

## Malcolm's Monday Musings : 6 May 2024

### (i) Scripture.

And the Lord met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, Go again unto Balak, and say thus. And when he came to him ... he took up his parable, and said,

Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor.

God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?

Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and He hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel: the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them.

God brought them out of Egypt; He hath as it were the strength of an unicorn [probably, 'a wild ox'].

Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!

Numbers 23. 16-23 (King James Version)

### (ii) Food for thought.

#### **'We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened' (2 Cor. 5. 4).**

'Satan may rage, the world may frown, the flesh may rebel, and providence may seem to cross the humble believer; but, notwithstanding all this tempest, his soul is safe, being "hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3. 3).

'He may "groan, being burdened"; yet still he can rejoice. He looks through the curtain of time, which hangs over the glories of eternity; and in joyful expectation of soon entering within the veil, he endures with much patience the trials of this transitory state ...

'He knows that glorious days are hastening on and therefore is not discouraged, though they are preceded by a stormy night'.

(Thomas Reade, 'Christian Retirement: Spiritual Exercises of the Heart', pages 60-61.)

#### **'I will rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me' (2 Cor. 12. 9).**

'It has been well said that the angels excel in strength (Psa. 103. 20), but the saints excel in their weakness.

'When we are most weak, and Christ strengthens us, then are the most excellent virtues produced'.

(C. H. Spurgeon, 'Prayer, the Cure of Care', a sermon preached at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, on 12 January 1888: Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, Sermon no. 2351.)

#### **'I am content with infirmities' (2 Cor. 12. 10).**

'Health is a blessing, a great mercy, enabling us to relish the comforts of life, and to be useful in our generation. And sickness is a great mercy, likewise, ... for it is and shall be sanctified:

(i) to wean us more from the present world,

(ii) to stir up our thoughts and desires heaven-ward,

(iii) to quicken us to prayer, and

(iv) to give us more opportunity of knowing the sweetness and suitableness of the promises, and the power and wisdom of a promise-performing God.

'Troubles have many uses when the Lord is pleased to work by them for the good of His children ... we should miss the meaning and comfort of a great part of the Bible without them'.

(John Newton, 'Letter to Mr W\*\*\*, dated 2 October 1767', The Works of the Rev. John Newton: Volume IV, page 272.)

#### **'Who delivered us from so great a death ... in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us' (2 Cor. 1. 10).**

'He that is not a good treasurer of mercies has nothing to draw upon in future difficulties. But he who lays up experiences and makes use of them to feed upon ... is enabled to depend on God in all future difficulties'.

(Samuel Bolton, 'The Wonderful Workings of God for His Church and People', page 84.)

#### **'Christ Jesus our hope' (1 Tim. 1. 1).**

When the Lord Jesus comes, we shall be:

(i) Received to Himself ... 'I will come again and will take you to myself' (John 14. 3).

(ii) Made like Himself ... 'when He appears we shall be like Him' (1 John 3. 2; cf. 1 Cor. 15. 49; Phil. 3. 21).

(iii) Forever with Himself ... so shall we ever be *with the Lord*' (1 Thess. 4. 17; cf. John 17. 24).

**'Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen' (Heb. 11. 1).**

That is **not** a definition of what faith **is** but a description of what faith produces.

'The divine, spiritual, heavenly and supernatural objects, which are presented to us in the Word, appear intangible and nebulous to the unbeliever but faith gives them substance and reality!

'Though the things hoped for are invisible and future, faith makes them sure and solid and gives them a real subsistence in the soul.

'Faith does for us spiritually, what imagination does for us naturally. Faith gives the things promised by God a present actuality in the heart, and makes Christ and heaven more certain than if seen by the physical eye'.

(A. W. Pink, 'Faith as a Masticator', accessed at <https://bibleportal.com/sermon/Arthur-Pink/faith-as-a-masticator>.)

**'All things were created ... for Him' (Col. 1. 15-16).**

'The universe is not self-existent. It was made. And that inevitably raises the question, 'What was it made for?'

'Instinctively, we reject the idea that there is no purpose or goal behind its existence. Our minds refuse to be satisfied with the idea that while each part of the universe has a purpose and a function in regard to the whole, the whole itself has no purpose or function ...

'The answer is in the Son of God. It was for Him and for His pleasure that the universe, and we within it, were made ... The eternal Son of God alone is big enough and worthy enough to be the final goal of the life of the individual and of the human race and of the universe'.

(David Gooding, 'An Unshakeable Kingdom', pages 28-29.)

**'The great dragon was cast down, the ancient serpent, he that is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world' (Rev. 12. 9).**

'Sun Tzu's treatise ("The Art of War", 5<sup>th</sup> century BC), is the first-known written strategy on how to fight and win a war ... Perhaps the most influential, and certainly one of the most cited, of Sun Tzu's principles is that "All warfare is based on deception" ...

'All warfare is based on deception ... Hold out baits to entice the enemy ... Attack him where he is unprepared, appear where you are not expected'.

(Sun Tzu, 'The Art of War', Sweetwater Press, 2006, pages 1, 10 and 15.)

You and I know that the devil could have taught General Sun Tzu far more about deception than he ever knew; Satan has been in that business since long before the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. The Lord Jesus said of him, 'He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it' (John 8. 44).

Note how the apostle Paul expresses his concern for the church at Corinth, 'I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ ... for Satan transforms himself into an angel of light' (2 Cor. 11. 3, 14). Earlier, the apostle speaks of Satan's 'devices' (2 Cor. 2. 11) and, elsewhere, of his 'wiles' ('schemes', 'strategies', Eph. 6. 11).

**'The peace of God which passes all understanding shall guard your hearts and minds' (Phil. 4. 7).**

'We are all familiar with the coming of a peace into our life at the terminus of some great strain or after we have weathered a staggering crisis. When a long-continued pain which has racked our nerves passes away and leaves us free, we suddenly come into a zone of peace ... In all such cases, the peace which succeeds pain and strain and anxiety is a thoroughly natural, reasonable peace ...

'There is, Paul reminds us, another kind of peace, of quite a different order. It baffles the understanding and transcends its categories. It is a peace which comes, not after the pain is relieved, not after the crisis has passed, not after the danger has disappeared; but in the midst of the pain, while the crisis is still on ...

'It is a peace that is not banished ... by the frustrations which beset our lives; rather it is, in and through the frustrations, that we ... enter into it, as, to use Paul's phrase, into a garrison which guards our hearts and minds'.

(Rufus M. Jones, 'Spiritual Energies in Daily Life', pages 2-3.)

**'We have received ... the Spirit who is from God that we might understand the things freely given us by God' (1 Cor. 2. 12).**

'The Spirit is not given to make Bible study needless, but to make it effective ... The Spirit is not the prompter of fanciful spiritualizing, or of applications of texts out of their contexts ... The only meaning to which He bears witness is that which each text actually has ...

'Without the Spirit's help, there can be no grasp of the message of Scripture, no conviction of the truth of Scripture, and no faith in the God of Scripture. Without the Spirit, nothing is possible but spiritual blindness and unbelief ... Our God-given textbook is a closed book till our God-given Teacher opens it to us'.

(J. I. Packer, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*, page 112.)

### ***The righteous King.***

Righteousness characterises:

- (i) *the King's throne* ... 'righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne' (Psa. 97. 2).
- (ii) *the King's girdle* ... 'righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins' (Isa. 11. 5),
- (iii) *the King's reign* ... 'a king shall reign in righteousness' (Isa. 32. 1),
- (iv) *the King's sceptre* ... 'a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of your kingdom' (Heb. 1. 8).
- (v) *the King's warfare* ... 'in righteousness He judges and makes war' (Rev. 19. 11).

### ***'That we might walk in newness of life' (Rom. 6. 4).***

'Turn thine eyes to Christ, and see there the exceeding mercy of thy most kind and loving Father.

'Remember that Christ made not this atonement that thou shouldest anger God again; neither died He for thy sins, that thou shouldest live still in them; neither cleansed He thee, that thou shouldest return, as a swine, unto thine old puddle again; but that thou shouldest be a new creature, and live a new life after the will of God, and not of the flesh'.

(William Tyndale, *A Prologue upon the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romans*, 1574, accessed at ... <https://www.bible-researcher.com/romansprologue.html>.)

### ***The Pharaoh of the Exodus personally led his six hundred chosen Egyptian chariots in pursuit of the children of Israel and perished in the waters of the Red Sea.***

Note:

(i) The testimony of scripture itself, (a) 'the king of Egypt ... made ready his chariot, and took his people with him' (Exod. 14. 6) and (b) 'Give thanks ... to Him who ... overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea' (Psa. 136. 15).

(ii) The following comments, 'In general, ancient Near Eastern kingdoms expected their monarchs to lead them effectively in battle (cf. the justification for Israel asking God for a king in 1 Sam. 8. 19–20) ... Many pharaohs planned and personally directed military campaigns, often leading chariot divisions in battle, as Thutmose III did at Megiddo ... At times, the kings indeed exhibited true bravery, such as when Thutmose III led his army through the narrow and dangerous pass leading to Megiddo or when Ramesses II personally led a counter charge with his chariot six times against the attacking Hittite chariots at Kadesh'.

(B. Seevers, *Warfare in the Old Testament*, pages 110–111, 226.)

### ***'Received with thanksgiving' (1 Tim. 4. 4).***

In expressing our gratitude to God for His provision of our daily sustenance, we follow the perfect example left by our Lord Jesus:

(i) Although He knows that the five barley loaves which He took into His hands have come directly from a young lad (John 6. 9), we are told twice that He gives thanks to God for the bread before distributing it, through His disciples, to the multitude of 'about five thousand men, beside women and children' (Matt. 14. 19, 21; John 6. 11).

(ii) Although He knows that the seven loaves come directly from His own disciples, He gives thanks to God for the bread before giving it back to His disciples for passing on to the multitude of 'four thousand men, beside women and children' (Matt. 15. 34, 36, 38).

(iii) Although He knows that the bread in the Upper Room has been provided by Peter and John as part of the preparation for the Passover meal (Luke 22. 8), He gives thanks to God for the bread before giving it to His disciples as a token of His body about to be given for them (Luke 22. 19).

(iv) Although He knows that the loaf in the village home at Emmaus has come from the store of the two disciples who lived there, He gives thanks to God for the bread before breaking it and giving it to them. (Luke 24. 28-30).

In each case, although our Lord knows well enough *through whom* God has supplied the bread, He is careful to give *God* thanks for it, in glad recognition that, when all was said and done, it represents His Father's provision. We, too, while knowing something of its human supply chain, should always give thanks to God for our food.

(See also Acts 27. 35; Rom. 14. 6; 1 Cor. 10. 30.)

(iii) Go on, smile.

Motoring mirth.

(i) The driving test.

Following Sophia's practical driving test, the examiner turned to her and said, 'Very good, Sophia, you've done really well. All that is left now are a few questions on the Highway Code. First, can you tell me why you should always wear tidy sensible shoes when driving?'

'Well, that's easy', Sophia replied, 'you don't know what handsome young man you're going to meet when you reach your destination'.

Struggling to follow Sophia's logic, the examiner asked, 'Second, can you name a sign you're more likely to see out in the country rather than here in a built-up area?'

'That's another easy one', Sophia responded, '*Pick your own strawberries*'.

(ii) The driving licence.

George was sitting, reading, in his garden, when he was dumbfounded by an upmarket car suddenly crashing through his hedge and coming to a grinding halt in the middle of his lawn. With considerable help from George, an elderly gentleman managed to get out of the car and on to an empty garden chair.

'I hope you don't mind me saying it', George exclaimed, 'but you seem rather old to be driving'.

'Let's just say', the gentleman replied, 'that I am old enough that I don't need a licence any more. The last time I went to see my optician, he examined my eyesight thoroughly and then asked me if I had a driving licence. I told him that, yes, I did and I handed it to him to see'.

'What happened then?' George enquired.

'That's when it got interesting', the gentleman continued, 'the optician took a pair of scissors out of a drawer, cut my licence into pieces and threw the pieces into his wastebasket. "You won't be needing that any more", he said to me. So, *I thanked him very much and drove home a happy man*'.