

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 1 July 2024

(i) Scripture.

The Lord will not forsake His people; He will not abandon His heritage; for justice will return to the righteous, and all the upright in heart will follow it.

Who rises up for me against the wicked? Who stands up for me against evildoers? If the Lord had not been my help, my soul would soon have lived in the land of silence.

When I thought, 'My foot is slipping', your steadfast love, O Lord, held me up.

When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul.

Psalm 94. 14-19 (New Revised Standard Version)

(ii) Food for thought.

'When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul' (Psa. 94. 19).

'How sweet are the comforts of the Spirit! Who can muse upon eternal love, immutable purposes, covenant promises, finished redemption, the risen Saviour, His union with His people, the coming glory, and such like themes, without feeling his heart leaping with joy?'

(C. H. Spurgeon, 'The Treasury of David', Volume IV, page 298.)

'Give me understanding, that I may learn your commandments' (Psa. 119. 73).

'It is fitter for youth to learn than teach, and for age to teach than learn; and yet fitter for an old man to learn than to be ignorant. I know I shall never know so much that I cannot learn more, and I hope I shall never live until I be too old to learn'.

(Joseph Hall, 'Meditations and Vows: Divine and Moral', 1621, page 44.)

'The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law' (Deut. 29. 29).

'Some things are hidden from our eyes. We really do not understand, for instance, the relationships between time and eternity, nor do we have much of an idea how the God who inhabits eternity discloses himself to us in our finite, space/time history. It is revealed that He does ... but we do not know how.

'We do not know how God can be both personal and sovereign/transcendent; we do not know how the one God can be triune ...

'What God has not disclosed of Himself we cannot know ... the path of wisdom is reverent worship of Him who knows all things, and careful adherence to what He has graciously disclosed'.

(D. A. Carson, 'For the Love of God', Volume 1, reflections for 24 June.)

'Against your holy Servant Jesus ... Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever your hand and your purpose determined before to be done' (Acts 4. 27-28).

'God did not merely permit the cross but purposed it'.

(A. Leckie, 'Romans 1-8', page 131.)

'His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men' (Isa. 52. 14).

The thought is not that the Servant suffered more than any other individual or more than other humans but that he experienced disfigurement "from [being] an individual ... from [belonging with] humankind", so that those who saw Him stepped back in horror—not only saying "Is this the Servant?" but "Is this human?"

(J. Alec Motyer, 'The Prophecy of Isaiah', page 425.)

'That He might present the church to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish' (Eph. 5. 27).

'Not even the smallest spot or pucker that spoils the smoothness of the skin will mar the unsurpassed beauty of Christ's bride when He presents her to Himself. Hers will be a splendour that is exquisite, unsurpassed, matchless.

'For the present the church on earth is "often in rags and tatters, stained and ugly, despised and persecuted" [quoted from John Stott, 'The Message of Ephesians', page 228].

'Christ's people may rightly be accused of many shortcomings and failures. But God's gracious intention is that the church should be holy and blameless, language which speaks of a beauty which is moral and spiritual'.

(P. T. O'Brien, 'The Letter to the Ephesians: The Pillar New Testament Commentary', page 425.)

'He is faithful who promised' (Heb. 10. 23).

In 1812, twenty-three-year-old Adoniram Judson and his wife, Ann (known as Nancy), together with another missionary couple, sailed from Massachusetts to India. From there, they transferred to Burma, which country had long been on Adoniram's heart.

There, among much else, he suffered imprisonment and torture. Less than a year after his release from prison, Nancy died at the age of 37. But, after recovering from the loss of Nancy, Judson continued with his translation of the Bible into Burmese, a work which he completed some seven years later.

'The privations and discouragements they (Adoniram and Nancy) endured were extreme. When asked how he could persevere amid so much hardship, Adoniram replied that future prospects for the gospel are "as bright as the promises of God".

(S. James, 'Hope in the Face of Hostility', referencing F. Wayland, 'Memoir of Adoniram Judson', Volume 2, 1853, page 381. The quotation is often, wrongly, attributed to William Carey, to David Livingstone or to Billy Graham.)

More generally, you and I rest in the knowledge that, whatever our present experience, our long-term future is 'as bright as the promises of God'!

'I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day' (Rev. 1. 10).

The apostle John 'was taken behind the scenes of time and history. One commentator cleverly notes that John is not taken to some never-never land, but instead he is taken into the ever-ever land of God's eternal values'.

(A. Begg and S. B. Ferguson, 'Name above all Names', page 164; emphasis original.)

Moses and Elijah.

'Elijah's movements in 1 Kings 18. 40 to 19. 12 have a distinctly Exodus-like shape about them:

(i) 'Just as Moses outdoes Pharaoh's magicians (Exod. 9. 11; cf. 2 Tim. 3. 8), so Elijah outdoes the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18. 19-40);

(ii) 'Just as Pharaoh gets into his chariot and sets out to do evil to Moses (Exod. 14. 8, 10), so Ahab gets into his chariot and sets out to do evil to Elijah (1 Kings 18. 44-19. 1);

(iii) 'Just as Moses's prayer brings about a strong wind and the miraculous movement of water (Exod. 14. 21), so does Elijah's (1 Kings 18. 45);

(iv) 'Just as the Israelites' boldness (Exod. 12. 36-37) turns to fear, (Exod. 14. 10) so does Elijah's (1 Kings 19. 3);

(v) 'Just as Moses and the Israelites enter the wilderness where they are miraculously fed with the "bread of angels" (Exod. 16. 1-17; Psa. 78. 25), so Elijah enters a wilderness where he is fed by bread baked by an angel (1 Kings 19. 4-8a);

(vi) 'Just as Moses goes forty days and nights without food (Exod. 34. 28; Deut. 9. 9), so does Elijah (1 Kings 19. 8b);

(vii) 'Just as Moses ascends Sinai/Horeb (Exod. 34. 4; "the mountain of God"; Exod. 3. 1), so does Elijah (1 Kings 19. 8). Horeb is an alternative name for mount Sinai;

(viii) 'Just as Moses stands there as the Lord 'passes by' (Exod. 34. 6), so does Elijah (1 Kings 19. 11; and

(ix) 'Just as Moses wraps his face/head in a garment (Exod. 34. 33-34), so does Elijah (1 Kings 19. 13). The connection is more explicit in the Greek Old Testament, where Moses is said to put a "kalumma" ("cover") on his face, while Elijah is said to "epikaluptō" ("cover") his face.

'As such, Elijah's experiences are distinctly Exodus-shaped and, more particularly, Moses-like. But Elijah's behaviour in 1 Kings 19 is very different from Moses's in Exodus 32:

(i) 'Whereas Moses intercedes on behalf of his people before the Lord (Exod. 32. 31-32; Deut. 9. 19), Elijah accuses and implicates his people before the Lord (1 Kings 19. 10, 14; cf. Rom. 11. 2-3); and

(ii) 'Whereas Moses puts his life in jeopardy for the sake of his people (Exod. 32. 32), Elijah wants his life to come to an end since he is so fed up with his people. He has had enough. He can see no purpose in his ministry and no hope for Israel's condition (1 Kings 19. 4, 10, 14)'.

(James Bejon, 'Notes from a Sermon on 1 Kings 19. 1-17', page 2; accessed at ... https://www.academia.edu/30630561/Notes_from_a_Sermon_on_1_Kgs_19_1_17.)

'Lacked nothing' (Deut. 2. 7; 1 Kings 4. 27; Neh. 9. 21).

(i) 'No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly' (Psa. 84. 11).

(ii) 'He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?' (Rom. 8. 32).

'Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel ... departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. He restored the coast of Israel' (2 Kings 14. 23-25a).

'The land controlled by Jeroboam II was the largest since the glory days of Solomon. So why was he given such sweeping victories?

(i) 'First, because of the unerring word of the Lord, "which He had spoken through His servant Jonah...the prophet who was from Gath Hepher" (2 Kings 14. 25b).

(ii) 'Second, because of the unfailing grace of the Lord, "For the Lord saw that the affliction of Israel was very bitter; and... there was no helper for Israel" (2 Kings 14. 26).

(iii) 'Third, because of the unchanging covenant of the Lord: "And the Lord did not say that He would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven" (2 Kings 14. 27).

'Our God—insistent in instruction, consistent in character, persistent in purpose'.

(J. B. Nicholson Jr, '*Jeroboam II*', Taste and See, Uplook Ministries, 25 June 2024.)

'The heavens and earth, which are now' (2 Pet. 3. 7).

'Chekhov's gun' is a rule of stage drama named after the Russian author and playwright Anton Chekhov. The rule states that if a gun appears in the first act, it must be fired by the end of the final act.

Consider how 'the heavens and earth, which are now' appear in the first and the final sections of the Bible:

(i) 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth' (Gen. 1. 1).

(ii) 'The first heaven and the first earth were passed away' (Rev. 21. 1).

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

'God would not have us careless; the constant prowling of our adversary calls for constant vigilance on our part (1 Pet. 5. 8-9). But God would have us carefree.

'Peter's readers have every cause for anxiety. They have more than their fair share of trials. In the present, they suffer simply because they are Christians (1 Pet. 4. 16). Prospects for the future are even worse; in rather ominous words, Peter warns them that the time had come "that judgement must begin at the house of God' (1 Pet. 4. 17). The storm clouds are gathering.

'Recognizing that his readers have every reason to be alarmed, Peter alludes to the Greek Old Testament translation of Psalm 55. 22: "Cast your care upon the Lord". To stifle any remaining doubts on their part, he adds the precious word, "all". They need shoulder no anxieties themselves; "all" can be cast on Him.

'Peter had concluded chapter 2 with a reference to the words of Isaiah: "All we like sheep have gone astray ... and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all' (Isa. 53. 6). He now invites his persecuted readers to cast their cares where God once laid their sins ... on Him!'

('Day by Day in Prayer, Precious Seed Publications', page 367. With kind permission.)

(iii) Go on, smile.

'Who' or 'what' do you 'know'?

1. 'Who'.

An immigrant with Polish ancestry goes to have his first eyesight test. The optician points him to a chart with the letters 'O L E S B R Z A C K I W Z'.

'Can you read this?' the optician asks.

'Read it?' the Polish immigrant replies, '*I've known the man for many years*'.

2. 'What'.

Two paramedics were dispatched to check on 92-year-old Jacob Withers, who had become a little disoriented.

They decided to take him to the hospital for evaluation. On the way, with Jacob wired up to several pieces of equipment, they decided to question him to determine his level of awareness.

Leaning over to him, one of the paramedics asked, 'Mr Withers, do you know what we're doing at the moment?'"

Slowly, Jacob raised himself up, gazed out of the ambulance window, and replied, '*At a guess, I'd say about 40, maybe 45*'.