**VOLUME 3; CHAPTER 13 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**THE PROBLEMS OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE: WHAT DOES GOD REQUIRE OF MAN? by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

THIS INQUIRY IS THE OUTCOME OF THOSE WHICH HAVE preceded it. If it be granted that man has to do with God, the inquiry is natural and necessary: What does God require of man? If it be granted that God can forgive sins the inquiry is urgent and vital: What does God require of man? If it be true that I have to do with God, what does God require of me? If it be true that when I realize I am a sinner He can forgive sins, what does God require of me?

The inquiry is of supreme importance because it deals with fundamental matters; it gets back in human life, behind the incidentals, to the essentials; down in human life beneath the ripples on the surface, to the still majesty of the underlying tides. It is the first question of all life. It asks: What does the God in Whom I live and move and have my being, and Whose are all my ways, in Whose hands my breath is, require of me - His creation, over whom He still maintains the right of government in the material, mental, and moral realms? Because the inquiry deals with the foundations of life, it deals also with the whole superstructure.

The answer to the inquiry is contained in the writings which - accepting the facts of God as dealt with in our first study - interpret His will for men and His methods with them. These writings declare the requirements of God in terms of the ideal, and in terms of the actual. In God the ideal and the actual are identical. He is what He ought to be. All you postulate of Him which is true and high and noble, He is. In man they are not identical. The ideal and the actual are not the same in human experience. A man who was transparently honest before he met Jesus Christ and after, said, "To me who would do good, evil is present," by which he meant that the ideal was seen but the actual was out of harmony with it. On the other hand, Jesus said, "I do always the things that are pleasing to Him." In that claim the ideal life is expressed in the words, "things that please Him," and the actual in the declaration, "I do." Jesus alone in human history united the ideal and the actual in His experience.

The ideal and the actual are not identical in human experience. Therefore I propose to answer our inquiry in two parts. First, the ideal requirement of God; second, the actual requirement of God. His actual requirements are that we may at last fulfil the ideal; but we look at them in separation in order that we may understand what the requirements of God for men really are.

The ideal requirement of God. I want first to state the terms of revelation, and having done so to consider the revelation of the terms. I go back to Deuteronomy, and to Micah; and then coming to the New Testament, listen to Jesus. My quotations are selected from the great books of authority. Deuteronomy is law in the terms of love. Consequently, it is the supreme book of authority in the old covenant. Micah was pre-eminently the prophet of authority. From these two great books of authority I take my selections from the Old Testament. Then I turn to the New, and come to Matthew, because therein I have the King, always speaking in tones of absolute and final authority,

In the first we find what the law says that God requires. In the second we find what grace and truth say that God requires. "The law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." In these quotations from the law by Moses, and from grace and truth by Jesus Christ, we shall find the terms of the revelation of the ideal requirements of God.

I go back to Deuteronomy and find that God requires of man that he should love Him and serve Him, and keep His statutes. I come to Micah and I find that God requires that man should "do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with God." In each of these declarations the word "require" is used in our translation, but the Hebrew words are different. They both convey the same idea, but there is a difference of emphasis. The Hebrew word in Deuteronomy means, This is what God inquires; this is what God asks. When Micah wrote he used another word with more fire in it, more force in it, which we may safely translate, This is what God insists upon. When the law was given it declared, in our simplest sense of that word, what God requires. But the law having been broken, Micah, calling the people back from their sins, used another word with another emphasis: God insists. The things that God insists upon are that a man shall walk with Him, shall do justly, shall love mercy. In the New Testament I find the requirements of God in words of Jesus, spoken in answer to a cynical inquiry by a lawyer, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And a second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hangeth the whole law, and the prophets." Everything that Moses and Micah said lies in this, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God ... Thou shalt love thy neighbour." Hear one other word of Jesus in answer to our inquiry. It occurs in the middle of the manifesto. More criticism has been spent on it than on any other of the sayings of Jesus, criticism of an order more perilous than all higher criticism, criticism which attempts to accommodate the great words of Jesus to the low level of the living of people who think they are Christians and are not "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." What does "perfect" mean? The exact opposite of sin. Sin, the word most commonly used in the New Testament, means missing the mark. The root idea of perfect is hitting the mark. "Ye therefore shall be perfect." You shall not miss the mark, but hit it. You shall not fail, but succeed. You shall be all God meant you to be. Whether that is a promise or a command does not at all matter. Whether the mood be indicative or imperative is of no consequence. If it be a command, all His commands are promises. If it be a promise, all His promises are commands.

But what is the revelation of these terms? That God requires from every human being perfection, the realization of the ideal. That is God's first requirement. God expects me to be what He made me to be. That is perfection. God does not expect us to be angels, because He has not given us the angelic nature. He expects a man to be a man. He expects a woman to be a woman. He expects a child to be a child. There is nothing more out of harmony with the will of God than a child that ceases to be a child before it has ceased to be a child. There is nothing more out of harmony with the will of God than a man who does not come to manhood when he does come to manhood. Nothing insults high heaven more than a woman who does not become a woman even when she becomes a woman. Your perfection and mine will be as different as are our different lives in outward expression; as identical as are our two lives in life principle. I am not attempting to deal with the outward expression. In a congregation like this there are as many different expressions as there are people; but the inner essential thing in all life is likeness to God, that is, perfect love and perfect truth. Under the command of these two, all the things of the life are to be realized, the artistic, the mechanical, the business; whatever is in us to be realized at its profoundest and its best. That is the will of God.

The passion for perfection is common to humanity. You cannot find a healthy being but that has a passion for perfection in some form. The only people who seem afraid of the word are Christian people. I am constantly asked, Do you believe in Christian perfection? It is a most absurd question, and I am always inclined to reply to it with another question, Certainly I do. Do you believe in Christian imperfection? The passion for perfection is in every healthy soul. Did you ever know a boy or girl who did not dream dreams and see visions of what he or she was going to be and do? Perhaps you in your folly sneered at them, and hindered them. That was a Divine passion in their heart, a desire to reach the goal, to hit the mark. The passion for perfection is indicative of the possibility of perfection. No man ought ever to be satisfied to be less than he is intended to be in the econorny of God. God expects that every man shall be that. If you are satisfied with anything less than that, God is not. He requires, He asks, said the ancient lawgiver; He requires, He insists, said the thundering prophet of the closing days of Hebraism, that man shall walk with Him, do justly, and love mercy; that men shall realize their own lives, and realize them by living in harmony with Himself. That is what I mean by the ideal requirement.

All, so far considered, is related to our first inquiry, and the answer concerning man's relation to God. The requirements of God thus understood result in the conviction of sin. Can anyone stand in the presence of his own life, the ideal possibility, and say, I am perfect? You say the instruments were imperfect to begin with. I am not discussing that at all. I admit it. If you admit it, you admit the thing I am asking you to admit, failure, sin. Because the instruments were imperfect to begin with, all the activities have been imperfect. When a man says, If that be the Divine requirement, I have failed, then he begins to ask the new question, What are the actual requirements of God for me? If there were nothing other than what I have been saying, then where are we? Where am I? Where are you? If the demand of God is realization of my life, and perfect realization, I have failed, When Pilate looked into the eyes of the Jewish priests, and said to them, "What I have written, I have written," he was giving expression to his own obstinacy, but he gave expression to a fact far more profound than he knew. What you have written you have written, and you cannot un-write it. I cannot undo the failure of the past. There lie behind me the years that the cankerworm hath eaten. There lie behind me wasted opportunities, I care nothing if you tell me there have been no vulgarities in your life. My reply to you will be, What do you mean by vulgar? If you are measuring yourself by the ordinary man you may be a very respectable man, but if we measure by heaven's requirement, we are guilty sinners, every one, vulgar with the awful vulgarity of those who are cultured mentally perchance, but have no commerce with heaven and no traffic with God. No man sees what the Divine requirement really is without having to say, I also have failed, I also am a sinner.

Therefore our inquiry must now follow the terms of the actual. What does God demand of such a man? What does He require of me, a sinner? This brings us back to our previous inquiry. I will but state in briefest words the sum and substance of that message thus, God has provided plenteous redemption: forgiveness of sin through the value of His passion, and the dynamic for purity through the victory of His resurrection. In the light of that, what does God require? Come to the terms of the revelation, and once again I take you back to the words of Jesus, startling words as we read them. The cynical men of His own age asked Him, "What must we do, that we may work the works of God?" - What does God require of us? Christ replied, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him Whom He hath sent," or, as I think it should always be read, "That ye believe into Him Whom He hath sent." That is what God requires of the man who has failed. Those of you who are not perfectly and experimentally familiar with all the meaning of this will admit that it appears a very surprising thing for Christ to say. Listen to it in the light of much preaching which we hear, "This is the work of God, that ye believe into Him Whom He hath sent." There are those who tell me that I am to be saved by works. There are others who say, There is nothing to do, only believe. Christ says, "This is the work of God, that ye believe into Him Whom He hath sent." Who is right, they or He? If we say at once, as we do, that He must be right, then what did He mean? He meant unquestionably to claim that He was not King merely, but Saviour also. Realizing the fact of their failure, knowing their sin, He said, if they would believe into Him they would work the work of God. That is to say, God provided in Him for their cleansing, for their new birth, for a gift of new life in the energy of which they would be able to do the thing which God would have them do. Therefore, the initial responsibility is that men believe into Him.

Why do I say into? Those familiar with the Greek New Testament know that the preposition 'eis', whenever used with the accusative, means motion into. It is not believe on - you can believe on Jesus Christ and lose your soul. You can believe everything about Him that was ever written and perish. To believe into Him is to hear His claim, and, knowing it true, to obey it. This is what God requires of men who have sinned and failed. Having made perfect provision whereby sin can be canceled and paralysis energized, God's requirement is that we believe into Him Whom He hath sent, that we yield ourselves to the Christ.

The revelation of these terms is that all a man needs for his remaking is provided in Christ Jesus. What does God require of man? That man take what God has provided. "He came unto His own, and they that were His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born, not of bloods, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." In that passage John uses two terms, receive, and believe, and shows that they are synonymous, thus suggesting that whichever helps us most we are free to use. Those who receive Him, who are they? Those who believe into His name. What is it to believe on Jesus? To receive Him.

God requires from me perfection. That is, the ideal. I cannot give it Him. What does He do for me? He provides for me in Christ forgiveness for my sins, and power to go and sin no more. Now what does He require of me? That I take what He provides, that I crown the King He presents, that I trust in the Saviour He sends, that I receive the life He places at my disposal. That is the first requirement for the sinning soul. God presents the one all-sufficient Saviour, revealing the pattern, providing the power, and commanding men everywhere to repent and believe into the Son Whom He hath set forth.

The requirements of God in grace are man's fulfilling of His requirements in law. The actual requirements are realization of the ideal requirements. Am I putting these two things into opposition to each other? By no means. Has God ever given up His ideal requirement for you or for me? Never. Does He by Jesus Christ consent to take something less than perfection in our life? By no means. Is the work of Jesus Christ that of asking God to excuse and let into heaven multitudes of incompetent souls? By no means. Was the work of Jesus Christ the making of a provision by which a man can be hidden out of God's sight in his impurity? By no means - a thousand times, by no means. Did Jesus Christ come to fling a cloak of righteousness over the filthiness of my rags? By no means. A cloak of righteousness, a robed righteousness, surely yes. I can still sing what my father sang. Jesus.

Thy blood and righteousness

My beauty are, my glorious dress;

'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed

With joy shall I lift up my head.

The robe of His righteousness is never placed upon the filthiness of rags to hide them. The work of Jesus Christ is not that of bringing into the Kingdom of God men who are paralyzed and incompetent; but men made perfect. That is the meaning of the mission of Jesus. God's actual requirement is that man shall believe on Jesus, in order that His ideal requirement that man shall be perfect may be fulfilled. "Now unto Him that is able to guard you from stumbling, and to set you before the presence of His glory without blemish in exceeding joy." Was anything more stupendous than that ever written? That is what God requires. Nothing less than that will ever satisfy Him. He begins with the actual requirement that we submit ourselves to the perfect Saviour Whom He has provided, in order that that Saviour may realize in us all that we failed of, and all that we have lost.

I pray you remember, however, that in the first submission to Christ the perfect ideal is not realized at once. Saul of Tarsus was smitten down on the road to Damascus by the Lord of love and life, but thirty years after that, writing one of his most beautiful epistles, he said, "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus." Thirty years of Christian experience and discipline; of fire, nakedness, peril, sword, and yet he had not yet attained, was not yet made perfect. God deliver us from the idea that by some mechanical dispatch we can come into all perfection of Christian character. I pray you remember this perfect ideal is not realized at once, but the perfect force necessary for the realization can be received at once. Before you cross the threshold of this house, before you leave Westminster Chapel, you can have all that you need for the ultimate. If Paul said, I have not yet attained, in the same letter he said, "To me to live is Christ." He had all the forces, as is indicated in the words, "One thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I persecute toward the goal." You say, That is wrong. Oh, no, it is quite right. When Paul said, "I persecuted the Church," he used exactly the same verb as we have translated press. He meant to say, all the zeal and passion and earnestness which he had put into the business of persecuting the Church he afterwards put into the business of attempting to reach the goal, and be what God would have him be.

I am perhaps speaking in the presence of men and women who have been Christians more years than I have been in the world, and who in the time of their Christian relation have in all probability been far more loyal to their Lord and Master, and far more simple in their faith than I have been, but these are the men and women who will be the first to say, We have not yet attained, we are not yet made perfect. I am also speaking to men and women who have only recently started the Christian life. Let them remember that they possess everything that is necessary for ultimate perfection, because, having received the Christ, they possess Him in all His perfection, and in all His power; and at last when His work is done they will be like Him, presented faultless before the throne of God. Without these forces perfection is impossible. With them perfection is assured.

Hear me as I utter this last word, applicable alike to those who never yet have answered this actual requirement of God that they should yield themselves to Christ, and to those who longest have been following Him. Belief into is the preliminary, and perpetual condition for the realization of perfection. That is to say, belief into Christ is not an act, it is an attitude. I believed in Christ, you tell me, forty years ago. I care nothing at all about that. Do you believe in Him now? That is the question. I am not undervaluing your past experience. Thank God if you have a day about which you sing, a place to which you take pilgrimage. Some of us have neither day nor place. There were years in my Christian life when it troubled me that I could not put my hand on a day or an hour or place. It troubles me no more. Yesterday is gone. Jesus saves me now! Belief is an attitude, and there will never dawn a day upon our failing, sinning, yet trusting souls when we can afford to cease our trusting. There never will come a day so bright in our experience that we can walk wholly by sight, never a day in which we shall be able to cease to believe into the Son of God.

That is God's requirement. The actual requirement includes the ideal requirement. When I believe into Him, what does it mean? I will begin on the lower level. I shall love my neighbour as myself. I am silent because of the rebuke of it to my own soul, and to the souls of all such as are honest. You and I have no right to sing of our love to God unless it is expressed in our love to men. If I see my brother in need, and shut up the bowels of my compassion against him, how dwelleth the love of God in me? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God ... Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." That is the ideal, and belief into Christ means that it can become and will increasingly become the real.

It may be as well in conclusion to leave out of view those ultimate reaches of the Divine requirement, never forgetting them wholly, and begin in the presence of His Christ set forth as God's righteousness, set forth as God's perfect Saviour for sinning and failing men. Let us believe into Him, trusting Him for absolution, trusting Him for power, and so looking into His face tonight in full abandonment, know that the Christ of God will perfect that which concerneth us. In order that it may be so here and now,

Jesus, I will trust Thee,

Trust Thee with my soul:

Guilty, lost, and helpless,

Thou canst make me whole.

As we believe into Him, we fulfil God's first requirement in order that at last we may fulfil His final requirement.