

## Malcolm's Monday Musings : 15 July 2024.

Greetings,

No doubt, some of you solved Mr Cowper's riddle, which was included in last week's 'Musings'. For the sake of lesser mortals, I can reveal that the word 'kiss' was the solution. (For the record, the scripture references to my second clue are Matt. 26. 48; Mark 14. 44; Luke 7. 45; 22. 47-48; Rom. 16. 16, 20; 2 Cor. 13. 12; 1 Thess. 5. 26; 1 Pet. 5. 14.)

I set out today's 'Musings' below.

Here are five brief tasters:

(i) 'In one thousand trials it is not five hundred of them that work for the believer's good, but nine hundred and ninety-nine of them, and one besides'.

(ii) 'Either He will shield you from suffering or He will give you unfailing strength to bear it'.

(iii) 'One good way to get comfort is to plead the promise of God in prayer ... Show Him His handwriting'.

(iv) 'Natural disasters and the suffering they cause are not the end of the story'.

(v) 'The record of David and Israel's rise from the brink of annihilation to domination of the Ancient Near East in less than the span of a generation represents one of the most dramatic stories to come from the Ancient Near East'.

Happy reading.

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

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### (i) Scripture.

Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales; behold, He takes up the coastlands like fine dust ... All the nations are as nothing before Him, they are accounted by Him as less than nothing and emptiness.

To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with Him? ... It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in ...

Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name, by the greatness of His might, and because He is strong in power not one is missing.

Isaiah 40. 15-26 (*English Standard Version*)

### (ii) Food for thought.

#### **'In remembrance of me' (1 Cor. 11. 24-25).**

'To stand at the foot of the cross, with a softened heart and melting eyes; to forget our sins, sorrows, and burdens, while we are wholly swallowed up in the contemplation of Him who bore our sins in His own body upon the tree, is certainly the most desirable situation on this side the grave!'

(John Newton, 'Cardiphonia; The Utterance of the Heart; in the Course of a Real Correspondence', 1781, Volume 2, pages 279-280.)

#### **'All ... for good' (Rom. 8. 28).**

Two encouraging quotations:

**1.** 'In one thousand trials it is not five hundred of them that work for the believer's good, but nine hundred and ninety-nine of them, AND ONE BESIDES'.

(George Müller, quoted by D. L. Moody in 'Thoughts for the Quiet Hour', 1881, pages 11-12; capitalisation original).

**2.** 'God calls us to Him, and He watches us as we go, and allows nothing to happen save what is for our real good ... Do not look forward to the changes and chances of this life in fear; rather look to them with full hope that, as they arise, God, whose you are, will deliver you out of them. He has kept you hitherto; do you but hold fast to His dear hand, and He will lead you safely through all things, and, when you cannot stand, He will bear you in His arms.

'Do not look forward to what may happen to-morrow; the same everlasting Father who cares for you today, will take care of you to-morrow, and every day. Either He will shield you from suffering or He will give you unfailing strength to bear it. Be at peace then, and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginations, and say continually, "The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart hath trusted in Him, and I am helped" (Psa. 28. 7). He is not only with me, but in me, and I in Him'.

(Francis de Sales, a letter, dated 16 January 1619 'to a lady', quoted by H. L. S. Lear in 'A Selection from the Spiritual Letters of S. Francis de Sales', 1876, pages 185-186.)

**'We saw the giants, . . . and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight' (Num. 13. 33.)**

'The ten spies differed from Caleb and Joshua in their report of the land of Canaan.

'There are three words here beginning with G—the word "**G**od", the word "**g**iant", and the word "**g**rasshopper". Now, note, these spies made a great mistake as to the position of these three words; they compared themselves with the people of the land and said, "we were in our own sight as grasshoppers".

'If they had compared the people of the land with God, they would have come back, as Caleb and Joshua did, who said in effect, "We have compared the giants with God and the giants are as grasshoppers". [Compare, 'It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, and *its inhabitants are as grasshoppers*' (Isa. 40. 22).]

(F. B. Meyer; quoted in 'The Northfield Year-Book', 1896, page 86.)

**Seven precious 'though's (ESV).**

(i) 'Though He slay me, I will hope in Him' (Job 13. 15).

(ii) 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me' (Psa. 23. 4).

(iii) 'Though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the Lord upholds his hand (Psa. 37. 24).

(iv) 'Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life' (Psa. 138. 7).

(v) 'Though He cause grief, He will have compassion according to the abundance of His steadfast love' (Lam. 3. 32).

(vi) 'Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord' (Hab. 3. 17-18).

(vii) 'Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day' (2 Cor. 4. 16).

**Prayer and the promises of God: 'Do as you have said' (2 Sam. 7. 25).**

Four relevant quotations:

**1.** 'Prayer is the bow, the promise is the arrow: and faith the hand which draws the bow and sends the arrow with the heart's message to heaven. The bow without the arrow is of no use, and the arrow without the bow as little worth, and both without the strength of the hand to no purpose. Neither the promise without prayer nor prayer without the promise, nor both without faith, avail the Christian anything'.

(William Gurnall, 'The Christian in Complete Armour', 1662, page 342.)

**2.** 'One good way to get comfort is to plead the promise of God in prayer ... Show Him His handwriting'.

(Thomas Manton, 'Sermons upon Psalm 119: Sermon 26', The Complete Works of Thomas Manton, Volume 6, page 242.)

**3.** 'Tether your prayers to the brightness of His promises'.

(J. Berndt, 'Praying the Scriptures for Your Adult Children'.)

**4.** 'It is no arrogancy nor presumption to burden God, as it were, with His promise ... He can as little deny such prayers as deny Himself'.

(John Trapp, 'Annotations upon the Old and New Testaments', 1662, page 159.)

**'Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned' (Rom. 5. 12).**

'Vesna Vulović made history on January 26, 1972, and landed herself in the Book of World Records. It is not an honour she wanted or was seeking.

'She was a flight attendant on a DC-9 that was flying over what is now the Czech Republic when a bomb exploded and decimated the plane. She fell 33,330 feet inside a piece of the fuselage and landed on the side of a mountain.

Though she suffered a fractured skull, three broken vertebrae, two broken legs, and was in a coma for twenty-seven days, she made a complete recovery. She ... survived the longest fall in history.

'*There was another fall*, even longer and harder, which not only caused the death of the first victims but of the entire human race to this day. The account is found in Genesis 3'.

(J. Merritt, '*52 Weeks through the Bible*', page 24.)

### **So-called natural disasters.**

'Why are there biological natural disasters, such as childhood cancers, that seem to have no beneficial role whatsoever? Why, despite our best efforts, are we all on a trajectory toward decay and death? ...

'What kind of God might still be worth relating to in this broken world?

'First, a God who not only has sent us instructions on how to cope with disaster, but also has *entered human history Himself to come alongside us in our pain and grief*. The basis of helping others in times of disaster finds its roots in the Incarnation and also in the teachings of Jesus to "love your neighbour as yourself".

'Second, a God who will one day bring deep comfort and restoration to all who follow Him. If it's true that Jesus rose from the dead, then *natural disasters and the suffering they cause are not the end of the story*. There is life beyond the grave.

'The Bible speaks of a time in the future when God will make everything new and will wipe every tear from our eyes (Rev. 21. 4-5). The brokenness and disaster that we see today will be put right in ways that go far beyond anything we can imagine'.

(S. Dirckx, '*Why Would God Allow Natural Disasters*', accessed at ...

<https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/resources/earthquakes-hurricanes-and-wildfires-why-would-god-allow-natural-disasters/>)

### **'David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep' (Acts 13. 36).**

'Saul was succeeded by David, who not only managed to keep Israel alive [after the nation's ignominious defeat at Mount Gilboa, 1 Sam. 31. 1], but also led it in conquests until he and son Solomon would command an empire that stretched from Egypt to the Euphrates River (1 Kings 4. 24; 2 Chron. 9. 26).

'The record of David and Israel's rise from the brink of annihilation to domination of the Ancient Near East in less than the span of a generation represents *one of the most dramatic stories to come from the Ancient Near East*'.

(B. Seevers, '*Warfare in the Old Testament*', page 38.)

### **'God's fellow-workers' (1 Cor. 3. 9).**

'There are several ways of working for God.

(i) 'We may make the wisest plans we can, and then carry them out to the best of our ability. This is perhaps better than working without any plan, but it is by no means the best way to serve our Master.

(ii) 'Or, having carefully laid our plans and determined to carry them through, we may bring them to God, and ask Him to help and prosper us in connection with them.

(iii) 'Yet another way is to begin with God, to ask His plans, and offer ourselves to Him to help in carrying them out'.

(J. Hudson Taylor, quoted by Mrs Howard Taylor in '*The Story of the China Inland Mission*', Volume II, 1893, page 403.)

### **'It is not for you to know the times or the seasons' (Acts 1. 7).**

'If I were introduced into a room where a large number of parcels were stored up, and I were told that there was something good for me, I should begin to look for that which had my name upon it, and when I came upon a parcel, and I saw, in pretty big letters, "It is not for you", I should leave it alone.

'Here, then, is a casket of knowledge marked, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power".

'Cease to meddle with matters which are concealed, and be satisfied to know the things which are clearly revealed'.

(C. H. Spurgeon, '*The Ascension and the Second Advent Practically Considered*', a sermon preached at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, on 28 December 1884).

**'Now is Christ risen from the dead' (1 Cor. 15. 20).**

The resurrection is variously presented in the New Testament; it is at once a proof, a pattern, a power, a prophecy, and a pledge.

(i) It is the proof of our acceptance of Christ's death and of our acceptance with Him (Rom. 4. 25).

(ii) It is the pattern of our holy life (Rom. 6. 4),

(iii) It is the power for Christian character and service (Eph. 1. 18-20).

(iv) It is the promise of our own resurrection (1 Thess. 4. 14).

(v) It is the pledge of our life hereafter (John 14. 19).

(W. H. Griffith Thomas, 'Christ Preeminent', page 92.)

**'As he thinks in his heart, so is he' (Prov. 23. 7).**

A man's true character comes out when you get to know his desires. If you knew a man's desires you would know the man; they are the true index to what he is. What a man has or what he is outwardly does not constitute his character: for this you must go beneath the surface to the hidden springs of the heart.

(C. A. Coates, 'The Christian's Desires', published in 'The Paths of Life', page 116.)

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

**1.** A doctor had a problem with a leak in his bathroom plumbing and the leak was getting worse and worse.

Even though it was 2 o'clock in the morning, the doctor decided to phone his plumber.

'Don't you know what time it is?' the plumber complained when he woke and answered the phone.

'Of course, I do', the doctor replied testily, 'but you've never hesitated to call me in the middle of the night with an urgent medical problem. Now I've got an urgent plumbing problem'.

There was a moment's silence. Then the plumber replied, 'Point taken, Doc. What's wrong?'

The doctor explained about the leak in his bathroom.

'There's really nothing for you to worry about', the plumber consoled him. '*Drop two aspirins down the pipe every four hours. If the leak hasn't cleared up by morning, phone me at the office.*'

**2.** The choir had just finished a rehearsal.

'Do you do much singing at home?' Alan asked Richard, a fellow choir member.

'Oh yes, a lot—but mainly to kill time', Richard replied.

Alan nodded and said, '*well, you certainly have a lethal weapon!*'