**VOLUME 3; CHAPTER 03 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**SUBMISSION AND RESPONSIBILITY by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*I also am a man under authority, having under myself soldiers: and I say to this one, Go, and be goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh.*

*Matthew 8:9*

ALL THE SCENES OF NEW TESTAMENT HISTORY LIE IN THE of the atmosphere of Roman government. Its earliest stories are connected with the decree that went forth from Caesar Augustus that the world should be taxed. The last definitely historical picture that it presents is that of a notable prisoner, at large in his own house in the imperial city. As we read we grow familiar with Roman armies, with cohorts, legions, and bands, with captains, centurions, and soldiers. We meet with seven centurions. The first one appears in the passage from which my text is taken. He came to Jesus about his servant who was sick; the next one we see at the close of the Gospel narrative, in charge of the crucifixion of Christ; then in the book of Acts we find Cornelius, a devout man, the first Gentile believer to be baptized by the Hebrew apostle; then a centurion placing bonds upon Paul, and, as Paul objects, immediately seeking the advice of his superior officer; then two centurions taking Paul to Felix and protecting him from the threatened hostility of the crowd; then one who took charge of Paul and gave him great indulgence by the direction of Felix; until we come to the last, Julius, who was Paul's custodian on his voyage, and who became interested in Paul, so much so that he saved him from death at the hands of the soldiers in the hour of threatened shipwreck. In all these centurions there is something to admire; in some of them much to admire; and in one of them at least everything to admire. The three first mentioned stand out upon the page of the New Testament, and are remarkable in many ways. This one came to seek the aid of Christ for his slave, and uttered the remarkable words of my text. At the crucifixion another centurion watched the dying of the Man of Nazareth, and so keen and accurate was his observation that he said, "Truly this was the Son of God." Of Cornelius the highest things are written.

How is this excellence to be accounted for? If I were to declare that the military system accounted for it, I am inclined at once to say that would be too broad a statement, yet there is a sense in which it is true. I want to discover that sense, and to make it the method of my appeal to the young manhood of this congregation, to whom this message is to be particularly delivered. The end of the life of the soldier is not in view. I am not dealing with that. Whether that end be war, or whether it be that for which war is waged, I am not discussing that question at all at the present moment. It may be that if I were I should arouse the hostility of some of you, or, rather, I should not find you in perfect agreement with my own standpoint. I think there is a wonderful amount of insight in words which occur in The Comments Of Bagshot, "There is no peace at any price party. There are only various parties which disapprove of each other's wars." I was recently reminded that so eminent a theologian as the late Dr. Dale once said, "I for peace at any price, even at the price of war if necessary," I not discussing that, I am attempting to bring you to a consideration, not of the end of the soldier's life, whether that end be war, or the reason for war is waged; but of the method of the soldier's life. In understanding that method we shall discover why it is these men of the old Roman armies had an excellence that attracts us.

That method is declared clearly and simply and inclusively in the words that the centurion uttered to Jesus, "I am also a man under authority, having under myself soldiers." That is a philosophy of life. I wonder if he had ever said that before. I think not. I am inclined to think that it was a sudden expression of a subconscious philosophy. Remember, while he spoke in the first person singular, and while the philosophy was stated in the terms of experience and not in the terms of theory, this declaration was drawn from him by what he saw in Jesus. With an accuracy that should make us very thankful, the revisers have restored to the text a little word omitted Authorized Version, "also." You can drop the word "also" and you still have the philosophy, you still have the experience. "I am a man under authority, having under myself soldiers." That is my whole text, and yet it is not my whole text. It is the "also" that attracted me to the text. It is the supreme word. The centurion implied that Christ was a Man under authority and that He had those under Him. He looked at Christ and he saw in Him the fulfilment of the highest ideal of life as He knew it, and so Christ compelled from him the confession of the level upon which he was living his own life, the confession which revealed the philosophy of his life, which I think he had never formulated before.

I shall ask you, first of all, to consider this philosophy of life, "l am a man under authority," that is submission: "having under myself soldiers"; that is responsibility. I am a man under authority: I have soldiers under me. I know how to bend the knee to a throne: I am able to exercise the power of a throne, I have kissed a sceptre: I sway a sceptre. I am responsible to a throne: I therefore am able to be responsible for those who are beneath me. I am a man under authority, submission. I have soldiers under me, responsibility, That is the highest philosophy of life that can be stated for a young man.

Let us attempt to see a little more clearly what it really means, So far, then, as the method of the life of the centurion is concerned, I borrow the career of such a one as the ideal for young men. First consider the view of life suggested, and then see how the Christian life realizes that ideal at its highest and best.

What is this view of life suggested? This man first said, "I am a man under authority." To illuminate this I will take three simple prepositions: "to," "of," "for." I am … under authority." That is submission to, submission of, and submission for.

Submission to. The Roman soldier was submitted to the cause of the Roman Empire, but for the Roman soldier the cause of the Roman Empire was personified in the emperor. The Roman soldier was under authority, and so was, submitted to a cause personified in a person. You need not stay with the Roman soldier. It is true all through the ages. For king and country is the motto of the soldier today. The king is the personification to the soldier of the larger purpose and issue. The soldier is submitted to the cause of his country as it is personified for him in the king.

Submission of. The submission means submission of the central will. Upon enlisting in the army of the emperor the Roman soldier surrendered his will, his property, his relations. From the moment when he enlisted he had no will of own, no possession of his own, no property of any kind. He could not hold property. Neither could he speak of his relations as any longer being his. He gave up everything. The soldier submitted to a central authority has submitted his will and everything else. His time, his habit of dress, his choice of foods, and all his ability are handed over.

Submission for. The Roman soldier was submitted for fitting himself for his work. That meant drill. He was submitted also for his work, That meant war.

The centurion was submitted to the service of his country personified in a sovereign; he had made submission of his will and of all he had: he had submitted for the purpose of his own perfecting, for the accomplishment of the work to which he was called.

Turn to the other side of this: responsibility, "having under myself soldiers." I want you very patiently to follow me as I say that the responsibility of the centurion was connected intimately with his submission. He was responsible for the soldiers under him, to the state to which he himself was submitted. He must identify himself with them. He must exert an influence upon them. He must insist upon certain things in their lives. All this for the sake of the state. The state looked to him, held him responsible, for all those who were placed under him, that he should recommend it, utter its requirements, and insist upon the realization of its purpose. So there was the most intimate connection between the soldier's submission and his responsibility, "I also am a man under authority, having under myself soldiers." The first was an upward look to the throne to which he bent; the second was a downward look to the territory over which he reigned. The upward look was in order that he might realize the territory over which he reigned. The downward look was in order that he might satisfy the throne under which he served. In order that we may understand this great philosophy of life, I am more anxious that we should realize the connection between these two things than that we should see either in isolation. This is not a picture of the two sides of a man's nature, the one side subservient to authority, and the other getting satisfaction out of the fact that he was able to make others bend the knee to him. Here is a man who says, For seven years I have been serving a master, now it is my turn. I am going to make someone else serve me! Or here is a man who says, In a certain department of my life I have obeyed; now I am going to compensate myself for the irksomeness of that by making someone else obey me. That is not the picture presented by these words. Let us be careful to draw the distinction. The unifying conception of life to the centurion was the Roman Empire. He said, I am under the empire and of the empire. I submit to its authority and I represent its authority. I look up to a throne in order that I may represent the will of the throne to those over whom I reign. I look down upon the territory over which I reign in order that I may realize in it the will and purpose of the throne to which I am submitted. This is a perfect harmony and interrelationship. There can be no right and perfect government of the territory over which I reign, save as I am in right relationship to the throne over me. The reason why I should perfectly submit to the throne over me is that I may exert its influence among those who are placed under me. I am under authority, submission; I have soldiers under me, responsibility. The responsibility of reigning is intimately connected with submission.

That is a revelation of perfect life. Before I turn to show that the Christian ideal realizes that, do you see the importance of it? Let me get my sermon out of shape and take the application now. To what throne is your life submitted? territory are you reigning over? Have you found a throne to which you bend the knee? Have you found a kingdom over which you reign? That is the meaning of human life. Every man is intended to reign, but before a man can reign must submit. Every man here has found a throne. Every man has found a territory over which he is reigning. You cannot escape it. These are the deep things of human nature which no man can elude. The trouble is that men submit to the wrong throne, and therefore their reign is that of despotism, destruction, death. The influence you are exerting within the circle of your own manhood, the circle of your friends, in your home, your city, is an influence created by your relation to a throne. If the throne before which you bow is the throne of the world, or the throne of the flesh, or throne of the devil - and these are not separate thrones, that is the trinity of evil - if you bow before that throne, you are still reigning, but it is a reign of devastation, a reign death. You cannot escape submission to a throne. You cannot escape the exercise of influence, of power. Whether the power be constructive or destructive, for life or death, for lifting or flinging down, depends upon the throne to which you bow the knee. Every man can say, "I also am a man under authority, having under myself soldiers." I am not here to press young men to go forth and find a kingdom. I here to press them to see to it that they find the right authority, and are exercising the right influence in the place where they reign.

That leads me to the second point. The Christian revelation most perfectly realizes this ideal of life. That ideal was perfectly presented as a pattern in Christ. That is what this man meant, though I do not imagine, or suggest, that he perfectly understood it. Thou art a Man under authority, and Thou hast soldiers under Thee. That is the story of Christ's life. Jesus of Nazareth might have said with perfect accuracy and with far fuller, richer, more spacious meaning than did the centurion, "I am a Man under authority, having under Myself soldiers." Jesus Christ was under authority. He was under authority to the state, the great universal empire of God, which He expressed in that term which we are still using and are only beginning to understand the meaning of, "The Kingdom of God"; and that for Him was personified in God Himself, Who was King, Ruler, Sovereign over the whole empire. He was a Man under authority. "I do nothing of Myself ... I do always the things that are pleasing to Him." "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to accomplish His work." It was a life under perfect and absolute authority, It was a life of perfect and absolute submission. It was a life, therefore, responsible, "having under Myself soldiers," all the forces of the Kingdom of God over which He was appointed to reign. He was under authority and exercised authority. The authority He exercised over the things under Him was the authority to which He submitted, as He yielded Himself wholly to the will of God. The authority of life, light, love, the authority of pure, high, noble ideals; to these things He yielded Himself, for they were in the will of God. These are the very elements of the empire of God. Wherever He exercised His authority it was toward the realization of these things in human life.

Christ did not merely reveal to us the fullness of this ideal as a pattern; He came to call us into submission to it, and to communicate to us the power that would enable us to fulfil that in our life which is essential to it on the highest level and in all fullness and breadth.

To what, then, does Christianity call every young man? To submission and responsibility! Submission to what? To the Kingdom of God personified in Christ as King. I call you in the name of this Christ to submission to the Kingdom of God. I pause because I am so conscious that the familiarity of these terms robs them of their spaciousness and grandeur and beauty. Young men are constantly telling me they are looking for a career. Here is an all-inclusive one, passion for the Kingdom of God. All honor to the soldier who really and truly and deeply loves his country. I ask you to make the master passion of your life not this country of Britain, but the Kingdom of God. If the idea be too spacious, too gracious, as indeed it is, then focus it, localize it, personify it, only remember when you have personified it that that to which you come, or He to Whom you come, does stand for the larger purpose, the Kingdom of God. We call you for this purpose to the Christ, for submission to Him is submission to the Kingdom of God. Come, not merely that you may kiss a sceptre and be under a King, but that you may make the Kingdom of God the goal of your endeavour, the passion of your life, that to which you devote all your energies. Here is the true throne. Here is the true state. Here is the true empire to which men should give themselves. The man who can go forth from this chapel saying, I am a man under authority to God's King, and God's Kingdom, is fulfilling the essential necessity of his life on the highest level and in the fullest, best sphere.

Remember that if submission means submission to the Kingdom of God it means submission of the will, and as the Roman centurion in the olden days, having handed over his will and choice, ceased to have property, or time, or relations of his own, so must the soldier who submits to the Christ. If you say I am carrying my figure too far, listen to the King Himself. "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." "If any man cometh unto Me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." This does not mean that the man giving himself to the Christ is to have no love for father, mother, wife, child, brother, sister; but that forever, in every hour of crisis, in every commonplace, in all circumstances, if there should arise conflict between the interest of Christ and that of father, mother, wife, child, brother, sister, Christ must have the pre-eminence, and the Kingdom of God must be first. So that "he that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me" is the awful and yet necessary word of the King as men come into contact with Him and desire to submit themselves to Him. Sometimes I think that we lose something of power and force by stating the case in all its widest reaches and its most spacious applications. It means that the soldier is to have no habit unremitted to Christ for approval or disapproval, no hour of his time which he calls his own, no interest in life which is to him vacation from vocation, no single detail of life over which Christ is not supreme, which does not enter into the supreme master passion of bringing in the Kingdom of God. That is the life of the Christian. I know there are a great many people who call themselves Christians who have never come within a million miles of realizing this, Are they Christians? I suggest the question and leave them to their own conscience and the clear teaching of Christ for decision, "Under authority." You have played at life long enough. Begin to live by giving yourself in tremendous submission to this King.

When you have done that, what then? Begin to reign in power. Begin to realize your kingdom. Where shall I begin? says some young man. Give me my work. I give it to you now. "He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city." That is in Proverbs. I am not going to preach from text apart from the New Testament. I long ago gave up preaching the doctrine of self-control. I never say to a man, Control yourself. "The fruit of the Spirit is … self-control." You begin to control yourself only as you hand yourself to your King. That is the first empire over which man is called to reign. All the forces and conditions of his own life, the desires and aspirations; the movements of intellect, emotion, and will. I can reign only when I am under authority, when I have kissed the sceptre. Enlarge it without my staying to illustrate it. Your home, your class in the Sunday school if you are a teacher. This pulpit is a throne of power for me if I am under authority. If I am not, then it is awful opportunity for wrecking human life. I am not talking idly. These are the deep and awful and heart-breaking convictions of any man who knows what it is to be called to preach the Word of God. Yet blessed be God, as the apostle declares, the true minister is "led in triumph." If I would reign in this pulpit and bring a territory into subjection to the vast empire of God's Kingdom, then the measure in which I submit is the measure in which I command, and reign in my own life of service. So also in your city, in your country, everywhere. First under authority, and then reigning in power.

I go back to the application which I have already used in the middle of my sermon. Under what authority are you living? What are the sanctions of your life? To what do you remit everything? The lusts and desires of your own life? Is that so? Under what authority are you living? Tell me that, and I will tell you the effect you are producing upon the territory over which you are reigning. The authority to which a man submits is the authority he exercises. Let us break this up. Are you submitting your life to the authority of the flesh, answering its clamant cry, yielding all the forces of your being to whatever your flesh life asks and demands? Then you are exerting the authority of the throne to which you bow. You are spreading a poison and paralysis wherever you go for no man liveth unto himself. Are you bending the knee to the world with its maxims and methods? Then you are exerting the influence of the world in the circle of your friendship, and your friend is becoming worldly because you are reigning over him in the power of the world to which you bow the knee. Are you serving the devil, the devil who was a liar from the beginning and a murderer, the devil who is the prince of compromise and of subtlety? Then you are exerting the influence of the devil wherever you go. Are you serving that great Kingdom of God by crowning Christ? Then you are exerting the influence of that Kingdom and that Christ wherever you go. That which you are under, you transplant into that which you are over. That has a wider application than to young men. Fathers and mothers, that is true of you. It is not the precept which you utter, it is the throne before which you bend that you will see reproduced in your children. It is true everywhere. Let me cease my illustrations and leave the vast, awful sublime truth upon your conscience, and turn to my final word to young men.

Man, you must fulfil your manhood by bowing the knee to a throne and reigning. To what throne are you bowing? That life of yours, the history and mystery of which I know not, nor could I know if you attempted to tell me, the history mystery of which you know not, for there are vaster reaches in your manhood than you have ever discovered. God only knows it all. Take that life and hand it over to that One Who out of the eternal ages came into the little spaces of passing time that evil men might know the meaning of life in its richest fulfilment. Hand your life to Him and He will - this the gospel, the evangel that comes like music to the heart of the man who has failed - He will "restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten." He will give you back the things you have missed. Though the vessel be marred in the hand of Potter, He will make it again, another vessel as seemeth good to Him. If you, like Jonah, in unutterable folly have paid your fare to try to escape Jehovah, and have gone to Tarshish, if only you will get back, the Word of the Lord will come to you the second time, and He will establish His Kingdom in your life and then you may begin to reign in life.

Is there anything you more desire than a sense of power? Is there anything any man who is a man at all desires more to be able to say, "I can"? It is the next great word to "I am" on the level of human life. "I am" is the first expression of human personality. If the next be "I think" the outcome is "I can." Do you want to say it? Oh, the scores of men who say to me, "I cannot." They are here tonight. You are here tonight, my brother, you are saying, "I cannot, God knows I would if I could, but I cannot do it. I see the vision, but I have no virtue to win the victory." No, you have bent to the wrong throne, and the influence resulting from your bending to the wrong throne has been destruction of the territory over which you reign, for, remember, your paralysis is your own doing, your weakness is the result of your own yielding. I pray you turn the deafest of deaf ears to the false and damnable teaching which declares that you cannot help your sin. You can help your sinning. Sin is the rebellion of your will, and it is rebellion against God. You know that you need not have crossed the threshold of the house of sin, or put your life at the disposal of evil things; but you have done it and now you cannot help it, you are poisoned, paralyzed, spoiled. You are saying, I cannot, and you have ruined your kingdom because the throne to which you bent was the wrong throne.

There is a "trysting place where heaven's love and heaven's justice meet," and the trysting place is the Cross where the Christ, Who came to give the pattern, died that you might know how in the mystery of pain God is able to communicate power that makes life over again, If you have been the slave of the awful evil things to which you have yielded yourself, the chain can be broken now. God help you to find the right authority and bow under it, and so find your kingdom and reign over it,