**VOLUME 3; CHAPTER 07 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**THE VALUE AND PROOF OF THE RESURRECTION by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*If Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain.*

*1 Corinthians 15:14*

STRAUSS, WHO WAS ONE OF THE MOST BRILLIANT OF THE critics of Christianity, and one of the most unbelieving of the apologists of Christ, declared the resurrection to be the centre of the centre. That declaration harmonizes with the view of the greatest exponent of the Christian faith in apostolic times. "If Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we witnessed of God that He raised up Christ: Whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, neither hath Christ been raised: and if Christ hath not been raised your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most pitiable." No language can be clearer. The resurrection is the groundwork of faith because all else in connection with the affirmations of Christianity must be interpreted by it. If Christ hath been raised, then evangelical Christianity is true. If Christ hath not been raised, then all other matters of our faith are misinterpretations. If Christ hath not been raised then God was no more manifest in flesh in Christ than in other men. If Christ hath not been raised then the teaching of Jesus has no other authority than the authority of His own personal conviction, and must be tested by subsequent thinking and speculation. If Christ hath not been raised then the Cross of Calvary was nothing more than the tragic ending of a mistaken, if noble life. All the values of evangelical Christianity are dependent on interpretations of the person and mission of Jesus resulting from acceptation of the central fact of His resurrection.

I desire to speak first of the place of the resurrection in the economy of redemption, as revealed in the Scriptures of Truth; and second, of the values of the resurrection as a basis of faith for all such as are crying out after purity, and after God.

First, then, the place of the resurrection in the economy of redemption. The Christian religion is pre-eminently a religion of redemption. Its whole message may be summarized in the words of our Lord concerning Himself, "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." That tells the story not merely of the mission of Jesus, it reveals the real meaning of the Christian religion. It begins with man as incompetent, and has to do with the method of his saving, his remaking. That is the distinctive note of Christianity. In that it is differentiated from any and every other religion of which the world has ever known anything. Other religions are ethical, and attempt to interpret to men the higher ideals of life. In so far as they do so they also have Divine authority. Yet others insist upon the necessity of man's culture of his own life, and almost invariably tell him with strange, weird, awful honesty, that his endeavour will be of no avail. The Christian religion comes to man everywhere, and says in effect, Thou art lost, but mayest be found. Thou hast failed, but thou mayest succeed. Thou art ruined, but thou mayest be redeemed. The content of the Christian religion is the declaration of pardon, and of power, and of peace.

In the Bible there is one central figure, and one central truth. The central Person in the Bible is Jesus of Nazareth, called as to person, Son of man and Son of God; bearing as supreme title, indicating the meaning of His mission, the Christ of God. There can be no intelligent study of the Bible that does not show the pathways since His life in the world started with that life, and owe their direction to His indication and His impulse.

The Christian religion may be summarized in one very brief sentence, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." I therefore take the life and ministry of Jesus and divide it into four parts. First, there is the fact of incarnation. Second, there is the ministry of His life, His teaching, and His deeds. Third, there is the Cross. Ultimately, there is the resurrection. Let us interpret these facts by the supreme word, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." To do so is to recognize that the whole life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth was an unveiling of the truth concerning God. God was speaking out into speech that men could understand the infinite and eternal things concerning Himself. In the incarnation God did not come any nearer to humanity than He had been before. I go back into the twilight of the Old Testament, and I find the stupendous recognition of the nearness of God to human life. When the prophet at the Babylonish court charged the king with sin, he said, "The God in Whose hand thy breath is, and Whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified." The Psalmist declared, "Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, Thou understandest my thought afar off ... Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, Thou art there," The singers and the writers of the past were thus conscious of the nearness of God. Paul speaking in the midst of the culture of Athens, said to the philosophic Greeks, "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." Men knew the nearness of God, but they did not know the God to Whom they were near. The incarnation was not the method by which God came nearer to humanity, but the method by which He came into the observation of humanity, and took the speech that man was able to understand. The Word, inarticulate through the far-flung splendor of the ages, became flesh, became articulate in human speech and human accents and human tones, in order that men might hear in their own language the infinite truth concerning God. By way of the incarnation God came into human observation; came into such form and fashion that the men who had ever lived in His presence, whose breath had been in His hand through all their lives, might listen and understand, might see and comprehend. That is the first fact in the ministry of Christ.

The second fact is exactly true to the same underlying principle. I follow Him through all the years of His private life, along the pathway of His public ministry; and as I do so I am coming to the knowledge of God. God is revealing to me His thought for me, His purpose for me, the meaning of the breadth, beauty, and beneficence of His government. I do not wonder, as I ponder the words of Jesus that have been preserved for me by the inspired writers, that men exclaimed, "Never man so spake." Was the message a new message? Was God giving us a new thought? Had God changed His mind? By no means. In Christ He said the thing that He always thought and intended, but He so said it that man might understand it. Through all the ministry of Christ I have the unveiling of the will of God for human life. Observe Him, more-over, in His attitudes toward men. His awful severity against sin, His gracious tenderness toward the sinner, unveil the attitude of God toward sin, and toward the sinner. The words that passed His lips, that scorch me even until this hour, are the words of God about sin. The words that passed His lips, and which woo and win me toward His heart for rest and healing, are the words of God toward me the sinner.

Now, reverently, one step further. As I stand in the presence of the Cross, I must recognize that the Crucified One is the same Person that I have looked upon in the years of public ministry, the same Person Who is described as the Word made flesh. If "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" when He came into human life, and as He passed along the pathway of human teaching, it is still true that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" in the Cross. In that Cross is unveiled before humanity the grace of God, operating through suffering, toward the restoration of man. The Cross of Jesus Christ, according to the interpretation of the New Testament, was the place where one Jesus of Nazareth, Who was also God in Christ, wrought out into human visibility the infinite and unfathomable mystery of that passion and pain whereby it is possible for God to take back the sinning man and remake him.

So, finally, when I come to the final fact of the resurrection, it is the revelation of the strength of God accomplishing the utmost purpose of His will, I go back to some of the ancient words concerning Him. Hear this, for instance, "In all their affliction He was afflicted." There are those who believe that from that passage a negation has been omitted and that what was actually written was this, "In all their affliction He was not afflicted." I do not say that is an accurate statement, but admitting it for the moment, see what is said. "In their affliction" - He was in it, He shared it, He passed through it with them - but He was not afflicted, He was not beaten down, overcome, defeated. Even if we take the gracious statement as it stands it has the same significance, "In all their affliction He was afflicted ... He bare them, and carried them all the days of old." I reverently come to the Cross and there I see unveiled the mystery I can never explain. I will not attempt to interpret it by the words of Scripture. The great herald of Jesus Christ said, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." The apostolic writer said, "His own self bare our sins in His own body upon the tree." Still believing that this is God in Christ, I am face to face with the tremendous declaration that God is bearing the sin of the race. The resurrection demonstrates the fact that He was equal to the burden; that He carried it; that He dealt with it as He intended to deal with it; and therefore the writers of the New Testament invariably when they speak of the resurrection speak of it as the manifestation of the might of God. The apostle declares to us that He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead; even Jesus Christ our Lord." The Resurrection is the revelation of the strength of Deity; the revelation of the fact that if He was oppressed, burdened with the passion of human sin, He was not overcome thereby; that in the process of bearing the burden He accomplished His purpose, and came at last to ultimate victory. Peter had the same vision of it when He declared, "It was not possible that He should be holden of it." So that the place of the resurrection in the economy of redemption is that of demonstration of the fact that all God thought for human redemption, all God attempted in the mystery of His own being for human redemption, He accomplished.

In the incarnation the fact of God was manifest. By the pathway of Christ's public ministry the will of God was interpreted. In His crucifixion, the grace of God was unveiled. In the resurrection, the victorious strength of God was manifest. The importance of the resurrection is at once evident. Take the first three facts away from the fourth, and what is the result? He claimed identity with the Father, "I and the Father are one." He claimed authority from the Father for all He taught, "I do nothing of Myself, but as the Father hath taught Me, I speak these things." He claimed co-operation with the Father in His work, "My Father worketh even until now, and I work." I come to His Cross and I see Him die. I watch them as they bear Him tenderly and reverently, and place Him in the rock-hewn tomb, and I stand outside that tomb in the garden, and see the great stone rolled to the entrance and the seal of the Roman government placed upon it. Now, what of His claim to identity with the Father? What of His claim to authority from the Father? What of His claim to co-operation with the Father? "If Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain." If there was no resurrection all the things declared are discredited. If there was resurrection these things are demonstrated. The whole Christian religion depends upon the fact of the resurrection of Christ. If He never rose, then the story of the incarnation is a myth. If He never rose then I have no demonstration of the authority of His teaching. If He never rose, then His dying was no more than the dying of Thomas Cranmer. If He rose, then by that resurrection His Person is revealed as other than the person of Thomas Cranmer, His life as different from the life of other men, His teaching as having Divine authority, and His Cross as having some infinite value and meaning. Everything depends upon the resurrection.

Paul did not end with a hypothesis. His ultimate word is, "But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of them that are asleep. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." The infinite music of the Gospel singing itself through Paul's heart, he declares the possibility of human redemption, basing his conviction, his testimony, upon the great and gracious fact that Jesus Christ rose from among the dead.

Degrade Christ from the place that He has occupied in evangelical Christianity, from that conception which has made the Church what she has been through the centuries; speak of Him merely as on the level of other men, and you have lost your revelation of God, and your ethical authority, and your salvation by passion and suffering and death; and in order to do this you are compelled to deny the actual historic fact of the resurrection. Let that fact of actual resurrection be admitted, and it interprets all the other facts, and explains the history and mystery of the conquest of Christianity through the centuries. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself," revealing His nearness in the fact of incarnation, interpreting His will in the teaching of Jesus, making visible the awful mystery of His passion in the presence of sin, by the Cross; demonstrating the might by which He accomplishes the redemption, in the greatness and glory of resurrection.

Now let me turn to the second line of consideration, which is the personal application of that already taken. What the value of the resurrection as a basis of faith? In order that we may see that let me ask you to think of Jesus before the resurrection as to the claims He made in the presence of human life, as to the purpose He declared He had in view, and to the promises He definitely made to men as He taught amongst them.

Of His claims, I will refer to only one. In differing ways He deliberately claimed that He and He alone could lead the soul of man to God. There are many texts. Let me take you to that oldest and most familiar, which we generally begin to recite thus, "Come unto Me." That is not the commencement of the declaration. Jesus did not begin there. He began thus, "All things have been delivered unto Me of My Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him." To whom will the Son reveal the Father? In a moment the answer to our inquiry comes, "Come unto Me." By all of which Christ meant to say, first of all, that what humanity needs in its restlessness is to find God. If you would cure the feverishness of life you must lead men to God. Now, mark His claim. "Neither doth any know the Father save the Son." Blasphemous audacity, or Divine Gospel, one of the two! He claimed to be the Revealer of the Father. He declared that His mission was that of leading souls to God.

What did He say concerning His purpose? He declared He could accomplish His purpose only by dying, and whenever He referred to His dying He referred to His rising again. By many a hint in earlier days of His ministry, by clear and definite declaration in the midst of hostile crowds, by careful and patient instruction to His own disciples, He affirmed the necessity for dying, and declared that if He died He would rise again. I say by many a hint in the earlier days of His ministry. Take two illustrations. When He cleansed the temple and they inquired, "By what authority doest Thou these things? " He answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up"; referring to His body, as the inspired writer declares later. On the housetops at night, with the wind sighing through the streets of Jerusalem, an inquiring soul said to Him, "How can these things be?" Jesus said, "Ye must be born anew." This man asked, How can a man blot out the past and begin again? Jesus said in answer, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth may in Him have eternal life." Life shall come through death was His answer to the inquiry of Nicodemus. If you question the interpretation of these particular passages then come to the set and definite discourse chronicled in the tenth chapter of John's Gospel. There is nothing more wonderful in all the discourses of Jesus than that. He said, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd layeth down His life for the sheep ... I lay down My life, that I may take it again. This commandment received I from My Father." Or if you turn from the public declaration, which perhaps has in it still something of mystery, then follow the last weeks after Caesarea Philippi, and listen attentively. "From that time began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up." How often we read that carelessly. If you tell me that was simply the conclusion of a far-seeing soul, if you tell me Jesus was such as I am, a child of His own age, blundering His way on with great honesty, and seeing that at last these men would kill Him, and that He is now taking His disciples into His confidence and saying, Well, I see how it will all end, they will kill Me. I have been true to My teaching, and when I go to Jerusalem I know they will kill Me - then how do you explain the last thing, "and the third day be raised again"? If you study your New Testament carefully you will discover that He never spoke of His death to His disciples but that He also spoke of His resurrection. I challenge you to find a single exception. In those last weeks, over and over again, He called them to Him and always seems to have been seeking their sympathy, as He told them of the Cross; but He always told them also of the resurrection. Of course, if you question the accuracy of the records, and tear up the New Testament, do not come and hear me preach. I have nothing to preach but this Book. I have no authority other than this. I am not here to defend its authority. That demonstrated by nineteen centuries of victory in the moral realm.

I come once more to the tomb. He is dead. He is in the tomb. I come as a sinning man. I come as a man who has to say, "The good which I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I practice ... to me who would do good, evil is present." I come as a man who would say to all philosophers: do not discuss how the poison came into my blood; it is here, mastering me; I have sinned; I have seen the fair vision of His teaching and I desire it, but I cannot realize it; J am a sinner with guilt and pollution upon me. This Man said He would lay down His life for me, and take it again that I might share it. This Man said I might be born again by the mystery of His dying. He declared emphatically that He must die and be raised again. He is dead. If He do not come out of that tomb I will not say that He was a deceiver, but He was deceived. If He do not come out of that tomb, the thing He thought to do He has been unable to do. I cannot put it less reverently than that, but I must so put it, I stand in the presence of that sealed tornb of Jesus and say, Is He coming back? If He do not come forth, then though He laid down His life, He cannot take it again; the burden has been too much, the desire too mighty, the great dream of redemption of man by the laying down of His life and taking it again that they may share it, a great dream, but nothing more. If that stone remain there, and Jesus is held captive, then there is no pardon for my guilty soul, and no life for my paralyzed humanity. "If Christ hath not been raised ... your faith also is vain, void;" yea and it is true in my heart and life.

"But now hath Christ been raised from the dead?" In the moment of that resurrection all the claims of His life and teaching are vindicated. When I see Him come back from the grave I know full well that what He said is true. I know He laid down His life and has taken it again. In the mystery of that death, I cannot enter into the awful chambers of its loneliness I am forevermore excluded, I cannot understand it or explain it, but I know there has been -

One death grapple in the darkness 'twixt old systems and the Word.

Between the Lord of life, and death, and sin. If He did not rise again, then death won, and sin won. If He hath been raised, then He won and death is vanquished, because sin is spoiled. Then the sinner has found his Redeemer. If He took His life again, to share it, then I know that His dying was victorious dying; and the value of His dying He makes over to me for pardon; and the virtue of His life He makes over to me for power, and the presence of my risen Lord shall forevermore be the method of my victory.

I make the application of the great fact of resurrection in the words of this selfsame apostle in his epistle of salvation. Hear them, "If thou shalt confess with my mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be put to shame." Why does the apostle put the resurrection there, why not the Cross? Why did he not say, If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that He died for thee, thou shalt be saved? Because that will not satisfy reason, and so creates no basis for faith. Death apart from resurrection makes no appeal to my confidence. Death in the light of the resurrection is that in which I put my trust. I come into the presence of the death of Christ while the light of His resurrection plays upon it, and I say, He loved me and gave Himself for Me; He was wounded for my transgressions, He was bruised for my iniquities; the chastisement of my peace was upon Him and with His stripes I am healed. It is all night if He rose not. It was a tragic death, awful death, a death of failure, as other deaths have been. In the light of resurrection I know it was a death triumphant, a death of accomplishment, a death of victory in the process of which He procured for me the pardon that my sinning heart needs, and the power my weakened life demands.