**VOLUME 4; CHAPTER 02 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**THE UNTRODDEN PATHWAY by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*Ye have not passed this way heretofore.*

*Joshua 3:4*

LAST SUNDAY MORNING WE LOOKED BACK, THIS MORNING we look on. The Children of Israel are still seen at the parting of the ways. There is some change of circumstances from those at which we looked before, but it is a slight one so far as the hosts are concerned. They are still on the margin of the land. We spoke then of the fact that change was imminent, the leaders were about to change, the circumstances were about to change, the wilderness was passed, and the land was immediately before them.

When we turn to this book of Joshua, we find that Moses, the servant of God, has entered into rest, and Joshua has taken his place as leader of the nation. Behind the people there is the history, and the great lessons learned through that history.

Among the last words of Moses to them had been those which formed our text last Sunday morning, "Thou shalt remember all the way which Jehovah thy God hath led thee." Standing upon the margin of the land, behind them lay the deliverance from Egypt; the guidance of God for forty years in the great and terrible wilderness, and the daily supply of daily need. They possessed, moreover, the lessons learned through the experience of the past; that first of humility, for He had them and suffered them to hunger, and fed them, that He might humble them; that secondly of the discovery of themselves - for I think you will agree when I say that the people who stood on the margin of the land for the second time after forty years had learned a great deal about themselves that they did not know before; and finally that of the discovery of God in many an hour of extremity and many a place of difficulty.

Now before them lay the great unknown. Joshua said to "Ye have not passed this way heretofore." There were certain things about the future which they thought they knew, but of none of them were they absolutely certain. There were things about the land which had been reported to them as a people forty years before, which, doubtless, many who were then but children would nevertheless remember; facts concerning its mountains and valleys, its rivers and rills, its cities and its people, but nothing was certain, nothing was definite. The future was all unknown.

So this morning we stand at the parting of the ways. We attempted a week ago, as the Old Year was passing from us, to consider the responsibilities of memory. We attempted to emphasize the teaching of that last word of Moses, and to show that in remembering we must put the past into relation with God; must attempt to learn the lessons He has intended to teach, and must recognize that the true look back is a look on.

I propose to continue that subject this morning, by asking you to consider the responsibilities of anticipation. Here I shall seek the contextual light of the story, for while we live in other times, and our manners are different, and in many things we have changed radically and completely from these men of a bygone age; yet in all the essentials of our human nature, and in the master principles that govern human life, we are the same as they; and, therefore, from the picture on the old page we may gather light for the new history.

There are two things of which I want you to think with me. First, of the uncertain future; and second, of the certainties of the future.

"Ye have not passed this way heretofore." The future is all uncertain, That is a fact which needs no argument in the case of sane men and women. It is only insanity that gazes into crystals, and examines palms, and seeks to listen to wizards and witches that peep and mutter. If my words in this connection are few, I do not think they are unnecessary, especially in this quarter of London. I pray you remember that it is only insanity which imagines that anybody can discover the secrets of the future. Therefore, with this congregation I will not argue it. The future is unknown, is utterly uncertain.

If the fact of its uncertainty is thus recognized, let me speak of the fascination of that uncertainty. There is to every healthy mind a fascination about the unknown. That explains the perennial interest which is attached to the passing of one year and the beginning of another. As a matter of fact, there is no new year and there is no old year. These are things of human almanacs, human calendars and human calculations. I believe, and I say this quite frankly and of growing conviction, that the nearer we live to God the less we care about times and seasons of any kind. We come to a recognition of the fact that time is eternity. Suns rise and set, and seasons pass; and these are the only marks of time in the Divine economy. Those of our Januaries and Februaries, and Sundays and Mondays, are pagan. When presently the great Kingdom of God comes, we shall never talk of January or Sunday. Our friends, the Friends, are ahead of us when they speak of first day, and second day. Yet there is a fascination in passing from one year to another, and there is a value in our marking of the passing of time in this particular way. We have halted and looked back. Now we are halting to look on. Who of us here this Sunday morning has not been dreaming dreams about the New Year; wondering, with healthy wonder, what it is bringing to us, what the ever receding curtain of mystery will leave revealed in the foreground of experience? There is a great fascination about the uncertainty of the future.

This fascination is born of two things, one lower, the other higher. Let me speak of the lower first. It is born of the passion for the new that ever burns in the heart of humanity. If I speak of that as the lower, it is only by comparison with the other, for it is not essentially wrong. It is one of those master instincts of human nature that we do well to recognize, and attempt to direct along true lines. The passion for the new, for discovery, is in every healthy human heart. What do you mean by a newspaper? What is the fascination of the newspaper? The finding out of things not known, the entering into the discovery of the larger whole. Do you remember Kipling's lines about the explorer? In those lines there lies a philosophy applicable not only to the geographical explorer, but to all human life:

There's no sense in going further - it's the edge of cultivation,

So they said, and I believed it -

Till a voice, as bad as conscience, rang interminable changes

On one everlasting whisper day and night repeated - so

Something hidden. Go and find it. Go and look behind the Ranges -

Something lost behind the Ranges, Lost and waiting for you. Go.

That is the passion of exploration, and it creates the fascination of the unknown in the New Year.

The higher motive, or the higher reason of that fascination, is the desire for the better. The passion for the new is true and right, but it is the lower. The higher is the desire for the better. Oh, those vows and resolutions of the New Year. They are so multiplied that even the newspapers gain some amount of humor out of them. Yet they are tragic and pathetic and human. Promises made with the dawn of the dead year, broken, scattered all along the line, until one is ashamed to look back upon them. Yet they were fine, true, noble; they meant well. Today we are making them all over again. If there is any gladness in our heart about the New Year, it is that we see in the future a chance of being better. The glamour of it, the fascination of it is in all our hearts. "Ye have not passed this way heretofore." We pause and listen to the voice that comes singing out of the unknown, and it is the voice of hope.

But think not only of the fascination of the unknown, think also of the fear of it. This is as certain, as positive a quantity in our outlook as is the other. We know not what the future has hidden in the way of opposition; what forces are hiding behind the mountains, or lurking in the mists that lie along the valleys. We cannot tell how deep is the river, how tortuous the path through the mountains, how many robbers lie ambushed, suddenly to swoop down upon us. We are ignorant of the forces that are against us in the coming year. Their number, their nature, their methods are all unknown. So it was with these people upon the margin of the land. They had become accustomed to the perils of the wilderness, but those ahead were unknown. Consequently, there fear as to their ability to cope with the difficulties that Iay ahead.

And so it is with me. If I do not know the foes, how can I be sure whether my own strength is equal to them. Here I halt upon the margin of the New Year, feeling its lure, its fascination, its appeal; and yet, in an almost greater degree, fearing it, dreading it. If I do not stay for illustration, it is because your minds will act more rapidly than my speech can. In your business, in your home, perhaps in the weakness of your physical frame, or in the trembling mental unrest of which you are conscious, are unknown possibilities of opposition. Are we equal to them? So felt these men on the margin of the land, and so feel we. We have not passed this way heretofore. It is all strange, all new, and while it fascinates us it fills us with fear.

Yet once again. In thinking of the uncertain future, while we admit the fact, recognize the fascination, and know the fear; let us ever remember the force of it, the value of it, the strength of it.

What is the force of uncertainty? It is a force in the life because it is the inspiration of effort; and a call to preparation. If I knew all the facts of the coming year, I might be careless. I do not know them; and out of the mystery and fog and silence there breaks one voice, "Watch!"

Said Joshua to the men encamped near the river, with the land before them and the wilderness behind them, "Sanctify yourselves: for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you," Tomorrow for God: today for you. Today for you because you do not know tomorrow. Consequently, the force and value of uncertainty is that it compels me to seek to put my life into right relation with the forces that are equal to tomorrow. It compels me to make preparation for effort, to quit myself like a man that I may be strong; for if I am to march one step at a time, one day at a time, in the midst of forces that I do not know, over territory that I have never traversed, and if I have to deal with new unfoldings of mystery, it behoves me to be equipped, and to be ready. Herein lie the values of uncertainty.

But now turn to the second consideration, the certainties of the future. "Ye have not passed this way heretofore." If this does suggest indeed, the uncertainty of the future, and remind me that the pathway is an unknown one, I am constrained to inquire whether there are any certainties with which I may take my way into the unknown tomorrow. I want to answer that inquiry in the very simplest way by saying that there are three certainties with which I may face the uncertain future. I will name them. The first is the past. The second is the present. Though it appear a paradox, the third and the most certain is the uncertain future.

The past. Let us get back to this borderland, to this place by the Jordan. Look at these people. "Ye have not passed this way heretofore," but Moses had already said, remember all the way you have passed. Their first certainty was the past.

As you face the new, never forget the old, for the most absolute certainty that we possess as we face the uncertain is that of the things of the past. Deliverance prophesies deliverance. Guidance predicts guidance. Supply promises supply. Let me make this a little more geographical. There is a river in front of us. Then measure the river by the sea. He divided that, He can divide this. There is an unknown land before us. Measure the unknown land by the unknown wilderness. But passing into a new country, we shall need to be fed with bread and water. Measure your hunger in the new land by the manna in the old.

The one thing no man can take away from me as I face tomorrow is yesterday. You may confuse me about the problems of next year, but you cannot confuse me about the solutions of last year. You may tell me of all the perils and difficulties and dangers that are ahead, but on the pathway o'er which I have passed lie dead my foes. I have sung a song on the deliverance side of the Red Sea; Jehovah hath triumphed, His people are free, and I do not think you can frighten me with a running river when I have seen the sea divided. Therefore, I look into the future and it is all uncertain, and I come to it with the certainties of the past, with the deliverances wrought, the prayers actually answered, with the supplies that have come out of the nowhere into the here. That is the first certainty, and it is a great one. Doubt very much the man or the philosophy that asks you to doubt your own experience. There are moments when we are inclined to do it. It is quite a commonplace thing for men to say to me, and to each other, I doubt not when speaking of these things, I am sometimes tempted to doubt whether there was ever anything in it all. Do not be tempted to doubt your past triumphs. Lay hold upon the things that you have in the actuality of your experience. Make them new by remembering them perpetually. Make them forceful by allowing them to become the inspiration of all your endeavour. There are men and women in this house who come to the New Year full of dread. Look back one moment. Yes, it is good to do it in silence, when the preacher has no word to say. I cannot tell you what to look at, but you know. That day when the bitter waters were sweetened, when after the long desert tramp you sat down at Elim. Oh, we have had the experience. That is our one certainty as we look on. You cannot take that away from us. You can mystify us about our theory, but you cannot mystify us about the things we have been brought through.

Then we also have as certainties the lessons learned. These we dwelt upon last Sunday. Let us reckon on them as certainties. We have learned the lesson of humility, learned it through crushing and breaking, sorrow and difficulty, but let us be glad if we have learned it.

Then again, there was the discovery in ourselves of some things that we did not know, and would rather not have known, or so we think; the startling surprise of the evil thing in us, which some hour of trying circumstance brought to light; that hour, when we who had cursed Peter for his cowardice were cowardly; when we who had denounced Judas for his treachery were traitors. Thank God, as I face the New Year I know it. I have found it out. I am not in half so much danger from that discovered evil as I was before it was revealed. You failed, my brother, in some dire disastrous moment you fell into some gross, venal sin. If you will only live in the light of that warning, you can climb on your dead self to better things. You have learned your weakness, and you will avoid the very street in which you fell! You will be careful to have no business transactions with the man who persuaded you to do the mean thing! You have found out that you could do a mean thing. You did not think you could, but you are safer for having found out. It is a great thing when a man has found out where his weakness is. Where I am weak I become strong, through the knowledge of the fact.

And finally, in the past we have discovered God. Now we are going to abbreviate our dictionaries by cancelling the word extremity, for we have found out that it is when we are at our extremity that the door of opportunity is opened for our discovery of God, and our entering into all the possibilities of His power. These are the things of the past, which our certainties as we face the New Year.

Then there are the certainties of the present. To these people they were the sacramental symbols, and the living leader.

When Moses passed, Joshua remained, and what Moses not do Joshua could, and that because Moses was dead. If you question that statement, remember what we read in the second verse of the first chapter, "Moses My servant is now therefore arise, go over this Jordan." The death of Moses was necessary to progress into the land.

These then were the things of the living present, the sacramental symbols and the living leader. Why dwell upon the sacramental symbols? Because here was a change. These people possessed the Ark before. Yes, but they had not followed the Ark, but the cloud; and they would never see it again; the cloud of fire by night, and the mist and mystery by day had ceased. They had a new pathway to tread, with a different method of guidance. They who had waited for the moving of the cloud were now to wait for the moving of the Ark and the priests. The cloud was the provision for the wilderness. God was changing His method with them. They to live not by a particular sign, but by the word of the Lord. They would never forget that the Ark came out of the cloud. It was in the mystery of the cloud that enveloped mountain that Moses had the pattern of the Ark given to him. But henceforth the cloud was withdrawn, and the Ark remained. It was not for them to question, or to desire to retain the past; but to be thankful for the present provision, and to obey.

What application has this to us? We have the present as well as the past as we come to the New Year. And in the economy of God there remains for His people one visible, tangible, sacramental symbol, and it is the Bible. That is not a subject which I am going to discuss or deal with fully. I make the assertion and leave it for you to think over. The only sacramental symbol God has left in this world is not bread, or wine, or water, but the Word written. We have that still.

To us remains also a living Leader. If we want to understand all that is included in this phrase, we shall not stay in the book of Joshua. In the letter to the Hebrews the writer says, in effect, Moses led you out, but he could not lead you in, Joshua led you in but he could not give you rest. Now there is one greater than Moses and Joshua Who leads out, and leads in, and gives rest. We must discover Him in spiritual communion.

Do you doubt at that point, my brother, my sister? Nay, do I doubt? Are we in danger of doubting? Let us think once again. The whole superstructure of our moral and spiritual life depends upon the living presence of the living Christ. This Bible is only the sacramental symbol. It is a great certainty, but do not worship it. In the name of God, do not worship it! It is the living Leader Who is the supreme certainty for the days to come. Are you not tempted to say, "If I could but put my hand upon the hand of His flesh I should know Him better." Not at all. The men who did it never knew Him until He withdrew the hand of flesh and came in spiritual power at Pentecost. These frail hearts of ours still hanker after the hand of flesh upon which our hand might rest, something more present, more tangible, of which we might be sensible; but He is as definitely in the midst of us, as positively by the side of every pilgrim of faith, aye, and more so, than was Joshua present to the hosts of old. Thus we have in the present the Word, written and incarnate.

The final certainty is the future. The past is past. I cannot go back. The present is passing, and I cannot hold it. Twenty minutes ago I was talking of the present. That is now the past. We say, "Tomorrow never comes." As a matter of fact we never possess anything certainly except tomorrow. Everything else is shifting, changing, gone. The future is mine! That is the truer word; it is the word of the man who struggles up after his fall; the word of the man who builds his castle in the air; the word of the man who feels the lure of the coming days. The future is mine. That is true.

Thus here we stand, on an ever moving present, between an irrevocable past and a challenging future. I repeat the phrase already used more than once, the lure of the future is on our spirits. How shall we meet it? The answer is in these early chapters of the Book of Joshua. There is a special word here for the leaders, a special word to Joshua. Now for the moment Joshua becomes the symbol not of the lonely und supreme Leader, Christ, but of all those who are put into places of oversight. What is the word to leaders, preachers, teachers, prophets, overseers? "Be strong and of a good courage". If you read all that first chapter you will find that that was a call to Joshua by God and by man. God said to him, "Be strong and of a good courage"; and presently, when he charged the Reubenites, and the Gaddites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, as to what they were to do, they said, "According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee: only the Lord thy God be with thee, as He was with Moses … only be strong and of a good courage." God said it, and man said it.

It is so today. The appeal of God to those who are charged with leadership is, "Be strong and of a good courage." Let not your heart faint. Do not tremble. Do not play the coward. The appeal of humanity to the leaders of the Christian Church is the same, "Be strong and of a good courage." If you tremble, no victory will be won.

How shall we meet the future? What is the word to the hosts? This also have I recited, "Sanctify yourselves: for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you." How were they to sanctify themselves? With regard to the past, they were to remember! With regard to the present, they were to see the Ark, to keep at a sacred distance from it, and to follow it; to discover that it was the new symbol of their relationship; to treat it with holy reverence; to follow it. Their relation to their leader was to be that of loyalty, so long as he was loyal to God.

What of the future? With the inspiration of the past filling the soul, with the certainty of the present enabling the life, they were to go in and possess.

Thus let us go forward to face each day in the name of the Captain of Salvation. Oh, but giants are there! To be slain! Walled cities are there! To be taken! Difficulties await us! To be overcome!

So may God give us grace to follow our greater than Joshua into the unknown tomorrow, and to possess it in His name, and for His glory.