



# MONDAY'S MEAL

SUSTAINABLE NOURISHMENT *for the* LONG DISTANCE RUN

## Heroes vs. Hooligans

by **Stuart Bryan**

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**Monday's Meal is a service of The Oaks Classical and Christian Academy. Each meal is selected specifically to feed and nourish parents for the long distance run. If you found it helpful, consider passing it along.**

**"...and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds..."  
Hebrews 10:24**

May I make a confession? It may seem shocking to some, scandalous to others — but I feel that I must make it. I love history. Try as I might to suppress my passions; labor as I may to turn my attention elsewhere; I find myself reading obscure books, talking about obscure men, and memorizing obscure facts. What's worse — people actually pay me to do all this. I often think this brand of torture is like putting a chocolate lover in the midst of a Hershey's manufacturing plant — balloon is probably too modest a simile to describe the proportions reached by the unfortunate victim. And so here I am, a history buff, paid to gorge myself on the delectable treats of antiquity.

Now, lest you be led astray by the tenor of the last paragraph, the title is not, "True Confessions of a History Teacher: A Shocking Expose." Important reading, I am sure—but hardly the fare for the faint of heart. No, my purpose in writing is much more mundane; to tell about history—what it is and why we teach it.

History is remembrance. To some this may seem a strange definition. "No," they declare, "history is memorization—dates, names, persons, places." And so it is. But history is much more than the mere recitation of data. It is the recollection of a story—a story that begins in a Garden and ends in a City.

As we peruse the opening chapters of Genesis, we behold God's original creative purposes for mankind. God called man to fill the earth and subdue it; to tap the hidden resources of the world and mold them into a captivating culture that extolled God's excellence and beauty (Gen. 1:26). But man rebelled (Gen. 3). The glorious vision became tainted and ruined—man retained his divinely granted grace but now utilized them to extoll perversity and wickedness (Gen. 4-11).

But even in the midst of sorrow God highlighted mercy. He divided mankind into two classes—the Seed of the Woman and the Seed of the Serpent (Gen. 3:15). The preeminent fulfillment of this text is the clash between Jesus and Satan. But the contest does not stop there. Both Jesus and

Satan have servants and history records their struggle. While the Seed of the Serpent would distort creation from its original purpose and seek to honor and glorify the creature, the Seed of the Woman, by God's grace, would endeavor to reverse the devastation wrought by the fall to the glory of the Creator (Rom. 1:18). The entirety of history bears witness to the unyielding strife between these two classes of men and in each encounter, God preserves and purifies the seed of the woman. The culmination of the strife is described in the book of revelation when the wicked are judged and the righteous dwell forever in the glorious city, the New Jerusalem.

This conflict illustrates why I have declared that history is remembrance. As believers in Christ, members of the Seed of the Woman, we find ourselves in the middle of the story. The Garden is lost forever, but the City has not yet arrived in its fullness. In this interim, we are called upon to strive against the Seed of the Serpent and labor for the expansion of the kingdom of God. We are summoned to remember our place in the world as Christ's emissaries and to bring down everything which exalts itself against our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 10:4,5).

Because history is remembrance, Scripture identifies forgetfulness as a heinous sin. Psalm 78 tells us that the reason our fathers failed was because they forgot God's works of old. To forget is to lose one's place in the world; it is to wander aimlessly through life; it is to cease to be human.

Notice the way in which Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy supports this biblical framework. Who are the heroes in the tale? They are those who remember the stories. The Ents, Gandalf, Gimli the dwarf, the wise among the Riders of Rohan, the Elves. Who are the hooligans? Those who forget. Saruman is the embodiment of this idea. He had forgotten the Ents, forgotten the powers that waged war against Sauron. What was the result of his forgetfulness? Hopelessness, despair, and destruction.

And so we come, quite naturally, to the second part of our essay—why study history? Quite simply we study because God commands it. And whatever God commands must be good. As we press further, we discover why it is good. First, history nurtures humility. It exposes the hubris of what C.S. Lewis called chronological snobbery, the idea that our age has everything together. History awakens our sense of smallness as we behold how many have marched to their grave before us and, if the Lord tarries, how many shall follow. Second, history fosters thankfulness. It gives us an abiding appreciation for God's works of old and his faithfulness to our fathers. As we behold how often the continuance of the faith has balanced upon the edge of a knife, how often the truth has been maligned, distorted, and denied, we are filled with wonder for what we now possess. Third, history cultivates courage. It frees us from the oppressive *esprit decor* that makes righteousness look strange and sin look normal. It enables us to see that beyond the façade of modern mores and opinions are societies hopelessly adrift. Once we see this, we will be enabled to take our stand as servants of the Seed of the Woman and labor against all the wiles of the devil. We will be able to offer our societies a sure anchor in the Word of God.

History plays a large part in our education here at The Oaks. It is our duty as parents and teachers to train the students to view their labors as constructive works of the Seed of the Woman opposing the destructive demolition of the Seed of the Serpent. We are training them to work in light of what has been lost but also in light of what is yet to be gained. By God's grace alone shall we accomplish this objective.