Spirit'. God's promise to bestow His Spirit can be traced back to the Old Testament<sup>5</sup> and extends through the ministry of John the Baptist<sup>6</sup> to that of the Lord Himself.<sup>7</sup> The Lord spoke of the Spirit as 'the promise of the Father'.<sup>8</sup>

The mention of 'ye' in verse 13, in obvious contrast to the earlier 'we' in verse 12, indicates that the apostle has Gentile believers particularly in mind, in contrast to Jewish believers. As Gentiles, you and I should thank God that, *whereas we were altogether outside the range of 'the covenants of promise',<sup>9</sup> we were not outside the range of 'the Holy Spirit of promise'!*

Many ideas are conveyed in Scripture by the words 'seal' and 'sealing'. The main emphasis, however, appears to be that of confirmation. A 'seal' often served to attest a fact or claim as true.<sup>10</sup> Sometimes,

it confirmed that a person held a certain office or possessed certain authority.<sup>11</sup> On occasions, it added the idea of security also.<sup>12</sup>

All objects suitable for sealing could be marked by that means as the property of the owner. The same applied also to cattle and even to men (in particular, to soldiers and slaves). The brand-mark served as a claim to ownership.

When God gives His Holy Spirit to a believer, He marks the believer out as His own enduring possession. By giving His Spirit to us, God bears 'witness' that we are His.<sup>13</sup>

'Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us', John writes, 'because He has given to us of His Spirit'.<sup>14</sup> The Spirit within moves us to practise righteousness, to love the brethren and to believe that Jesus is the Christ—the three distinguishing characteristics of those who are born of God.<sup>15</sup> By means of the fruit which He produces in us,<sup>16</sup> the Holy Spirit furnishes one of the grounds of our assurance that we have eternal life.

Concerning Himself, the Lord Jesus said, 'Him hath God the Father sealed'.<sup>17</sup> This likely refers to the way in which, through His own witness, together with that of His works, that of John the Baptist and that of the Scriptures, the Father had given testimony to the fact that He (the Lord Jesus) had been sent by Him into the world.<sup>18</sup>

*The Lord Jesus, then, was sealed by God the Father as a testimony to who He was; we are sealed by God the Father as a testimony to what we have been made!*

We are sealed 'unto the redemption of the possession'.<sup>19</sup> The point is restated later, 'in whom you were sealed unto the day of redemption'.<sup>20</sup> The word translated 'unto' in both cases<sup>21</sup> denotes purpose. We have been sealed 'for', 'with a view to', the day of redemption. In these verses, 'redemption' points to something yet future.

The same is true when the apostle describes us believers as, 'waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body'.<sup>22</sup> In one sense, our spiritual adoption remains incomplete until it is crowned by the final emancipation of our bodies from all that is sinful. But, praise God, we do not wait in vain! Then we, who are already God's possession, will experience the full realisation and enjoyment of our redemption.<sup>23</sup>

## 2. The Earnest ... 'Possessing'.

The word translated 'earnest'<sup>24</sup> occurs just three times in the New Testament. Each reference is found in the writings of Paul and in each case the word is used concerning the Holy Spirit.<sup>25</sup>

The word was borrowed from the world of commerce and was very common in business documents and agreements of New Testament days. Its significance would have been readily understood, therefore, by people from mercantile communities such as Corinth and Ephesus. The word indicated the partial payment which was made in advance of the full sum. The 'earnest' was the assurance and guarantee that the remainder would be forthcoming at the appointed time and served to make an agreement binding.

One quotation from the papyri will be sufficient to illustrate the nature of an 'earnest'. A man named Horus wrote, 'regarding Lampon the mouse-catcher, I paid him eight drachmae on your behalf, as an "earnest", that he would catch the mice while they are with young'.<sup>26</sup> The advance payment was made as a guarantee that the rest would follow in due course, to encourage the mouse-catcher to get on with his job at the most effective time!

The word 'earnest' was used also of betrothal gifts which young men gave to their intended brides. Mr Vine observes, 'In modern Greek ἀρραβών ("earnest") is an engagement ring'.<sup>27</sup> In effect, therefore, the gifts of gold and silver which Abraham's servant bestowed on Rebecca constituted an 'earnest' of the riches of Isaac, which she was shortly to share.<sup>28</sup>

Another scriptural illustration is found in Numbers 13. When the children of Israel were at Kadesh, the pomegranates, figs and grapes which the spies brought from the Valley of Eshcol were an 'earnest', a sample, of 'the fruit of the land'.<sup>29</sup>

The Holy Spirit has been given to the believer as a foretaste of the future glorious inheritance which God has reserved for His saints.<sup>30</sup> The fact that we are now indwelt by God's Spirit is the guarantee that, when the Lord comes, we will receive changed, glorious and eternal bodies.<sup>31</sup> The gift of His Spirit is God's promise to us of our final and eternal blessedness.<sup>32</sup>

[This document has been reprinted {and slightly adapted}, with permission, from the Precious Seed magazine, 1986, Volume 37 Issue 6.]

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Eph. 1. 13-14; 2. 18, 22; 3. 5, 16; 4. 3-4, 30; 5. 9, 18; 6. 17-18.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. 1. 13-14 lit.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. 1, 13; 4. 30 lit.

<sup>4</sup> H. Alford, 'The Greek Testament', Volume III, page 76,

<sup>5</sup> Joel 2. 28-29; Ezek. 36. 26-27.

<sup>6</sup> Mark 1. 8.

<sup>7</sup> John 14. 16-17; 15, 26; 16. 7, 13.

<sup>8</sup> Acts 1. 4; cf. Acts 2. 38-39.

<sup>9</sup> Eph. 2. 12.

<sup>10</sup> John 3. 33; Rom. 15. 28.

<sup>11</sup> 1 Kings 21. 8; Esther 3. 12; 8. 8; 1 Cor. 9. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Jer. 32. 10; Dan. 6. 17; Matt. 27. 66.

<sup>13</sup> Acts 15. 8.

<sup>14</sup> 1 John 4. 13.

<sup>15</sup> 1 John 2. 29; 4. 7; 5. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Gal. 5. 22-23.

<sup>17</sup> John 6. 27.

<sup>18</sup> John 5. 31-39.

<sup>19</sup> Eph. 1. 14 lit.

<sup>20</sup> Eph. 4. 30 lit.

<sup>21</sup> The Greek word *εἶς*.

<sup>22</sup> Rom. 8. 23.

<sup>23</sup> For the description of God's people today as His 'possession' (*περιποίησις*), see Acts 20. 28 and 1 Pet. 2. 9. Compare also Exod. 19. 5; Deut. 7. 6; 14. 2; 26. 18.

<sup>24</sup> The Greek word *ἀρράβων*.

<sup>25</sup> 2 Cor. 1. 22; 5. 5; Eph. 1. 14.

<sup>26</sup> 'Regarding Lampon the mouse-catcher I paid him for you as earnest money eight drachmae in order that he may catch the mice while they are with young', B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt, 'The Oxyrhynchus Papyri', 1898, page 301. For other examples from the papyri, see J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, 'The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament', 1915, Volume 1, page 79.

<sup>27</sup> W. E. Vine, 'Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words', page 190, article 'Earnest (Noun)'.

<sup>28</sup> Gen. 24. 35, 53.

<sup>29</sup> Num. 13. 20-27.

<sup>30</sup> Eph. 1. 14.

<sup>31</sup> 2 Cor. 5. 4-5.

<sup>32</sup> Compare the kindred expression, 'firstfruits of the Spirit', Rom. 8. 23, which conveys the assurance of a larger harvest to follow when we enter into the enjoyment of the full and final realisation of our present sonship.