**VOLUME 2; CHAPTER 13 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**THE GREAT APOSTLE by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*I am not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.*

*2 Corinthians 11:5*

THIS CLAIM OF PAUL OCCURS IN THE MIDST OF WHICH HE was evidently ashamed, but which was necessary in defence of truth. There is no surer sign of modesty than the absence of mock modesty. When a man is able to boast in vindication of his appointment to service by his Lord he proves his humility.

The greatness of Paul as an apostle is now conceded, yet during his exercise of the apostolic vocation he had perpetually to defend his right to the title. In his letters, sometimes with a touch of satire, he defended his apostleship against the misunderstanding - that is the kindest word to use - of the other apostles. In the Galatian letter he declared that he went up to Jerusalem and gained nothing from them. He referred to those whom he found there as persons "who were reputed to be somewhat," then absolutely denied that they ministered to him in any way, either by original authority, or subsequent counsel. He received his Gospel from his Master. He received his commission from his master. He did his work under his master's immediate direction. He remitted his case and cause to his master's judgment.

In defence of his apostleship he always adopted two lines of argument. First, he insisted upon his Divine appointment. Second, he claimed that the fulfilment in his ministry of the true apostolic function proved that Divine appointment.

Wherein lay the greatness of this apostle? The simplest and most inclusive answer to that inquiry is to be found in a statement of the deepest facts of His life in its relation to Christ. I desire now to make that statement quite briefly and only by way of introduction, for I propose another method of approaching the subject. I cannot, however, entirely pass over these fundamental and inclusive matters.

The greatness of the apostle was created in the first place by the absoluteness of his surrender to Jesus. On the way to Damascus, surprised, startled, and stricken to the earth by the revelation of the living Christ, he in one brief and simple question handed over his whole life to Jesus. "What shall I do, Lord?"

The greatness of Paul as an apostle is further to be accounted for by his attitude, consequent upon that surrender, toward all the things of his former life. "What things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ."

Finally, his greatness is to be accounted for by the resulting experience which he crystallized into one brief sentence, "To me to live is Christ."

These things being stated and granted, I desire to consider certain attitudes of the mind of this man which reveal the strength which made him the great apostle, the pattern missionary for all time. These attitudes of mind are revealed, not so much by the formal statements of his writings, as by the incidental and almost unconscious utterances thereof. I particularly desire to make clear my own discrimination between these two things. In his letters there are certain paragraphs which are formal statements concerning himself. I do not propose turning to these for this reason - I say this with all respect to Paul, and with recognition of the fact that these are inspired writings - men do not reveal themselves in their formal utterances half so clearly as in their incidental words.

I have recently been going through the writings of Paul, and gathering out some of the incidental things he uttered concerning himself. I propose to take seven of them, without any set sequence or order, hoping the effect may be cumulative, helping to an understanding of the attitudes of mind which made this man a great apostle.

The deepest thing in human personality is not mind, but spirit. The spiritual life of Paul commenced when he said, "What shall I do, Lord?" was continued when he said, "What things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ"; was perfected as Christ was formed in him and shone out through his life. That is the spiritual fact. I desire now to deal with the mental, that is, with the attitudes of mind which were natural to him, and which were baptized by the Spirit into life and fire and power.

1.

In the midst of his classic passage on love, he declared, "Now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things." Comparing love with knowledge, and showing how knowledge passes away, the richer and fuller forevermore making obsolete the smaller and the incomplete, by way of illustration he wrote, "Now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things," or, more literally, "I have made an end of childish things." In that declaration there is revealed an attitude of mind, consisting of a sense of proportion. It is a recognition of the fact that the ways of a child are right for a child, but that the ways of a child are wrong for a man. There are men who when they become men do not put away childish things. There are people who make advance in certain directions, and carry up with them into the raw region of their life things which ought to have been left behind. Should the butterfly cling to the shell in which it had been but a grub, what disaster! When it became a butterfly, it put away the things of the former life. "Now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things." That is to say, toys gave place to tools. Playtime was succeeded by world-time. Instruction began to express itself in construction. This is a principle of greatness in all Christian service, and lack of it is inimical to progress. It is a sense of proportion and readiness to answer new conditions whenever they arise.

2.

My second illustration is taken from the Galatian letter, "I conferred not with flesh and blood." That is a revelation of the sense of spiritual compulsion. He had already declared that he had received a double unveiling of Jesus Christ. Mark the twofold fact. Christ was unveiled to him, and in him. He had seen a vision of Christ external to himself on the way to Damascus, and he had seen a vision of Christ as part of his inner, deepest and profoundest life. That vision, that unveiling of Jesus Christ, became the master principle of his life. In a moment all the lower motives were canceled. The spiritual truth breaking in upon his soul by the revealing of Christ to him and the revealing of Christ in him came not only as light but as fire, not only illuminating, but destroying every other motive that existed within.

Now mark the fine scorn of his word, "I conferred not with flesh and blood," that is to say, material motives at their very highest and best were forevermore out of court and out of count. "I conferred not with flesh and blood," quite literally, I did not take advice from flesh and blood, I did not take counsel with flesh and blood, did not seek the guidance of flesh and blood. First, his own flesh and blood. He never took counsel with his material life from the moment when God revealed His Son in him. He took counsel with the revealed Son. He did not take counsel with the apostles of flesh and blood. He took counsel only with the spiritual truth which had broken upon him through the inner and spiritual conception of Christ.

3.

Turn to another of these declarations, "I know how to be abased and I know also how to abound." That is a sense of detachment from circumstances. Did ever apostle pass through more varied circumstances than this one? Was ever man less affected by them than he was?

This is not the detachment of absence. That is the ascetic, monastic ideal which is anti-Christian. The man who says, I will escape the possibility of abasement, the possibility of abundance by hiding myself from the commonplace affairs of life, is not realizing the apostolic ideal, which is ability to stay in the midst of circumstances of abasement and to dwell amid abundance.

Neither is it the detachment of indifference. It is not the stoicism of the Greek which steels the heart and says, Abasement shall not affect me, abundance shall not appeal to me. Far from it.

It is rather the detachment of mastery and of use. "I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound." I am not afraid of abasement. I will not escape from it. I am not afraid of abundance, I will not avoid it. I do not imagine that in the hour when my Lord gives me abundance there is something wrong in my inner life. "I know also how to abound." I know how to suffer hunger. I know how to suffer need. Abasement without dejection. Abundance without tyranny. That is one of the greatest sentences Paul ever wrote as revealing his absolute triumph in human life. It is the picture of a man so absolutely detached from all the circumstances of his life that he was able to take hold of them and press them into the making of his own character, and, what is more, into the service which his Master's will had appointed. This is one of the statements of Paul of which I hardly dare to speak, so little do I know it personally, so difficult do I find it to be. Where was the secret? How was it this man could say such a thing. Follow right on and he tells you. "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me." It is the Christ-centered life. That is the spiritual fact. I refer to it only that we may find the secret of this mental attitude which is so difficult, nay impossible, to cultivate, which can come only as Christ within becomes in very deed the Master of the whole life. Whenever Christ does become the Master of the life you will find a servant who says, I cannot hurry from abasement, "I know how to be abased." I do not fear abundance, "I know also how to abound." You cannot turn my feet out of the way of His commandment by hunger, I know how to suffer hunger. You cannot quench my zeal for His service by giving me fullness. I know how to be filled. I am so detached from circumstances that I can master them.

4.

I come now to the very heart and centre of the references which reveal his greatness as an apostle. In that wonderful Roman letter - introducing the subject of the salvation of God - he made three personal references within the compass of a few phrases. "I am debtor ... I am ready ... I am not ashamed." "I am debtor," the Gospel is a deposit which I hold in trust. "I am ready," the Gospel is an equipment so that I am able to discharge my debt. "I am not ashamed," the Gospel is a glory, so that if I come to imperial Rome, sitting on its seven hills, I shall delight to preach the Gospel there also. In each case the personal emphasis reveals the sense of responsibility. "I am debtor." Here you touch the driving power of the man's life. Here you find out why he could not rest, why the very motto of his missionary movement was "the regions beyond," why he traversed continents, crossed seas, and entered into perils on perils. He felt that while anywhere there was a human being who had not heard the Evangel, he was in debt to that human being.

"lam ready." I suppose you have all read what Artemus Ward said about the American War between the States. He said he had already donated several brothers and cousins to the war, and he was prepared to donate a few more. How many of you have donated other people to missionary enter-prise? Paul said, "I am ready." "I am not ashamed." You tell me we must cancel the capital "I." Yes, nail it to the cross and let it emerge in resurrection glory.

5.

In the same letter I presently find this man writing another revealing sentence. "I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ." I do not know that there is anything other than silence possible in the presence of that. There have been endless attempts made to account for it, and to explain it, usually to explain it away. It has been said that the Apostle did not really mean that he wished he were accursed from Christ. Then, in the name of God, why did he write it? If language means anything, he meant exactly that. "I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh." How is this to be accounted for? It can be accounted for only by declaring that it is the mental attitude which grows out of the fullness of spiritual life, of which Christ is the fountain. Again, go back in memory over the argument. He had stated the great doctrine of sanctification. He had climbed up out of the unutterable ruin of human sin until he had come to that height at the close of the eighth chapter in which he said that nothing can "separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Immediately the shout of personal triumph merged into the cry of a great sorrow, "I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake." How are we to account for it? Only thus, he is now speaking with the tongue of Christ, feeling with the heart of Christ. He is a man surcharged with the Christ-life. It thrills and throbs through every fibre of his being. If that be so, I have no further difficulty, for He Who knew no sin was made sin for me. Here is a man in whom His life is dominant, in whom the Christ passion is moving and burning. What is the mental attitude now? Utter and absolute self-abnegation. "I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ." It is the sense of compassion.

6.

I turn to another passage which stands in almost brutal contrast to the one at which we have just been looking. "I resisted him to the face." Who is this that he resisted to the face? Peter. Why did he resist Peter to the face? Read the story carefully. Not because Peter had been preaching a false doctrine. He had done nothing of the kind. Peter, to whom first had come the commission to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, having come down to these Gentile Christians, had sat down at the table with them quite naturally. But there came down certain men from Jerusalem, and when they came Peter declined to sit down with the Gentiles. Paul calls his action by the right word, dissimulation, positive dishonesty. I pray you notice carefully what this means. Paul saw that Peter insulted truth in the commonplaces. He would never have insulted truth in a great crisis. Peter argumentatively and theologically would have defended the liberty of the Gentile quite as eagerly as would have Paul, but under stress of conventionality he conformed to the false thinking of the Judean visitors by refusing to sit down with the Gentiles. Paul's anger here is a finer revelation of loyalty to truth than any lengthy treatise. I will put that in another form. His attitude toward Peter is the supreme vindication of the honesty of the Galatian letter. Had he written his Galatian letter, a powerful treatise in defence of the liberty of the Christian, and yet had lightly passed over Peter's dissimulation, I would have been compelled to doubt his sincerity. Here, again, I remind you of the principle enunciated at the beginning of this study. A man is revealed in the commonplace thing, not in the crisis. Paul, when he saw Peter violating truth in the commonplace, resisted him to the face, because he was to be blamed. An apostle violating truth in the commonplace is not to be excused because he is an apostle. In all probability Peter was one of those to whom Paul referred as those who were "reputed to be somewhat." The "somewhat" that he seemed to be could not save him in the presence of this man in whom the truth reigned supremely, who would not deviate by a hair's breadth from loyalty to it. No man is great who excuses the violation of truth in the commonplaces of life. "I resisted him to the face."

7.

One more illustration, "I must also see Rome." That was not the feverish desire of the tourist. He was himself a Roman citizen, and was conscious of the far-reaching power of the Roman empire. He knew full well how the influence of the capital city spread out over all the known world. He was perfectly well aware that the Roman highways extended in every direction, and Roman rule was everywhere. It was the strategic centre of the life of his age. "I must also see Rome." I must go to Rome, and from that great centre send forth this self-same evangel, this Gospel message.

It is exactly this sense of method which the Church has so perpetually been in danger of losing. Take one illustration of what I mean from home missionary work, and another, a living one at this moment, from the foreign field. The home illustration is to be found in the perpetual habit the Church of God has had of abandoning some building at the centre of a vast population. When the Church of God abandons some strategic centre it is because she has not the apostle's sense, "I must also see Rome," I must be at the heart of the world's movements, I must take this Gospel into the very centre where the tides of life are throbbing, and from which the influences which make or mar men are proceeding. Take the other illustration, from the foreign field. If the Church of God did but know its day and opportunity it would fasten its attention at this hour upon Japan. China is waking from her long, long slumber, and the question of the politician is not the question of the Christian. The question of the politician is, "What shall we do with China?" The question of the Christian is, "What will China do with us?" for I believe the Christian man climbs to the highest height and sees things more clearly. That is the question of the future. Remember, finally, China is not going to be influenced by us. If she desires Western civilization she will certainly choose to take it from her neighbour and kin, Japan. If we did but know the hour of our visitation and opportunity, we should evangelize Japan, and especially in the centres of learning, for from them are going forth the men who will presently effect the moulding of China. The Church today ought to be restless through all her missionary societies, and her great cry ought to be, "I must see Japan." It was a great sense of method. It was the word of a man who thought imperially in very deed and truth, and who knew that to be at the centre of empire with the message of the Gospel was to affect the uttermost part of the earth.

Conclusion.

Let me gather up in brief sentences these sayings and their values. First of all, I find a sense of proportion which made Paul willing to pass on into new light and new conditions and forget absolutely the things of the past. "Now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things." Then I find the sense of spiritual compulsion which made him magnificently, even satirically, independent of the counsel of flesh and blood. "I conferred not with flesh and blood." Then I find that splendid detachment from circumstances which meant mastery of circumstances. "I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound." Then I find that sense of personal responsibility which made him say, "I am debtor ... I am ready ... I am not ashamed." Then I find that overwhelming sense of compassion which made him say, "I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ." Then I find the sense of stern loyalty to truth which made him resist Peter to the face - "I resisted him to the face." Finally, I find that sense of method which made him put into a sentence the burning desire of his heart when he said, "I must also see Rome."

Truly this was the great apostle, the great pattern for all time of those who would desire to be apostles, messengers, missionaries of the cross of Christ.

Yet I am compelled to return to the fundamental statements with which I began. If these are the mental attitudes, what is the spiritual fact? "To me to live is Christ." So that as I look at Paul, the apostle, the missionary, the last thing I have to say is not of the great apostle, but of the great Christ, the One Who took hold of this man, and revealing Himself within him, unveiling His glory to his inner consciousness, drove him forth, and made him such as he was. Christ diffused through Paul will not help us. It is good to see Paul, to know what Christ can do; but we must indeed get to Christ Himself if we would enter into fellowship even with Paul. If the vision of the great apostle shall drive us to his Lord, then how great and gracious will be the result. If we will but make his surrender, "What shall I do, Lord?": if we will take up this attitude toward the things we have counted best, counting them but loss that we may win Christ: if we will but enter into the experience which he expressed in the words, "To me to live is Christ" - what then? First, He will not make us Pauls, but He will make us His own. Though He may never send us over continents and among such perils, all that matters nothing, for it is local, and incidental merely. He will send us where He would have us go, and He will make us what He would have us be, and through us - oh, matchless wonder of overwhelming grace - the light of His love may shine, and the force of His life may be felt.

We cannot have this Christ-life within us without having clear vision, and without having driving compassion, and without having the dynamic which makes us mighty. We cannot have Christ within us and be parochial. Christ overleaps the boundaries of parish, society, and nation, and His clear vision takes in the whole world. If Christ be verily in us we shall see with His eyes, feel with His heart, be driven with His very compassion.

"If I have eaten my morsel alone!"

The patriarch spoke in scorn;

What would He think of the Church, were He shown

Heathendom, huge, forlorn,

Godless, Christless, with soul unfed,

While the Church's ailment is fullness of bread,

Eating her morsel alone?

"I am debtor alike to the Jew and the Greek,"

The mighty apostle cried;

Traversing continents, souls to seek,

For the love of the Crucified.

Centuries, centuries since have sped;

Millions are famishing, we have bread,

But we eat our morsel alone.

Ever of them who have largest dower

Shall heaven require the more.

Ours is affluence, knowledge, power,

Ocean from shore to shore;

And East and West in our ears have said,

Give us, give us your living Bread.

Yet we eat our morsel alone.

Freely, as ye have received, so give,

He bade, Who hath given us all.

How shall the soul in us longer live,

Deaf to their starving call,

For whom the blood of the Lord was shed,

And His body broken to give them

Bread, If we eat our morsel alone?