

## Malcolm's Monday Musings : 10 July 2023

Greetings,

This coming Wednesday marks the 220th anniversary of the birth of Mr Thomas Guthrie on 12 July 1803.

Mr Guthrie was a well-known and much-loved Scottish preacher of the early 19th century. (For those interested, further information can be found in the introduction to the 'Musings' for 11 July 2022, which can be accessed at <https://voicesforchrist.org/writings/242>.)

It strikes me that all preachers and Bible teachers could well take a leaf out of Mr Guthrie's book:

'I set myself vigorously to study how to illustrate the great truths of the gospel, and enforce them, so that there should be no sleepers in the church, no wandering eyes, but everywhere an eager attention. Savingly to convert my hearers was not within my power; but to command their attention, to awaken their interest, to touch their feelings, and instruct their minds was—and I determined to do it'.

(Sources: 'Autobiography of Thomas Guthrie, D.D.', 1878, page 129, and Thomas Guthrie and Sons, 'Autobiography and Memoir', Volume 1, page 160.)

I hope that I am not being too unkind when (with a nudge in the direction of the so-called 'First Boer War' of 1880-1881) I say that I have sat through not a few meetings which have seemed to me to be a form of 'Bore War'!

For reasons with which I will not 'bore' you, I had reason recently to revisit Mr Spurgeon's 'Lectures to my Students'. Here are a few relevant 'pearls of wisdom' which I acquired from the so-called, 'Prince of Preachers':

(i) 'The first golden rule is, always say something worth hearing ... Give your hearers something which they can treasure up and remember ... the best matter from the best of places, solid doctrine from the divine Word'.

(ii) Give them manna fresh from the skies; not the same thing over and over again, in the same form ad nauseam, like bread cut into the same shape all the year round'.

(iii) 'My brethren, it is a hideous gift to possess, to be able to say nothing at extreme length'.

(iv) 'Keep on, on, on, on, on, with commonplace matter and monotonous tone, and you are rocking the cradle, and deeper slumbers will result'.

(v) 'I have a very lively, or rather a deadly, recollection of a certain series of discourses on the Hebrews, which made a deep impression on my mind of the most undesirable kind. I wished frequently that the Hebrews had kept the epistle to themselves, for ... each sermon increased in dullness. Paul, in that epistle, exhorts us to "suffer the word of exhortation", and we did so! [I refrain from commenting on Mr Spurgeon's opinion that Paul authored the Epistle to the Hebrews.]

Enough!

I set out below this week's 'Musings'.

Happy reading.

Yours, as always, in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

---

## Malcolm's Monday Musings : 10 July 2023

### (i) Scripture.

God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble.  
So we will not fear when earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea.  
Let the oceans roar and foam. Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge!

#### *Interlude*

A river brings joy to the city of our God, the sacred home of the Most High.  
God dwells in that city; it cannot be destroyed. From the very break of day, God will protect it.  
The nations are in chaos, and their kingdoms crumble! God's voice thunders, and the earth melts!

The Lord of Heaven's Armies is here among us; the God of Israel is our fortress.

#### *Interlude*

Come, see the glorious works of the Lord: see how He brings destruction upon the world.  
He causes wars to end throughout the earth. He breaks the bow and snaps the spear; He burns the shields with fire.

'Be still, and know that I am God! I will be honoured by every nation. I will be honoured throughout the world'.

The Lord of Heaven's Armies is here among us; the God of Israel is our fortress.

Psalm 46 (*New Living Translation*)

### (ii) Food for thought.

#### **'Be still, and know that I am God' (Psalm 46. 10).**

(i) 'We must not interpret that "Be still" in a sentimental manner. Some regard it as a kind of exhortation to us to be silent; but it is nothing of the sort. It means, "Give up (or "Give in") and admit I am God". God is addressing people who are opposed to Him and He says: "This is my power; therefore give up and give in, keep silent and know that I am God"'.  
(D. M. Lloyd-Jones, '*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*', page 134).

(ii) 'This divine oracle ("Be still, and know") can be misunderstood as a summons to quiet meditation. Rather, the Hebrew imperative means "desist", commanding the forces opposing God's sovereignty to surrender'.

(Konrad Schaefer, '*Psalms (Berit Olam)*', comment on Psa. 46. 10.)

(iii) 'Presumably the addressee of the Lord's exhortation is the nations. They are to stop asserting themselves, behaving like the seas pointlessly hurling themselves against the land that they are never going to overwhelm. They need to acknowledge who it is that they are seeking to assail'.

(J. Goldingay, '*Psalms 42-89 (Baker Commentary)*', comment on Psa. 46. 10).

(iv) 'Jehovah speaks, admonishing the nations to desist from their vain endeavour to destroy His people, and bidding them recognise Him as the true God, who will manifest His absolute supremacy'.

(A. F. Kirkpatrick, '*The Book of Psalms (Cambridge Bible)*', page 258.)

#### **'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ' (2 Cor. 13. 14).**

(i) Grace manifested in the past: 'the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor' (2 Cor. 8. 9);

(ii) Grace supplied in the present: 'He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you: for my strength is made perfect in weakness' (2 Cor. 12. 9);

(iii) Grace revealed in the future: 'Set your hope fully on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ' (1 Pet. 1. 13).

#### **The Cross.**

'May we sit at the foot of the cross; and there learn what sin has done, what justice has done, what love has done, what the soul is worth, and what plenteous forgiveness flows from the fountain which was there and then opened'..

(John Newton, '*One Hundred and Twenty-Nine Letters from the Rev. John Newton ... to the Rev. William Bull: Letter LXXXVIII*', page 206.)

#### **'As Christ forgave you' (Col. 3. 13).**

'Forgiveness is specially ascribed to Christ. If Christ forgive sin, the inference is, that He is Divine. Pardon is a Divine prerogative, yet Christ exercises it ...

If Christ forgive sin, He is entitled to do so, for He has made provision for it in His sufferings and death. May He not Himself dispense the fruits of His atonement and pardon those for whom He died?

(John Eadie, 'A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians', 1856, page 243.)

**'Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you' (1 Pet. 5. 7).**

**'Whatever produces a care in us, produces God's care for us.'**

(J. N. Darby, 'The Spirit, not of fear, but of power', Collected Writings, Volume 16, page 33.)

**'Jesus Christ our Saviour' (Tit. 3. 6).**

'Faith is not our saviour. It was not faith that was born at Bethlehem and died on Golgotha for us. It was not faith that loved us, and gave itself for us; that bore our sins in its own body on the tree; that died and rose again for our sins.

Faith is one thing; the Saviour is another. Faith is one thing, and the cross is another. Let us not confound them, nor ascribe to a poor, imperfect act of man, that which belongs exclusively to the Son of the Living God ...

Our faith does not divide the work of salvation between itself and the cross. It is the acknowledgment that the cross alone saves, and that it saves alone. Faith adds nothing to the cross, nor to its healing virtue'.

(Horatius Bonar, 'The Everlasting Righteousness', pages 110, 115-116.)

**A Christian.**

'Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than going to a garage makes you an automobile'.

(Billy Sunday, quoted by W. T. Ellis in 'Billy Sunday, the Man and His Message', 1914, page 187.)

**'Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him' (Gen. 4. 8).**

'It had been many years since Adam and Eve had disobeyed God. We know this since there had been time for Cain and Abel to be conceived, born, and grow up.

'When their mother and father first learned of their son's murder, their minds must have careened back to God's declaration of the thing called "death". And this, as a result of their own disobedience.

'Now death was paying a visit to their family'.

(Robert Wolgemuth, 'Finish Line', page 12.)

**'Because you have plundered many nations, all the remnant of the peoples shall plunder you ... the cup in the Lord's right hand will come around to you' (Hab. 2. 8, 16).**

'God has not explained how He can use a more wicked nation to chasten a less wicked one (cf. Hab. 1. 13). Rather, He has said that He knows more about Babylonian wickedness than Habakkuk does, that He keeps accounts, that justice will one day be meted out'.

(D. A. Carson, 'For the Love of God', Volume 2, meditation for 7 December.)

**The New Testament provides a threefold antidote to worldly anxiety and worry:**

(i) **God knows:** the Lord Jesus says, 'Do not worry, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we put on?" ... For **your heavenly Father knows** that you need all these things' (Matt. 6. 31-32)..

(ii) **God hears:** the apostle Paul says, 'Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, along with thanksgiving, **let your requests be made known to God**; and the peace of God ... shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus' (Phil. 4. 6-7).

(iii) **God cares:** the apostle Peter says, 'Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your worries upon Him, because **it matters to Him about you**' (1 Pet. 5. 6-7).

One ancient poem (often wrongly attributed to Anacreon, a Greek lyric poet whose life spanned the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC) reads, 'When I drink wine, my worries go to sleep ... The bowl to the lees let us drain, for while we drink, our worries go to sleep'. (Source: 'Anacreontea', Ode XXV.)

We can only pity the poor, sad poet. Thank God, the Christian does not have to drink his or her worries to sleep! For he or she enjoys the assurance that 'God knows', that 'God hears' and that 'God cares'.

**For another's sake.**

(i) Blessing for Joseph's sake: 'the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house **for Joseph's sake**' (Gen. 39. 5);

(ii) Kindness for Jonathan's sake: 'David said, "Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness **for Jonathan's sake?**"' (2 Sam. 9. 1);

(iii) Forgiveness for Jesus' sake: 'forgiving one another, even as God **for Christ's sake** has forgiven you' (Eph. 4. 32).

**'If any man thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know' (1 Cor. 8. 2).**

'When I was young, I was sure of everything; in a few years, having been mistaken a thousand times, I was not half so sure of most things as I was before; at present, I am hardly sure of anything but what God has revealed to me'.

(John Wesley, 'To the Editor of the "London Magazine", a letter dated 1 January 1765, published in 'The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.', Volume 4, page 286.)

**'Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth' (Col. 3. 2).**

'We all profess that we are bound for heaven, immortality, and glory: but is it any evidence that we really design it if all our thoughts are consumed about the trifles of this world, which we must leave behind us, and have only occasional thoughts of things above?'

(John Owen, 'The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded', 1844, page 71.)

**'Nevertheless in the time of his old age ... ' (1 Kings 15. 23).**

'When I first became a Christian, I thought I would be glad when I got farther on, and got established. I thought I would be so strong and there would not be any danger; but the longer I live, the more danger I see there is. The only hope of any Christian...is to keep hold of Christ ... a good many fall at a very old age'.

(D. L. Moody, 'Sermons Delivered at the New York Hippodrome: Address to Young Converts', 1876, page 447.)

### **Prayer.**

'Prayer will make a man cease from sin, or sin entice a man to cease from prayer. The spirit of prayer is more precious than treasures of gold and silver. Pray often, for prayer is a shield to the soul, a sacrifice to God, and a scourge for Satan'.

(John Bunyan, 'Bunyan's Dying Sayings: Of Prayer', 'The Works of that Eminent Servant of Christ, John Bunyan', 1831, Volume 1, page 95.)

### **Satan—not omnipotent.**

'There are some things Satan cannot do. He cannot drive God out of our lives. He cannot cause us to sin. He cannot tempt us beyond what we are able to bear. He cannot penetrate the shield of faith'.

(N. Anderson and T. M. Warner, 'The Beginner's Guide to Spiritual Warfare', page 83.)

### **'Only He'.**

He does not expect us to do what only He can do. We can roll the stone away from the tomb of Lazarus, but only He can raise the dead. We can hand out the bread, but only He can multiply it.

(W. W. Wiersbe, 'Prayer, Praise and Promises', Day 115.)

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

### Two entrances.

**1.** 'It was awful, Miss', moaned young Emily, entering the classroom over half an hour late one cold January morning. 'Honestly, I left with plenty of time to arrive at school on time. But it was so slippery that, every step I took, I slid two steps back'.

'Hmm', said the teacher, with a suspicious look on her face, 'so how then did you get here at all?'

'Well', answered quick thinking Emily, '*after twenty minutes, I gave up trying, turned around and started walking home!*'

**2.** Ben was a young artist working with a gallery in London. He entered the gallery one day to see the owner and to check if any interest had been shown in his paintings.

'Well', the owner said, 'I have some good news and some bad news for you. The good news is that earlier today a local gentleman studied your work and asked if it would appreciate in value after your death. When I told him it certainly would, he bought all fifteen of your paintings'.

'That's great news, indeed', Ben responded. 'But what is the bad news?'

'*The local gentleman*', the owner replied, '*is your doctor*'.