

## Malcolm's Monday Musings : 5 July 2021

Greetings.

**First**, a rebuke to my lack of faith. Two days ago (3 July) marked the anniversary of a crisis (the 'greatest' trial of faith through which he had then passed) in the life of George Müller of Bristol.

I will let him tell the story in his own words:

*In July 1853 it pleased the Lord to try my faith in a way in which it had not been tried. My beloved daughter, an only child, and a believer since the commencement of the year 1846, was taken ill on June 20th. This illness, at first a low fever, turned to typhus. On **July 3rd** there seemed no hope of her recovery. Now was the trial of faith. But faith triumphed. My beloved wife and I were enabled to give her up into the hands of the Lord. He sustained us both exceedingly. Though my only and beloved child was brought near the grave, yet was my soul in perfect peace, satisfied with the will of my Heavenly Father, being assured that He would only do that for her and her parents, which in the end would be best. She continued very ill till about July 20th, when restoration began ...*

*The Father in Heaven said, as it were ..., "Art thou willing to give up this child to me?" My heart responded, "As it seems good to Thee, my Heavenly Father. Thy will be done". But as our hearts were made willing to give back our child to Him who had given her to us; so He was ready to leave her to us, and she lived ...*

*Of all the trials of faith that as yet I have had to pass through, this was the greatest; and by God's abundant mercy ... I was enabled to delight myself in the will of God; for I felt perfectly sure, that, if the Lord took this beloved daughter, it would be best for her parents, best for herself, and more for the glory of God than if she lived ... and thus **my heart had peace, perfect peace, and I had not a moment's anxiety. Thus would it be under all circumstances, were the believer exercising faith.***

(*'A Narrative of some of The Lord's Dealings with George Müller'*, Fourth Part, pages 340-342 – emphasis mine.)

'You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you' (Isaiah 26. 3).

**Second**, a short poetic riddle for you. (Solution next week.)

Four heads had I, but body none, and without any legs I would run.  
'Midst bliss supreme my lot was cast, and joys that could not be surpassed.  
Yet these delights I did forsake, and far away my course did take;  
Yet, while I wandered far or nigh, still ever in my bed did lie.

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

---

### (i) Scripture.

Behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, 'Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord"'.  
Matthew 23. 34-39 (King James Version)

## **(ii) Food for thought.**

### ***Four precious promises in Isaiah.***

- (i) 'I will help' (Isa. 41. 10, 13, 14).
- (ii) 'I will hold' (Isa. 42. 6).
- (iii) 'I will heal' (Isa. 57. 19).
- (iv) 'I will hear' (Isa. 65. 24).

### ***Seven qualities of God's mercy.***

- (i) His mercy is great (Num. 14. 18; Psalm 103. 11; 145. 8). It is great, because the Father is the Source of it; it is great, because of the price it cost before it could reach us, for sin had blocked up the way. The cost was the blood of Christ.
  - (ii) His mercy is enduring (1 Chron. 16. 34, 41; 2 Chron. 5. 13; Psalm 106. 1; Jer. 33:11). Having put His hand to the plough, He never looks back.
  - (iii) His mercy is plenteous (Psalm 86. 5, 15; 103. 8). He does not dole it out grudgingly, but showers it upon us abundantly.
  - (iv) His mercy is tender (Luke 1. 78; James 5. 11). He has mercy upon us, not as a judge, but as a Father.
  - (v) His mercy is rich, or He is rich in mercy (Eph. 2. 4). He keeps not the riches of His mercy to Himself, but, like Joseph, who gave of his abundance to his brethren, even so the Lord gives us of His fulness.
  - (vi) His mercy is saving (Titus 3. 5). We should never have been saved if our salvation had depended upon ourselves; but He held out the sceptre of mercy to us, as Ahasuerus did to Esther.
  - (vii) His mercy is abundant (1 Peter 1. 3). It is not like a brook that dries up in the summer, but like the sea, which is unlimited. His mercy shall be as an attendant to accompany us (Psalm 23. 6), and as an army to encompass us (Psalm 32. 10).
- (F. E. Marsh, 'Five Hundred Bible Readings', page 178.)

### ***'The just shall live by faith' (Hab. 2. 4).***

**1.** 'It goes without saying that the text that made Martin Luther made history with a vengeance ... . In the Convent Library at Erfurt ... an exceedingly famous and beautiful picture ... represents Luther as a young monk of four and twenty, poring in the early morning over a copy of the Scriptures to which a bit of broken chain is hanging. The dawn is stealing through the open lattice, illumining both the open Bible and the eager face of its reader. And on the page that the young monk so intently studies are to be seen the words: "The just shall live by faith" ... . These, then, are the words that made the world all over again.

Leaving the Convent Library at Erfurt, let us visit another library, the Library of Rudolstadt. For here, in a glass case ... is a letter in the handwriting of Dr Paul Luther, the reformer's youngest son:

"In the year 1544", we read, "my late dearest father, in the presence of us all, narrated the whole story of his journey to Rome. He acknowledged with great joy that, in that city, through the Spirit of Jesus Christ, he had come to the knowledge of the truth of the everlasting gospel. It happened in this way. As he repeated his prayers on the Lateran staircase, the words of the Prophet Habakkuk came suddenly to his mind, "The just shall live by faith". Thereupon he ceased his prayers, returned to Wittenberg, and took this as *the chief foundation of all his doctrine*".

The picture in the one library, and the manuscript in the other, have told us all that we desire to know ... "This powerful text", remarks Merle D'Aubigne, "has a mysterious influence on the life of Luther. It was a creative sentence, both for the reformer and for the Reformation. It was in these words that God then said, 'Let there be light', and there was light!"

(F. W. Boreham, 'Martin Luther's Text', A Bunch of Everlastings, pages 18-24.)

**2.** 'The Jews in the Talmud have this saying, "The whole law was given to Moses at Sinai, in six hundred and thirteen precepts". David, in the fifteenth Psalm, brings them all within the compass of eleven. Isaiah brings them to six (Isa. 33. 15); Micah to three (Micah 6. 8); Isaiah again to two (Isa. 56. 2); Habakkuk to this one, "The just shall live by faith" (Hab. 2. 4)'.

(John Lightfoot, 'Funeral Sermon for Sir Rowland Cotton', Whole Works of the Rev. John Lightfoot, Volume 6, page 201.)

### ***Seven 'indispensables'.***

- (i) Without the Lord Jesus, we can do nothing (John 15. 5).
- (ii) Without love, we are nothing (1 Cor. 13. 2).
- (iii) Without the shedding of blood, we cannot have forgiveness (Heb. 9. 22).
- (iv) Without faith, we cannot please God (Heb. 11. 6).
- (v) Without chastisement, we are not sons (Heb. 12. 8).
- (vi) Without holiness, we shall not see the Lord (Heb. 12. 14).
- (vii) Without works, our faith is dead (James 2. 26).

### ***Two contrasting prayers of men while they were being stoned.***

1. In the Old Testament, Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the priest: 'they stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king ... and when he died, he said, "The Lord look upon it, and require it"' (2 Chron. 24. 21-22).

2. In the New Testament, Stephen: 'they stoned Stephen ... and he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge"' (Acts 7. 59-60).

And the reason for the difference? The example of Him who, dying at a time between the two stonings, had prayed for His executioners, 'Father, forgive them' (Luke 23. 34).

### **The uniqueness of the Book of Psalms.**

'Among all the books, the Book of Psalms has certainly a very special grace ... for, besides the characteristics which it shares with others, it has this peculiar marvel of its own, that *within it are represented and portrayed in all their great variety the movements of the human soul*. ... Moreover, whatever your particular need or trouble, from this same book you can select a form of words to fit it, so that you do not merely hear and then pass on, but learn the way to remedy your ill'.

(Athanasius of Alexandria, 'Letter to Marcellinus' – written in the fourth century.)

The comments of Athanasius are sometimes paraphrased as, 'The Psalms have a unique place in the Bible because, *whereas most of Scripture speaks to us, the Psalms speak for us*'.

### **Unfailing.**

(i) God Himself: 'The Lord your God ... will not fail you' (Deut. 31. 6; cf. Deut. 31, 8; Josh. 1. 5; 1 Chron. 28. 20).

(ii) God's word: 'Not a word failed of any good thing which the Lord had spoken' (Josh. 21. 45).

(iii) God's faithfulness: 'I will not suffer my faithfulness to fail' (Psa. 89. 33).

(iv) God's compassions: 'His compassions fail not. They are new every morning' (Lam 3. 22-23).

(v) God's Servant – the Lord Jesus: 'Behold my Servant ... He shall not fail' (Isa. 42. 1, 4).

### **'The King of glory'.**

Break forth, O earth in praises!  
Dwell on His wondrous story;  
The Saviour's name and love proclaim—  
The King who reigns in glory.  
See on the throne beside Him,  
O'er all her foes victorious,  
His royal Bride, for whom He died,  
Like Him for ever glorious.

Hail to the King of glory!  
Head of the new creation—  
Thy ways of grace we love to trace,  
And praise Thy great salvation.  
Thy heart was pressed with sorrow,  
The bonds of death to sever,  
To make us free, that we might be  
Thy crown of joy for ever.

(Edward Denney, 'Songs of Grace and Glory' {edited by Frances Ridley Havergal}, hymn number 335.)

### **Three things committed.**

(i) Sin: 'Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which *commit* such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them' (Rom. 1. 32).

(ii) Judgment: The Father judges no man, but has *committed* all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father' (John 5. 22-23).

(iii) The spirit: 'Into your hand I *commit* my spirit' (Psa. 31. 5; Luke 23. 46).

### **Holy heart ailments.**

(i) An enlarged heart: 'I will run in the way of your commandments when you enlarge my heart' (Psa. 119. 32; cf. 'God gave Solomon ... largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore' (1 Kings 4. 29) – large enough to encompass all the people of God: 'Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude' (1 Kings 4. 20).

(ii) A case of heartburn: 'Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the scriptures?' (Luke 24. 32).

(iii) A broken heart: 'The Lord is near to them that are of a broken heart' (Psa. 34. 18).

(iv) Heart sickness: 'I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys ... Sustain me ... refresh me ... for I am sick with love' (Song of Songs 2. 1, 5; cf. Song of Songs 5. 8).

### **Heels.**

(i) The 'heel bruiser' – the serpent-devil (Gen. 3. 15).

(ii) The 'heel seizer' – Jacob (Gen. 25. 26; Hos. 12. 3).

(iii) The two 'heel lifters' – Ahithophel (Psa. 41. 9) and Judas Iscariot (John 13. 18).

***Eight woes and one blessing (Matt. 23. 1-39).***

'The Lord's sad lamentation [Matt. 23. 37-39] followed immediately on a scathing denunciation. The works of these truth-hating, God-rejecting hypocrites were performed only to win the applause of men. The woes Jesus pronounced against them provide us with a full-length portrait of the hypocrite, with all his false profession and shameful inconsistencies.

There were eight woes in all (verses 13, 14, 15, 16, 23, 25, 27, 29). They remind us of the eight woes which Isaiah the prophet uttered against his contemporaries, Isaiah 3. 9, 11; 5.8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22.

There was, however, one important difference between Isaiah and Jesus. Faced with the majesty and holiness

of the Lord of hosts, the prophet was forced to pronounce one more woe—on himself, Isaiah 6. 5. Not so the Lord! He closed His address not with a woe but with a beatitude, verse 39.

Isaiah had eight woes for others and then added "Woe is me"; Jesus had eight woes for others but then, concerning Himself, He added, "Blessed is He".

(*'Day by Day through the New Testament (Precious Seed Publications)*), page 39.)

***Bearing.***

(i) A cross (Luke 14. 27).

(ii) Fruit (John 15. 2).

(iii) Witness (Acts 1. 8).

(iv) Burdens (Gal. 6. 2, 5).

(v) With others (Eph. 4. 2).

(vi) Tales (Prov. 18. 8); it has been well said that 'he who carries a "tale" makes a monkey out of himself'!

***'His marvellous works which He has done' (Psa. 105. 5).***

(i) 'They declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles' (Acts 14. 27).

(ii) 'They were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them' (Acts 15. 4).

(iii) 'They related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles' (Acts 15. 12).

(iv) 'He related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry' (Acts 21. 19).

Compare:

(a) 'I will not venture to speak of anything except what *Christ has accomplished through me*' (Rom. 15. 18).

(b) 'I planted, Apollos watered, but *God gave the growth*' (1 Cor. 3. 6).

(c) 'I worked harder than any of them, though it was *not I, but the grace of God that is with me*' (1 Cor. 15. 10).

***'No more' in Hebrews 10 (King James Version).***

(i) 'The worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins' (Heb. 10. 2).

(ii) 'Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more' (Heb. 10. 17).

(iii) 'Where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin' (Heb. 10. 18).

(iv) 'If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins' (Heb. 10. 26).

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

Paddy and Mick were looking in the shop window of an expensive shoe shop in Dublin. A large sign caught their attention. The sign advertised genuine crocodile shoes at prices ranging from £300 and £500 per pair.

Paddy and Mick looked at each other and, there and then, they decided to travel to Africa and make their fortune.

Three months later, after catching and killing 23 crocodiles between them, Paddy told Mick, 'To be shure, Mick, *if the next one isn't wearing shoes, I'm after going back home*'.

George and Gwen hired Paddy to fix a large hole in their roof. They went to stay with some friends for a few days while the job was done.

They happened to return home in the midst of a torrential rainstorm, only to find Paddy sitting in the living room on a soaking wet couch in two inches of water.

'What are you sitting here for?' George yelled at him. 'Get up now and fix that leak!'

'Can't do that', Paddy responded. 'It's raining cats and dogs out there'.

'Then why didn't you repair the hole when the sun was out?' George wanted to know.

"Don't be daft, Paddy answered. '*The roof wasn't leaking then!*'

See the attached 'The Puzzle' picture.

