

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 22 May 2023.

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

But first ...

The beginning of this month marked 150 years since the home-call of the pioneer missionary and explorer, David Livingstone, on 1 May 1873 in Chief Chitambo's Village, Kingdom of Kazembe (now Northern Province, Zambia).

Below are two testimonials to what (with my eyes on 1 Pet. 2. 5) I may well call, '*the Christian character of a true "living stone"*'.

(i) 'For four months and four days I lived with David Livingstone in the same house, or in the same boat, or in the same tent, and I never found a fault in him. I am a man of quick temper, and often without sufficient cause, I dare say, have broken the ties of friendship; but with Livingstone I never had cause for resentment, but each day's life with him added to my admiration for him'.

(Henry Stanley, '*How I Found Livingstone*', pages 627-628.)

(ii) 'It is the man who is the missionary; it is not his words. His character is his message. In the heart of Africa, among the great Lakes, I have come across black men and women who remembered the only white man they ever saw before—David Livingstone. And, as you cross his footsteps in that dark continent, men's faces light up as they speak of the kind Doctor who passed there years ago. They could not understand him; but they felt the Love that beat in his heart'.

(Henry Drummond, '*The Greatest Thing in the World*', page 17.)

(An account of Henry Stanley's famous meeting with David Livingstone, together with a selection of Dr Livingstone's memorable sayings, can be found in the opening section of the Monday Musings for 15 November 2021. Those Musings can be accessed at <https://voicesforchrist.org/writings/217>.)

ADVANCE NOTIFICATION

On account of family commitments, I shall not be issuing my 'Monday Musings' for the next two weeks.

During that time, your Monday Inbox will, therefore, be one email lighter. 😊

God willing, the 'Musings' will recommence on Monday, 12th June.

Happy reading,

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 22 May 2023.

(i) Scripture.

So David and Abishai came to the people by night: and, behold, Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster: but Abner and the people lay round about him.

Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time.

And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless?

David said furthermore, As the Lord liveth, the Lord shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish. The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed: but, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that is at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go.

So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's bolster; and they gat them away, and no man saw it, nor knew it, neither awaked: for they were all asleep; because a deep sleep from the Lord was fallen upon them.

(ii) Food for thought.

'My greatest grief and my greatest joy'.

'When I die, I shall then have my greatest grief and my greatest joy—my greatest grief that I have done so little for Jesus, and my greatest joy that Jesus has done so much for me. My last words shall be, "Here goes an unprofitable servant!"'

(William Grimshaw, the conclusion of Mr Grimshaw's 'Creed', dated 8 December 1762, published in *'Biographia Evangelica'*, 1810, Volume IV, page 413.)

'O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory' (Psa. 115. 1).

'Not long after his last sermon, (Richard Baxter; 1615-1691) felt the approaches of death and was confined to his sick bed ...

'When a friend was comforting him with the remembrance of the good which many had received by his preaching and writings, he said, "I was but a pen in God's hand; and what praise is due to a pen?"'

(Erasmus Middleton, *'Biographia Evangelica'*, Volume IV, page 44.)

'Because He Himself has suffered when tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted' (Heb. 2. 18).

(i) 'He endured keen trials and temptations Himself, not only the trials incidental to our human lot, but those subtle temptations which attended His messianic calling. Time and again the temptation came to Him from many directions to choose some less costly way of fulfilling that calling than the way of suffering and death, but He resisted it to the end and set His face steadfastly to accomplish the purpose for which He had come into the world.

'Now, His people were not only enduring those trials which are common to mankind, but were being tempted in their turn to be disloyal to God and give up their Christian profession.

What a source of strength it was to them to be assured that in the presence of God they had as their champion and intercessor one who had known similar and even sorer temptations, and had withstood them victoriously!'

(F. F. Bruce, *'The Epistle to the Hebrews: The New London Commentary'*, page 53.)

'Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith' (Heb. 12. 2).

'Jesus ... is presented as the one who has blazed the trail of faith and as the one who Himself ran the race of faith to its triumphant finish ...

'Not only is Jesus the pioneer of faith; in Him faith has reached its perfection. "He trusts in God", they said as they stood by His cross (Matt. 27. 43); the implication was: "Much good His trust in God is doing Him now!" The words, though not their implication, were truer than they knew.

'The whole life of Jesus was characterized by unbroken and unquestioning faith in His Father, and never more so than when in Gethsemane He committed Himself to His Father's hands for the ordeal of the cross, with the words: "not what I will, but what Thou wilt" (Mark 14. 36).

'It was sheer faith in God, unsupported by any visible or tangible evidence, that carried Him through the taunting, the scourging, the crucifying, and the more bitter agony of rejection, desertion, and dereliction'.

(F. F. Bruce, *op. cit.*, pages 351-353.)

'Ah, Assyria, the rod of my anger ... Shall the axe boast over him who hews with it? ... the Lord God of hosts ... will cut down the thickets of the forest with an axe' (Isa. 10. 5, 15, 33-34).

'The God who uses Assyria to punish His wayward covenant community nevertheless holds Assyria responsible for her own sins, and will ultimately destroy them.

'The empire that is nothing more than a battle axe in the hand of God, wielded against a rebellious nation, will itself ultimately be axed down by God'.

(D. A. Carson, *'For the Love of God'*, Volume 2, meditation for 12 May.)

'Our citizenship is in heaven; from where we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ' (Phil. 3. 20).

We are not searching for signs. We are not dabbling in dates. We are looking for the Lord.

Honesty when praying.

'Out of 150 psalms, 48 are individual laments, and 16 are corporate laments (for a total of 64). There are 15 psalms of trust, 20 of praise, and 13 of wisdom. Remember, the book of Psalms was the

hymnbook for ancient Israel, and 43 percent of their congregational singing proved to be complaints and expressions of sadness and disappointment with God!

'Why ...? The Jewish worshippers wanted to approach God with sincere hearts, and they experienced a fundamental problem: God does not seem to keep ... His promises and does not always answer when we call out to Him. ...

'Expressing to God our honest feelings and beliefs is a good way to get things off our chest... release anxiety, and begin a path toward a more intimate relationship with God. ... God wants us to speak honestly with Him and not pretend we're at a place that He knows we're really not at. ...

'He often does not answer our prayers for relief and healing in the way we desire. Thus, it is important to learn how to express honestly and authentically our feelings and attitudes toward God in these times'.

(J. P. Moreland, 'Finding Quiet', pages 166-174.)

'There is none that seeks after God' (Rom. 3. 11).

'The history of mankind is not a gradual ascent to God but rather a winding path that leads deeper and deeper into the gloom of death and despair. As a sinful creature man naturally seeks to hide from a holy God ...

'Near the turn of the 19th century, F. W. Farrar wrote a book entitled "Seekers After God". The book was a popular seller and was in considerable demand.

'A certain western bookseller had a number of requests for the volume but had no copies available. He sent a telegram to the dealers in New York requesting them to ship him a number of the books.

'After a while, a telegram came back which read, "No seekers after God in New York. Try Philadelphia".

(D. Edmond Hiebert, 'Working with God', pages 100-101.)

The law of God.

'The law tells man not so much what he is to do, as what he is not to do. If we look at the ten commandments, we shall find that they do not tell him to do anything, except to honour his father and his mother. That is the only positive precept. All the rest are, "Thou ... shalt not" do this, and "Thou shalt not" do that ...

This of itself is a sufficient proof of evil tendencies in those addressed. Men care not to make laws for a country to prohibit that which nobody thinks of doing; and so God's law forbids people to do certain things because they have a tendency to do those very things; it touches the motives and dispositions of men's hearts as they are known by God ...

"Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all". The authority of God is attached to His law; and therefore, if, when the authority of God meets the lusts of man, he is guilty of the breach of that law in one thing, he has overthrown the claim of the authority of God, and thus broken the whole law (James 2. 10) ...

God never intended to save man by the law: that was not His purpose in giving it. He never meant to save any other way than by Christ'.

(J. N. Darby, 'The Accepted Man', Collected writings, Volume 12, pages 334-336.)

'As we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone' (Gal. 6. 10).

'I shall pass through this world but once. Any good therefore that I can do or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again'.

(Attributed to Stephen Grellet (1773-1855) among many others.)

The devil's providence: 'Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish' (Jonah 1. 3).

(i) 'There could hardly ever be a more remarkable instance of apparently providential co-operation than we have here. Jonah wants to go to Tarshish; and having selected that place as the region of his hiding, he must needs go down to Joppa, on the Mediterranean sea. He walks on the quay, and the first thing he sees is a ship going to Tarshish! Is not that a providence? ...

'Never blaspheme God by laying your sins on the back of His providence ... It is very easy to make up a providence when you want to do so ... the crafty devil and your deceitful heart together will soon conjure up a plea for providence ...

'There are devil's providences as well as divine providences'.

(C. H. Spurgeon, 'Runaway Jonah, and the Convenient Ship', a sermon preached on 10 August 1890 at The Metropolitan Tabernacle, London; accessed at <https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/runaway-jonah-and-the-convenient-ship/#flipbook/>.)

(ii) 'What some call providential openings are often powerful temptations; the heart, in wandering, cries, "Here is a way opened before me": but, perhaps, not to be trodden but rejected'.

(John Newton, 'The Life of John Newton: An Authentic Narrative, written by himself, to which some further particulars are added', 1854, page 111.)

(iii) The account of David and Abishai in the camp of Saul (1 Sam. 26. 7-12).

'When Abishai said that he would not need to strike twice (1 Sam. 26. 8), he was right.

'I suspect that his eyes had lit up at the very sight of Saul's spear. For a spear was Abishai's kind of weapon! We read that 'Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruah, was chief among three. And he lifted up his spear against three hundred, and slew them, and had the name among three. Was he not most honourable of three? Therefore, he was their captain' (2 Sam. 23. 18). Although that exploit may well have taken place sometime later, Abishai was clearly very good with a spear! Saul may have been renowned for the use of his sword, Jonathan for the use of his bow (2 Sam. 1. 22), and David for the use of his sling – but just put a spear in Abisha's hand.

'And I guess that, in Abishai's eyes, the irony would have been simply superb—that Saul, the rejected king, should be killed with his own spear, the very symbol of his authority and kingship. Not only so but that he should be killed with the very weapon with which, on more than one occasion, he had sought to slay God's anointed king (1 Sam. 18. 11; 19. 9-10) ... And it did look as though God had arranged things to the end that Saul should be slain now and in this way, for Saul's entire camp was wrapped in a supernatural slumber (1 Sam. 26. 12)'.

(Personal notes of a message given 17 years ago. The full - but unedited - notes can be accessed at <https://voicesforchrist.org/notes/79>.)

(iii) Go on, smile.

Today, a random selection.

1. The local newspaper carried the following story:

'On Monday, a lorry laden with thousands of copies of 'Roget's Thesaurus' crashed, shedding its entire load.

'Witnesses were stunned, startled, aghast, taken aback, stupefied, confused, shocked, paralyzed, dazed, bewildered, surprised, awed, dumbfounded, nonplussed, flabbergasted, astounded, amazed, confounded, astonished, overwhelmed, horrified, numbed, speechless, and perplexed'.

2. The ruler commanded his servant, 'Go out into the gardens and water the plants'.

'But, master', the servant responded, 'if you look out of the window, you'll see that it's still raining very heavily outside'.

'I see you are right', the ruler replied, '*You have my permission to take an umbrella*'.

3. Roger was attending his first Scuba Diver course.

Early in his first lesson, he asked one of the instructors, 'Tell me, why do scuba divers always fall backward off their boats into the sea?'

Rolling his eyes, the instructor replied, 'Because, *if they fell forward, they'd still be in the boat*'.

4. Bill Lloyd is addicted to drinking brake fluid. But he insists he *can stop at a moment's notice*.