

## Malcolm's Monday Musings : 18 July 2022

### (i) Scripture

Of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire".

But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness ('lawlessness'); therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions".

And, "You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end".

Hebrews 1. 7-12 (*English Standard Version*)

### (ii) Food for thought.

**'Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour' (1 Pet. 5. 8).**

'Never idle, Satan is always on the prowl as "the prince of this world" (John 12. 31), blinding minds (2 Cor. 4. 4), stealing God's Word (Matt. 13. 19), opposing God's work (1 Thess. 2. 18), sowing tares (Matt. 13. 37-40), tempting God's people (1 Cor. 7. 5), attacking God's Word (Gen. 3. 1), spreading false doctrine (1 Tim. 1. 3), persecuting God's church (Rev. 2. 10), and deceiving the nations (Rev. 16. 14)'.

(S. J. Lawson, '*Job: Holman Commentary*', page 16).

**'Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!' (1 Cor. 9. 16).**

I want to direct your attention to a very large bell which hangs above the clock at St. Paul's Cathedral in London. This bell, 'Great Paul', is 'housed in the south west tower, and is the largest bell ever cast in the British Isles, weighing in at an incredible 16½ tons'.

(*'St Paul's Cathedral; the Bells'*, accessed at <https://www.stpauls.co.uk/bells>).

'Great Paul' does not currently ring every day but it has rung out on a number of historic occasions, including the coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 1953, the state funeral of Winston Churchill in 1965 and, a little over six weeks ago, the Service of Thanksgiving in celebration of the Queen's 70-year reign.

My interest in 'Great Paul' stems from the fact that it is inscribed with the words of the Latin Vulgate translation of the words of the apostle Paul: '*vae mihi si non evangelisavero*' ... 'Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel'.

"Woe is me!" is an exclamation which occurs nowhere else in the writings of St. Paul. But it has a history in the prophetic literature of the Hebrews, and St. Paul uses it with a full knowledge of its meaning. Under the cover of this ... word "Woe!", the Prophets called down penal suffering upon persons, countries, causes, enterprises, which were opposed to the will of God; and our Lord employed the same word in the same sense as the Prophets, though with higher authority ...

'Paul, then, is employing an expression of acknowledged solemnity which for him, we may be very sure, had not lost its freshness. He predicts and invokes evil upon himself if it should ever happen that he ceased, while in this life, to preach the good news of God to men ...

"Woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel!" Every Christian man and woman may, in a true sense, make these words his own. For most assuredly every life preaches something, not necessarily in set discourses, not perhaps by anything that passes the lips, but by its whole drift and character'.

(Henry Parry Liddon, '*The Inscription on "Great Paul"*', Advent in St. Paul's: Sermon 33, pages 118-119, 132.)

**'To the Son He says: "... You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness"' (Heb. 1. 8-9).**

The Lord Jesus lived for what He loved (Matt. 3. 15) and died for what He hated (1 Cor. 15. 3).

**Parallels between (a) the great flood and (b) Sodom and Gomorrah.**

'There are many echoes of the theme and vocabulary of the flood story in the Sodom and Gomorrah story.

Both tell of (i) a universal destruction from which (ii) one family escapes thanks to (iii) the father's righteousness, but after their rescue (iv) he drinks too much and is (v.) abused by his children (Gen. 9. 21-22; 19. 32-35).

(G. J. Wenham, 'Story as Torah: reading Old Testament narrative ethically', pages 27–28).

**'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God' (James 1. 5).**

'If you lack knowledge, go to school. If you lack wisdom, get on your knees!'

(Vance Havner, quoted by W. W. Wiersbe, 'With the Word', page 740.)

**'The Captain of the Lord's host said to Joshua, "Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy". And Joshua did so' (Josh. 5. 15).**

**'Moses's** barefoot encounter comes at the beginning of the exodus [Exod. 3. 5]. It's where he's commissioned to go back to Pharaoh and (i) begin leading Israel out of Egypt into the Promised Land (Exod. 3. 7-10).

It is (ii) immediately followed by an odd story of circumcision (Exod. 4. 24-26), while the exodus itself is immediately preceded by (iii) the first Passover (Exod. 12-13).

**'Joshua's** barefoot encounter comes after he (i) has just brought God's people into the Promised Land, having led the people miraculously through the Jordan, just as Moses had led the people miraculously through the Red Sea 40 years earlier (Josh. 3; Exod. 14).

It is (ii) immediately preceded by a story of circumcision (Josh. 5. 1–9), as well as (iii) Israel's first Passover in Canaan (Josh. 5. 10–12).

'The author wants us to view this story as the end of the exodus, with Moses and Joshua's barefoot encounters serving as bookends ... This is also signalled by the fact that, in the verse prior, we're told that the manna God had been providing for 40 years finally ceased falling (Josh. 5. 12). In short, this story marks the end of one era and the beginning of another'.

(Justin Dillehay, 'Joshua's Mysterious Barefoot Encounter', accessed at ...

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/joshua-barefoot-encounter/>)

**'Go return ... I have left me seven thousand in Israel' (1 Kings 19. 15-18).**

God provides for His disappointed, disillusioned and despondent servant. And the man previously fed miraculously by ravens [1 Kings 17. 6] and a widow [1 Kings 17. 15] enjoys two helpings of 'angel cake' accompanied by refreshing drinks to revive him [1 Kings 19. 5-8].

"Behold, the Lord ..." (1 Kings 19. 11-12). God did not speak in the great wind, as He did to Job [Job 40. 6]; He did not reveal Himself in the earthquake, as he did to Korah [Numb. 16. 31-32]; He did not walk in the fire, as He did with Daniel's three friends [Dan 3. 24-25]. Here these served as the mere outriders and forerunners of His presence, before which Elijah covered his face. Now the Lord has Elijah's rapt attention!

"Behold, there came a voice to him" (1 Kings 19. 13-17). Elijah first repeats his earlier complaint against Israel; the people had rejected God's word, worship and witnesses (note 'thy covenant', 'thine altars' and 'thy prophets', vv. 10, 14).

'The man who had made intercession to God for Israel on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18. 37), now 'makes 'intercession to God against Israel' (Rom. 11. 2)! "I, even I only, am left", he laments [1 Kings 19. 10, 14]. But God has two messages for His servant.

'First, he is not indispensable. He is to anoint:

(a) Hazael, who will fight against Israel and so weaken Ahab's dynasty [1 Kings 19. 15];

(b) Jehu, who will overthrow the house of Ahab, destroying Jezebel, together with the worshippers and altars of Ba'al [1 Kings 19. 16a]; and

(c) Elisha, who will carry on his prophetic work after him [1 Kings 19. 16b].

Between them, these three men will finish off the destruction of Ba'al worship in Israel, which Elijah had begun.

'And second, to further encourage His servant's downcast spirit, the Lord sets the record straight; "I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to Ba'al" (Rom. 11. 4).

'So, "Go, return", Elijah, all is not lost! There is still a work for you to do'.

('Bible Commands', Precious Seed Publications', page 70.)

**'You also are built together for an habitation of God in the Spirit' (Eph. 2. 22).**

'Of old, men built for God His dwelling-place [Exod. 15. 2; 25. 8]; now, He has built one for Himself ... If God took a delight in dwelling in the midst of His people then, not less does He surely now, since He has made them His habitation in the Spirit'.

(C. E. Stuart, 'Simple Papers on the Church of God', The Christian's Friend, 1877, pages 45-46.)

**'Earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven' (2 Cor. 5. 2).**

'The hope of the believer is not death ... The purpose of God is nothing less than that we should be conformed to the image of Christ ... Our proper hope is to see Him as He is, and be like Him ...

*'We have a hope in death, but death is not our hope'.*

(J. N. Darby, *'What death is to the Christian'*, Collected Writings, Volume 26, page 367.)

***'Caught up ... to meet the Lord in the air' (1 Thess. 4. 17).***

'At a time unrevealed and hence undiscoverable, "they that are Christ's" are to be caught away "to meet the Lord in the air"; or as the words run literally "to a meeting with". The word used ... occurs elsewhere only in Matthew 25. 1, 6; Acts 28. 15. The brethren who met the apostle at the Three Taverns returned with him to Rome; in the parable the virgins returned with the bridegroom to the place whence they set out.

'After this analogy those who are caught up to this meeting with the Lord in the air, are to return with Him to the earth, for we know that the earth is the appointed terminus toward which He is journeying when that meeting takes place.

'There is nothing in the Word, neither is there anything in the context, to indicate that the return to the earth must follow immediately upon the meeting in the air ... Indeed, there are cogent reasons for the conclusion that that descent will be interrupted for a measurable interval at the point of meeting with His redeemed people'.

(C. F. Hogg and W. E. Vine, *'Touching the Coming of the Lord'*, page 152.)

***'Wherefore God ... gave them up' (Rom. 1. 24, 26, 28).***

'What is the cause, (Paul) asks, of (the) appalling condition which has developed in the world? Whence come these shameful perversions, this internecine enmity within the human family?

'It all arises, he says, from wrong ideas about God. And these wrong ideas about God did not arise innocently; the knowledge of the true God was accessible, but men and women closed their minds to it.

'Instead of appreciating the glory of the Creator by contemplating the universe which He created, they gave to created things that glory which belongs to God alone'.

(F. F. Bruce, *'Romans: Tyndale New Testament Commentary'*, page 82.)

***'The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen' (Rom. 1. 20).***

'Godless science reads Nature only as Milton's daughters read Hebrew: rightly syllabing the sentences, but utterly ignorant of the meaning'.

(Samuel Coley, quoted by R. P. Downes, *'Samuel Coley: The Illustrative Preacher'*, page 70.)

***How to give.***

According to Paul's exhortations to the saints at Corinth, the believer should give:

- (i) Regularly ... 'On the first day of every week' (1 Cor. 16. 2a);
- (ii) Proportionately ... 'As he may prosper' (1 Cor. 16. 2c);
- (iii) Generously ... 'Whoever sows bountifully' (2 Cor. 9. 6);
- (iv) Purposefully ... 'As he has decided in his heart' (2 Cor. 9. 7a);
- (v) Willingly ... 'not reluctantly or under compulsion' (2 Cor. 9. 7b); and
- (vi) Cheerfully ... 'God loves a cheerful giver' (2 Cor. 9. 7c).

***Cares—good and bad.***

'It is the old story: "Casting all your care upon Him" [1 Pet. 5. 7], that is one side of life; "The care that cometh upon me daily" [2 Cor. 11. 28], that is the other.

'There is no escape from it if we share the burdens of our Lord. It is part of the paradox of life'.

(Amy Carmichael, *'Walker of Tinnevelly'*, page 176.)

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

When the believer meditates upon that which scripture says of the Lord Jesus, his or her appreciation and estimation of Him grows ... something, perhaps, like the experience of the fictional Lucy with the lion Aslan.

When Lucy encountered Aslan again:

'She gazed up into the large wise face.

"Welcome, child," he said.

"Aslan", said Lucy, "you're bigger".

“That is because you are older, little one”, answered he.

“Not because you are?”

*“I am not. But every year you grow, you will find me bigger”.*

(C. S. Lewis, *Prince Caspian: The Return to Narnia*, page 141.)

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

‘Laughter is a gift, and it’s meant to be shared. A funny story and a good laugh might be just the medicine a friend needs during a tough day’.

(Louie Giglio, *How Great is our God*, page 40.)

All in a day’s work for a police motorcyclist.

**1.** Herbert Hawkins was driving home from the office when he was pulled over by a police motorcyclist for speeding. On the spot, the police motorcyclist served Herbert a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Two days later, Herbert was caught again. Same place, same police motorcyclist ... and a second Fixed Penalty Notice.

‘Well, I hope you have learned your lesson now about how you should be driving’, the police motorcyclist said sternly.

‘I sure have, officer’, Herbert replied, *‘I’ve learned to drive a different way home from work in future’.*

**2.** One day, a police motorcyclist was passing a roadside café when he noticed an elderly gentleman pulling out of the café’s car park with a large pasty on the roof of his car. Clearly, the gentleman had put the pasty on the roof when getting into his car, had forgotten the pasty and had driven off.

The police motorcyclist decided to pull the old motorist over and to perform a community service by handing him his pasty. He got off his bike, walked up to the car, took the pasty off the roof, and offered it to the driver.

The elderly gentleman looked at the police motorcyclist. ‘No, thank you, officer’, he said, ‘I appreciate the kind thought but *I have only just bought one’.*