**VOLUME 3; CHAPTER 19 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**THE PROBLEMS OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE: IS THE RELIGIOUS LIFE WORTH WHILE? by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

IN THIS QUESTION THE EMPHASIS IS CHANGED ONCE MORE. In the first question, whether the religious life is possible, the beauty of the ideal is not for a moment questioned, but the possibility of realization is doubted. We attempted to answer that inquiry by declaring the religious life possible because of the nature of man, because of the nature of God, and, finally, because of the plenteous redemption that God has provided, even for the man who has failed.

The second question moves on a lower plane than the first. The man who asks it does not question the beauty of the ideal, neither does he doubt the possibility of realization; but in view of the conditions he inquires, Is it absolutely necessary? We attempted to answer that inquiry by declaring that the religious life is necessary for the life which now is, and for the life which is to come, in order that life may be fulfilled. The life that now is less than life, unless it be the life religious; and the life that is to come and this life are one, death makes no change in a man's character. He passes over the boundary line and the set and direction are the same on the other side as on this side. Consequently, to admit the necessity for the religious life here in order that life may be fulfilled, is to be compelled to admit its necessity for the life to come.

The man who asks the third question admits the beauty of the ideal, admits the possibility of realization, admits the necessity for the religious life, if life is to be fulfilled; but, in view of the cost, suggests that perhaps after all it is hardly worth while, and inquires, Why not be content with something less than the best? Is it worth while?

I said, I think in the first of these last three addresses, that there is a descending scale in these questions. The man who asks, Is it possible? is asking a question on a higher level than the man who asks, Is it necessary? And the man who asks, Is it necessary? is on a higher level than the man who asks, Is it worth while? I have known cases in which these three questions have been asked and always in this sequence. In fear and trembling, a man confronted with the beauty of the ideal of the religious life asks, Is it possible? He is brought to conviction that it is possible, and then he asks the second question, Is it necessary? He is brought to conviction that in order to reach perfection of life it is necessary, and then he asks this lowest question of all, Is it worth while?

The first question is a question of desire mingled with doubt. Is it possible? The moment there comes to a man the conviction that it is possible a new peril is created, that of attempting, somehow, to find an excuse for not yielding to the truth. Then follows the next question, which is a mixture of conviction and compromise. When this is answered and a man knows that it is necessary to the perfecting of life, again a new peril presents itself, and the third question is a mixture of rebellion and risk. It is with that question we now have to deal.

In order to answer that question there are two things we must consider. First, the cost of the religious life; and, second, the value of the religious life.

The man who says, Is it worth while? is thinking of the cost, and of the values, and he is trying to strike a balance. Is it worth while? Let us see clearly, if we can, both the cost and the value.

I begin with the cost, and I want to say in your hearing as clearly as I know how that the religious life is costly. Whatever others may say, Jesus was perfectly clear in His teaching about this fact, and I do most solemnly say, especially to young men and women, be very suspicious of the preacher or teacher who tells you that the religious life is simple and easy. I dare any man to make that affirmation on the basis of what Christ taught. There is nothing more remarkable in the ministry of Jesus Christ than the fact that He forevermore repelled men by the severity of His terms. Oh, there was a wooing winsomeness about our blessed Master, and men crowded after Him wherever He went; it was only to look at Him to want to go with Him, only to listen to Him to be captured, and men said and said truly, "Never man so spake." But as the multitudes thronged and pressed Him, He turned upon them and uttered things so severe as to scatter them like chaff before the wind. All the way, from the beginning to the end of His ministry, Jesus Christ insisted on the fact that the religious life is costly, I make my appeal tonight wholly to His own words.

Let us see what Christ thinks about the cost of the religious life. In chapter fourteen of Luke's gospel, it is recorded that thrice over He said, "cannot be My disciple." Hear the connecting words: "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." "Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after Me, he cannot be My disciple." "Whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple." If we had never read those words before, and had not been so busy trying to lower the standard of Jesus in order to accommodate it to our own ideas, they would startle us so that we hardly dare sleep tonight. Look at them: except a man hate all the nearest and dearest, he cannot be My disciple. Except a man take up his own cross, he cannot be My disciple. Except a man renounce all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple. I pray you notice carefully what is involved in this threefold word of Jesus on the cost of the religious life. The first word indicates that if a man is to live the religious life he must submit himself to the absolute mastership of Jesus. "If any man cometh unto Me and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sister, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." By all of which He meant that if a man is to follow Him he must put Him absolutely first, so that if the love of father or mother or wife or children, of brethren or sisters, or of his own life, shall at any moment or in any circumstances, for any reason, conflict with loyalty to Him, that love must be crucified. That is the supreme and most appalling claim ever set up on the soul of a human being. That is where Christ begins. I know the difficulty of the word "hate" in this passage, but we must remember that in this Eastern language there was little light and shade. It was positive or negative. Love and hate stood opposite to each other. What Christ demanded that men should do for Him, He did for men. On another occasion He said, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." One day they came to Him and said, "Behold, Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without, seeking to speak to Thee," and He replied, "Who is My mother? and who are My brethren? ... Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother." By which He meant to say, there is an affinity far higher than that of blood relationship, that of the spiritual relationship of those who do the will of God. That is the principle underlying this word of Jesus. A man must make his relationship to Christ as revealing God, and so his relationship to God, his attitude toward religion, the supreme thing in his life. If he allows the love of father, mother, wife, children, brother, sister, or of his own life, to conflict with his loyalty to Christ and to God, then he cannot be a disciple. There are many of us here who do not know how costly a thing that may become. I confess there is a sense in which I do not know the costliness of that requirement. I was born of Christian parents and my love for them never conflicted with my loyalty to my Lord; but no farther back than last Saturday night I talked with one person after our meeting who was face to face with that old word, actually, positively, at the present moment. Love of father and love of Christ were in conflict. I need go no further with the story. There it is. Christ says, If it causes a conflict like that, you cannot be My disciple unless you put Me first. That is the cost.

He said a second thing, "Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after Me, he cannot be My disciple." Some time ago I attempted to deal with that word of Jesus and His illustration of it in Luke. I want in a hurried manner now to repeat what I said then. What did Christ mean when He spoke about building a tower and going out to fight a battle? The popular interpretation has been that Jesus meant to say if a man is coming after Him he had better count the cost. He meant nothing of the kind. What He meant was this. You are not to count the cost. It is I Who must count the cost. After the stern words to which I have made reference in which He demanded that a man should love Him before father, mother, wife, children, brethren, sister, and his own life, He began to explain the severity of His own terms. "Which of you desiring to build a tower, doth not first sit down and count the cost? ... Or what king, as he goeth to encounter another king, doth not sit down first and take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? ... Therefore whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." He said, in effect, You ask Me why My terms are so severe. I will tell you. I am come into the world for building and for battle, and I cannot commit My enterprises to any save those I know I can depend upon. It is He that builds the tower, not I. He is the King conducting the warfare, not I. Because He is here to build, and here for battle, His terms are severe. I must, He says, have men and women coming after Me who will take up their own crosses and follow Me as I take up My cross: men and women who will not faint or grow weary when the battle thickens, or until the building work is done.

First, the devotion of the disciple must be so supreme that all other loves are put into abeyance. Second, the one ambition of the disciple must be for the enterprises of Jesus, for His building and His battle. He must take up his own cross, that is to say, there must be crucifixion of any thought in the life of the disciple of place or power. So long as I am seeking place for myself or power for myself, I cannot be His disciple and I cannot help Him in His building and battle. In order to be a Christian man, in order to be a disciple of Christ, in order to live the religious life, there first must be devotion, absolute loyalty; and, second, there must be such abnegation of self that there shall be no seeking for place or power, but, the enterprises of Christ possessing the soul, willingness to take up the cross daily and follow Him.

Once more, "Whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple." First, devotion, then ambition, now possession. If a man is to live the religious life he must lay all his treasure at the feet of his Lord, and recognize not only that what he is he is for Christ, and what he does he does for Christ, and that what he has he holds for Christ. Renunciation of what a man has does not mean flinging it away, but placing it at the feet of the Lord and recognizing that the man of vast possessions is a steward for the Master. I am weary to death of people who are telling us that we ought to give a tenth of our income to God. I believe the whole movement is wrong. Not one single farthing of yours belongs to you if you are a Christian. All that a man has is to be renounced. You are to spend this in dress for the glory of God, and that in food for the glory of your Lord, and that in recreation for the glory of your King; but over the superscription of King Edward there is the superscription of the Cross of Christ and the Kingdom of God. All that he has is to be renounced, so that the disciple no longer says that anything he has is his own, it belongs to his Lord and to his Lord's enterprises and to his Lord's work. We are a long way off from it yet, but these are the terms of discipleship according to Christ. I repeat, it is costly. If you want to know why there has been decrease - and I feel more able to speak about it this week because the Congregational statistics have been published and there is decrease there also. I hate these statistics. The hunt for increase is part of the reason of the decrease at the present hour. Be that as it may, if you tell me there is decrease not merely in numbers but in spiritual intensity and fervour, I ask why? It is because we have lowered the standard of discipleship and talked to men as though it were easy. We have to get back to the ideal of Christ which presents the religious life as strenuous, severe, costly. When we get back there we shall increase. I admit the cost, and if you stand outside and say, Is it worth while? your question is justified so far. It is a costly business to be a Christian. You can call yourself a Christian and sing hymns and give to collections and drift through the world and never do anything for God or humanity. But if we are going to be Christians indeed, Christ men and women, religious men and women in the profound meaning of the great word, there is blood in the business, there is cost in the business. Go back for one brief moment to the ninth chapter of this Gospel of Luke and see the illustration. One man said, "I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest." To another man Jesus said, "Follow Me." The third said, "I will follow Thee, Lord; but first suffer me to bid farewell to them that are at my house." That passage is remarkable if you keep it in its setting. "It came to pass, when the days were well-nigh come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." Nothing more significant than that was ever written. Jerusalem was hostile to Him and He knew it, but He steadfastly set His face to go. Jerusalem was doomed and He knew it; but He steadfastly set His face to go. Jerusalem was to be rebuilt, not immediately; but after long processes and centuries and millenniums there should be a Jerusalem from on high, and He steadfastly set His face to go. On His way, with His face steadfastly set to go to Jerusalem, a man came to Him and said, "I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest." Jesus answered, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head," which was an explanation to the man not merely of what the man would have to do but of what Jesus was doing. He said to another man, "Follow me," and the man said, "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." I never understood that until I was talking to Dr. George Adam Smith about it, and he told me this story. He was traveling in Syria, and desiring to get into a part of the country where no ordinary guide ever takes the traveller, he went to a young Arab sheikh - whose father was still living - and told him that he wished to go to this out-of-the-way part, and wanted him to accompany him as guide. The Arab sheikh said it was impossible for him to do so. Dr. Smith pressed him, and, at last, with a salaam, the sheikh said, Suffer me first to go and bury my father, which did not mean that his father was dead, for his father was sitting by him as he spoke. It is the Eastern method of saying, I have family ties and affections that I cannot break away from. Christ said, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but go thou and publish abroad the Kingdom of God." His face was toward Jerusalem, and that was the attitude of His soul, passion for the Kingdom of God overcoming all lower instincts.

Once again, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God." Put that into close contrast with "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God." There is illustration of the religious life. Jesus of Nazareth was religious. He had not where to lay His head, He had no possessions, nothing which could prevent His progress toward the ultimate goal. His passion for the Kingdom of God overcame all lower instincts, and He never gave a backward look, but ploughed His furrow straight to the ultimate victory. Now, remember that if He said these things when His own face was set toward Jerusalem, He said them to men on the subject of their following Him, and they are illustrations of the great principles revealed in the fourteenth chapter. That is the cost of the religious life. Is it worth while? That is the question.

What is the value, if that is the cost? The cost is the denial of self, therefore the value can never be stated as what I gain, but what others gain. I wonder if you take me at that point. Is it worth while? How am I going to answer it? By telling you what you will gain by being religious? No. You will gain. Jesus put the personal equation into these tremendous words, only He put it the other way, "What shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life?" If you want the personal equation there it is. You ask, Is the religious life worth-while? Christ asks, Is the irreligious life worth-while? I am not going to deal with that equation. I want to show you the value, not in the gain that comes to you personally, but in the gain to others. The gain to Christ if you will be a religious man, the gain to the world if you will be a religious man.

The gain to Christ. I take three words because they are all His words, and I am going to put them in the singular as though I were talking to one man only. If you will give yourself to Christ and begin the religious life, Christ will gain a friend. Christ will gain a witness. Christ will gain a servant. Christ will gain a friend. What does that mean? Identity of interest. Unity of purpose. Harmony of method. If you will give yourself to Christ, Christ will have a friend where you live, where you work. He will have a man in that store whose interests are His interests, whose purposes are His purposes, whose methods are His methods. Christ will gain a witness, that is, one who is a sample. How is London going to find out what Christ can do? Not by preaching, unless the preaching makes samples. A witness is not necessarily one who talks, but one who reveals. Christ will gain a witness, a man of whom other men will say, That is what Christ means. Christ will gain a servant, that is, someone whose one business will be the preparation of His Kingdom, someone through whom there will be the operation of His power. Christ's gain, if I may but lay that upon you tonight, is it worth while? Yes, for the sake of Christ and God it is worth-while that you should be good, and religious, a Christian. I am coming more and more to think that is the final reason and the final impulse. The man who led my father to Christ still lives, Richard Roberts, in the Wesleyan ministry. I have at home a little book written years ago by Richard Wrench, being a pen-and-ink sketch of Richard Roberts. He says of Richard Roberts that his highest ambition was to place another gem in the Redeemer's diadem, to weave another garland wherewith to deck His brow. I believe that. I believe that is the highest ambition of all. Never mind whether you gain anything or not, Christ will gain immeasurably if you are a Christian.

If so, it follows that there will be gain to the world, What will be the gain to the world? Let me state three things. First, the maintenance of a testimony to the reality of the spiritual and eternal. To live the religious life really, truthfully, the life that has commerce with God, the life that counts with God and on God, daring even in this unbelieving age to season the speech with salt and to say, "If the Lord will," I will do this or that, is to live so that the world gains one man at least who lives as though there were a God and as though there were eternity. It is a great gain in this age. There is so much life that seems to shut Him out. But the world will gain more than that if you are religious. It will gain this, that in you there will be perpetual antagonism to all the things that are contrary to the will of God and which therefore destroy man. You will become a fighting man. Some of you are quite astonished at that. It is quite true, only you will fight the right thing. You cannot be a Christian man and be wholly a man of peace. Dr. Dale was once asked if he believed in peace at any price, and he said, Yes, even at the price of war. I am not discussing the Peace Congress. That is not in my mind. I think that all war as between man and man with weapons that are carnal, and where there is bloodshed, is begotten in hell. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal," but we have a real warfare. If you become a religious man, a Christian man, you are going to fight everything that spoils your brother, because the thing that spoils your brother wounds the heart of your Father. The world will gain another man fighting the wrong for the establishment of the right. The world will gain in you if you are a religious man, one full of sympathy for all who are scattered, distressed, wounded, and one who out of that sympathy will work in order to uplift and to bless. Is this worth-while?

When Moses wanted Hobab to accompany him, he said to him, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good." What was the result? Hobab did not go. He was one of those independent men who said, No, thank you, I do not care for you to do me good. I will go my own way. Then Moses said, Come with us "and thou shalt be to us instead of eyes," and he went. "Come with us, and we will do thee good." No. Perhaps he ought to have gone. It is quite true that Moses could do him good and the company of the people of God could do him good. There are thousands of men today to whom that invitation does not appeal. I have resolutely tonight not said to you that it will do you good to be religious, but you can be eyes to somebody else if you are. You can do somebody else good if you are religious. If you are not careful you ought to be careful about the perfecting of your own life, but if not, then for the sake of Christ and for the sake of the world you ought to be good, you ought to be religious. It is only by submission to this one Lord Christ that I can ever hope to be able to help to bring in the Kingdom of love and truth and purity, and to bring in that Kingdom it is worth-while.

My appeal to you, then, in answer to this question is on the highest ground. I affirm the costliness of being a Christian, but I declare the value issuing far outweighs the cost. If only you and I will give ourselves to this same Lord Christ - I say nothing tonight of the effect on our own life - what I say is this, it is worth while to do anything for Him, and it is worth while to do something for the world.

One Lord there is, all lords above;

His name is Truth, His name is Love,

His name is Beauty, it is Light,

His will is Everlasting Right.

But, ah! to Wrong, what is His name?

This Lord is a consuming flame

To every wrong beneath the sun:

He is one Lord, the Holy One.

Lord of the Everlasting Name,

Truth, Beauty, Light, Consuming Flame!

Shall I not lift my heart to Thee,

And ask Thee, Lord, to rule in me?

If I be ruled in other wise,

My lot is cast with all that dies;

With things that harm, and things that hate

And roam by night, and miss the gate -

The happy gate, which leads to where

Love is like sunshine in the air,

And Love and Law are both the same,

Named with an Everlasting Name.

Because I want to help to bring in that order, it is worth-while.