

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 29 April 2024

(i) Scripture.

When a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to Him, He said in a parable:

'A sower went out to sow his seed.

'And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold' ...

When His disciples asked Him what this parable meant, He said, 'The parable is this: the seed is the word of God.

'The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience'.

Luke 8. 4-15 (*English Standard Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

First, a few quotations from the English Puritans.

Manasseh's crown and chain.

'King Manasseh was bound in chains. This was sad to see—a crown of gold changed into fetters; but it wrought for his good, for, "when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord and humbled himself greatly, and the Lord was entreated of him" (2 Chron. 33. 11, 12).

'He was more beholden to his iron chain than to his golden crown; the one made him proud, the other made him humble'.

(Thomas Watson, 'A Divine Cordial', page 20.)

'You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good' (Gen. 50. 20).

'Sometimes God makes use of instruments for good to His people, who designed nothing but evil and mischief to them. Thus, Joseph's brethren were instrumental to his advancement in that very thing in which they designed his ruin'.

(John Flavel, 'The Mystery of Providence', page 120).

'Your testimonies are my meditation' (Psa. 119. 99).

(i) 'It is not hasty reading, but seriously meditating upon holy and heavenly truths, that makes them prove sweet and profitable to the soul. It is not the bee's touching of the flowers that gathers honey but her abiding for a time upon them and drawing out the sweet'.

(Thomas Brooks, 'Precious Remedies against Satan's Devices', page v.)

(ii) 'Meditation is a heart-warming work ... which will keep your hearts and souls from sinful thoughts. When the vessel is full you can put in no more ...

'If the heart be full of sinful thoughts, there is no room for holy and heavenly thoughts: if the heart be filled with holy and heavenly thoughts by meditation, there is no room for evil and sinful thoughts'.

(William Bridge, 'Christ and the Covenant', in 'The Works of the Rev. William Bridge', Volume III, page 131.)

The incomparable Christ.

'There is nothing which can come in competition with Christ, but is infinitely below Him. All the combined excellencies of creatures, put into the balance with Christ, bear not so much proportion as a feather to a mountain.

'To forsake Christ for the world, or a lust, is to leave a treasure for a trifle; a mountain of gold, for a heap of dung; the pure, lasting fountain for the muddy, broken cistern; eternity for a moment; reality for a shadow; all things for nothing'.

(William Jenkyn, 'An Exposition upon the Epistle of Jude', pages 104-105.)

'Would God I had died for you, O Absalom' (2 Sam. 18. 33).

'What shall we say to that love of Thine, O Saviour, who hast said of us wretched rebels, not, "Would God I had died for you" but, "I will die, I do die, I have died for you".'

(Joseph Hall, 'Contemplations on the Historical Passages of the Old and New Testaments', page 239.)

'Our light affliction, which is for the moment, works for us ... an eternal weight of glory' (2 Cor. 4. 17).

'He that rides to be crowned, will not think much of a rainy day'.

(John Trapp, 'A Commentary or Exposition upon the Five Books of Moses', 1662, page 121.)

'You took joyfully the plundering of your possessions, knowing in yourselves that you have a better and enduring possession in heaven' (Heb. 10. 34).

'If a poor man is robbed of (a certain sum of money), it is no wonder if he cries and carries on, because he has nothing left to live on. But if a rich man is robbed of such a sum, he is not much troubled, because he has more at home.

'So, a man who is justified by faith and has assurance of the favour of God can comfortably bear up against all the troubles and crosses he meets with in his way to heaven'.

(Thomas Manton, 'A Treatise of the Life of Faith', in 'The Complete Works of Thomas Manton', Volume XV, page 63.)

'Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better' (Phil. 1. 23).

(i) *'Why should we fear death, that is but a passage to Christ? It is but a grim servant [‘sergeant’ in the original] that lets us into a glorious palace, that strikes off our bolts, that takes off our rags, that we may be clothed with better robes, that ends all our misery, and is the beginning of all our happiness.*

'Why should we, therefore, be afraid of death? It is but a departure to a better condition. It is but as Jordan to the children of Israel, by which they passed to Canaan ...

'It determines and ends all our misery and sin; and it is the suburbs of heaven. It lets us into those joys above. It is a shame for Christians, therefore, to be afraid of that that Paul here makes the object of his desire'.

(Richard Sibbes, 'Christ is Best', in 'The Complete Works of Richard Sibbes, D.D.', page 340.)

(ii) 'There is an essential difference between the decease of the godly and the death of the ungodly. Death comes to the ungodly man as a penal infliction, but to the righteous as a summons to his Father's palace. To the sinner it is an execution, to the saint an undressing from his sins and infirmities. Death to the wicked is "the king of terrors" [Job 18. 14]. Death to the saint is the end of terrors, the commencement of glory'.

(C. H. Spurgeon, 'Though He Were Dead', a sermon preached at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, on 14 September 1884.)

[Now, a few other quotations.](#)

The sufferings of the Lord Jesus.

'Christ suffered from man for righteousness' sake. But He suffered also from the hand of God upon the cross ... There He suffered the just for the unjust; that is, He suffered, not because He was righteous, but because we were sinners ...

'He suffered for righteousness, as a living man, from men; as a dying Saviour, He suffered from the hand of God for sin'.

(J. N. Darby, 'The Sufferings of Christ', Collected Writings, Volume 7, page 165.)

'Not reckoning their trespasses against them' (2 Cor. 5. 19).

'Some years ago, when I was diagnosed with cancer, my great concern was that the surgeon would get it all. I wasn't really interested in a cure that was only partial.

'And when we think about Jesus bearing our sins, the mystery and the wonder of the gospel is that He deals with all of them. He who was absolutely perfect died in the place of sinners, identifying with us in our guilt and becoming liable to our punishment.

'When Paul writes to the Corinthians, he tells them that God was not counting their sins against them. And the reason for that is because He was counting them against Him'.

(Alistair Begg, 'The New City Catechism', page 114.)

My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought—
My sin, not in part but the whole.
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more;
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

(Horatio Spafford, the hymn, 'It is Well with my Soul'.)

'There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek ... whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved' (Rom. 10. 12-13).

'The Gentile can now drink from the public well of salvation without having first obtained the Jewish permit to draw'.

(Eric Sauer, 'The Triumph of the Crucified', page 64.)

'To know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge' (Eph. 3. 19).

'When we attempt to consider (i) the glory of His divine person, (ii) the depth of His humiliation, (iii) the unknown sorrows and agonies which wrung His heart in Gethsemane and on Golgotha; and (iv) that He endured all this for His enemies, even for those whose hearts were, both by nature and habit, alienated from Him; (v) the power He exerts in reconciling them to Himself; (vi) the blessings He bestows upon them in this life, when they are renewed by His grace; and (vii) the eternal happiness He has prepared for them in the eternal state ...

'... I say, when we attempt to conceive of this love, in its origin, progress, and effects—we are soon overwhelmed, our thoughts are swallowed up, and we can only wonder and adore in silence!'

(John Newton, 'The Constraining Influence of the Love of Christ', a sermon, preached in the Church of the United Parishes of St. Mary Woolnoth and St. Mary Woolchurch-Haw, Lombard-Street, London, on 30 March 1800).

The Christian's hope centres in a Person.

(i) 'I will come again and receive you to myself; that where I am there you may be also' (John 14. 3).

(ii) 'This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, will come' (Acts 1. 11).

(iii) 'We are looking for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ' (Phil. 3. 20).

(iv) 'To serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven' (1 Thess. 1. 9-10).

(v) 'The Lord Himself will descend from heaven ... so we will always be with the Lord' (1 Thess. 4. 16-17).

(vi) 'The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him' (2 Thess. 2. 1).

(vii) 'Christ Jesus, who is our hope' (1 Tim. 1. 1).

'A sower went out to sow his seed ... The seed is the word of God' (Luke 8. 5, 11).

'Jesus describes four types of ground: (i) the wayside, (ii) the stony places, (iii) the thorny soil and (iv) the good ground.

'With (i) the first, the seed went **on but not in**; with (ii) the second, it went **in and on but not down**; with (iii) the third, it went **in, on and down but never came up**. Only with (iv) the fourth did the seed go **on, in, down and come up** in an abundant harvest; it was not (i) eaten, (ii) scorched or (iii) choked but (iv) fruitful.

'(i) The first represents the case where "the word" lies on the surface of a man's memory. Its meaning is never really grasped by the mind, and it therefore falls an easy prey to the devil.

'(ii) The second is the case where "the word" is eagerly received but is not taken deeply to heart. The hearer is therefore altogether unprepared to face the subsequent testing that comes in the form of opposition.

'(iii) The third is the case where "the word" is received and gives every appearance and promise of life. As the days go by, however, the effect of that "word" is checked and frustrated by the preoccupations of the present life; by *worry, wealth* and *worldliness* (Luke 8. 14).

'(iv) The fourth represents the case where "the word" is not only heard and understood but abides and yields lasting results in the life. The man is "saved" (Luke 8. 12)'.
(Reprinted, with kind permission, from 'Day by Day through the New Testament', Precious Seed Publications, 1979, page 24).

(iii) Go on, smile.

Henry drives up to a petrol station to get some fuel for his car. While he is there, the cashier notices two penguins on the back seat of Henry's car. Curious, she asks Henry, 'What's the story with the penguins?'

'Well', Henry replies, 'I spotted them about half an hour ago. They were just waddling down the road. I haven't a clue how they got there or what I can do with them'.

The cashier ponders for a moment and says, 'I think you should take them to the zoo'.

'Thank you', Henry responds, 'that's a great idea', and then drives off.

Two days later, Henry drives up again to the same petrol station. The cashier sees that the two penguins are still on the back seat of the car. 'Excuse me', she says to Henry, 'how come you have still got the penguins? I thought you were going to take them to the zoo!'

'Oh, I did', Henry replies, 'and we had a simply marvellous time. *Today, I'm taking them to the beach*'.