

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 8 December 2025.

(i) Scripture.

I will always thank the Lord; I will never stop praising Him.

I will praise Him for what He has done; may all who are oppressed listen and be glad!

Proclaim with me the Lord's greatness; let us praise His name together!

I prayed to the Lord, and He answered me; He freed me from all my fears.

The oppressed look to Him and are glad; they will never be disappointed.

The helpless call to Him, and He answers; He saves them from all their troubles ...

Find out for yourself how good the Lord is. Happy are those who find safety with Him.

Psalm 34. 1-8 (*Good News Bible*)

(ii) Food for thought.

'Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich' (2 Cor. 8. 9).

'The crucial significance of the cradle at Bethlehem lies in its place in the sequence of steps down that led the Son of God to the cross of Calvary, and we do not understand it till we see it in this context.

'The key text in the New Testament for interpreting the incarnation is not, therefore, the bare statement, "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1. 14), but rather the more comprehensive statement of 2 Corinthians 8: "ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich".

'Here is stated, not the fact of the incarnation only, but also its meaning; the taking of manhood by the Son is set before us in a way which shows us how we should set it before ourselves and ever view it —not simply as a marvel of nature, but rather as a wonder of grace'.

'For the Son of God to ... become poor meant a laying aside of glory; a voluntary restraint of power; an acceptance of hardship, isolation, ill-treatment, malice, and misunderstanding; finally, a death that involved agony—spiritual, even more than physical. It meant love to the uttermost for unlovely men, who "through His poverty, might become rich".

'The Christmas message is that there is hope for a ruined humanity—hope of pardon, hope of peace with God, hope of glory—because, at the Father's will, Jesus Christ became poor and was born—that thirty years later He might hang on a cross. It is the most wonderful message that the world has ever heard, or will hear'.

(J. I. Packer, 'Knowing God', 1973, page 51.)

The two occasions when scripture records that Lord Jesus 'went a little farther'.

(i) 'Going a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets' (Mark 1. 19).

(ii) 'Going a little farther, He fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will" (Matt. 26. 39).

On the first occasion, the Lord Jesus saw James and John ahead of Him—busy. On the second occasion, He left James and John behind Him—drowsy (Matt. 26. 40).

'Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life' (John 11. 25)

'Jesus' concern is to divert Martha's focus from an abstract belief in what takes place on the last day (John 11. 24), to a personalized belief in Him who alone can provide it.

'Just as He not only gives the bread from heaven (John 6. 27) but is Himself the bread of life (John 6. 35), so, also, He not only raises the dead on the last day (John 6. 39, 40, 44, 54) but is Himself the resurrection and the life. There is neither resurrection nor eternal life outside of Him.

(D. A. Carson, 'The Gospel according to John: Pillar New Testament Commentary', page 412.)

[I reproduce as an Appendix below, a (slightly adapted) extract from my own notes on John 11. 25 in context, which formed part of a document entitled 'The Resurrection of Lazarus', attached to my 'Musings' dated 12 July 2021.]

'You have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba, Father!"' (Rom. 8. 15).

'Adoption was a very significant concept in the ancient world, employed by Paul with intent.

'Under Roman law, adoption bestowed all the privileges of naturally born children, with one very famous example: Gaius Octavian Thurinus was adopted by Julius Caesar and became Augustus Caesar—the first Roman emperor.

'The ancient world could hardly imagine a greater endorsement of adoption than that. But Paul did'.

(C. R. Campbell, *'The Letter to the Ephesians: Pillar New Testament Commentary'*, comment on Eph. 1. 5.)

'By grace you have been saved' (Eph. 2. 5, 8).

Ponder:

(1) 'In the New Testament, grace means God's love in action toward people who merited the opposite of love. Grace means God moving heaven and earth to save sinners who could not lift a finger to save themselves'.

(J. I. Packer, *ibid.*, page 226.)

(2) 'It is typical to hear divine grace defined as "God's undeserved favour", but this does not capture the idea communicated here in Ephesians 2 or in other places in Paul. As this whole passage shows, God's grace, which is emphasized here is actually God's favour granted to those who deserve His wrath (Eph. 2. 3).

'It is not just undeserved, as if the people whom God befriends were neutral. It is act of immense favour bestowed on those who lie under God's just condemnation as transgressors and sinners. Hence, a better quick definition is: "God's favour despite human demerit"'.

(S. M. Baugh, *'Ephesians: Evangelical Exegetical Commentary'*, pages 159–160.)

The Lord knows:

(i) My heart: 'Shall not God search this out? For He knows the secrets of the heart' (Psa. 44. 21).

(ii) My name: 'I will set Him on high, because He has known my name' (Psa. 91. 14).

(iii) My frame: 'He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust' (Psa. 103. 14).

(iv) My way: 'He knows the way that I take' (Job 23. 10).

(v) My words: 'There is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, you know it altogether' (Psa. 139. 4).

(vi) My needs: 'Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him' (Matt. 6. 8).

'Doing the will of God from the heart' (Eph. 6. 6).

'When a beloved child was at the point of death, a friend asked his mother, "What do you desire of God? Do you plead for life or death?"

'The mother answered, "I refer it to God's will".

'But her friend persisted, "If God were to refer it to you, what would you choose?"

'She responded, "Truly, if God were to refer it to me, I would refer it back to Him".

'That is what it means to commit ourselves and our troublesome concerns to God'.

(John Flavel, *'Triumphing Over Sinful Fear'*, page 82).

'In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths' (Prov. 3. 6).

'We must repose an entire confidence in the (i) wisdom, (ii) power and (iii) goodness of God ...

'We must therefore trust in the Lord with all our hearts; we must believe that He is: (i) able to do what He will, (ii) wise to do what is best, and (iii) good, according to His promise, to do what is best for us, if we love Him and serve Him'.

(Matthew Henry, *'An Exposition of the Old and New Testament'*, published 1800, page 570.)

'I am your servant; give me understanding that I may know your testimonies' (Psa. 119. 125).

'Texts will often refuse to reveal their treasures till you open them with the key of prayer.

'How wonderfully were the books opened to Daniel when he was in supplication! (Daniel 9) ...

'The closet is the best study. The commentators are good instructors, but the Author Himself is far better, and prayer makes a direct appeal to Him and enlists Him in our cause ...

'Persevering inquiry at the sacred oracle uplifts the veil and gives grace to look into the deep things of God. A certain Puritan divine, at a debate, was observed frequently to write upon the paper before

him. Upon others curiously seeking to read his notes, they found nothing upon the page but the words, "More light, Lord", "More light. Lord", repeated scores of times'.

(C. H. Spurgeon, 'Lectures to my students', pages 43-44.)

'Exceeding great and precious promises' (2 Pet. 1. 4).

'God's promises are like the stars: the darker the night, the brighter they shine'.

(D. Nicholas, quoted in D. Partow, 'Extracting the Precious from Isaiah', page 90).

'Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God ... shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus' (Phil. 4. 6-7).

'What do you want? Go and ask God about it. Instead of harassing your own mind about it, carry it to Him. It is not said He will give you just what you ask, because this might not be for your good; but He gives you His peace.

'You put your cares into His heart, and He will put His peace into yours. Do all the things that trouble you disturb the peace of God?

'With thanksgiving ...'. When I put my affairs in a persons' hands and ask them to see to it for me, they undertake to do it, and I say, "Thank you", although as yet they have done nothing ...

"Walk in the path you have learned of me", Paul says, "and the God of peace Himself shall be with you" (Phil. 4. 9). Joy is an up-and-down thing, but peace is something constant and undisturbed. God is never called the God of joy but the God of peace.

'While Christ was with His disciples, during His ministry, He never said to them, "Peace be unto you"; it was, rather, "Fear not." But, when He arose, He said, "Peace be unto you"

(J. N. Darby, 'Thoughts on Philippians 4', Collected Writings, Volume 27, page 242.)

'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins' (1 John 4. 10).

'Man needs a radical change of heart; he needs to begin to hate his sin instead of loving it, and to love God instead of hating him; he needs, in a word, to be reconciled to God. And the place, above all others, where this change takes place is at the foot of the cross, where he apprehends something of the hatred of God for sin and his indescribable love for the sinner.

'But the cross would not really have demonstrated God's hatred of sin had there been no need, on God's side, for the propitiation which alone makes it possible for Him to forgive the sinner. ...

"What would be the point of an empty display of love by a death which was utterly unnecessary ... It would be like a man saying that he would throw himself into the sea and give his life to demonstrate the depth of his affection for someone standing safely on a pier. This might be love, but it would savour of lunacy. How different it would be, however, if he had plunged into the water to rescue a drowning man, and had succeeded in saving him at the cost of his own life. That would be true love — love in action — rather than empty sentiment.

'So, the love of God was demonstrated at the cross not by an empty show, but by His saving men from judgment and condemnation in the only way in which this could be done. And it was shown, not primarily by the physical agony of crucifixion, but by the infinite spiritual cost of bearing the sin of the world'.

(J. N. D Anderson, 'Christianity, the witness of history: a lawyer's approach', page 81.)

(iii) Go on, smile.

Today's 'Smile' is dedicated to all those who are not strangers to problems with their computer.

Four friends happen to be different types of engineers; one is a mechanical engineer, one is a chemical engineer, one is an electrical engineer and one a computer engineer.

One day, the car in which the four friends are journeying breaks down.

The mechanical engineer says: 'It sounds to me as if the pistons have seized. We'll have to strip down the engine before we can get the car working again'.

The chemical engineer begs to differ. 'I don't think that is necessary', he says, 'It seems to me that the fuel is contaminated. I believe we only need to clean out the fuel system'.

'I reckon', contributes the electrical engineer, 'that it is probably no more than a faulty plug lead'.

Having voiced their opinions, the three turn to the computer engineer. 'Well, what do you think?' they ask him.

'Oh, it's really very simple', says the computer engineer. 'All we need do to get everything working properly again is for us ...

to get out of the car and to get back in again'.

[If you do not understand today's 'Smile', BE GRATEFUL.]

Appendix

The Resurrection of Lazarus (an extract)

From Martha's later misunderstanding that Jesus was speaking of the resurrection at the last day,¹ together with her horrified reaction to His command to remove the stone from the entrance to the tomb,² it is clear that the raising of her brother at this time is the last thing Martha is expecting.

I, therefore, understand her words, 'even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you',³ as simply reaffirming her continued confidence in the Lord Jesus. Evidently, the loss of her brother has not shattered her faith in Jesus.

Martha interprets Jesus' words, 'Your brother shall rise again',⁴ as no more than the conventional words of comfort and consolation offered by the Jews in cases of bereavement. So, 'Yes', she responds, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day',⁵ asserting her faith in a general resurrection of the just⁶ in the end times.

But Martha is soon to learn that Jesus is in fact saying something far more profound than that. She is to discover that He is speaking, not as the comforter of the sad and bereaved (though He had indeed been sent to 'bind up the broken hearted'⁷) but as the raiser of the dead—and that, not on some far-off occasion, but there and then.

The Lord's claim, 'I am the resurrection and the life ... shall never die'⁸ (the fifth of the seven 'I am' statements recorded of Jesus in John's gospel⁹), is simply mind-bending! Because, in these words, Jesus asserts that the life which is received through believing in Him can neither be (i) interrupted by physical death, nor (ii) terminated in eternal death!

(i) He Himself, He says, is 'the resurrection', and all who believe in Him (even if, like Lazarus, they should die physically) will continue to live spiritually, to be raised by Him one day and so to live for ever. For them, physical death is not the end, for it utterly fails to extinguish the life which they enjoy in Him. Theirs is a life which death cannot destroy. Make no mistake—'the last enemy'¹⁰ will not have the last word!

(ii) And He is, Jesus adds, also 'the life', and all who are now alive and believe in Him, like Martha, will never die. They will 'never' ('by no means for ever'¹¹) experience spiritual and eternal death. In His own words in the Book of Revelation, they shall 'not be hurt by the second death'.¹²

The Lord Jesus isn't promising His people that they will be kept outside the reach and range of the first death. What He is promising His people is that they will be kept forever outside the reach and range of the second death.

Not that, in any case, the first death has any real power to 'hurt' or injure His people.¹³ Because, for the believer, physical death is simply the Lord's appointed escort to usher him or her into His presence and to glory everlasting.¹⁴

Some years ago, I read of the martyrdom of John Hooper, the sixteenth century Bishop of Gloucester and Worcester in England. Bishop Hooper was burnt alive in February 1555 before an estimated crowd of 7,000.

'Sir Anthony Kingston, at one time Dr Hooper's good friend, was appointed by the queen's letters¹⁵ to attend at his execution ... With tender entreaties he exhorted him to live. "True it is", said the Bishop, "that death is bitter, and life is sweet; but ... [speaking of the difference between the second death and eternal life] consider that the death to come is more bitter, and the life to come is more sweet".'¹⁶

For the Lord Jesus to tell Martha, 'I am the resurrection and the life', was, then, to make a staggering double-claim. But the forthcoming resurrection of Lazarus was to provide firm and tangible evidence to back up the truth of His assertion.

Notes

¹ John 11. 24.

² John 11. 39.

³ John 11. 22.

⁴ John 11. 23.

⁵ John 11. 24.

⁶ Luke 14. 14; cf. Rev. 20. 5-6.

⁷ Isa. 61. 1-2.

⁸ John 11. 25-26.

⁹ The seven 'I am' statements made by Jesus in the Gospel according to John:

(i) 'I am the bread of life' (John 6. 35, 48)

(ii) 'I am the light of the world' (John 8. 12; 9. 5)

(iii) 'I am the door' (John 10. 7, 9)

(iv) 'I am the good shepherd' (John 10. 11, 14)

(v) 'I am the resurrection, and the life' (John 11. 25)

(vi) 'I am the way, the truth, and the life' (John 14. 6)

(vii) 'I am the true vine' (John 15. 1; cf. v. 5).

¹⁰ 1 Cor. 15. 26.

¹¹ A double negative followed by 'to the ages': 'εἰς ἐμὲ οὐ μὴ ... εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα'.

¹² Rev. 2. 11; in the imagery of the Book of Revelation, 'the second death' is one and the same as 'the lake of fire', Rev. 20. 14; 21. 8.

¹³ Compare 1 Pet. 3. 13.

¹⁴ Phil. 1. 21; 2 Cor. 5. 8.

¹⁵ The queen at the time was Mary, Queen of Scots.

¹⁶ Source: *Foxe's Book of Martyrs: Chapter 16, Part 1: The History, Imprisonment, and Examination of Mr John Hooper, Bishop of Worcester and Gloucester*.