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

**2. FOR OURSELVES THAT WE MAY BE ACTUALLY AT HIS DISPOSAL FOR SERVICE by REV. G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*"And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."*

*Luke 14:25-35*

We are gathered for intercession for ourselves that we may be actually at His disposal for service. We are all quite willing to pray for that. But are we? We take for granted as we come to this subject of intercession, all that we considered yesterday, when we prayed for ourselves that we may be conformed to His will.

Let us begin there, and assume that we are conformed to His will. Then let us remind ourselves that service is inherent in the intention of salvation. We surely know it, yet it is most appalling how, even in our Christian experience, we forget it. We exult in our own personal salvation, and we have a right so to do; we cry out with joy that God has in His grace ransomed and redeemed us, and we are warranted in doing so; yet we are in such danger of stopping at that point, and forgetting that in His intention of saving us our service was inherent.

In the case of those who are brought into the experience of personal salvation suddenly, this sense of the passion and power for service is invariably a phase of the experience. Am I not right in saying that? I thus try to make my distinction carefully. In the case of those who are brought into the experience of salvation suddenly; we are not all brought into it suddenly, I was not; I know no date on which I was born again. I suppose that the majority of Christians have such a date and occasion, that they can remember. Invariably, one phase of that experience is the sense of passion and power for service; those who have it immediately want someone else to know, someone else to be told, someone else to see the light, feel the warmth of the love, and experience the liberty. One of the first movements of the life of God in the soul of a man is a movement outward, toward someone else.

Or again, to those of us who were born into personal relationship with Christ without this sudden experience and without knowing when, one of the proofs of the life is this self-same thing, this sense of passion for and power for service. The language of the true Christian is always this, I want to serve, I am able to serve, I am bound to serve.

Yet how we fail! Is it not true to say that in many, many instances - I want to speak carefully without anything like censorious criticism - must it not be confessed that it is true almost in the majority of cases, that the first flush fades from the sky, that the first fervour dies out of the life? How many Christian people there are today - I am not questioning their Christianity - who if they spoke the truth, all the truth, would have to say something like this: I really do not want to serve; I really am not able to serve; I do not feel bound to serve.

It is very important that we should remember that if those things be so, they are evidences of decline and deterioration in our Christian life. My brethren in the Christian ministry will not think I am talking to them as apart from them but in comradeship with them, when I say that such failure may co-exist with the most regular observance of all the duties of the ministerial office. I may have to get my sermons ready, I may have to face my people, and attend to the routine of ministerial work, and yet lack the sense of passion and power which are the necessary outcomes of true, deep life in Christ. There is no tragedy quite so dreadful as that. Of the man who is in that position in the Christian ministry I would speak with all tenderness, I have known something of it. Let us not be angry with him, but pray for him; for if there is one situation in God's World more dire and terrific than another, it is to have to go on doing holy things when we have lost the Divine Passion that first drove us to them.

It is a serious thing we are going to pray for, that we may be actually at His disposal for service. Ideally, we are at His disposal, because we are His; but actually where do we stand?

What does it mean to be actually at His disposal for service? First of all, it means that as to what I am in myself, in my own personality, the whole of the "I am" of me, shall be at His disposal. That is why we must be lonely in this praying. In God's name, let no one ask to be able to preach like anybody else. Let no one ask to be able to do the kind of foreign missionary work that some other has done. What then am I? What is there within my own personality? What powers have I? That is a question that each must answer alone. To be actually at His disposal, is to have put personality so completely at His disposal, that He may use it. Let me illustrate in a homely way. In Dr. Jowett's little book The Passion for Souls he has a wonderful chapter on "I will make you fishers of men." I refer to that chapter because I have never read anything so exquisitely beautiful and powerful on that particular passage. Having said that, I am free to say that I miss the whole value of that teaching for myself if I follow slavishly the figure of the fisher in my work. I am no fisher. I do not like fishing as a pleasure. I agree with Charles Lamb. Thirty years ago the Lord came to me; but He did not say, Come after Me and I will make you a fisher of men. He found me at my desk with my boys around me. I was teaching them, and I loved the work. It was a perpetual joy to train the mind and lead it out, imparting to it such knowledge as it was able to bear. Jesus said to me, Come after Me, and I will make you a teacher of men.

The application of this is far wider than to the Christian ministry. You are a business man. Is that business ability at your Lord's disposal for His Kingdom? The trouble is that some business men are such fools when they come into the house of God. They are so keen, acute, in business; but they treat this business of the Kingdom of God as though it needed no enterprise, no ingenuity, no observance of the law of adaptation.

Twenty-five years ago I was conducting a mission in a Wesleyan chapel in Shropshire, and pleaded on the Sunday morning for the consecration of gifts for the sake of the Kingdom of God. After the service a lady came to me and said; "What can I do?" I replied: "What can you do? Can you sing?" "Oh yes, I can sing." "Do you ever sing in public?" "Oh yes, I sing at the concerts of the Church." Then I said: "Give Christ your voice for two weeks." She replied: "Oh, I could not sing in public, in that way." "Then," said I, "There is no more to be said, there is nothing you can do for Jesus." After a moment's reflection she said can "Yes, I will do it!" She sang that night. Sitting down in the middle of the Chapel was a farmer, and when I got to speak to him - for he had come out into the inquiry room - he said, "Oh, it wasn't your sermon, that did not touch me at all!" "What was it then?" "That woman's singing!"

*Take my voice, and let me sing*

*Always, only for my King.*

Have you ever sung the gospel for Him, dear girl? Have you ever gone and sung of His love to some sick soul, or in some assembly of men and women for Christ's sake? All must be at His disposal, not only as to what I am, but as to what I have; my possessions which are other than my essential self; not the possessions of capacities or gifts within my personality merely, but the possessions that were given to me by another, or that I have earned by my own labour. Are they His? To be actually at His disposal is to say,

*Nought that I have my own I call*

*I hold it for the Giver,*

*My life, my soul, my wealth, my all*

*Are His and His forever.*

Is that so? Here is a point at which no man has any right to make a particular application, because he cannot. I do not know, and it would be impertinent to judge by the observation of my eyes. He judges not by the seeing of the eyes or the hearing of the ears; but by righteous judgments. I cannot do that. Nevertheless, taking a general outlook upon our Churches, I dare to say that if all the possessions of the saints of God were at His disposal, there would be no languishing missionary coffers. Individually this is business we must transact when we are alone with the Lord. There is much comfort as well as much fire in that fact. Jesus watched the Treasury - He is always doing that - and He saw a widow cast in two mites! He did not say, 'She is doing very well;' or 'She is doing quite equal to anyone else.' He said, 'She hath cast in more than them all.' He added up all the gifts of the day, and said that the whole of it was not equal to her gift. When Sir Moses Montefiore was dead they found among his papers a little book with a list of private benefactions, far larger than anything men had known about, and in the front of the book he had written, 'Gifts acknowledged by men are not registered in the ledgers of heaven.' That was a devout Hebrew. I do not know where we Christians stand, by comparison!

Again, I am to be actually at His disposal, not only as to what I am and what I have, but as to where I go. I am not actually at His disposal if I say I can only serve Him in China. I am not quite actually at His disposal if I say I will go here or there unless He prevent me. I am at His disposal if I am willing to go where He sends me. Whether it is the city, or the village, in India, China, or Africa; where He would have me be is the place for me.

Finally, I am to be at His disposal actually, as to what I do, where He puts me. What are the things that hinder our being actually at His disposal? There are personal things that hinder us. There is pride; there is modesty. The first needs no argument. There is a modesty that is as evil a thing as pride can ever be in its influence upon Christian service. When the call comes ringing like a trumpet blast, and we stay hiding away in the stuff, we are wrong. Pride and modesty are alike of the self-life, if they interfere with the Lords command. Eagerness for the great thing, the conspicuous thing, the mighty thing, may be the thing that hinders us. Sloth - the word is enough - it means laziness; this surely hinders. There are relative things that may hinder. The love of our kindred may hinder us. "Whose loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me." We know He was right! We may be hindered by dislike of folks. That, as it seems to me, is superlatively contemptible. What do we think the Lord might have felt about us naturally, foul and guilty, as we all are in His sight? What right have we to say: We do not like that sort of person; we cannot go here or there. If we are like Him, His great, surging, sweeping passion will drive us, and we shall not see the objectionable things for the love of the folk themselves:

*"Only like souls I see the folk thereunder."*

It is that vision of the crowds we need if we are to serve.