**VOLUME 3; CHAPTER 06 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**THE VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIFE by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*Having done all, to stand.*

*Ephesians 6:13*

THE WORDS THRILL WITH A SENSE OF POWER EVEN WHEN taken, as I have now taken them, out of their setting. They suggest assured victory. "Having done all, to stand." Considered in their textual relation this becomes far more apparent. I think I had hardly dared to read these words as text if I had not already read their context, that passage toward the close of the wonderful Ephesian letter which the apostle commences with the words, "Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might." Having read the passage, and knowing that it is in your memory, I repeat that these words, "Having done all, to stand," suggest an absolute and an assured victory. In that passage the enemies are all recognized - "against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places." The equipment of the soldier is perfectly described, the loins girt with truth, the breast-plate of righteousness, the feet shod with the readiness of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, with prayer and supplication. The clash of conflict is plainly heard. What is the issue? "Having done all, to stand." There is no quaver in the voice. The victory is not hypothetical. The issue is not for one single moment uncertain. The soldier is "to stand … withstand ... and having done all, to stand." He is to recognize the fact that he is not playing at battle. He is to "put on the whole armour of God" and to "take up the whole armour of God." To "put on" may be for military parade. To "take up" is for actual conflict. What is to be the issue of it? "Having done all, to stand." That is a perfect picture of absolute victory.

We are all familiar with the conflict in greater or less degree. I think I am safe in saying that we all desire just such victory as the apostle describes in this great passage. But the question is being asked in a thousand varied ways on every hand, especially by young people who have seen the gleam and desire to follow it. Is that really possible? Is it really possible to live a victorious Christian life? Eagerly and almost in agony the inquiry is made.

How shall I answer that question? Let me say, first of all, there is a sense in which no one can answer it finally for another. The only answer that will be convincing will be that of personal experience when the conditions have been fulfilled and the attempt made. We too often refuse to make the attempt until we have discovered a theory; or, most earnestly desiring victory, we seek for a testimony of other people, and are influenced unduly by it. Seeking for a theory we have found - to use a commonplace expression - that it does not work; or seeking for testimony, we are afraid, discouraged by the exalted nature of it, or by its confession of failure and impotence. There are some things that a man needs to say very carefully, and what I am going to say now is one of them. Scores of young people desiring victorious life have been discouraged by some of the finest books ever written, the lives of the saints of the past. I remember on one occasion having conversation at some length with a young man who had been brought to the verge of despair in his own life by reading that wonderful life of the sainted Fletcher of Madeley. He said: If that be Christianity and if that be the victorious life, it is not for me. If I could gain the ear of the young men and women here tonight who have seen the glory and in the deepest of their heart desire the victory, I would say to them, Do not trust in a theory, do not take as final evidence any testimony, but for yourselves make the great adventure. Learn the conditions as indicated; make your own venture, and come to the final proof in your own life.

I can imagine that some will say, Why are you preaching? Surely you are preaching to declare a theory. Surely you are preaching to utter the testimony of the man who wrote these words, and perchance your own. Yes, I suppose that is true. Yet I desire to deal with a theory, and declare a testimony, only in order to urge and inspire you to make the great adventure for yourself. I will not at the first declare whether or not I hold it to be possible to live this life and gain this victory. If peradventure you think you know sufficient of me and my message to know that I do believe it, try to banish that thought from your mind; and learning the conditions, go your ways to make each for himself and herself the personal adventure.

I want, then, to speak to you of two things, First, the nature of the conflict described in this passage; and second, the conditions of victory as laid down in the theory of this writer and as borne witness to in the testimony of his own life.

I begin with the nature of the conflict. In order to discover it we must first inquire to whom these words are addressed. I go back to the beginning of the letter, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and the faithful in Christ Jesus." The phrase "the faithful" does not mean those who are absolutely true and loyal necessarily; but it does mean those who are living on the principle of faith in Christ Jesus. "To the saints and the faithful in Christ Jesus," All the letter is to such. That is the preliminary condition. This letter, and this passage, and the phrases, "stand ... withstand ... and having done all, to stand" have no meaning for, or application to, any other than soldier saints. I am not going to deal at length with this subject of sainthood, but I do desire to remind you of what the writer says in this particular letter concerning those who wrestle against principalities and powers, the soldiers who enter into this conflict. They are, first of all, men and women who are related to Christ by the mystic and mighty ties of actual life. If you read the earlier part of the letter you will find that the apostle is at great pains to teach these people what is their relation to Christ, because they have believed on Him. As he prays for them that they may know God and know perfectly His will, he teaches them that they are men and women in whom the life of Christ is actually present. That is the meaning of the first phrase in the paragraph, "Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might." So that my first statement is that it is impossible to test the accuracy of the apostle's theory and testimony, impossible to find out whether or not it be possible to live the victorious Christian life, until you have become Christ's own. That is the preliminary matter. It is to the soldier saint, already sharing the Christ life, already related to Him, who knows the wrestling, that I speak tonight. There is a sense in which a man never yielded to Christ may be conscious of the conflict, but he knows very little of the strenuousness of it. It was after you had yielded yourself to Christ that you came back to your pastor, teacher, or friend, and said, How is it that since I have given myself to Christ I have been more sorely tempted than ever? You began wrestling against principalities and powers when you became Christ's own. The first thing to be remembered, then, is that the soldier saints are such as are related to Christ by the mystic and mighty tie of actual life.

There is a second matter of equal importance to remember in the teaching of this letter. Those to whom the apostle wrote were called to an ultimate vocation of strange and wonderful grandeur. In the first three chapters the apostle shows that the ultimate meaning of Christian life is not to be discovered in the present life, that it does not lie in the realm of earthly things. By argument and teaching, declaration and illuminative statement, he proves that the ultimate meaning of Christian life lies far out beyond the present age, in those measureless ages that are to come. There the saints are to fulfil their ultimate vocation as they become the messengers to angels and ages of the grace and wisdom of God. These soldier saints in this world are only in preparation for higher, larger, nobler and fuller service.

There is a third matter that must be recognized. The apostle teaches that the saints have present responsibility consequent upon these earlier facts. Let me state that in another form. These soldier saints are such as share the virtue of Christ. I sometimes think that is one of the words a man today needs to pause at. It is one of the dis-crowned words of our language, We sometimes speak of virtue as though it were a grace and beauty of character. It is that, surely, but that is not the essential meaning of the word. Virtue is strength. Very accurate and beautiful use is made of that word when in the familiar and beautiful story of the healing of the woman who touched, we read that Jesus knew that "virtue had gone out of Him." That translation of the Greek word, which being Anglicized might read dynamic, is perfect transIation. The soldier saint is one of whom the apostle declared that he shares the virtue of Christ. The soldier saint, moreover, is one who is called to a vocation which lies on and out of sight, and for which the life today is preparatory. Having revealed these facts of virtue and vocation thus, he shows that in the midst of the present world the saints have immediate responsibilities. Listen to the actual words, "I therefore ... beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called." The worthy walk will be, "giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," growing up "in all things into Him, which is the Head, even Christ." And so the letter runs on, until presently he says, "Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might." The life of the saint is not a delicate softness. It is rather a stern conflict, for the men and women who share the mystic and mighty life of Christ, and are called to ultimate vocation of strange and wonderful grandeur, have present responsibilities, and these create the conflict.

Then notice the apostolic description of the enemies. Strange and mystic words are these, "Not against flesh and blood." He dismisses all carnal thought of conflict as though it were hardly worthy of notice. It is one of those dismissals that sweep out of sight something not to be named by comparison. "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood." Therefore someone will say the wrestling is a figure of speech, and there is no real meaning in it, there is no conflict. The man who says that has never entered into an understanding of the fulness and majesty of human life. We still imagine that the hero is the man who wrestles with flesh and blood and overcomes. We have yet to come to an understanding of the fact that moral heroism is finer than material. In your house of business, standing behind your counter, sitting at the desk in your office, in your own home circle, in the fellowship of your earthly friends, you may have to fight a far fiercer battle than was ever won upon the field of blood. Paul knew how fierce the conflict is, and in a few sentences he describes the enemies. Notice how they stand over against what we have said. The saint is one who is related by mystic and mighty ties to Christ, and consequently is Christ's own soldier. Therefore, the saint is in conflict with the principalities and powers in rebellion against Christ. With a touch of fine sarcasm, which nevertheless does not underrate the enemy, he says, "the world rulers of this darkness." "This darkness." What does Paul mean? Begin with the smallest circle. Ephesus was a city of light and learning and of wealth; a city in which there existed that strange combination between religion and commerce which had turned the temple of the heathen goddess into the banking house of the merchants. That city was included for Paul in the words, "this darkness." Or take the wider outlook. All the things that were against the Nazarene, all men and forces in the world that were against the ideals of the Christ and the purposes of Christ were included. He stood for the spiritual. All materialized thinking was part of "this darkness." Mark the infinite scorn of the son of light as he looked upon the condition of affairs in the midst of which he and the saints lived, "this darkness"! To the child of God that phrase will constantly recur in the midst of the world's pomp and pageantry, glitter and gaud. "This darkness"! Finally, in a comprehensive phrase that defies our analysis he says, "spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." This is the picture of the spiritual antagonisms by which the life of the saint is forevermore surrounded. This man at least believed that the saint has to battle not with flesh and blood, not against men; but against subtler and more terrible forces that lie behind the visible foes, driving them, and making them the instruments of a devilish onslaught. Paul's picture of the conflict is that of conflict between the saints and devilish forces that touch the spiritual life and wrestle with men in order to prevent their realization of the ultimate.

If these are the combatants, soldier saints, related to Christ, called to ultimate vocation in the heavenlies, and having present responsibilities, and principalities and powers, world rulers of this darkness, what is the issue? Inevitable, real, strenuous conflict. Some of you have known the battle so long that it is almost needless that I dwell upon it; but I want to say to every young man and woman here, saint-ship means definite conflict with spiritual forces, spiritual powers of the air.

Christian! dost thou see them

On the holy ground,

How the powers of darkness

Compass thee around?

This is the meaning of temptation. This is the reason why on the morning when you rose with hope and consecration, before noon had come, the shadows were about you and the siren voice of evil had spoken to your soul. Principalities and powers. It is against these that we wrestle.

What is the final issue to be? That is the question I want you to ask and decide. In order to do that, let me speak of the conditions of victory as suggested by this whole letter. Stated in brief language, what are they? First, complete surrender to Christ; second, patient and persistent training under the control of Christ in order to carry on the conflict: finally, determined conflict.

Complete surrender to Christ. Admiration, patronage, imitation are each and all insufficient. You may genuinely and honestly admire Jesus Christ and never be like Him. Patronage may be in this case, as it is so often, a studied insult. Imitation is useless save as at the centre of the life there has been submission, and Christ Himself is enthroned. I sometimes wonder if other of my brethren who preach the Word of God feel as I do the enormous and almost appalling difficulty of making some commonplace thing living and vital. Submission to Christ. We have heard it so often that it has become a phrase, a clangor of words with little or no meaning. Submission to Christ means that there must be no choice made anywhere or anywhen save after consultation with Him, that all knowledge must be submitted to the mastery of His mind, that emotion, whether it express itself as hate or love, must be purified in the hot fire of His infinite love.

All choice submitted to Him. How easy it is to sing about consecration and yet live hour after hour, day after day, without ever consulting Christ. So to do is to insult Him. If I am to live the victorious life it is perfectly patent that I must submit. It is not enough to sing of submission. It is not enough to understand the theory of submission. It is not enough to consent to the declaration of the preacher that choice must be submitted to Him, and knowledge must be tested by the mastery of His mind, and the emotion purified in the fire of His love. These things must be done; and if they are not done there can be no victorious Christian life. This is the first thing, the radical thing, definite submission of the life to Christ.

That issues in the second statement, patient and persistent training under the control of Christ. Readjustment of all relationships because He is consulted in the choice. The formation of habits. I wish I could get young men and women to understand that the habits of the Christian life need forming just as the habits of the evil life do. Do not imagine that here by some mechanical action you come into the Christian life. You do in less than a moment come into the possession of the dynamic and the virtue, but you have to form new habits, and you have to be as persistent in your repetition of the good thing that is not habitual, until it becomes habitual, you were in the repetition of the evil thing that was not habitual until it became habitual. Patient persistence also means cultivation of the neglected spiritual areas of your own personality. I am told that I no longer need to tell men they must be born anew, and in defence of the statement it is declared that many people are now refined, cultured and beautiful, apart from Christ. I admit it. In the narrow circle of what they are apart from Christ they may be in large measure - to use the language and to measure by the standards of the age - cultured, refined. That which is lacking is the consciousness of the spiritual areas of their own being. They never pray, I am told, and yet they are beautiful. I answer, so much less than beautiful, in that they do not pray. Prayer is the final attitude of life. Worship is the last expression of humanity's perfection. If there be no prayer, and no commerce with the eternal, no light of the flashing splendor of eternity on the brow, then life is vulgar, though you may refine it with the refinement of the latest university. There must be cultivation of the neglected spiritual areas of life in order that there may be victorious life.

All this means that there must be determined conflict, the perpetual battle of surrender, the refusal to act apart from Christ. Let me give you the word of Jesus in this connection, "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." Not once and for ever, but "daily"! Once and forever, in the sense of the radical denial of self that puts Him on the throne. That is the first thing, and it ought to be such a denial that the attitude is to be maintained; but in the maintenance of the attitude there is to be perpetual taking up of the cross. For those living the Christian life no day will dawn, until that last day that has no eventide shall break upon the astonished gaze, in which it will not be necessary to come to a new cross, and bend to a new surrender. The refusal to act apart from Him is the beginning of the conflict. This is ever followed by the struggle with old claims, old habits, and the toil of cultivating the neglected areas of the being. When a man gives himself to Christ these spiritual areas of his own being are desert, and in order that they may blossom as the rose, and run with the rivers of God, and be beautiful with the light of the eternal morning, there must be cultivation and patience. All this is part of the conflict, and a small part of it. The larger part is that the soldier saint is forevermore pledged to engage in conflict against all that exalts itself against Christ, not only in his own life, but in his home, in his city, in the world.

I am not in the humour to say to young men and women that Christianity is easy, and that for two reasons. First, because I know it is not. Second, because I do not believe that doctrine makes any appeal to young life. I do appeal to those of you who have already put on the armour to take it up, and "stand ... withstand," and find out whether it be possible, "having done all, to stand." I do appeal to those of you who tremble, and say, This is a serious message: according to this, Christianity is a serious and strenuous business; I am afraid of it. I make my appeal to you, Make trial for yourself of the possibilities.

I have a theory. I have a testimony. What is my theory? That Christ cannot fail. That if I am submitted to Him, obedient to Him, definitely fighting under His direction, I cannot fail. That is my theory. I have a testimony. What is it? That my theory works. Do not imagine I am boasting. I know how I have failed and still do fail. I have to say with the man who wrote this letter, I have not yet attained. I am not yet made perfect. I have not yet apprehended that for which I was apprehended. In these things I am almost ashamed to take Paul's words as my own. I fall so far behind what he knew experimentally of victory. I look back and there is the battlefield where I was beaten, but I know this, that when I was beaten it was my own fault; where I ought to have been surrendered, I had kept back part of the price; or I had grown weary of the discipline and the training for conflict; or I quietly, stealthily, devilishly let in one of the enemies of my Lord, and gave him room in my life. I have never failed since I gave myself to Christ except when I have been to blame. That is my testimony.

I will end as I began. I do not ask you to take my theory, to accept my testimony. Theory and testimony was valuable so far, but you must make your own trial of the possibility of this victorious life. Suppose that it be true that no one yet has lived such a life. I do not admit it actually, but for the sake of argument, and for the moment only. That is no reason why you should not make the adventure. If the world proceeded on the assumption that what no man has ever done no man can ever do, what would be done? Mountains would remain unclimbed. Pictures would remain unpainted. Poems would be unwritten and discoveries unmade. I pray you have done with this content with the experience of the average. Stand alone, and say, I will make this great adventure, I will give, so far as I am able, this Christ His chance of victory in me. I will, so help me God, put on this armour, take it up, stand and withstand, and find out whether having done all I can still stand.

Dwight Lyman Moody, long years ago in this England of ours, when he was unknown, heard it said that the world has yet to see what God can do with one man utterly and absolutely at His disposal. That statement turned all his life. Said Moody, If that is true, I will be that man and give God His chance. Now measure the rich, generous, gracious measure in which he made of his own life, and how he influenced other lives. The story has its disparity from my appeal, but it has its similarity. Make that adventure. Let every man who has seen the gleaming glory, and asks is this thing possible, say, I have heard the theory, I have heard the testimony, they interest me, but I will dismiss them, and for myself I will make this great adventure, and then presently, when the mists have melted, and the ultimate light is shining, there is no doubt that you will be able to say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith"; and having done all, I stand.