**VOLUME 1; CHAPTER 3 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**THE TERMS OF DISCIPLESHIP by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.*

*Matthew 16:24*

*So therefore whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple.*

*Luke 14:33*

IN THE WORDS OF JESUS, PRESERVED FOR US IN THE RECORDS, there are two elements perpetually noticeable. There is that with which, perhaps, we are most familiar - the element of tenderness, of gentleness, or, as it has been very often recently described, the wooing note. But there is also manifest another element - that of severity, the element which sometimes seems almost to amount to harshness of expression, or, in contrast with the phrase already referred to, the element which may be described as the warning note.

These are also to be found in the story of the influence He exerted upon His own age, and in the influence He has exerted on every successive age, as well as in the influence which He is exerting today.

Jesus was and is the most attractive personality that the world has ever known. Yet, both when He was in our world in earthly form, and by His spiritual presence in every successive century, He has repelled the men He attracted - whispering, on the one hand, to the sorrow-burdened heart of humanity words so full of mother love and father love as to make men crowd and press round Him, and then, on the other hand, suddenly speaking words that flash and scorch and burn until men draw back in astonishment.

Let us think of this apparent contradiction a little more closely. The fact of the attractiveness of Jesus needs no argument today. The story of the life of Jesus as set forth in the four Gospels is the story of One Who was constantly drawing men to Him. I do not say for the moment with what issue; neither do I now deal with the motive which prompted the men that came. It was not always the same so far as their consciousness was concerned. I simply insist upon the fact that He drew men to Him. I think that perhaps the whole story may best be told in the somewhat rough and ready way of saying that the one thing the men of his age could not do with Jesus was to let Him alone. There was a strange attractiveness about Him in the early years. Luke has opened for us one or two windows through which we may see some of the facts about those hidden years. Among those windows there is one through which I love to look. It is the statement which Luke makes that He went down to His own home and that there "He grew in favour with God and man." Taking only one half of that double window, we have a declaration that Jesus as a boy, youth, and young man, grew in favour with men. May I not be allowed to put that in another form and say that Jesus, the boy, the youth, the young man, was a favourite in Nazareth. I am not sure that this is not almost startling put in this form. We have, somehow, come to imagine that real Christian character is not popular among men. We have come to imagine that some of the traits of Christianity are awkwardness, and such peculiarity as repels men. It was not so in the case of Jesus. He was a favourite in Nazareth, that little town far up from the great high roads of the nations, one of those little towns where everyone knew everyone; there the boy was known, the young man was known and loved, and was a favourite. That is one of the windows looking through which a man is tempted to let his imagination run away with him. I think Jesus the carpenter was such a carpenter that children went to see Him, and took their broken toys to Him, and He mended them. If you do not understand that sentiment be sorry for yourself. Some of you are men whom no child would bring its toy to and ask to have it mended. I think young men loved to crowd to Him and talk to Him, this sweet, strong carpenter, about their difficulties and problems. I am not sure that the old men did not love to gather around the door of the carpenter's shop and listen to Him and talk with him about the Father's house of many mansions, and the rest that followed the turmoil and strife. Be that as it may, "He grew in favour" - they loved Him, they believed in Him in Nazareth. I know perfectly well that presently they tried to murder Him, that the day came when they took Him to the brow of the hill and fain would have cast Him down headlong. That was the effect of His teaching, the result of His having to rebuke their sin; but while He was living His quiet, strong, heroic life in the midst of them, He was a favourite. And when He turned His back upon the workshop and came into public life, how men pressed after Him wherever He went! I need not repeat it, you know your New Testament. "Much people ... much people ... much people." You cannot read the Gospels without feeling that you have been in the midst of the crowds. There are great, solemn, silent moments, midnight moments, but most of the time you are in the midst of the multitude, and men of all classes and castes are crowding after Him. I read that "the common people heard Him gladly" - which does not mean the poor people. The phrase translated "common people" is the identical phrase elsewhere translated "much people." So far from meaning people of the lower order, it means all sorts of people, rulers and ruled, learned and illiterate, rich and poor, privileged and oppressed.

In the early part of His ministry, the rulers were deeply interested in Him, and, more than interested, they hoped that they might have made something out of Him. They even went to the length of asking Him to dinner, and I never read the story of His going but I worship His strength, for more prophets have been spoiled by dining out than in any other way. This Man was able to sit at the table with the rulers, and with fine courtesy tell them the truth which scorched them. And the people followed Him out of the villages and cities. How many days' work were lost in following Him who can ever tell? How many long, dusty pilgrimages were under-taken, who can imagine? One day, tired of the throng, He entered into a boat and put across to the other shore, and then I have this wonderful declaration: when the boat had kissed its way across the water and arrived at the other side, all the multitudes were waiting for Him, for they had outrun the boat round the shore in their anxiety to be near Him. That is the first fact about the days of His ministry in the world.

Set over against it this other fact. He was constantly warning men as they came. There was the moment when they came to Him and would have made Him King, but He slipped away and hid Himself, and would not so be made King. There were moments such as those of which we read in Luke's gospel when the multitudes were following, and even His own disciples fondly believed the opportunity was at hand when He should exert His power, and by popular acclaim become King, when He suddenly said, Unless you hate your father, mother, brother, sister, you cannot be My disciple. When you read those words after nineteen centuries is it not true you are afraid? I am. Is it not true that even now in the heart of most of us there is something of questioning rebellion? What does He mean? What are those strange, severe things by which He repels the very crowds He gathers? In-stead of attempting to cover all the ground, I read these two incidents because they are typical. The words I read in Matthew 16 were not spoken primarily to the crowds, but to His own disciples. It was at Caesarea Philippi, at the parting of the ways, after He had fulfilled the first part of His ministry, and one soul at least had seen and known Him for what He really was, the Christ of God. There He began to unfold the mystery of His method, to tell them the story of His cross and His suffering and resurrection, and there and then the whole company of His disciples fell back, and they never came into close fellowship again until He was dead, buried, risen, ascended, and the Holy Ghost was poured upon them. They shunned the cross. Do not be angry with them - we are shunning it still, many of us, and we have more light than they. While He talked of the keys, their faces were radiant and their following was faithful; but when He talked of the cross, their faces were shadowed and their following faltered. Then it was that, looking at the little group of men, He said: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." And they dared not do it, and if we watch the story carefully from the beginning of His ministry to Caesarea Philippi, we see men perpetually leaving Him - rulers, scribes, Pharisees - until this little group is left alone. If you follow the story after Caesarea Philippi, you will reach its tragic last chapter and find it written in these few burning words: "They" - all the disciples - "forsook Him and fled." So that at the end I see the most attractive personality in human history absolutely alone, no one by His side, no sympathy in His dying. It is a strange story. It is a contradiction that needs careful examination. Why this repelling method of Jesus in the presence of His attractiveness?

Having asked that question, it is our business to answer it, not speculatively, but in the light of the Scriptures we read, in the light of the teaching they contain. I have read these two Scriptures because I think we have the one answer delivered in two sets of circumstances - first to the disciples, in Matthew 16, and then to the crowds, in Luke 14. Let us begin with the story of Luke. Why is it that Jesus upon such an occasion should say such strangely severe things? Mark the occasion. There went with Him great multitudes, and He turned and said - and you know the words. If you follow on you will find that He explains their meaning. "For which of you desiring to build a tower, doth not first sit down and count the cost ...? Or what king ... will not sit down first and take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? ... So therefore whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."

Here, for a moment, I must crave your very close attention and patience, because I want, if I may, to rescue this passage from popular misinterpretation. It is almost always read as though Jesus meant to say, "You must hate father, mother, wife, children, brethren and sisters, because if you are going to build a tower you must count the cost; if you are going to war you must see whether you are able to meet twenty thousand with ten thousand." One little word in the Authorized Version has given color to this interpretation. In verse 33 we read, "So likewise," but in the Revised Version we have an entirely new meaning suggested by the words, "So therefore." The difference is that, according to this rendering, what our Lord meant to say was this: You ask in your heart why I insist upon such severe terms, why I hold men away from me in this manner. And this is His answer. Which of you going to build a tower will not first count the cost, or going to battle is not careful about the quality of the men who will serve under you. So therefore, because my work is the work of building and of battle, I am bound to be careful about the men that I choose to follow me; because I am not merely asking men to come after me in order to save them, but in order to help me and help God and humanity. My business is to build - that is constructive. My business is to conduct a war, a battle - that is destructive, and I must have men I know where to find. Which of you going to build a tower doth not first count the cost, or what king going to war does not take account of the quality of the men?

Let us leave Luke for a moment and go back to Matthew and see what our Lord said there, and inquire if we find anything like the same explanation. Here the same two figures occur in the Lord's description of His work. Peter had confessed Him, and immediately He named something in the economy of His work which had never been named before. He said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." In that statement about the Church you have Christ's revelation of the nature of His work.

First, "I will build"; secondly, "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." Our Lord did not here state the same thing concerning the Church in two ways. He did not mean, "I will build the Church here, on this rock foundation, and when Hades comes against it it shall not prevail." When an enemy attacks a city, it does not take its gates with it. What Christ here meant is, My Church is, first of all, my building, and consequently impregnable; but my Church is also to be an aggressive force, which I shall lead to battle against all foes of God and humanity; and then, with the far vision of a great Conqueror, He sees the last enemy, death, the gates of Hades, the last citadel which His Church will storm, and sweeping over the intervening foes, He says: "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." Here, then, as in Luke, there are two things - building and battle. "I will build My Church" - "Which of you going to build a tower cloth not first count the cost?" "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" - "What king going to make war doth not count the cost?"

Thus we find the answer to our question as to the severity of Jesus. Because He is committed to the building of the Church, and is committed to battle against all the forces that are against man and God, He must have those associated with Him on whom He can depend. He not merely seeks to save individuals, but also to gather about Him men and women on whom He can depend for co-operation in building and comradeship in battle. That is why He is so severe in His terms. That is why, when multitudes gathered about Him, He seems to have been sifting them.

Behold the crowds, oh, Jesus, the day of Thy crowning is coming. In a few moments they will put the crown upon Thy brow! No, I must build and fight! If any man will come after me, if there is one man among the crowd that really will follow, let him deny himself and take up his cross. Not by popular acclaim, but by solid building and hard fighting is my victory to be won. Who is coming with me?

The Son of God goes forth to war,

A kingly crown to gain.

His blood-red banner streams afar;

Who follows in His train?

Who best can drink His cup of woe,

Triumphant over pain,

Who patient bears his cross below,

He follows in His train.

Quality is always more than quantity. We are a little slow to believe it, but we all know it. We do not like the sifting process when Christ confronts us and sends back the multitudes that we fain would keep, but we know He is right. It is in the Old Testament as well as in the New. We read that thirty-two thousand men came up to fight the battle of the Lord, but Jehovah said, They are too many, sift them; and within a few moments twenty-two thousand men tramped home. Sing the Doxology! - we are stronger the moment they are gone. But still the people are too many - test them by the water brooks, and the men who take unnecessary time over necessary things are to go home. Nine thousand seven hundred of them went away, leaving only three hundred, but infinitely mightier the three hundred than the thirty-two thousand.

Not by popular vote, or acclaim, but by souls who can suffer and dare and die He builds the tower and fights the foe. Our Lord has not altered His method, and yet - here let me speak with great carefulness - there is not one in all this house that He does not want. There is no one that He will not enrol among His soldiers and employ in His great building enterprise - that is, if we are prepared to fulfil His conditions.

I am making my appeal tonight from perhaps a slightly different standpoint from the usual one. I am not speaking to you of the fact that you need personal salvation. In my heart is this great thought, that Jesus has need of you, not merely for your sake, but for His sake. He has not built His Church yet; He is building it, and will never finish until the top stone is brought on with shouting of, "Grace, grace unto it." He had not ended the battle yet. He has fought the Armageddon, the greatest battle is over; but battles are fought all along the line, and He it is who leads the hosts of God. He is building God's city, and He wants you if you are such a man as He can depend on. Jesus Christ in London today wants really faithful, consecrated souls far more than patronizing multitudes.

Christ confronts us all and says, "If any man would come after Me let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." Who follows? You can applaud without following. You can admire without helping. You can be near enough to touch His sacred garment in a crowd, and never lay a brick in God's city, or strike a blow for God's victory. I dare believe there are young hearts everywhere that are sighing to help Him. Oh, young man, young woman, was there ever such a King, such a Leader, such an enterprise? Was there ever anything dreamed of by angels or men so calculated to stir the pulse and drive the heart as the King's building of the city, the King's battle for the victory? Will you come after Him?

Let us hear His terms, and God help us to hear them solemnly. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." Three things, and yet only one. The essential is the last-named, the first two are preliminary. They are necessary; you cannot reach the third save through them, but the third is the final, the essential, "Follow Me." I have been interested anew in Christ's use of the word, and have taken these Gospel stories, and have been surprised how often He said, "Follow Me." The call is so simple that any little child will tell you what it means. It is so sublime that no Christian philosopher has ever exhausted the infinite meaning of the word. If we are to help Him in His building and battle we must follow Him. What is it to follow? Two very simple things are included; to follow is, first, to trust, and, secondly, it is to obey. I cannot follow unless I trust; but I can trust in a general sense and never follow. There are many who believe Him to be the one and only King and Saviour of men, who never take His name in vain, and would not allow anyone to speak disrespectfully of Him; but they are not following Him.

"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross." Denial of self is the hidden and internal process, the taking up of the cross is the outward and external manifestation. If I may adapt and use in this connection old and familiar words, I would say that the taking up of the cross is the outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace of self-denial. What is self-denial? Jesus says everything when He speaks, and there is nothing more to be said; our danger is that we minimize when we explain. To deny self is to say no to every wish that comes out of the personal life. To deny self is radical; it goes down to the roots of things. A man may practice self-denial all his life and never deny himself. A man may practice self-denial in this and that respect, and all the while his self-centeredness is strengthened. Jesus did not say, Exercise self-denial in externalities. He said, Deny self. Have done with choosing, wishing, planning, arranging for self. Choose no more; will no more, except to will that God shall will.

Our wills are ours we know not how,

Our wills are ours to make them Thine.

I deny self when I hand over the keys of the citadel to the King and say, Enter and reign in every chamber of the being, in all the possibilities of the soul.

Is this easy? How is it to be expressed? Take up thy cross. What is that? I do not know for you, my brother. I do not know for myself tomorrow. The cross in its practice changes perpetually, in its principle it abides. The cross is the one thing that intrudes itself upon your vision at the moment of your denial of self. I am increasingly impressed with the fact that whenever a soul comes to Christ the last battle is fought out over one thing. I do not know what it is in your case, but you know exactly what you have to do if you are to follow this Christ, to build and to battle - the thing that must be set right, the friendship that must be dropped, the habit that must be abandoned, the restitution that has to be made, pride that has to be humbled, prejudice that has to be crucified. God tells us what it is, and we know. Oh for one five minutes of soul honesty! Do not indulge in subterfuges. You are asked to be true about the thing that you know is between your soul and God. For some of you it will mean a hasty return home to find the woman you insulted ere you left. For some it will mean going home and telling your children that you were wrong in your treatment of them. For some it will mean asking for the money back that you put on the plate to make restitution. It is a real cross when you begin to follow Jesus. They are Christ's terms. Nothing I have said is quite so hard as the words He uttered. Unless you hate father, mother, wife, children, brethren, sisters; unless you put every other love, every other interest in the background and Christ in the foreground, you cannot be His disciple. So help me God, I will not tone down my Master's message. I will not make this thing for my heart and yours one bit smoother than He made it. Take up your cross - not Christ's. You cannot take up Christ's cross. He took it up alone, and in the mystery of it made it possible for you to take yours and find the virtue of His; but you must take up your own.

There is one other thing I would say. If you stand where I stand you are appalled at the tremendous claim of Jesus. How can I ever deny myself and take up my cross? I come from the negative to the positive, and say to you that the only way in which you will ever be able to deny yourself and take up your cross is by fixing your eye upon Him and crowning Him. If I must stretch out my hands to the rugged cross in order to get to Him I can do it in only one way, that is by seeing Him and doing it for His sake. If I do it for my own sake, or for the sake of men, I shall fail, for I am such a coward; but if I may but look at His face as I come to my dying, I can say, "I am crucified with Christ, but nevertheless I live."

From the ground there blossoms red

Life that shall endless be.

The cross is but the prelude to resurrection. How often shall we say it! Let us come, those of us who will, and say to Him, Christ, Thou hast drawn us irresistibly. We are here to see Thee, to hear Thee. Thou hast frightened us with Thy terms, but we also would help Thee in Thy building and in Thy battle, and we will deny self and take up the cross with our eyes fixed upon Thee. And by the way of the cross we enter the army, and enter upon the enterprise, and if we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him. May God grant that there may be many who will join Him in His building and His battle by denying self and taking up the cross and following Him!