

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 7 February 2022.

Greetings.

This is my 'Monday Musings' email.

At the outset, I need to tell you that **this will be the last 'Musings' email for some time** – probably for six weeks or so. This break is due, mainly, to my being away from home (in South Africa, to be precise), God willing, for most of that time.

This is, perhaps, an opportune time to remind you that all previous 'Musings' can be accessed freely at <https://voicesforchrist.org/writings/speaker/370>. I should like to think that many of these 'Musings' will repay a second reading.

As explained in the first item on that link, the weekly 'Musings' were born of a desire 'to encourage believers who, on account of COVID-19 restrictions, were unable to access normal assembly meetings'. The first 'Musings' were circulated under cover of an email, dated 6 April 2020, which explained that, 'given this time of COVID-19 enforced leisure, I intend, God willing, to write a brief weekly email ...'.

A lot of water has passed under the bridge in the past twenty-two months and, in many places, restrictions have been progressively lifted.

I intend, therefore, to review the need to recommence the 'Musings' at the end of next month. I should appreciate any comments or suggestions, please.

For now, happy reading.

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

(i) Scripture.

The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God ... we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God ...

For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.

1 Corinthians 1. 18-29 (*The New King James Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

Safe!

'We live under the canopy of divine omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence'.

(Charles Stanley, *'From the Pastor's Heart'*, 12 January 2022.)

Biblical prophecy.

'More than a fourth of the Bible is predictive prophecy. Approximately one-third of it has yet to be fulfilled. Both the Old and New Testaments are full of promises about the return of Jesus Christ. Over 1,800 references appear in the Old Testament, and seventeen Old Testament books give prominence to this theme.

'Of the 260 chapters in the New Testament, there are more than 300 references to the Lord's return—one out of every thirty verses. Twenty-three of the twenty-seven New Testament books refer to this great event. Three of the four other books are single-chapter letters written to individuals concerning a particular subject, and the fourth is Galatians, which does imply Christ's coming again. For every prophecy on the first coming of Christ, there are eight on Christ's second coming'.

(George Sweeting, 'Who Said That?' page 391.)

'What the word of God does'.

(i) By it we are born again (1 Pet. 1. 23).

(ii) By it we grow (1 Pet. 2: 2).

(iii) By it we are cleansed (John 15. 3).

(iv) By it we are sanctified (John 17. 17).

(v) By it we get light (Psa. 119. 105).

(vi) By it we are defended (Eph. 6. 17).

(D. L. Moody, 'Notes from my Bible', page 194.)

New-born and high-born.

'For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called' (1 Cor. 1. 26).

'It is better to be new-born than high-born ... Do not quarrel with your low estate if Christ is yours. A hut on the rock is better than a palace on the sand'.

(Samuel Coley, quoted by R. P. Downes, 'Samuel Coley: The Illustrative Preacher', pages 80-81.)

'God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law' (Gal. 4. 4),

*'The woman brought in sin and the law brought in transgression and **Christ meets both!** Come of a woman, and made under law'.*

(J. N. Darby, 'Fragment', Food for the Flock, Volume 5, page 234.)

Christian love.

'Love one another, as I have loved you' (John 13. 34; 15. 12).

'It may be difficult to provide a perfect definition for Christian love. But it is not difficult to find its supreme example'.

(D. A. Carson, 'For the Love of God', Volume 1, 8 September.)

Death defeated.

(i) *'I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades' (Rev. 1. 18).*

'It is an integral part of His resurrection triumph that He not only broke free from the prison house but became possessed of the keys, so that His own are no longer to be bound there ... for them is the certainty that the last word is not with death, but with death's Conqueror, and whether they live or die they can rest in Him ...

(ii) *'I am the resurrection and the life. He that believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live, and whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die' (John 11. 25-26).*

'In these words, we see that the believer, like other men, will undergo biological death, but that is not the point. He will never die in the sense that matters, for he that believes on Christ has entered into a new existence where death has no part'.

(Leon Morris, 'The Wages of Sin: An Examination of the New Testament Teaching on Death', pages 25-28.)

Sins not remembered.

'What does the Scripture mean when it says "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more" (Heb. 10. 17)?

'To understand that, we must understand the term "remember" in the Bible. In the ancient world the kings in their palaces had a number of officials ... The Old Testament tells us that there was one official who was called "the remembrancer" or "the recorder". His job was to keep the records of everything that went on in the realm, so that the king could summon the remembrancer at any time and find out what had happened.

'So, if a king had a sleepless night, like old Ahasuerus did (Esther 6. 1), he would get up and call for the remembrancer to bring the books and to start reading. If he came to the name of someone who had done terrible things, the king would ask if he had been sentenced and punished. If the remembrancer said, "No, your Majesty, he hasn't been dealt with yet", the king would say, "Now that you've brought it to my mind, please carry out my sentence on him".

'That is what the Bible means by remembering somebody's sins. It means to haul them up in court for the judge to pronounce the sentence of "guilty" and prescribe the penalty. That is what God has said He will never do with us. He will never drag us into His judicial court, never rake up the guilt of our sins. He will never again pronounce the sentence, nor have the penalty executed. Why won't He? Because He's already done it once and for all, when our blessed Lord Jesus died at Calvary'.

(David Gooding, 'A Glimpse of Heaven: One Study from Revelation 21 on the Believer's Future', Myrtlefield Sermons. Freely accessible at <https://www.myrtlefieldhouse.com/sermons/a-glimpse-of-heaven.>)

The apostle Paul's developing view of his unworthiness.

- (i) 'I am the least of the apostles' (1 Cor. 15. 9).
- (ii) 'I am less than the least of all saints' (Eph. 3. 8).
- (iii) 'Sinners, of whom I am chief' (1 Tim. 1. 15).

Death: loss or gain?

'He who lays up treasures on earth spends his life backing away from his treasures. To him, death is loss. He who lays up treasures in heaven looks forward to eternity; he's moving daily toward his treasures. To him, death is gain'.

(Randy Alcorn, 'The Treasure Principle', page 43.)

Comfort over departed saints.

'I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope. For them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. ... for the Lord himself shall descend from heaven ... then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words' (1 Thess. 4. 13-17).

'The apostolic consolation to saints mourning the death of brethren was not, "Be content, they are gone to heaven", then it would have been, "You will go to them". But so did the coming of the Lord fill the soul, as a present thing, that he gives this comfort, as it were, at the dying-bed of a Christian, "Be content, God will bring him (or her) back when Jesus comes".

(Anonymous, 'Christ's Coming, Faith's Crowning', The Christian's Friend, 1874, page 149.)

'Whatever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord' (Col. 3. 23).

- (i) 'The Christian shoemaker does his duty not by putting little crosses on the shoes, but by making good shoes, because God is interested in good craftsmanship'.

(Attributed widely to Martin Luther. However, I have failed to locate the quotation in his writings.)

It may be, therefore, that Martin Luther King, Jr., stood on his namesake's shoulders when he reputedly said:

- (ii) 'If a man is called to be a streetsweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven played music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, here lived a great streetsweeper who did his job well'.

'Extraordinary'.

'The true call of a Christian is not to do extraordinary things, but to do ordinary things in an extraordinary way'.

(Attributed to Dean Stanley.)

'Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ' (2 Pet. 3. 18).

We might say that 'grace' is the keyword in Peter's first epistle (1 Pet. 1. 2, 10, 13; 3. 7; 4. 10; 5. 5, 10, 12) and that 'knowledge' is the keyword in his second epistle (2 Pet. 1. 2, 3; 5, 6, 8; 2. 20). In this case, 2 Pet. 3. 18 pulls together the teaching of both epistles.

'If we are to find a single "key verse" for all of 2 Peter, this would probably be it ... we continue growing (the present tense of the imperative indicates something that is ongoing, not something new) in the grace/favour that Jesus gives and in the knowledge that he gives.

'The saints are not only compared to stars for their light, but to trees for their growth ... A good Christian is not like Hezekiah's sun that went backwards (2 Kings 20. 11), nor Joshua's sun that stood still (Josh. 10. 13), but is always advancing in holiness, and increasing with the increase of God (Col. 2. 19)'.

(Thomas Watson, 'A Body of Divinity', page 273.)

'It is more blessed to give than to receive' (Acts 20. 35).

- (i) The question we each need to ask is not, 'How much have I *gotten*?' but 'How much have I *given*?'
(ii) 'How we use our money demonstrates the reality of our love for God. In some ways it proves our love more conclusively than depth of knowledge, length of prayers or prominence of service. These things can be feigned, but the use of our possessions *shows us up* for what we actually are'.

(Charles C. Ryrie, *Balancing the Christian Life*, page 84.)

- (iii) 'When we die we *leave behind* us all we *have*, and *take with* us all we *are*'.
(Anonymous.)

Abortion: two Christian quotations—one ancient and one modern.

(i) *Ancient*. 'In our case, murder being once for all forbidden, we may not *destroy even the foetus* in the womb, while as yet the human being derives blood from other parts of the body for its sustenance. To hinder birth is merely a speedier man-killing; nor does it matter whether you take away a life that is born, or destroy one that is coming to the birth. That is a man which is going to be one; you have the fruit already in the seed'.

(Tertullian, 'Apology' (c.197 AD), translated by S. Thelwall, Chapter 9.)

(ii) *Modern*. 'I agree with Raymond Johnston, the late founder director of CARE Trust, when he wrote in a newspaper article: "I personally am convinced that the *destruction of the unborn* on this massive, deliberate scale is the greatest single offence regularly perpetrated in Britain today, and would be the first thing an Old Testament prophet *redivivus* [brought back to life] would reproach us for"'.
(John Stott, 'Issues Facing Christians Today' (third edition, published 1999), page 373.)

Prayer for others,

'Prayer requires effort. When we pray for people, we focus our thoughts on them; we take their burdens upon ourselves; we intercede before God for them; we sacrifice our time for them; we commit ourselves to their wellbeing. We demonstrate true care and compassion'.

(Alexander Strauch, *Leading with Love*, page 11.)

Scripture memorization.: 'Lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul' (Deut. 11. 18).

(i) 'I know of no other single practice in the Christian life more rewarding, practically speaking, than memorizing Scripture ... No other single exercise pays greater *spiritual dividends*! Your prayer life will be strengthened. Your witnessing will be sharper and much more effective. Your attitudes and outlook will begin to change. Your mind will become alert and observant. Your confidence and assurance will be enhanced. Your faith will be solidified'.

(Charles Swindoll, *Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life*, 1983, page 53.)

(ii) 'Bible memorization is absolutely fundamental to *spiritual formation*. If I had to—and of course I don't have to—choose between all the disciplines of the spiritual life and take only one, I would choose Bible memorization ... Bible memorization is a fundamental way of filling our minds with what they need. "This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth" (Josh 1. 8). That's where we need it! In our mouth. Now, how did it get in your mouth? Memorization'.

(Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship*, page 58.)

(iii) Go on, smile.

1. Two long-term friends (Brian and Bert) went fishing on a lake. Disaster struck when, leaning over the side of the boat, Brian's dentures fell out and disappeared into the murky water.

Being something of a prankster, Bert surreptitiously removed his own false teeth, tied them on his line, threw his line into the lake and pretended he had caught Brian's 'choppers'.

Unhooking the teeth, Brian tried to put them into his mouth. Then, suddenly, he hurled Bert's dentures into the lake, calling out in disgust, '*They're not mine! They don't fit!*'

With fond memories, I reproduce the following 'smile' from the very first 'Malcolm's Monday Musings' email, issued on 6th April 2020.

2. A tough old cowboy once counselled his grandson that, if he wanted to live a long life, the secret was to sprinkle a little gunpowder on his oatmeal every morning.

Throughout life, his grandson did this conscientiously, and he lived to the great age of 93.

When he died, he left 14 children, 28 grandchildren, 35 great-grandchildren ... *and a fifteen-foot hole in the wall of the local crematorium.*