**VOLUME 3; CHAPTER 20 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**THE PROBLEMS OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE: THE ALL-SUFFICIENT SOLUTION by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*Christ Jesus - Mighty To Save and To Keep.*

IN LOOKING BACK OVER THE SUBJECTS WE HAVE CONSIDERED together I am quite conscious that I have laid myself open to the charge of having approached these inquiries prejudiced in favour of Christianity. I at once admit the fact. To me religion and Christianity are synonymous terms. Do not misunderstand that. I recognize as fully as any man that there is much sincere religion in the world which does not call itself Christian, but of all other religions I would say,

They are but broken lights of Thee,

And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.

Consequently, if I speak of religion I speak of Christianity. In this final address I want, as I am able, to give my reasons for that prejudice. Broadly stated, they are that Christ answers my first questions satisfactorily, masters my enemies completely, disposes of my difficulties perfectly. Or more briefly, as indicated in the title, He is the all-sufficient Solution. This conviction is the result of knowledge of Him, which, in turn, results from experience of salvation. My prejudice in favor of Jesus Christ is not due to any theory I hold concerning Him, it is due to what He has done, and is still doing for me.

I shall ask you to follow two lines of consideration. First, Christ the all-sufficient Solution; and, second, Christ the all-sufficient Saviour.

First, Christ as the all-sufficient Solution. The first questions of the religious life are: Has man anything to do with God? Can a just God forgive sins? What does God require of man? Has man anything to do with God? What is Christ's answer to that inquiry? The New Testament introduces me to a Man Who in actual life presents a perfect ideal. I do not think I need stay to argue that. I am inclined to think that it will be granted not merely by those who stand within the centre of the Christian Church, but by all competent judges outside the Christian Church. It is a remarkable fact, and it is well that we should be reminded of it sometimes, that the most scholarly and brilliant critics of Jesus Christ have always ended by putting some wreath upon His brow. Every man who has come to the study of Christ presented by the gospels, while perhaps denying certain things which the gospels say concerning Him, does nevertheless admit the perfection of the ideal He presents. I start with that fact in answering this inquiry. I then ask what does this Man say in answer to the inquiry, Has man anything to do with God? The whole of His life and the whole of His teaching attest the fact that man must have to do with God, because. God has everything to do with man. Think for one moment of the teaching of Jesus. His teaching concerning God was teaching which declared God's knowledge of man, God's love of man. God's government of man. You may gather up into one brief sentence His whole message to man about his relationship to God: "Seek ye first His Kingdom, and His righteousness." First, before what? What are the things that lie around the text in the great manifesto? Not luxuries, but the necessities of life. "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? or Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" Christ says of them all - recognizing the necessity for them by a word full of tenderness and beauty, "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things" - that they are not first. "Seek ye first His Kingdom, and His righteousness." That is the word of a Man, admitted by foes and friends alike, to be the most perfect man ever presented to the vision of humanity. When I look at Him, I say Thou art the Man of all men I would rather be like. If Thy Manhood is the explanation of my humanity then I long to realize my own life. If it may ever be like that life in which there was the combination of strength and sweetness, that life in which there was mingled the thunder of fierce denunciation and the tears of infinite pity, then I want to be like that. When I would learn the secret of that life, He says, "Seek ye first His Kingdom." "I do always the things that are pleasing to Him ... the things which I heard from Him these I speak ... I do nothing of Myself." "I must work the works of Him that sent Me." The master passion of His life was the will of God. The whole of His life was a life that had commerce with heaven, traffic with God. When I. look at the ideal humanity of Jesus and ask its secret I discover that its secret is His profound, intense, personal conviction that He had to do with God, and that His whole life was a life or relationship to Him. His first recorded words are these, "I must be about My Father's business." His last recorded words are these, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." That answers my first inquiry. I have to do with God. I must find God and obey God.

I take the second of these inquiries. Can a just. God forgive sins? How does Christ answer that question? I know that here we touch the realm of mystery because our finite mind cannot appreciate perfectly the infinite mind and the infinite power. Let me state the case thus. First He exercised the prerogative, He claimed to be able to forgive sins. He distinctly said, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." But He revealed the method also, By the mystery of His Cross He unveiled God's attitude toward sin, and God's activity in the presence of sin. In the hour of the Cross He did not try to persuade God to change His mind; but working together with God He unveiled before the astonished gaze of man that passion of God whereby He is able, Himself bearing human iniquity, to forgive it, to cancel it, to set the prisoner free. You say that is all theory? Follow me yet further. He told men they were forgiven. He has been telling men they are forgiven ever since, and men have entered into the consciousness of the forgiveness of sins, They have professed to know sin forgiven. You say that is only human profession, and I reply that men have exemplified the truth of their profession in the new lives which they have lived. I hold that the last and ultimate proof of the absolute Deity of the Man of Nazareth is the consciousness in the soul that sin is forgiven by what He is and what He did. The demonstration that sins are forgiven is to be found in the fact that a man whose sins are forgiven mourns the sins forgiven to the end of his life and fights against them, and rises on the basis of that deep and inner consciousness to life that is pure and strong and holy. That is the supreme miracle of Christianity, When you are next theorizing about the atonement, and the forgiveness of sins; spend an hour in the slums, in a Salvation Army barracks, and look into the faces of some of the men; find out what they say, what they are, and hear from their lips the repetition of the apostolic word, "We are His witnesses." In the Cross He drew the veil a little way aside, and I see God in Christ, suffering, and so setting me free from sin. I cannot believe in the possibility of the forgiveness of sins by a just God until I come face to face with the Christ. Then, whatever the theory may be, I know, and so my second inquiry is answered.

Take the third of these inquiries. What does God require of man? The answer is Jesus Himself as the Revelation of God's actual requirement. He requires of every man that he shall be like Christ. Christ is the pattern. I pause there because it is a most alarming thing to say, or it ought to be. Before Mr. Gladstone died he said one of the greatest weaknesses of the age was the weakened sense of sin. I believe that with all my heart. I am sometimes told today that men are not convinced of sin as they were in the days when our fathers preached. How are you to account for it? That is an inquiry that would take me more time to deal with than I have, but let me say this briefly. We are not preaching the perfections of Jesus as we ought. If we were, and men measured themselves by Him, there would be a profound and awful conviction of sin. Whenever I come into the presence of Christ I tremble. When I put what I am by the side of what He is, and then, when I discover that He is the Revelation of what was in the heart of God when He said, "Let Us make man in Our image," I know my sin. So, when I ask, What does God require of man? that is Christ's first answer. If that were all, I should be of all men the most miserable and the most helpless. The Man upon Whom I look is infinitely more than the perfect ideal. He is also the One Who comes down to me in my ruined condition and communicates to me a new life. Christ is not merely pattern, He is power. He is not merely a vision, He is virtue in the old root sense of the word.

Strength into strengthless souls He speaks,

And life into the dead.

When I ask what God requires of man He first shows me the pattern, and then teaches me that God requires of the man who cannot attain unto it that he shall submit himself to Christ, Who will perfect that which concerneth him, and at last in spite of all the paralysis make him what God wants him to be. What does God require of man? To be like Christ. What, then, does God require of me? That I shall give myself to Christ and trust Him. If I do, what then? Presently He will present me faultless before the presence of His glory. I am not afraid any longer to know what God requires of me, for I hide me in that rock, I follow that King, and through processes it may be, of discipline, pain and suffering, He will make me all that God wants me to be.

Then I turn to the opposing forces, the world, the flesh and the devil. I prefer now to take them in another order, because, as I have said in dealing with them separately, it is the devil we have to deal with finally. The world and the flesh are all right if only we can get hold of the devil and deal with him. The world is God's world, fair and beautiful. The flesh in itself, essentially, primarily, according to Divine intention, is not evil. "An enemy hath done this," I say whenever I see tares in the field.

What did Jesus do with regard to Satan? He first dragged him into the light. God led Jesus into the wilderness in order to make the devil stand out in the light. He was led of the Spirit in the wilderness. He was driven by the Spirit into the wilderness. With what result? A Man standing quietly within His own Manhood and obeying the law of God masters the devil at every point. He puts Himself in the will of God and stands squarely there, and the devil is defeated. In His life He mastered the forces that harm and spoil humanity. Paul, in one of the most daring phrases of his writings, tells us what He did with Satan in death. Speaking of the principalities and powers, the subtle forces of spiritual antagonism that thronged around the dying Christ, Paul says, "He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." So whenever I meet the devil now I meet a vanquished foe. The woman's seed has bruised the serpent's head. In Christ humanity has won its Armageddon as against all the spiritual hosts of wickedness, There is a good deal of administrative warfare going on, I still have to fight, but I fight under a victorious Lord against a vanquished foe.

What about the flesh? He took flesh, and sanctified it by taking it. He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. The apostle is very careful to show that His flesh was not sinful, but in "the likeness of sinful flesh." The purely flesh life of Jesus was as holy as His spiritual life. The flesh was subservient to the spirit, the body was the instrument of the Spirit. The eye was the window of the spirit, and was never allowed to gaze on that which might harm it. His body was the temple of His spirit, His spirit reigned over His body, and so the very flesh-life of Jesus was pure and spotless and beautiful, And mark this well, He did not bruise His flesh, He never scourged Himself. He left His brutal enemies to that work. He did not produce holiness of spirit by bruising and battering the flesh. That idea was born in hell. His life was a perfectly natural life, so natural that His critics said He was a gluttonous man and a winebibber, the friend of publicans and sinners. He loved flowers and children, went to the wedding feast, as well as to the house of mourning. His life was perfectly human, and because of the mastery of the spirit it was perfectly holy. Then through that mystery of death, which we must ever reverence and never can fathom, He set free His own life; and by regeneration He gives His life to other men, so that in the power of it they also begin to live the life of holiness, cleansing themselves from the filthiness of flesh and spirit in the power of His indwelling life.

What of the world? He entered it, and He redeemed it by entering it. He entered into its joys and its sorrows, never for one single moment so living that men could think of Him as ascetic. He entered into the world and loved its mountains, its seas, its children, its flowers, and all wonders. May I borrow a word of Paul and apply it to Him? He used the world as not abusing it. Then by the suffering of His death He introduced into broken creation healing forces that shall never cease their working until the whole creation which today groans and travails in pain shall be remade, and shall sing the song of redemption. He entered into the world and redeemed it, as He redeemed man. By redeeming man He put him back on his lost throne, over the things of the cosmos, in order that at last the desert should blossom as the rose, and the sin-scarred earth become what God meant it to be, a veritable paradise for the dwelling of man. So this great Christ masters the enemy, and by so doing restores all the physical and material to its proper place of subservience, thus making possible a fulfilment of the Divine ideal.

I turn to the last group of questions. The first, Is it possible? is answered at once by the things I have already said. If man sees the beauty of the ideal of the religious life and asks, Is it possible? Christ says, Yes, it is possible if you will admit Me and crown Me. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." The religious life was quite impossible to scores of people in this building until they admitted Christ, and crowned Him and trusted Him. From the moment in which they did so they have found it possible.

Is it necessary? He answers that inquiry by His revelation of what life ought to be. He gave us some glimpses of the far-flung splendor of the ages to come, showing us the value of one human life, as He held in His own hand the balances. "What shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life."

Finally, Is it worth-while? You will remember in dealing with that inquiry our answer was that it is worth-while, not simply because of what it means to us, but for Christ's sake, and for the sake of the world. Christ inspired that heroism in the heart of every man who feels it. He is the File-leader of faithful souls, the first of the hosts; and everything heroic, everything done for the sake of those who are suffering, all toil endured for the sake of others, all this is due to the inspiration of that one supernal life by which Christ says to men, It is worth-while to be right with God in order to lift other men.

Finally, Christ is the all-sufficient Saviour. Here I take one brief and all-inclusive declaration of the writer of the letter to the Hebrews, "He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." Let me take a minute or two with the terms of that declaration. "To save," what does this mean? The word here translated save simply means to render safe. I was very interested in looking this up to find the Greek word translated in different ways. Here are some of them. "To heal"; "preserve"; "do well"; "be whole." These translations are interesting, because all the thoughts suggested by them lie in this great word, "He is able to save to the uttermost." He is able to heal. That is the initial thing, That is the first thing I want. I cannot live the religious life because I am spiritually diseased. But He heals me. Then He is able to preserve. I would like to be a Christian, but if I start I am afraid I cannot. On this side of the Atlantic, North, South, East, and West, I have heard the same phrase, I am afraid I cannot keep it. On the other side I have heard the phrase, I cannot hold out. The answer is, He is able to preserve. Both these expressions show that men have a wrong idea of salvation. I am afraid if I am a Christian I shall not be able to keep it. Keep what? You have nothing to keep, you have to be kept. I am afraid I shall not hold out. You have not to hold out. You have to be held. There is responsibility. The responsibility is that of maintaining always the attitude of repentance and faith, the back turned on sin, and the face turned to the Christ. These conditions being fulfilled, He is able to preserve.

"To save" is a great and gracious word. Do not drop it out of your vocabulary, and do not drop it out of your experience. "He is able to save." It begins just where our need begins, with healing. It continues with the continuity of that need, with preservation. He is able to do all this. I love the word because it is a word that man needs to hear. Man cannot do the thing he supremely wants to do. He knows the beauty of holiness, but cannot live it. "He is able to save." Christ gives virtue where man lacks. He touches paralysis with power.

Take the next term, "to the uttermost." That is a great word that occurs only twice in the New Testament. It signifies the fullest measure, the furthest extent. It occurs in that wonderful story of the woman who was bent so that she could not stretch herself up. She walked doubled up, with infirmity, and could not straighten herself, to the uttermost. "He is able to save to the uttermost." You say, Spiritually I am decrepit, I cannot stand straight, or go straight. He is able to make you straight as He made that woman straight. That is the first application of it. He is able to save to the fullest extent, that is, the whole of your life, volitional, emotional, intellectual. It is one of the greatest words in the New Testament.

Tarry a moment longer with the terms, for the terms are everything in this declaration. "He is able." The Greek word from which we have derived our word "dynamic" is here. In the case of the woman who touched the hem of His garment Jesus said, "Virtue hath gone out of Me"; that is dynamite. He is able to save, You say you cannot be saved. God help you to fix your eye upon this Saviour. It is not what you are able to do. It is what He is able to do, to heal, to preserve, to set right all that is wrong in your nature, to preserve you against all the forces that oppose you, and to present you faultless at last.

What are the conditions upon which He saves men. "He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him." The goal, God. The way, through Him. How, then, can I live the religious life? By turning back to God. How am I to find my way back to God? Through Him, There is mercy, there is pardon, there is power through Him. So that tonight if you are perplexed with problems, the place in which to begin the work of solving them is Christ. If a man shall give himself to Christ I do not mean that all his intellectual problems will be solved at once. By no means. Again suffer words of experience. My intellectual problems are by no means all solved. Sometimes men come to me and say, You believe that Bible from cover to cover? By all means, but I do not perfectly understand it. I do not understand the problem of evil. I do not understand how God wrought in the mystery of His own Being in order to atone. I do not understand all the Bible teaches about the ages that lie beyond, either concerning the wicked or the good. Some men do, or think they do! I am content to postpone many things. The one sure and certain thing is, that we can be good if we trust Him. I like that word "good." That is why I used it.

There was no other good enough

To pay the price of sin.

He only could unlock the gate

Of heaven and let us in.

How does He do it?

He died that we might be forgiven,

He died to make us good.

I do not ask you to shut your mind to your intellectual difficulties, to say that these things do not matter; but to get right at the spiritual centre of your life, and then to correct the circumference therefrom.