

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 26 May 2025

Greetings.

Welcome back.

As you know, there were no 'Musings' last Monday.

I note, however, that the date last Monday marked the anniversary of the death, on 19 May 2017, of one of two Russian military personnel of the 20th century who are said to have 'saved the world'.

The man's full name is **Stanislav Yevgrafovich Petrov**.

Towards the close of September 1983 (during the Cold War), Lieutenant Colonel Petrov of the Soviet Air Defence Forces was the duty officer at the secret command centre for a nuclear early-warning system, when the system reported that an intercontinental ballistic missile had been launched from the United States, with four more missiles behind it.

Suspecting a false alarm and that the Soviet satellite warning system had malfunctioned, Stanislav Petrov decided not to notify his superiors of the report.

Given the strained relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States at the time, such a report might well have prompted them to launch a missile assault against the United States, which, in turn, would have provoked a nuclear response.

Because of his decision to take no action, Lieutenant Colonel Petrov has been credited with having 'saved the world'—saved it from nuclear war, that is. (A brief account of the incident can be accessed at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stanislav_Petrov.)

The other person credited with having 'saved the world' was a Soviet Naval submarine commander by the name of **Vasili Arkhipov**.

It was in October 1962 (over 20 years before Stanislav Petrov's 'decision'), at the height of the so-called 'Cuban Missile Crisis', that Vasili Arkhipov prevailed on his fellow commanders of a Soviet nuclear submarine not (as the other commanders had decided) to launch their nuclear torpedo at United States' ships then blockading Cuba. 'Had Vasili Arkhipov not been there to prevent the torpedo launch, historians agree that nuclear war would likely have begun'.

The Director of the National Security Archive reportedly said, '... Vasili Arkhipov saved the world'. (Details of this incident can be accessed at <https://allthatsinteresting.com/vasili-arkhipov>.)

I must leave others to judge whether either or both of these men did in fact avert a third world (nuclear) war and whether, therefore, they warrant it being said of them that, in that sense, they 'saved the world'.

The important thing for you and me is that we know One (infinitely greater than any number of Russian military personnel) who, immediately prior to His suffering and death, declared, 'I did not come to judge the world but to save the world' (John 12. 47) ... 'to save the world' from something infinitely greater than even a nuclear holocaust—to 'save' it from the wrath of God (Rom 2. 5; 5. 9; Eph. 5. 6).

Praise God ... that He 'did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him' (John 3. 17) ... that 'the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world' (1 John 4. 14).

And so, with the Samaritans of Sychar, we proclaim, 'this is indeed the Saviour of the world' (John 4. 42).

I set out below today's 'Musings'.

Happy reading.

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

(i) Scripture.

Woe to Assyria, the rod of my anger ...

I will send him against an ungodly nation, and against the people of my wrath I will give him charge, to seize the spoil, to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.

Yet he does not mean so, nor does his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and cut off not a few nations. For he says, 'Are not my princes altogether kings? ... As my hand has found the kingdoms of the idols, whose carved images excelled those of Jerusalem and Samaria, As I have done to Samaria and her idols, shall I not do also to Jerusalem and her idols?'

Therefore, it shall come to pass, when the Lord has performed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, that He will say, 'I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his haughty looks'. For he says: 'By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I am prudent; also, I have removed the boundaries of the people, and have robbed their treasures. So I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man. My hand has found like a nest the riches of the people, and as one gathers eggs that are left, I have gathered all the earth; And there was no one who moved his wing, nor opened his mouth with even a peep'.

Shall the axe boast itself against him who chops with it? Or shall the saw exalt itself against him who saws with it? As if a rod could wield itself against those who lift it up, or as if a staff could lift up, as if it were not wood!

Therefore, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, will send leanness among his fat ones ... the Light of Israel will be for a fire ... It will burn and devour his thorns and his briars in one day. And it will consume the glory of his forest and of his fruitful field, both soul and body.

Isaiah 10. 5-18 (*The New King James Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

'When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son' (Gal. 4. 4).

'One of the longest silences in biblical history was the four hundred years between the testaments. After the prophet Malachi spoke of a coming messenger who would prepare the way for the Lord (Mal. 3. 1), the voice of God went quiet. No new prophets. No fresh revelation. Just silence ...

'In the silence, He was preparing the world for Jesus. The Greek language spread, making it possible for the gospel to reach many nations. The Roman Empire built roads, paving the way for missionary travel. During those seemingly silent centuries, God was aligning history for Christ's arrival.

'When the time was right, the cries of a baby broke the four-hundred-year silence'.

(V. R. Risner, 'Why Does God Seem Silent?', accessed at <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/why-does-god-seem-silent>.)

How to study the Scriptures.

(i) Reverently (Psa. 119. 161; 1 Thess. 2. 13), because they are the Word of God, and not the word of men.

(ii) Meekly (James 1. 21), with a humble and submissive temper.

(iii) Believingly (Heb. 4. 2); for else the study is utterly unprofitable.

(iv) Prayerfully (Psa. 119. 12, 26, 64, 68, 124, 135); for the Lord will thus prepare the heart.

(v) Practically (Psa. 119. 11; James 1. 22), that our life may be a commentary on the Word.

(T Croskery, 'Ephesians: The Pulpit Bible Commentary', page 22—slightly adapted.)

'The Word became flesh and pitched His tabernacle among us', John 1. 14.

'The statement that the incarnate Word "pitched His tabernacle among us" harks back to the tabernacle of Israel's wilderness wanderings. The tabernacle was erected by God's command in order that His dwelling-place might be established with His people: 'let them make me a sanctuary', He said, 'that I may dwell in their midst' (Exod. 25. 8).

So, it is implied, as God formerly manifested His presence among His people in the tent which Moses pitched, now in a fuller sense He has taken up residence on earth in the Word made flesh'.

(F. F. Bruce, *'The Gospel and Epistles of John'*, page 40.)

'We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers ... the authorities ... the cosmic powers over this present darkness ... the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places' (Eph. 6. 12).

'You haven't been invited to join a cruise ship; you've been recruited for a battleship'.

(Quoted by B. Mooney, *'Prayers for Putting on the Armour of God'*, Christianity.com.)

'This man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins ... sat down on the right hand of God' (Heb. 10. 12).

'Much of the Epistle to the Hebrews has for its background the ritual of the day of atonement in Israel ... Among the features peculiar to that day was the entrance of the high priest within the veil. It is to be noted that in its hours he went in more than once into the holiest.

'First of all, he took a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and brought it within the veil. He put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense might cover the mercy seat that was upon the testimony, and this, we read, was done that he die not (Lev. 16. 12-13). Not till the cloud of incense rose could he dare to present the blood of sacrifice by sprinkling it on and before the mercy seat. Had he gone in with blood apart from incense, he would have died ... The fragrant incense speaks of the beauty of holiness which was our Lord's personal ground of entrance ...

'But He who needed no blood of sacrifice as His own title to heaven was pleased to enter not only by right of character but by right of the sacrifice of Himself, in order that we who had no right of person to enter might do so on the ground of that same sacrifice and the shedding of His own precious blood'.

(H. C. Hewlett, *'The Glories of our Lord'*, page 114.)

'This man receives sinners' (Luke 15. 2); 'Such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners' (Heb. 7. 26).

1. 'He moved daily in the midst of those who were sinners. How different He must have been ... A real man He was, and truly man, but ... morally separated from the men among whom He lived'.

(J. M. Flanigan, *'Hebrews'*, page 147.)

2. 'Christians have as their high priest one who ... preserved His purity while treading the common ways of this world and sharing our human lot. Although He came to earth "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. 8. 3), lived among sinners, received sinners, ate with sinners, was known as the friend of sinners (Luke 7. 34), yet He is set apart from sinners, in a different class from sinful men'.

(F. F. Bruce, *'The Epistle to the Hebrews: New International Commentary on the New Testament'*, 1964, pages 156-157.)

3. 'This phrase seems explicatory of the three that precede it. By His perfect piety, justice, benevolence, and personal purity, He must be "separated from sinners"; i.e., He must not be a sinner —He must not belong to that class of moral beings. The general sentiment conveyed by these four epithets is plainly this: "The high priest we need must be morally perfect"—a sentiment which necessarily implies in it that He cannot be merely a man of our own order'.

(J. Brown, *'An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews'*, page 354.)

Five thought-provoking questions posed by Pilate at our Lord's civil trial.

(i) ***'What have you done?'*** (John 18. 35).

[Possible response: 'Many things' (John 21. 35)]

(ii) ***'What is truth?'*** (John 18. 38).

[Possible response: 'I am' (John 14. 6)]

(iii) ***'Where are you from?'*** (John 19. 9).

[Possible response: 'From above' (John 8. 23)]

(iv) ***'What shall I do with Jesus?'*** (Matt. 27. 22).

[Possible response: 'Believe in Him' (John 6. 29)]

(v) ***'What evil has He done?'*** (Matt. 27. 23).

[Possible response: 'This man has done nothing wrong' (Luke 23. 41; cf. 1 Pet. 2. 22)]

Robbery? Adam (Gen. 3. 5-6) and Christ (Phil. 2.6-7).

'Adam, being in the form—that is, the state and condition—of a servant, by robbery attempted to take upon him the "form of God"—to make himself equal to Him.

The Lord Christ, being in the "form of God"—that is, of the same nature with Him—accounted it no robbery to be in the state and condition of God, to be "equal to Him"; but, being made in the "fashion

of a man", taking on Him our nature, He also submitted to the form—the state and condition—of a servant'.

(J. Owen, 'The Person of Christ', The Works of John Owen, Volume 1, page 207—slightly updated.)

Seven saints in Wrong Places.

- (i) A Discouraged Worker. Elijah under a juniper tree—1 Kings 19. 4.
- (ii) A Backsliding Believer. Abram in Egypt—Gen. 12. 10.
- (iii) A Disobedient Servant. Jonah in the sea-monster—Jonah 2. 1-10.
- (iv) A Seduced Prophet. The man of God in the old prophet's house—1 Kings 13. 19.
- (v) A Lazy Saint. David on the house top—2 Sam. 11. 2.
- (vi) A Silenced Witness. Lot in Sodom—Gen. 14. 12.
- (vii) A Miserable Disciple. Peter before the fire—Luke 22. 55'.

(F. E. Marsh, 'One Thousand New Bible Readings', page 331, number 707.)

Joseph's brothers—true repentance.

Joseph was lord of all Egypt, and his brethren were at his mercy (Gen. 42. 6). But he had no intention of exploiting the situation to avenge himself. All his dealings with them were dictated by the desire to witness their genuine and wholehearted repentance for their past sin, that he might be reconciled to them.

His younger brother Benjamin was crucial to his plans. Joseph could safely assume that, as a son of Rachel, Benjamin would be the special object of Jacob's favour and affection (cf. Gen. 44. 20). His absence during his brethren's first visit confirmed this (Gen. 42. 4). Joseph was determined to learn how his brethren reacted to Benjamin's privileged position. Did they feel the same envy and malice towards Benjamin as they once felt towards him?

Their first visit to Egypt resulted in the pricking of their consciences and the acknowledgment of their sin (Gen. 42. 21). Joseph remembered his dreams (Gen. 42. 9), but they remembered what had followed his dreams!

During their second visit, Joseph skilfully tested his other brothers' true feelings towards Benjamin by favouring him with a five-fold portion (Gen. 43. 34). This blatant 'favouritism' would certainly have exposed any resentment on their part.

The acid test of their repentance, however, came after they had left for home, and during their subsequent return to Joseph's house (Gen. 44. 3-34). They were told that they were free to return to Jacob but that Benjamin must remain—enslaved! They were thus given the golden opportunity to be rid of Jacob's favourite son, as once they had rid themselves of Joseph. Would they again prove heedless of a brother's plight and of a father's grief? Their reaction would tell Joseph whether or not they had undergone a change of heart. They replied that they preferred to share Benjamin's slavery than to leave him alone ('we are my lord's servants, both we and he also with whom the cup is found', Gen. 44. 16).

Judah began his plea as spokesman for his brothers, but ended it with a personal request—that he be allowed to take Benjamin's place (Gen. 44. 33). There could be no doubt about the reality of his repentance. Once he had been glad to see one of Rachel's sons go into slavery, regardless of the sorrow it would bring to his father (Gen. 37. 26-27, 32-35). Now he was willing to go into slavery himself instead of Rachel's other son, to spare his father further sorrow (Gen. 44. 31).

True repentance means a complete change; it means my forsaking sin.

(Reprinted, with permission, from 'Day by Day through the Old Testament', Precious Seed Publications, page 39).

Prayer's unlimited reach.

1. 'Our prayers can go where we cannot ... There are no borders, no prison walls, no doors that are closed to us when we pray'.

(Brother Andrew, 'And God Changed His Mind', page 165.)

2. 'Nothing lies beyond the reach of prayer except that which lies outside the will of God'.

(Source unknown; attributed to several.)

'I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am you may be also' (John 14. 3).

'I believe death is the most blessed thing that can happen to a Christian; but it is not the thing I am looking for. I am looking to see Him. He might come to-morrow, or to-night, or now ... Suppose you thought He might come, would it not make a difference in your thoughts? You know it would ...

'Another thing I have found to be specially blessed is that ... I do not think merely of going to heaven and being happy—a vague thought this. Of course, I shall be perfectly happy ... But one is coming whom I know, who loves me, who has given Himself for me, whom I have learned to love: and I shall be with Him for ever'.

(J. N. Darby, 'Lectures on the Second Coming of Christ: Lecture 1', Collected Writings, Volume 11, page 207.)

'The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil' (1 Tim. 6. 10).

'A generous-hearted lady left (John Wesley) a legacy of a thousand pounds [about £250,000 in 2025], but in a short time it was all given away'. He wrote his sister: "You do not consider money never stays with me; it would burn me if it did. I throw it out of my hands as soon as possible *lest it should find a way into my heart*".

(I. H. Smith, 'John Wesley: The Scriptural Christian', 1791, page 29.)

'The love of Christ that surpasses knowledge' (Eph. 3. 19).

'The love of Christ in its sweetness, its fullness, its greatness, its faithfulness passes all human comprehension.

'Where can we find the words to describe His matchless, His unparalleled love toward the children of men? It is so vast and boundless that, as the swallow simply skims the water without diving into its depths, so all descriptive words merely touch the surface, while immeasurable depths lie below ...

'Before we can have any right idea of the love of Jesus, we must understand His previous glory in its height of majesty, and His incarnation upon the earth in all its depths of shame.

'But who can tell us the majesty of Christ? When He was enthroned in the highest heavens, He was very God of very God. By Him the heavens were made, and all its inhabitants. His own almighty arm upheld the spheres; the praises of cherubim and seraphim perpetually surrounded Him; the full chorus of the hallelujahs of the universe flowed without ceasing to the foot of His throne. He reigned supreme above all His creatures, God over all, blessed forever (Rom. 9. 5). Who can tell His height of glory then?

And who, on the other hand, can tell how low He descended? To be a man was something; to be a man of sorrows was far more. To bleed and die and suffer—these were much for Him who was the Son of God; but to suffer such unparalleled agony—to endure a death of shame and desertion by His Father—this is a depth of condescending love that the most inspired mind must utterly fail to fathom. Herein is love! And truly it is love that "surpasses knowledge".

(C. H. Spurgeon, 'Morning and Evening: A New Edition Updated with Modern Language', 2003, Morning of 28 March.)

'When the Lord has finished all his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, He will punish the speech of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria' (Isaiah 10. 12).

'The God who uses Assyria to punish His wayward covenant community nevertheless holds Assyria responsible for her own sins, and will ultimately destroy them. The empire that is nothing more than a battle axe in the hand of God, wielded against a rebellious nation (Isa. 10. 15), will itself ultimately be axed down by God (Isa. 10. 34).

(D. A. Carson, 'For the Love of God', Volume 2, comment for 12 May.)

(iii) Go on, smile.

Speaking in tongues?

A Swiss tourist is travelling through Dublin and looking for directions.

He pulls up at a bus stop where Paddy and Mick are waiting.

'Entschuldigung, koennen sprechen sie Deutsch?' he asks.

Paddy and Mick just stare at him.

'Excusez-moi, parlez-vous Francais?' he tries.

The two continue to stare.

'Scusi, sai parlare Italiano?'

Paddy and Mick look blankly at each other.

He makes one more attempt—'Por favor, puedes hablar Español?'

Still no response.

Frustrated, the Swiss tourist drives off.

Mick turns to Paddy and says, 'To be sure, Paddy, I am thinking you and me ought to learn a foreign language'.

'Now why would we be doing that?' responds Paddy.

'That foreign fella knew four languages,
and it didn't do 'im any good'.