**VOLUME 1; CHAPTER 10 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**AMAZING LOVE by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*But God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

*Romans 5:8*

DURING THE PAST WEEK I RECEIVED ONE LETTER WHICH especially arrested my attention. It was unsigned, and I want to read it to you. It is very brief, very pointed, and seems to me to breathe the spirit of restless and disappointed rebellion. The writer says:

"The writer begs leave to call to the Rev. Campbell Morgan's remembrance a statement he made last Sunday evening, viz., "My Friend has proved His love to me so as to bring conviction to my heart." Then why does He not convince every person of His love? Why is He not just to all?"

The text I have read tonight is my answer to that question, and I was very careful last Sunday night to state that fact. In speaking of my Friend I said two things concerning His love. First, He has declared His love to my surprise, and then I made use of these actual words:

He has demonstrated His love so as to bring conviction to my heart. Whether I have responded or not is not the question for the moment. I simply state the fact. "God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Thus it will be seen that when I said that my Friend had brought conviction of His love to my heart I made the statement upon the basis of the text which I take tonight. I do not think the thinking of that letter is lonely, even though the writing of it is singular. I can well imagine that many people would go away last Sunday evening saying in their hearts practically the same things. "The Preacher declared that God had demonstrated His love to the conviction of his heart; but He has not done so in my experience, and if not, why not?" To that attitude of mind I want to say that the proof given to me of the love of God has been given to all. I did not mean to say that in some flaming vision of the night or apocalypse of the day God had done for me what He had not done for others. I suppose there are people even in this age who do see visions. I have never seen them. I suppose there are even today those who seem to hear, and perhaps do hear, voices which others do not hear. I am not one of such, and I should be very sorry for any man or woman to imagine that I intended to say that I had been privileged by God in any way that they had not. My Friend's proof of His love is given not to me alone, but to all men. No proof in mystic words spoken in loneliness to my own heart and no proof by some sudden and exceptional vision of glory could begin to be so conclusive to my reason as the great proof which belongs to all quite as much as it belongs to me. I venture to say - I know I speak within the realm of the finite, and limited and human, and yet I say it of profoundest conviction - God Himself could not have thought of any other way to prove His love so conclusive as the way He has taken. Will you let me, in all love and tenderness, and yet with great earnestness, say to you, my friend who wrote to me, and to all such, that if God's love has not carried conviction to your heart, I think it is because you have not taken time to consider that great proof? You have heard of it, you have sung of it. You could recite the proof texts, my text and the text in John, and many other such. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." That is the proof. "God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." That is the proof. I have no other. Hear me, that is not idly spoken. I have no other. I do not find the proof of God's personal love to me in nature. There are proofs in nature when once I have found His heart of grace. Then every flower seems to me to sing of His love, and all the rhythmic order of the universe becomes one great anthem of His tenderness. I never heard the song of the flowers or the anthem of the universe until this proof had brought me low and convinced me of His love. I have no proof but this, and yet I say to you again, speaking experimentally, my Friend has proved His love to the satisfaction of my heart in such full and perfect measure that I have no alternative, so help me God, other than that of yielding myself to Him, spirit, soul, and body, lover to lover in an embrace that makes us one forever.

I cannot help thinking, if you will let me repeat it, that if this proof has not carried conviction, it is because you have not taken time to think of it and consider it. You may believe it theoretically. You may never have quarrelled with the simple statement, with the perpetual, almost monotonous, message of the evangel; but have you ever considered the proof of God's love? To ask such a question as this, and make such a suggestion as this, is, of course, at least to carry to your minds the thought that I am going to try to lead you in the way of consideration. So I am, and yet I feel I never had a harder task or a more impossible. What can be said when the Scripture has spoken? There is nothing to be added to the text. There is great danger of detracting from its infinite music by any attempt to analyze it and break it up. Oh that we may hear it sung into our deepest heart tonight by that infinite spirit of music, the Spirit of God. "God commendeth" - recommendeth, demonstrates, proves - "His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." I cannot add to that. There is nothing more to be said. It is the speech of infinite and eternal love. When I read it I am inclined to bow my head and say, "The Lord is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him." Yet I must deliver my message, tremblingly and falteringly, and honestly wishing I need not say any more.

Notice first the persons involved in the declaration - God and the sinner. The spaciousness of the text is its difficulty. The infinite distances appal us when we begin to attempt to traverse them. We sometimes speak as though the supreme thought of distance were expressed in the words, "at the poles asunder." The poles asunder! That is but a handbreadth, but a span! God and the sinner. That is the supreme distance.

Notice, in the next place, the fact declared. Four words declare it. Four words that any little child who has been to school for one year could spell out - four words in our language all so tiny that a child can lisp them. Yet heaven is richer for their utterance, and all the thunder of the music of the seraphim is as nothing to that contained in them. All the mystery of human pain through piled up centuries is only palest gray by the side of the deep, dense darkness of this announcement, "Christ died for us." Finally, notice the truth declared in the text: "God commendeth His own love toward us." I cannot, I do not, believe that if you will quietly try this evening to traverse that threefold line of consideration you can write to me again and say, "God has not demonstrated His love to me."

Notice first the persons involved. How shall I speak reverently and yet with boldness of God? It seems to me that the great Apostle of love, John, the mystic, the seer, the man of vision, has given us in the briefest sentences the sublimest truths concerning God. I am not going to attempt to deal with these sentences, and yet I want to quote them. John tells us the story of the essence of deity in this brief word, "God is love." That is the subject in question tonight. John tells us the nature of God as well as His essence in words equally short and simple, "God is life." And once again John tells us the character of God in another sentence as simple, God is light." How dare I drape such declarations with the verbiage of explanation? It seems to me as though the Spirit through the chosen apostle of love took up the simplest words of human speech and lifted them above all rhetoric and eloquence and explanation and exposition, and focused in them all the light and splendor and glory concerning God which it is possible for man to stand in the presence of and live. God is life, essential life, and in the word is included all the facts of power which we try to express in other ways: all the facts of wisdom which so often appal us when we have tracked its footsteps through immensity, and that over-whelming fact of His sovereignty which we are so slow to learn and acknowledge. God is life. Not that He has it, or has been it, or even lives it, but He is life. This I am not considering now, for it does not seem to me that we shall catch the marvel of my text if we simply consider the fact of the life of God as it is manifest in all power and wisdom and supremacy. To be told that a Being of infinite power loves is not astonishing, even though His love be set upon a finite thing. To be told that a Being of infinite intelligence loves does not appal me, even though His love be set upon some foolish creature of His own hand. To be told that a sovereign, supreme Being loves is not amazing, even though His love be set upon those who are subject to His throne. Therefore I pass from the sentence that speaks of the essence, "God is love," and the sentence that speaks of the nature, "God is life," to the final sentence which speaks of character, "God is light." The moment I have uttered it or read it, the moment the thought it suggests passes before me, I begin to be astonished at the declaration that He loves me.

"God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." How shall I speak of that light and what it really means? It is best of all to catch the words of Holy Scripture and let them suggest, at least to my heart, something of the infinite and awful purity of God. He is holy and righteous. He is true and faithful. Holy - right in character. Righteous - right in conduct. True - the essential fact concerning Himself. Faithful - His loyalty, in all His dealings with created things to the uttermost bound of His universe, to that essential fact of truth in His own being. The God of the universe, infinite in power, infinite in wisdom, is, above all else, infinite in holiness. If the statement of the truth does not appal us it is because our sensibility to holiness is blunted by our own sin. If these words can easily pass our lips and we never tremble, the lack of trembling is evidence of paralysis in all the higher sensibilities of the spiritual nature. If only we knew what holiness meant, if we could understand what righteousness essentially means, if only we understood the real meaning of "truth in the inward parts," of faithfulness in the least detail of the activity of power, we should be appalled by the thought of the essential holiness of God. God, infinite in holiness. Let the broken and incomplete sentence suffice.

Then I pass to the end of my text and find this word "sinners." What are sinners? Those who in character are the exact opposite of God, though they are kin to Him by nature. Here is the marvel. By nature man is kin of God. Do not be afraid of the great word which the Apostle quoted on Mars Hill. By first creation man is "offspring of God," kin to God, related to God. As in His nature there is essential power, in my life there is power. As in His nature there is wisdom, in my life there are knowledge and wisdom. As in His nature there are supremacy and government, so in every human being there is the capacity for government, for man is the crown of creation, the king of the cosmos, made for co-operation with God in government and dominion over all the far-reaching life that stretches - a lost territory - beneath his feet.

Such is man in his nature. But what of his character? Though he is kin to God in nature, all his character is unlike God. Unholy instead of holy. Unrighteous instead of righteous. Untrue instead of true. Unfaithful instead of faithful. Contrary to God in choices and conduct. I am not going to discuss the theory of the "how," I am simply stating the fact of human life. Even though in these days some of us may be inclined to quarrel with the phraseology of sacred Scripture and the terminology of the older school of theology, the fact remains, men "go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies."

There is no man here who will test his past character d conduct - I will not say by the white light of God's existence, but by his own ideal of truth and uprightness and purity - and dare stand erect and say, "I have never sinned." There is no man in this house who dare say that, whatever his religion, or lack of religion. Men everywhere are ready to admit the fact of sin. We have been told quite recently that in these days men do not want to hear about sin, men are putting sin out of their vocabulary as a word, are attempting to put it out of their thinking as a fact; they cannot put it out of your experience. Drop it out your vocabulary if you will be so foolish. Cease taking count of it in your arrangements if you will be so mad. It will be the madness of the ostrich that hides its head in the sand the of the desert and dreams it is unseen because it cannot see.

Now mark what this means as to contrast. By the highest standards of human experience the sinner ought to be objectionable and loathsome to God. Purity - and we are down on the low level of human thinking - does and ought to hate impurity. The man of high ideals must hold in supreme contempt the man of base and ignoble ideals. To me it is first of all inconceivable that infinite purity can care for me because I am impure. Apart from the cross of Christ you will never persuade me that God loves me. I am not blaming God for not loving me. I would not suggest that He ought to love me. I would not lend my lips to the blasphemy of saying that He ought to love me because He made me. He made me kin to Himself with environment in His own being and the inheritance of His own might, stronger than any other environment and inheritance I have entered into. Still, I am impure. I have been selfish, and sinful, and am undone in the fiber of my moral being, and it is inconceivable to me that the pure can love the impure. I cannot, save as His love enters into my life and enables me. The measure of my purity - it is faint, God knows - but the measure of it is the measure in which impurity is hateful. Here are the supreme mystery and the supreme miracle, not only of the evangel as it is declared, but of the experience of all such as share its mystery and become themselves like God in that they, too, love those who are unlike Him and unlike themselves. Mark the persons involved: God, infinite in holiness purity and uprightness, and sinners such as are kin to Him in nature and utterly unlike Him and opposed to Him in character.

Now come to the fact declared in this text, the central fact of all your Bible. The fact, the first dreams of which you find in Eden, and the last glory of which flames in the apocalypse. "Christ died for us." "Christ died." How am I going to speak of that? Do not be angry when I say that some of you are almost weary of hearing this. You are almost inclined to say, "Is this all? We know all this." We do not begin to know it. There is nothing else to say when this is said. Therefore, God help us to be careful how we say it, and how we hear it. The matter of first importance is that we are very careful what we mean when we say "Christ." It is of equal importance that we are very careful what we mean when we say, "died." If I take this simplest phrase in holy Scripture "Christ died," and utter the word "Christ," I think simply of a peasant of Galilee, and when I utter the word "died" I think of such a death as I have seen when my I own loved ones passed, but I have not heard the music, have not seen the wonder, have not begun to understand how God commends His love.

With great solemnity, and speaking under deep conviction, I warn you never to forget that when you speak of Jesus you also speak of God. God was in Christ, not as He is me even by His grace, but in that fuller and infinite sense which the Apostle expresses in the grandeur of that word in the Colossian Epistle. "It was the good pleasure of the Father that in Him should all the fullness dwell corporeally." Oh, I cannot understand it. No philosophy man ever invented can contain it. If you rob the word "Christ" of that significance your Gospel will fall to pieces. Remember that this is God in Christ. The Man of Nazareth, very man, perfect man, man as I am man, was God's revelation to me of Himself. The Son of God was incarnate in the Man of Nazareth, and the Son of God is today still related to that self-same Man of Nazareth in the place where men gather in the home of God; but you have something larger here than the mere Man of Nazareth, you have Christ, and the name is the mystic symbol of Godhead bent in humility to redemption's work. Christ, the Son of God Who is of the essence of God, Who was with God in the measureless deeps and infinitudes of bygone eternity, Who was God, and Who, in a mystery profounder than the mystery of the rolling ages, became flesh and dwelt amongst men. "Christ" - do not put any small human measurement upon this word, or you will rob the evangel of its music. You may well sit down and tell me that God has not proved His love to you if you think little of Christ. It is little thinking of Christ that has de-graded our conception of the meaning of His death. "Christ died," and if you stand in front of the Roman gibbet and watch the ebbing of the life of the man until presently you say, "He is dead," and if you imagine that is all that is meant your eyes are very blind. You have seen very little. He Himself said that the physical is not death. He did not ever speak of such as death, but always as falling asleep. In His thinking and teaching, and in the Apostolic thinking and teaching which immediately succeeded it, death was something pro-founder than physical dissolution. What is death? Death is that in which a man may be, while yet alive, in the physical realm. A man can be dead in trespasses and sins. Death is that condition in which a woman may be while in the height of the London season. "She that giveth herself to pleasure is dead while she liveth." Death is not dissolution of the body. It Is severance of the spirit from God, the sense of homelessness, the sense of friendlessness, the one all-inclusive agony of loss, of lack and failure. Christ - and do not forget the meaning of the word - died. Listen, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" The sense of homelessness, loss, the infinite agony of loneliness. But you say to me, "You told us a moment ago that this was God." Yes, I repeat it. Then you say, "What can He mean when He says, 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' How can God say that to God?" Here are the mystery and the marvel of the unveiling of infinite love as you will find it nowhere else. I pray you do not imagine that this Person on the Cross is of other than God. After hearing that human speech in which the Infinite and Eternal sobs itself out in the little language of a fallen race, what do I find? I find that God has lost Himself to find man. I find that God has gathered into His own consciousness the whole unutterable issue of sin. Christ died. He did not cease to be. God in Christ, Who had blessed men with a touch, and had wooed men with winsomeness, now dies as He finds the place of loneliness, of homelessness, of infinite lack. Yea, verily the old prophetic word is fulfilled there in the sight of heaven and earth and hell in the experience of God, "The pains of hell gat hold on me." "Christ died." And yet you say that God has not proved His love to you.

Now mark the infinite reaches of this Gospel - God and the sinner. We see the infinite gulf, and we state, according to the very highest and best conception we have of things, that God ought to count the sinner loathsome. What is the truth? When there was no eye to pity, His eye pitied. When there was no arm to save, His arm brought salvation. What is the truth? Hear it, man, woman, doubting of God's love. The God of infinite purity bent in the mystery of incarnation, and in the cross, to the condition of the impure. He gathered into His own experience and consciousness all the immeasurable and unutterable issues of sin. "God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "Oh, for such love let rocks and hills their lasting silence break!"

"God commendeth His love." Can you explain to me in any other way than by the answer that love was the inspiration, the mystery of that descent and that great death? I say to you tonight that to me there is no other explanation of that death. "Scarcely for righteous man will one die: for peradventure for the good man someone would even dare to die." Such is the prologue of my text, and mark the emphasis, "But God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "His own love" - there is no other like it. Here is the quality found nowhere else - "His own love." You cannot commend anyone else's love in this way. I ask you again, Does that truth prove anything other than love? You tell me that that truth is proof of God's righteousness. I tell you, No. You tell me that truth is proof of God's wisdom. I say, No, not supremely. You tell me that truth is proof of God's power. Not finally. Yet God's righteousness is vindicated in it, wisdom is manifested, power is operative. You tell me that the Atonement was necessary because of righteousness. And I say, No, God's righteousness might have been vindicated by the annihilation of evil. All the infinite righteousness of God might have been perfectly satisfied if He had swept out the things that insulted His righteousness. But listen, "How can I let thee go?" That is the language, not of righteousness, but of love. "He commendeth His own love." The Apostle understood the deep truth. Though this is the great Apostle of righteousness he does not say, "He commendeth His righteousness," but "He commendeth His own love toward us." I stand in the presence of my text, and in the presence of that eternal wonder, and I say my Friend has demonstrated His love to the satisfaction of my heart, and I know now that I He loves me.

Surprised? Oh, my God, how growingly surprised I am. Amazing love! Why did He love me? I really do not know; but He did, and He does. Why should He care for me? I have been so selfish, so impure in my thinking and desire. Why I cannot tell; but this I know, He loves me. You may persuade me on many things, and you may dissuade me from some convictions; but I challenge you to dissuade me here. My Friend loves me. I am in His heart as well as in His power. I am in His love as well as in His light. You ask me how I know it, and I take you, not to the infinite spaces where stars march in rhythmic order, not to the hedgerow where God smiles in flowers; but to the rough and brutal cross of Calvary, to the hour of the dying of the Christ. "God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." My brethren, such love Is royal, and royal love makes claims upon loyalty. What shall I do in answer to that love? We have often sung together:

Were the whole realm of nature mine,

That were a present far too small;

Love so amazing, so divine,

Demands my soul, my life, my all!

Have we not sung that wrong in two ways? Have we not sung it first as though we would say, I cannot give Him so great a thing as the realm of nature, I can give only myself to Him? That is wrong. It is wrong in His thinking if it is not in yours. He counts you, bruised and broken, sinful, dying man, He counts you more than the whole realm of nature. When one day He held the infinite balances in His hand, He said, "What doth it profit a man, to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life?" That is His estimate. God so loves you that He would not feel Himself enriched if he could save the whole realm of nature and lose you. How do I know that? Because He gave something infinitely more than the whole realm of nature, He gave Himself in His Son for you. If you want to know your value by the measurements of love, God measure you by Himself. When next you sing that verse, do not sing it as though you had nothing to give - if you have yourself to give. If you have yourself to give, give yourself. That is all He wants. Have we not sung that verse wrongly in the next place by singing, "Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all," without the answering abandonment? My brother, my sister, answer that love tonight, not only by singing of its demands, but by giving all you are to it. Give yourself, with all your wounds and bruises, with all your weakness and frailty. Answer that love, and that love will remake you until at last you shall be meet for the dwelling of the saints in light. May God in His infinite grace speak this word to us as no human voice can speak it.