**INTERCESSION: PRAYER IN A TIME OF CRISIS BY REV. G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**1. FOR OURSELVES THAT WE MAY BE CONFORMED TO HIS WILL by REV. G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*"O lord, thou hast searched me, and known me ... Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."*

*Psalm 139:1, 23, 24*

*"* *Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."*

*Colossians 4:12*

I should have the greatest reluctance in saying anything in this hour of intercession, were it not that the purpose on my heart is that of attempting to give some instruction, some exhortation, and some word of admonition, in order to the creation of the true atmosphere for that intercession.

Intercession for ourselves - that we may be conformed to His will. Praying first for ourselves may seem to be somewhat strange, and somewhat out of the true order of things. Yet it is the true order, providing always that in our praying for ourselves we remember all those larger things toward which we pray, and which are necessarily involved in all true prayer along this line, If anything is taught in the Holy Scriptures, and if anything is taught by true Christian experience, it is that service and prayers in the interest of the larger, are unavailing save as, realising the sacredness of our responsibilities concerning that larger, we ourselves are in right relationship with God. If we pray for ourselves, even in this matter of conformity to the will of God, and the motive behind our praying merely be that we may enter into all the blessedness of such conformity, I venture to say that our prayers are valueless, are not heard, and will not be answered. The last form and fashion of selfishness of which the human heart is capable, is spiritual selfishness; and there is no form of selfishness more subtle, or more destructive than that, to all true and vital spirituality. The only man who can escape from hell, is the man who is willing to descend into hell, for the sake of other people. This is a burning fire, testing our petitions, and yet driving us along this line first of all, praying that we may be conformed to the will of God. When we begin with prayer of this kind it is most important that we should not be discouraged; that we should remember that in prayer we are not dealing with our fellow men, but with our God. If that thought fills us with astonishment at the remembrance of His holiness, it ought also to fill with amazement at the remembrance of His love, His compassion.

God deals with motives. We need first of all, even in prayer, to remember that. We need to try for a little - not that we can ultimately do it - to forget the speech and actions that spring out of motive, and to deal with the motive itself. The deepest thing in my life is the motive out of which all my speech proceeds, and out of which all my action grows. God deals with that. That fact must not, however, be used to excuse unworthy speech and action. When we get away from our fellowmen, and when we no longer place upon ourselves the measurements of the opinions of our brethren and sisters, and are alone with God, oh the comfort, the sorrowful comfort, of knowing that He searches us to the very depths, and knows the inner secret motive; the deepest, profoundest passion of the life, which we have so often violated and failed to fulfil, the failure to fulfil which has brought into our life so much of weakness and sorrow. There, at the back of all the failure lies motive, and God ever deals with that. There I think we need to begin to pray. That is why I read those words from the ancient Psalm. It is when we know that God is the One Who searches us, that we pray "Lord, search us."

The supreme motive then of life is that we are in the will of God. That is deeper than anything else. Not that we should save men - I mention that because it is so high a passion - but that we should be in the will of God. Not that we should bring in His Kingdom in the world; - I mention that because it is the ultimate consideration - but that the motive underlying our thinking, our speaking, our doing, our planning, our going, our coming, our suffering, our rejoicing, our playing, our working, should be that we are where God would have us be, and that we are what God would have us be. If we begin to pray for ourselves along that line, we shall pray with Epaphras, who agonised in prayer on behalf of the saints that they might stand perfect and fully assured in the will of God. We need to pray that for ourselves individually, and in fellowship.

In this hour of our intercession then let us seek that searching of God which shall discover, not to Him but to us, what is the underlying motive of life. We are often such cowards that we dare not face this. Introspection may be dangerous, for it often becomes morbid, but it has its value. Some of us dare not attempt it. Then let us ask God to do it. Let us ask God that the light may be so clear that we shall know what is the motive that lies behind our life. It may be a shameful proceeding, that is, a proceeding producing great shame. Nevertheless, let us find out.

It may be that He will discover to us that the motive is true and just; that deep down in the inner life, that which is born of God in His children has not sinned; and yet, strange and awful experience of the human soul, whereas the hidden thing of motive born of His Spirit may not have sinned, we may have been sinning in action and speech, contradicting the very motive of our own life.

Let us remit all that to Him. We cannot deal with wrong things; but He can. Let us then come to Him, that He may deal with them. Much there may be of which we have to repent, if we begin praying for ourselves in this way. Well, let us repent; but let us believe also. As we come to prayer may God deliver us from the one sin that has no forgiveness, the sin of doubting the exceeding mercy of God.

Now a word of exhortation and admonition. I would not say anything contrary to the mind of the Spirit; but I am bound to speak as I feel, and the feeling is born of prolonged study of the Word, and of a great many years' experience personally and in other ways, of the Christian experience. I do not think anything is gained by public confession of individual sins, in a public assembly. If we pray audibly, let our prayers be individual but in sympathy with others; and let those personal things be dealt with in the inner shrine of the soul, alone with God.

There are positive aspects of this praying that we may be perfectly conformed to His will. The inclusive petition is that we may be love - mastered. I think there is nothing to be added to that. All light is in love; all liberty is in love.

Now we are going to prayer; not about our service, that will depend upon what we are; not about the Church which we love so well, the Church of God will be perfected in its mission when all its members are perfected in their relationship to Him; not about our nation, concerning which we are anxious today, the nation will obey the Church when the Church arises and puts on her beautiful garments, and speaks with the voice of spiritual authority; not about the world at large, God is opening her doors to us everywhere, and alas we do not see them, the world will be reached when the Church is ready; but about ourselves. We want to pray that God will make us true. There we are back at the beginning, He must search us. Let us pray that He will; - and let us pray that we may be helped to yield ourselves to the light.