**VOLUME 1; CHAPTER 17 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**LOVE'S PROOF AND PRIZE by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him.*

*John 14:21*

I CANNOT READ THE SUBLIME THINGS OF JOHN WITHOUT feeling that I am listening to the man who leaned his head upon the bosom of Jesus. They are not set and dignified discourses, as was the Manifesto of the King which Matthew records; but they are discourses broken in upon by the interruptions of familiar friends, interruptions which reveal the blunders of the men who interrupted, and yet which lead to new unveilings of the heart of the interrupted Teacher. Take this discourse in the midst of which the words of my text occur, and you find that Jesus was interrupted four times, and yet there is no interruption to the stream of revelation which flowed from His lips. Peter interrupts Him, then James, then Philip, and presently Jude. Through all Jesus' replies runs a perfect system, and in the midst occur the words of my text. How simple these words are and yet how searching. They are so simple that perhaps when I read them they produced no blush of shame, no blanch of fear. They are all commonplace words, yet, somehow, there was something in them which lingered with us, creating a sense of discomfort, and almost compelling a stricter self-examination. Jesus says two things. First, "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." Secondly, "And he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him." First of all, Jesus sets love and obedience in relationship. "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." It is a statement that has at least a twofold meaning. First, that my love is proven by my obedience, and, secondly, that love to Christ produces obedience. That is but to state the one declaration in its twofold application.

Love, how we speak of it, how we sing of it, how we imagine we understand it! We hardly care to formulate its terms or declare its requirements. We talk of it as a symphony, a song, a sentiment. Jesus Christ analyzes it. It seems an almost ruthless touch that He puts upon love as He declares its terms. We are accustomed to think of love as vaporizing itself away, or expressing itself in a fragrance which cannot be analyzed. We are called Philistines today if we begin to analyze love. Jesus the One Revealer puts His hand upon love and says, "Love is demonstrated by obedience." Obedience is the outcome of love and consequently its fairest blossom and fruitage. Jesus says to us, "You can express love perfectly only in the terms of law." Jesus says to us, "Love that is lawless is not love." "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me."

Jesus, having expressed the truth concerning love in the terms of law, rose to another level: "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself unto him." If love be most perfectly manifested by obedience to definite and positive commandments it has as its answer visions, voices, revelations, unfoldings, manifestations. Love's one supreme desire is to comprehend being loved. Thus love will obey the law, keep the commandments, and the loved One will answer the search by revealing Himself. "I will manifest myself unto him."

Let us look at the first thing more particularly. "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." Some attempt to prove love to Christ by professing it, others by unceasing toil in His service, still others in a higher and better way, by the cultivation of a meek and lowly spirit, by the humility that does not obtrude itself, by manifestation among their fellows of that spirit which has learned sweetness and tenderness and gentleness at the very feet of our Lord Himself. No one in this congregation will for a single moment imagine that I am saying these things are wrong in themselves. I say that they will all be present in the life of the true lover of Jesus, but that none of them demonstrates love. All spring out of other causes and other reasons than love. Untiring zeal in the business of the Kingdom and the work of Jesus Christ does not prove love, nor does even the cultivated humility and meekness of spirit. Christ mentions none of these things. He says simply and prosaically - forgive that word, I do not quite like it, but am at a loss for a better - "There is only one way to prove that you love Me - keep My commandments." "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me."

What are these commandments? First of all, the great kingly words which Jesus uttered while He was here that make for men the way of entrance upon the life of loyalty to Himself: "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." That indicates the way of beginning in this whole pathway of loyalty. That one great word of Jesus covers the Christian pathway from its initiation to its consummation in the glory. What is the beginning? Denying self and taking up the cross. What is the progress? Following Him, until He lead us at last into the infinite light. There is, however, a larger application. His commandments are the words which He speaks in loneliness to the heart of everyone who really loves Him and leans upon His bosom, the simple words which He speaks in the silence of the morning or amid the rush of the noontide, or when the shadows of evening are falling; in the place of swift and subtle temptation, or in the quiet calm of that everyday life which becomes dreary because of its monotony. His commandments are given to all trusting souls immediately and directly.

Do you love Him? You do not prove it when, gathered in the sanctuary, you sing of Him. You do not prove it when in the busy hours of toil you are doing work for Him. You do not prove it when amid the men by whom you are surrounded you are attempting to reproduce the humility of His Spirit. You prove your love when in answer to His word you straightway do what He tells you. This is the demonstration of love for which He seeks. I may sing songs of praise to Him in the great congregation, or even in my loneliness I may lift to Him some psalm - and He seeks such singing and loves it - but it does not prove love. I may give my body to be burned. I may pour out all the fiber of my manhood in service and never prove my love. When because He says, "Do this," I do it; when because He says, "Go there," I go; when because He says, "Sit still and wait," I wait with happy spirit, then I prove my love. The final demonstration of love which He craves is not work or anything about which men will talk and sing, but the thousand and one little obedience's which men never see and know, in which the heart pours out its gratitude. "He that hath My commandments." How fond Jesus was of sweeping out the interference of all middle men. "He that hath My commandments in his own soul, in his own heart, he that hears My words spoken in a whisper and immediately obeys and keeps the commandment, that is the man who loves Me."

You cannot tell whether I love Him, make no mistake. You cannot measure my love by my service or my lack of it. The final demonstration of love is not for the vision of any save the loved one. Love is always between two. I may sing and serve, toil and suffer, and yet never love; and while the world applauds the supposed evidences of my devotion, my Master may be hungry for the love I am withholding, pining for the affection I will not give Him.

He broods over me and says, "My child, that is the way." I walk in it. It is quite an average way. You see me walking along that way and you do not notice it. It means nothing to you. It is a common, ordinary way; but to Him it is the song of love because He sent me there. He says to a child of His love in some noonday of blessing and of joy, "Come apart into the darkness. Come with me. I am going by this via dolorosa; come with me." You see the passing out into that way of sorrow, and you do not understand it. To you there is no song upon the lips, no radiance, no heroism; but there is love because there is walking with Jesus. You cannot discover the love, but He finds it. "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." We cannot prove to each other our love for Christ, but we know that He is right when He says that love is proved only by obedience. We often sing, sing loudly to cover the tracks of our disobedience. Thousands of men are busy doing something for Jesus, anything except the thing He told them to do. While we admire their zeal, He mourns their lack of love. "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me."

Again, love to Christ produces obedience. This is not a contradiction. It is simply the statement of the same thing from the other side. If obedience proves love, it follows by logical necessity that love is the inspiration of obedience. Love to Christ is produced, first, by knowledge of His love. Do not forget that word which John wrote in his epistle, "We love, because He first loved us." If my obedience is the demonstration of my love, my love is always born of His love and is the response to His love. Nothing short of love will produce perpetual and glad obedience such as satisfies the heart of the Lord. Think of the things I have now referred to us illustration. Profession of love never produces obedience. A man's pride in his own profession will keep him following for a little while. A man will say, "I have said this thing and I will do it." As the darkness falls, the strain and stress become more terrible, and presently he will forget his profession and disobey.

Zeal for work for Christ will not keep him obedient. It will halt, and presently passion will cool, unless the passion be the passion of a burning love for his Lord. Humility, what of that? Humility may become cowardice. Nothing other than love will keep me obedient. It is love which makes obedience a delight, even when obedience means pain and suffering. There is no motive other than love powerful enough to maintain unswerving obedience.

Mark how these two things interact. Obedience is the demonstration of love. Love, therefore, is the inspiration of obedience. At the beginning it is a simple thing. One vision of His face and my heart answers love, and I begin to follow Him. He lays upon me some new word of His law. If I disobey, my love will cool and disobedience will become the order of my life. If I obey I shall find through the gateway of that obedience a new demonstration of His love, which will make my love profounder, and gradually, with the increase of my love, there will be an increase in my devotion, until at last nothing but love will possess my soul and nothing but obedience will express that love.

To these deeper things our Lord passes in the second statement of our text. "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father and I will love him, and will manifest Myself unto him." At first sight there may appear to be contradiction to something I have been saying. I have been insisting upon it that He loved us first, and that is why we love Him. Here the love of the Father is stated to be the result of our love to the Son. "He that loveth Me and proves his love by obedience, him My Father will love." There is no contradiction. It is forever true, and there is no escape from it, that God's love is the first thing, but it is when I answer that love with love and obedience that His love is able to flow on toward me unchecked in its manifestation and operation. It is possible, terribly possible for me, not to make God cease to love me, but to put myself outside the place where His love is consciousness and power. That is the meaning of Jude's great word, "Keep yourselves in the love of God." Being in that love, keep yourselves there. Keep yourselves bearing such relationship to Him that love may flow on unchecked. Illustrate it if you will by earthly love. I do not think you could possibly make your mother cease to love you, if she is a real mother, but you may do such things as to put yourself outside the operation of a mother's love. I know the Scriptures say a mother may forget her child, but they say so only because it is such a remote possibility, and to throw into clearer relief the fact that God never can. You may check the outflow of a mother's love, you may lose the expression of it. You may make it necessary for the mother, to the breaking of her own heart, to seal up her love because of your disobedience. So also with God. "My Father will love him," says Jesus, "and I will love him," and by that He means to say, "Our love will flow on unchecked in all its expressions and all its operations." Mark the comfort of this word. We are beginning to touch the realm of poetry. We are coming to the place of vision and hope, of joy and strength.

Have I spoken of two things? Really, they are but the unfolding of one logical sequence. At the risk of wearying you, I will repeat again the words of Jesus, "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and manifest Myself unto him." Think of the comfort of it. This is the crowning glory which rests upon the path of obedience, the path of the man to whom God has spoken, and who has heard His word and has obeyed it. Jesus says, "My Father will love him, and I will love him." That fact makes the barren path blossom as the rose. That fact makes the dreary day shine with all the glory of God's uplifted face. Think of what this means: this dual consciousness of God's love and Christ's love set upon me in the path of duty.

The path of obedience for you may be a dreary path in many ways. It would be a great deal easier for you to be out upon the high places of the field doing heroic things, but you are needed here, working on the dead level of monotonous repetition as the days become weeks, the weeks months, and the months years. Start once again, my brother, on the same pathway, and start doing on that pathway the thing He appoints because of love to Him, and then what? "My Father will love you, and I will love you." Think of the inspiration of that in any hour of temptation and difficulty. Think of the moral force of it in a man's life if it once take possession of him. Think how the love of some dear one upon earth strengthens a man. There are young men in this house tonight who would have gone to the devil long ago if it had not been that their mother and father loved them. How often a man is saved and delivered in an hour of peril because he knows someone loves him, even though not then with him. We have known of those who have hung up before them the picture of a human friend to save them in the hour of great temptation, and it has saved them. Apply that in a higher realm. As you tramp the ordinary pathway of everyday duty, it may be with bleeding feet and burdened heart, know that because you are aching by His appointment His love rests upon you. I am increasingly convinced that this is the true force of holiness. It is when I come to say, "I cannot do this, it would grieve the heart of my Lover," that I shall live as I ought to live. It is as this great fact dawns upon the soul like sunshine, and possesses it like a force, that the pathway of common-place obedience becomes one of perpetual joy.

If God loves me and Christ loves me and increasingly that love surrounds me, what then? Then the laws which govern my life will multiply. You say, "But you are going back to the severe tones." You always get back to the severe tones when you get near to the gentleness of the heart of God. The more perfectly He loves me and the more amenable I am to His love, the more I shall find restrictions multiplying around me. You say, "I thought I was coming to new liberty." So you are, but it is liberty to produce the highest and the best.

I remember that when I was pastor of a country church one of my friends married and went to live out on Cannock Chase. He procured a piece of land, rough and utterly lacking anything in the form of cultivated beauty. When his house was built I went out with him to look at it. His land was fenced in, the fencing consisting of rough poles and wire. That was all. I did not see him for some years after. When I went back I saw that the fence round his land was a great deal stronger than when I first saw it. It was a closer fence. The garden was cultivated now, and the more perfectly you cultivate the garden, the stronger you make the fence. At first it was a fence to keep out marauding animals, but after-wards it must be a fence which will keep out the little foxes that spoil the vines, because the vines have tender grapes. The more God loves me, the closer will His fence be round about me. The more perfectly I answer love, the severer will be the restrictions He sets upon me. That is His principle. It is gentle and tender, always closing up the fence a little because He would come into His garden and find it unspoiled, not only by marauding beasts, but by the little foxes and small things which spoil the garden of God. It is love which makes the fence a little closer. It is love which makes the law a little more severe. It is love which shuts us up more completely from everything, and to Himself.

Now take the other word, a gracious and beautiful word: "I will manifest Myself unto him." This answers the severe part of the last thought. If it be true that the severity has become greater, and the requirements of God more stringent in the case of the man He perfectly loves, do not forget this other thing: "I will manifest Myself unto him." Every new requirement of love is a new opportunity for my rediscovery of my Lord. Every time He confronts me and asks me to yield up something He has never asked me to yield before, there is my chance of a new vision of His face and a new unveiling of His glory; but the face is never seen and the glory never flames until I answer His commandment. He is waiting to give some of you great revelations. He is waiting to unveil before your astonished gaze a face more radiantly lovely than you have ever dreamed, but He cannot do it until you obey that last commandment He laid upon you and so demonstrate your love, for love can be revealed only to love. "I will manifest myself to him." Every new commandment is a proof of new revelation. The world does not understand it. Jesus could not manifest Himself to the world, because the world does not know Him and does not love Him. You say this is something at which proud, cold, rationalistic philosophy smiles, and yet in the higher reaches of spiritual life this is a scientific law. This is a wonderful philosophy of love radiant with beauty, that when Jesus makes a demand and the soul answers it, that soul sees Him as never before.

This manifestation of Jesus, let me ask you to remember finally, is not a manifestation on the mount of transfiguration. It is a manifestation which comes along the lowly pathway in the valley. There are people here who do not want me to talk about this. They know all about it. When they tell you that in the midst of their business yesterday they saw the Lord, you smile at them, and the angels smile at you. Get up tomorrow morning to do His bidding. What shall I do tomorrow morning? The thing you were going to do, do it only at His bidding. Go to your office, your business, your work-shop because He bids you go. Do not talk any more of the drudgery of it. Cancel the word "commonplace." Keep His commandment. To do that will be to safeguard you in your calling from everything that is low and base, and it will be to transfigure the meanest calling of all into a thing of glory and beauty. In the office, in the home, on the street, in the hospital, amid its pain and fear, do each thing because it is His bidding, and you will see Him in His glory, toiling through your business vocation toward the building of His city, calling to you through the days of suffering for your help, whispering to you in the lonely hour of your watching, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these My brethren, even these least, ye did it unto Me."

Earth's crammed with heaven,

And every common bush afire with God;

But only he who sees, takes off his shoes -

The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries."

You can see Christ in the street as well as in the sanctuary, on Monday as well as on Sunday. Wherever a soul obeys Him and demonstrates love He answers love with manifestation, and every manifestation leaves its impress upon your brow, its light in your eyes, its elasticity in your step. So by the commonplace of obedience I climb to the mountain of vision, demonstrating my love by keeping His commandments, seeing Him where I did not dream He could appear.