**VOLUME 2; CHAPTER 25 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**CHRIST'S KNOWLEDGE OF MEN by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*Now when He was in Jerusalem at the passover, during the feast, many believed on His name, beholding His signs which He did. But Jesus did not trust Himself unto them, for that He knew all men, and because He needed not that anyone should bear witness concerning man; for He Himself knew what was in man.*

*John 2:23-25*

THE CLOSING STATEMENT OF THESE VERSES EXPLAINS WHY Jesus did not trust certain men who trusted Him. The outward commitment of the life to Him, and the belief which was merely a persuasion toward Him on account of signs seen, were nothing when the heart was not wholly and absolutely abandoned to Him, when in the deepest of the life there was still reserve. The trust was not complete and Christ can never commit Himself to any man who does not commit himself to Christ. I remember once hearing Dwight Lyman Moody says, "Christ is as great a Saviour as your faith makes Him." The perpetual law of Christ's dealing with souls may be expressed in this very simple formula, "All for all." If I have reposed in Him some imperfect and partial trust, He cannot trust me with all His confidence. He cannot commit to me all that He is unless I have committed to Him all that I am. Had we been in Jerusalem at that time, and had we seen the people crowding to Him, and trusting Him, in all probability we should have been eager to count them, to number them; the fever for statistics would have been upon us as it is until this hour. We should have been inclined to say to Him, "Lord, everything is going well! See how these people are trusting Thee!" Then we would have been surprised to notice that He did not commit Himself to them. Why not? Because "He knew all men." He did not require any testimony borne to Him concerning them, "for He Himself knew what was in man."

This statement concerning Christ must be interpreted, not in the light of this immediate paragraph merely, but also in the light of the whole Gospel of John, and particularly in that of the prologue. "He knew all men." Who? To Whom does the personal pronoun refer. For answer we turn back to the opening words of the Gospel. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... And the Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us." "He - the Word - knew all men. ... He - the Word - needed not that anyone should bear witness concerning man; for He - the Word - Himself knew what was in man."

The theme, then, of my message is the knowledge which Christ has of man, and the result of that knowledge in His dealings with men. In the coming weeks - as God shall help me - I propose to consider some illustrations which this Gospel affords of these great truths.

I begin with the general terms: Christ's knowledge of man and His consequent method with men. That will be a message of comfort or of fire according to what we are. There was a time when it was a very common thing to see on the walls of nurseries and schoolrooms a motto which read: "Thou, God, seest me." That statement is perfectly true, God does see us, but I have often thought that the tone in which it was recited was utterly false. If it was so recited to a child as to make the child think merely of God as present as a moral policeman, watching, it was wholly bad. Do not be surprised that your child has run away from God if you have not interpreted Him. It is a great truth. We need still to put it in the nursery where the child can see it; only God help us so to interpret God that when we put that truth before the child he may know what God is. You say, Would you take away the sternness of the truth of God's knowledge of men? By no means, but neither would I take away the infinite compassion, the love and beauty of the truth. That old truth printed for us to look at as children is fire or comfort according to what we are. Is there some sin gripping your life, mastering you, to which you are yielding yourself. A solemn hush fell on all the congregation tonight as I read, "Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, Thou understandest my thought afar off." How did the reading of the psalm affect you? If you came with sin cherished, you trembled! Are you a broken-hearted sinner, knowing your sin and desiring to break with it tonight? Then, oh, the com-fort of the words, "Thou knowest my thought afar off. Thou searchest out my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether." Oh, there is such relief for the sinner when he is found out. Man, you are found out. He knows. "He knew all men."

This passage is more particular in its assertion than appears at first. To read it carefully is to see that the writer was indeed most careful in his choice of words. He declares that this knowledge which Christ had of men was immediate, was profound, was universal.

It was immediate knowledge. Notice the word Himself. "Jesus did not trust Himself unto them ... for He Himself knew what was in man." He knew man in Himself and of Himself. He needed not that anyone should bear witness concerning man. We are brought into the presence of a knowledge of man that is peculiar to Christ, to that Christ Who is God incarnate. Here is knowledge of man that no other possessed. I cannot know any man apart from testimony. He needs no testimony to give Him knowledge of man. This is brought out in one of the ancient prophecies concerning the coming Messiah, the perfect Judge of men. "He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears: but with righteous judgments shall He judge." How? He knows all men, and, mark this, He knows what is in man. This is the truth of the Bible from cover to cover. It is a fundamental truth of Christianity, a great and startling truth, and yet we do not remember it, or live in the power of it. The meaning of the incarnation is in part that this truth was wrought out into human consciousness. I take up the Gospel of John and in the light of this text I read it through again, and am impressed by the fact that Christ moved amongst men, and had perfect knowledge of them.

There was no hesitation in His dealing with them. They passed before Him, man after man, woman after woman, and in a moment He spoke the word that needed to be said, dealt with them in the one way that met their need. He knew them. He asked them no questions in order to discover the truth concerning them. He perpetually questioned them in the light of truth possessed. He knew men. The Gospel of John works out into visibility this tremendous truth, which, if men can but grasp it, will alter all their lives, mould their character, and drive them in the way in which they should go. His knowledge was immediate, apart from testimony.

Then His knowledge was profound. I have already touched upon it. Let me emphasize it again. You notice the Apostle says two things. "He knew all men," individualities, units. "He knew what was in man," the generic term, human nature, the human heart, and all the deep truth concerning it. He knew all men, the varied manifestations of the one common humanity. He knew what was in man, the essential being. We fail of knowing men because we do not know man. Here in the presence of the men of His own age stood One Who to their seeing was a man, and yet standing there in their presence as they passed before Him He knew them all. Simon, thy name is Simon, it shall be Peter. He knew the whole make-up of the man. Nathanael, I saw thee under the fig tree. Thou art a worshiper in whom there is no guile. So on and on, with perfect ease flashing the truth of each man's life into the open word so that others knew the man, and the man knew himself as never before. It was profound knowledge. He did not form His estimate of human life and character from external manifestations, but He set the external in the light of the inward fact. He knew what was in man.

This knowledge was not merely immediate and profound, it was universal, as we see from the Gospel instances. Christ's knowledge of men was not the intuition of kinship. By that I mean that a man of one race understand the men of his own race, but this Man understood all races. If He was dealing with a Hebrew, He knew exactly how to speak to a Hebrew in the language of Hebrew thinking. If Greeks came, saying, "We would see Jesus," He used language in reference to them which revealed His intimate acquaintance with the Greek mysteries which were unknown to Hebrews of His own time. "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone." To the men who stood about Him on that day it was a strange thing to say, but the Greeks understood it. Only recently we have come to know something of these Greek mysteries, and we have discovered that at the heart of one lay the representation of the cutting off of the ear of wheat in order to gain more abundant life. The two Greeks came up to Him. He was a Hebrew prophet, and they found Him a master of their own mysteries. Standing in their presence He knew them, He knew all that was in them.

He knew men of different temperaments: whether it were the retiring, shrinking Philip, having to be called before he followed, and forevermore living, as my friend Mr. Elvet Lewis has beautifully put it, on the edge of the crowd, or whether it was fiery, impetuous Peter, He knew them and dealt with them according to their temperaments. He so spoke in metropolitan Jerusalem as to arrest the attention of the leaders of the day, men of light and learning, and as to make them say, "How hath this Man letters, having never learned?" He so spoke to the great crowd of poor people that they heard Him and trusted Him. He won them. He knew men of all ages, men of years, young men, little children, men of all habits. He knew man, and because He knew man He knew men. If you and I try to study humanity by studying men we shall never understand humanity. If we come to know man in the light of God's revelation we shall know how to deal with men. Here standing in the midst was one who knew them.

What knowledge had He of man? I take the whole of the Gospels, and I find, if I study them, Christ's conception of humanity. He looked upon man as spiritual in being, as sinning in experience, as salvable by grace.

He dealt with man as spiritual in being. They crucified Him because of that. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God" was a great spiritual word, startling the valleys and mountain heights of Judea. "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand," was a clarion call from dust to Deity, from materialism to spirituality. "Be not afraid of them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul," evinced a fine scorn for the life that did not count eternities or deal with God. Whether He looked into the face of the impotent man at the pool, a pauper seeking charity, or into the face of the mitred high priest, He dealt with the spirit behind. His conception of humanity was that it was spiritual.

His conception of humanity, moreover, was that it is sinning in experience. Sin was that with which He had come to deal in tears and passion and blood. When He spoke to men upon their highest level and recognized the best in them, He flashed into the midst of His recognition the revelation of man's evil as well as his good. "Ye know how to give good gifts to your children." That is the finest thing you can say about man, it recognizes his tenderness, his compassion, his fatherhood, the most beautiful thing in man. What else? "If ye, then, being evil." He knew that man in experience was sinning, and always dealt with him as a sinner.

But this knowledge did not produce hopelessness in Him, for He dealt with men everywhere as being salvable by grace. Sometimes one finds oneself limited, straitened to find words to tell some great truth! So am I now! How shall I tell it? How shall I say what I mean? Thus - He treated men as worth dying for. He looked upon man as possible of being remade through His passion and His death! How a man would like to stay here were he preaching to Christian people rather than to an assembly in which there are those who are seeking Christ. These are the views of humanity which create the evangelistic fervour. Every human face is the outward manifestation of spiritual being. Every human being is in the grip of sin in some form. Every human being can be saved. In the power of these things we dare preach and work. He knew what was in man.

If you look at the truth and ask the question. What did Christ know of man? you are simply overwhelmed by the variety. You find as you go through the Gospel of John that no two men appeared alike before Him, and that He did not deal with any two men alike. We are saying to men perpetually, to every man who crosses our pathway, You must be born again. There is a sense in which it is true, but Christ said it to only one man. It was true of every man, but He did not approach every man from that standpoint. Of the personalities that came into contact with Christ, this Master Winner of souls, He did not deal with two in the same way. He knew the personal peculiarity, the individual idiosyncrasy, and He dealt with it. He was always leading men to recognition of their spiritual being, to abandonment of their sin, to the river of grace which would heal them, but He acted in a thousand different ways. Every man who came to Him was dealt with by the method demanded by his immediate need. Christ knew what was in man.

That leads me to the second thought, some of the general results of this great knowledge. I begin with the broader facts. What did His knowledge of men produce in the Christ? My first answer is the answer of the whole book. His incarnation is the first result. He expressed God to man through man's own nature. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." How? By being made flesh. That was the first thing He came to do. That is the burden of my message. If I can see how Christ looked at man I shall know God's attitude. If I can discover the diversity of His method and learn therefrom, that though I am a lonely man, there being no other like me in the world, having peculiar sins and temptations, so that I cannot be classified, Christ can yet deal with me, I shall know that God can deal with me. The incarnation was not the beginning of a new fact, it was the initiation of a new revelation, when the Word became flesh and eternal nearness of God blossomed into visibility. But the psalmist of the olden day had sung the great truth, Thou knowest me, I cannot escape from thee. God was ever present, but the fact became patent when the Man of Nazareth took form and substance and shape, so that these very eyes could see, and this very hand could feel, and this life of mine could come to understand. He did that because of His knowledge of man. His knowledge of man compelled Him to express God for humanity that humanity might have knowledge of God.

Incarnation is not all. It is the way into the mightier, and the next word I use is salvation. He knew man, and what did He? He came, let me not use any words of my own. We fall back upon His own words, they are so familiar to us, and they are music to us tonight, "The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost."

Plunged in a gulf of dark despair,

We wretched sinners lay.

He saw, and, oh, amazing love,

He flew to our relief.

Then mark, I pray you, what follows. This is the thing of all things that I want to say in the closing words of my message tonight. Being in human life, visible by incarnation, being there for the saving of men, watch Him carefully, see how He treats every case alone: one issue, but many ways. I take up this Gospel and run through it and see Him in contact first with John the Baptist, and what does He do? He so deals with the prophet who has seen the flaming vision as to make the prophet content to say, "He must increase, but I must decrease." Andrew approaches Him. The adventurous seeker who turns from John with all sincerity to follow and see what some new teacher has to say. Christ turns and sees him. Andrew asks, "Rabbi, where abidest Thou?" How will Christ deal with him? "Come, and ye shall see." You are curious about Me, come along and I will show you where I live. If you had been a worker in some inquiry rooms you would perhaps have put Him outside because His method was not right! Peter, the man of possibility, what will Christ do with him? Tell him his possibility and then through processes realize it. Philip, the reserved man, Christ sees him, calls him. He would never come unless called, so He will call him and Philip comes. Nathanael, the guileless worshiper, brought by another to the Christ. Christ fulfils all that there was in this worship and brings him into such fellowship with Himself that he becomes Bartholomew the apostle. Mary, His own Mother's supreme human affection, He corrects, and at last commits her in human love to John. Nicodemus, the intellectual seeker, the man who thinks that everything is to come by way of knowledge; pure and upright in character so far as he had light, Christ brings him to the wicket gate and says, What you want is not learning, but life, "Ye must be born anew." The woman of Samaria, the flippant sinner who is ready for a theological argument but not for repentance. He searches her, flames upon her His knowledge, and then sends her to be the messenger to the city, having saved her. The nobleman, the sorrowing father with his boy ill, persistent in his appeal, what will Christ do? Heal his son and so win the father, for the whole house believed. There in the porches of Bethesda is an impotent man, utterly unable to lift himself. He will approach him, renew his hope, set him upon his feet, pronounce him whole and bid him sin no more. A woman taken in adultery, condemned. What will He do. Deliver her and lay upon her delivered spirit the great charge not to sin. A man born blind in the great and mysterious economy of God in order that God's works may be manifested in him. He gave him sight and made him the first worshiper outside the Jewish economy. Martha, honest, restless, He will patiently teach. Mary, the lowly disciple, He will fill her soul with His great grace. To Lazarus dead He will give life. Judas Iscariot, the thief, He will expose and exclude. Thomas, the sceptic, He will give him patient and gentle instruction. Annas and Caiaphas, mean and false, He will rebuke and then be silent in their presence. Pilate, the time-server, He will strive to save and then abandon. Joseph of Arimathea, the secret disciple, He will at last bring into such circumstances that his discipleship flames into light. Mary of Magdala, devil possessed, He will cast out the devil and make her the great messenger of His love and of His resurrection. John the rare dreamer, the man seeing visions and attempting to listen to the mystic music of the spheres, He will give him the apocalypse, the unveiling, signs and wonders in the heavens above and the earth beneath. He deals with every man according to his need.

Now hear me, I bring you tonight, in conclusion, the word of the herald in the first chapter of the Gospel, "In the midst of you standeth One Whom ye know not, even He that cometh after me, the latchet of Whose shoe I am not worthy to unloose." He knows you absolutely, perfectly, profoundly, finally. Not only better than your neighbour knows you, better than you know yourself! That is the final comfort to me. As God is my witness, during the last few months if only I had known myself I would have abandoned hope in more than one dark hour, but the memory of the fact that He knows me better than I know myself, that He looked into the face of Peter and said to him, "The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice. Let not your heart be troubled," trust Me, is my comfort. Man, where are you? Would God that I could lay hands, violent hands of love, upon you. He knows you. All things are naked and open to His eyes, and He loves you notwithstanding, and is able to save you to the uttermost, and He will deal with you along the line that is necessary to your making. I pray you turn to Him for perfect understanding, for His perfect understanding of you. I said it was a comfort to be found out. Many a man has hidden a sin, a felony, for years, attempting not to be found out, but the morning in which the hand of the law arrested him was a morning of comfort, it was a relief to be found out. Man, you are found out. He knows, God help you, He knows. What does it matter that mother, or wife, or brother or sister, or neighbour or friend does not know, He knows. Oh, but you say, it is not merely sin, it is weakness, difficulty, I cannot get anyone to appreciate the peculiar difficulty of my life. He knows. There is nothing in the wide world so precious as someone who knows. That is friendship. The measure in which you know and understand me is the measure of your friendship. It may make you rebuke me, but it is friendship. He knows. It is the basis of friendship. Oh, if I could get you to Him! I do not care anything about your getting to me. I care nothing about your getting into the church, you will do that after; you cannot help it. Get to Him for perfect understanding and know as you come to Him that there is no necessity for subterfuge, and no use therein; He knows you.

Know also that when you come to Him you will have not merely perfect understanding, you will have faithful dealing. He will not put His hand upon you in false pity and say these things do not matter. If your right hand offends you, cut it off. If your right eye is making you stumble into lust, gouge it out, fling it away. That is what He will say to you. No man here wants a medical man who faces a disease and tells you it does not matter. You want a man who will take hold of it and with knife and strength cut it out. The Physician of souls is such. He will be faithful with you.

Blessed be God, there is another word. You come not merely for perfect understanding, faithful dealing, but for certain salvation. Demonstrate to me that He cannot save you and I quit preaching. Prove to me that your case is beyond the power of Christ and the evangel breaks down. But you cannot prove it. Oh that there may come to us sooner or later a great baptism of passionate honesty. Witnesses are everywhere here, men and women who know His power; who could not, but can; who were fast bound in sin and nature's night, but who awoke as a ray of light came into the dungeon from His presence, whose chains fell off and who went forth to live, serve, and follow Him. If you will but come to Him because He knows you and let Him deal with you in all His faithfulness, you will find Him able to save you. May God in His grace bring you to this Christ Who knows you, that He may save you.