

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 2 October 2023

(i) Scripture.

As for me, my life has already been poured out as an offering to God. The time of my death is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of His return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to His appearing.

2 Timothy 4. 6-8 (*New Living Translation*)

(ii) Food for thought.

'Today, if you hear His voice' (Psa. 95. 7; Heb. 3. 7, 15; 4. 7).

'When the author walks on to the stage the play is over.

'God is going to invade, all right: but what is the good of saying you are on his side then, when you see the whole natural universe melting away like a dream and something else—something it never entered your head to conceive—comes crashing in; something so beautiful to some of us and so terrible to others that none of us will have any choice left?

'For this time, it will be God without disguise; something so overwhelming that it will strike either irresistible love or irresistible horror into every creature. It will be too late then to choose your side. There is no use saying you choose to lie down when it has become impossible to stand up.

'That will not be the time for choosing: it will be the time when we discover which side we really have chosen, whether we realized it before or not. Now, today, this moment, is our chance to choose the right side. God is holding back to give us that chance. It will not last for ever'.

(C. S. Lewis, *'Mere Christianity'*, page 63.)

'The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life' (Rom. 6. 23).

'The "wages" of sin is death. The word used is "*opsdnia*", which literally means "money to buy cooked meat" and which is the regular word for "a soldier's pay". That is to say, if we had got the pay we earned it would have been death.

'The "gift" of God is eternal life. The word is "*charisma*". Now "*charisma*" also is a military word. When an emperor came to the throne, or when he was celebrating his birthday, he gave his troops a "*donativum*" or "*charisma*", which was a free grant of money, a free gift. They had not earned it as they had their "*opsdnia*"; they got it unearned out of the goodness of the emperor's heart.

'So then what we have earned, our "*opsdnia*", would be death. All that we have is "*charisma*", God's free gift'.

(William Barclay, *'New Testament Words'*, pages 63-64.)

'Apart from me you can do nothing' (John 15. 5).

'It is possible to be extremely busy yet to accomplish nothing—as measured by God's criterion—unless it derives from complete dependency on Christ ...

'It is important to ask how Jesus lived His life and performed His ministry. We can do no better than find out His qualifications for ministry and seek to make them our own.

'It may come as a surprise to discover that of all His works, His miracles, and His teaching, He Himself claimed to do nothing. When the Jews were accusing Him of making Himself equal with God, Jesus gave this response: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does" (John 5. 19). He reiterated a few verses later, "By myself I can do nothing" (John 5. 30). On a later occasion, Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am [the one I claim to be] and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me" (John 8. 28).

'Then what is the explanation for all the words, works, and wonders that emanated from Jesus? He explains: "Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work" (John 14. 10). It is His union with the Father ("I am in the Father and the Father is in me") that is the source of the work.

'Similarly, He explained to His disciples ... that His relationship of dependency upon the Father must become their relationship of dependency on Him. "If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15. 5). As Christ did nothing outside of His dependency upon the Father, so we can do nothing apart from our dependency on Christ'.

(Charles Price, *'Learning to Depend on the Sufficiency of Christ'*, contributed to 'Lessons in Leadership', edited by Randal Roberts, pages 235-236.)

'Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might' (Eph. 6. 10).

'A little boy one day was trying to pick up a rock. He said "Dad, it's too heavy".

He said, "Son, you can do it".

The boy strained and tried, but he said, "Dad, it's too heavy".

The father insisted, "Son, you can do it".

He tried again. "Dad, it's too heavy".

He said, "Son, you're not using all your strength".

"Dad, I am. I am. It's too heavy".

"Son, you're not using all your strength".

"Dad, why are you continually saying I'm not using all my strength? It's too heavy".

"I know you're not using all your strength, because *you haven't asked me to help yet*".

'There is more strength available to you than what you have. Be strong in the strength of His might'.

(Tony Evans, 'Stories, Quotes, and Anecdotes', Moody, article 'God, power of'.)

'The deceitfulness of sin' (Heb. 3. 13).

(i) Sin will take you farther than you wanted to go.

(ii) Sin will keep you longer than you wanted to stay.

(iii) Sin will cost you more than you wanted to pay'.

(Steve Farrar, 'Finishing Strong', 1995, page 90.)

Four different ways in which biblical leaders 'finished the race' (2 Tim. 4. 7).

'Cut off early means they were taken out of leadership (assassinations, killed in battle, prophetically denounced, overthrown). Typical examples of those cut off early include: *Abimelech, Samson, Absalom, Ahab, Josiah, John the Baptist, and James* ...

'Finished poorly means they were going downhill in the latter part of their lives. This might mean in terms of their personal relationship with God or in terms of competency...or both. Some who are typical examples of finishing poorly include: *Gideon, Eli, Saul, and Solomon* ...

'Finished so-so means they did not do what they could have done or should have done. They did not complete what God had for them to do. This might mean that there were some negative ramifications (from their past) which lingered on even though they were walking with God personally at the end of their lives. Some examples of finishing so-so would be *David, Jehosaphat, and Hezekiah* ...

'Finished well means that they were walking with God personally at the end of their lives. They were strong in their faith and close to the Lord. The following men finished well: *Abraham, Job, Joseph, Joshua, Caleb, Samuel, Elijah, Jeremiah, Daniel, John, Paul, and Peter* .

(J. Robert Clinton, 'The Mantle of the Mentor', pages 4-5.)

'I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God' (John 20. 17).

'The two prayers of the apostle in the Epistle to the Ephesians (that of chapter 1 and that of chapter 3) will be seen to be respectively based upon these two titles.

'The prayer of chapter 1 is founded upon the second title, viz., that of "God of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 1. 17); and that of chapter 3 upon the former, viz., that of "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 3. 14). The first title is used in relation to glory, the second to communion in love'.

(J. N. Darby, 'On Worship', Collected Writings, Volume 7, page 96.)

'Let no man glory in men' (1 Cor. 3. 21)

The apostle Paul 'would no more allow the Christians at Corinth to be putting man (even though it were himself and Apollos) in a wrong place, than he would accept for himself and Barnabas, at Lystra, garlands and sacrifices from the priest of Jupiter.

'To these he said, "Sirs, why do ye these things? we also are men of like passions with you" (Acts 14. 15). To those he wrote, "Let no man glory in men" (1 Cor. 3. 21) and "These things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written" (1 Cor. 4. 6)'.
(E. Dennett, 'Josiah and His Days', The Christian's Friend, 1975, pages 276-277.)

'Continue'.

1. "Continue following the Lord your God" (1Sam 12. 14).

2. "Continue in my word" (John 8. 31).

3. "Continue ye in my love" (John 15. 9).

4. "Continue in the grace of God" (Acts 13. 43).

5. "Continue in the faith" (Acts 14. 22).

6. "Continue in prayer" (Col. 4. 2).

7. "Continue in faith and charity" (1Tim. 2. 15)'.
(F. E. Marsh, 'One Thousand New Bible Readings', page 115, number 244.)

(iii) Go on, smile.

The postman and the gas man.

1. The postman.

Mark was in the regular army and had been given an assignment overseas. Before he left, he assured his young lady, Poppy, that he would write to her every day to confirm that he still loved her as much as ever. He knew that, although Poppy lived with her parents on a remote farm way out in the countryside, the postman could be relied on to see that the mail would be delivered.

And Mark was as good as his word. He wrote a love letter to Poppy every single day for a year and a half.

It was with great joy and expectation that Mark arrived home after his 18 months' absence ... only to find that *Poppy had married the postman!*

2. The gas man.

'Twas on a *Monday morning*

The gas man came to call.

The gas tap wouldn't turn, I wasn't getting gas at all.
He tore out all the skirting boards to try and find the main
And I had to call a carpenter to put them back again.

Oh, it all makes work for the working man to do!

'Twas on a *Tuesday morning*

The carpenter came round.

He hammered and he chiselled and he said:

"Look what I've found!

Your joists are full of dry-rot

But I'll put them all to rights".

Then he nailed right through a cable and out went all the lights.

Oh, it all makes work for the working man to do!

'Twas on a *Wednesday morning*

The electrician came.

He called me "Mr Sanderson", which isn't quite my name.
He couldn't reach the fuse box without standing on the bin
And his foot went through a window so I called a glazier in.

Oh, it all makes work for the working man to do!

'Twas on the *Thursday morning*

The glazier came along.

With his blowtorch and his putty and his merry glazier's song
He put another pane in;
It took no time at all.

But I had to get a painter in to come and paint the wall.

Oh, it all makes work for the working man to do!

'Twas on a *Friday morning*

The painter made a start.

With undercoats and overcoats he painted every part,
Every nook and every cranny.
But I found when he was gone

He'd painted over the gas tap and I couldn't turn it on!

Oh, it all makes work for the working man to do!

On *Saturday and Sunday*, they do no work at all.

So 'twas on a *Monday morning* that **the gas man** came to call.

(Michael Flanders, 'The Gas Man Cometh', from 'The songs of Michael Flanders & Donald Swann', page 29.)