**VOLUME 4; CHAPTER 17 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**THE SECRET OF THE LORD by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; And He will shew them His covenant.*

*Psalm 25:14*

THE SOB OF A GREAT SORROW SOUNDS THROUGHOUT THIS psalm. The circumstances in which it was written are most evidently revealed by the words which occur through its process; desolation, affliction, distress, travail.

These and other kindred words, sobbing in sorrow, vibrant with pain, are the outstanding words of the psalm. Yet, its main message is not a message of despair, but rather of hope, of confidence. If at your leisure you will read this psalm again, you may discover that with which one cannot stay to deal at all, particularly now. The singer depressed by sorrow, yet perpetually rises above it; profoundly conscious of the overwhelming and crushing pressure that rests upon him, nevertheless spreads his wings and, rising, the sob becomes a song. The sorrow is made the occasion of the psalm. It opens and closes with prayer. The first seven verses constitute a prayer, and the last seven verses constitute a prayer; or, rather, and more accurately, the first paragraph and the last paragraph constitute one great prayer; and between these two paragraphs is the central one, beginning at the eighth verse and ending with the fifteenth. That central paragraph is occupied almost wholly with the contemplation and declaration of the goodness of God; not that these things are confined to that central paragraph; they run like a major note throughout all the minor wailing of the sorrowful experience, which created the necessity for, and found expression in, the psalmist's prayer.

Out of the central song of contemplation and declaration, we have taken this one verse, because it is the secret of the song in the midst of sorrow, the explanation of the reason why this man was able, even in the day of darkness, to lift a face radiant with light. It is impossible to escape the conviction, if the psalm be carefully studied, that in this declaration we have found the secret of this man's triumph over pain. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; And He will shew them His covenant."

My message tonight is to those who are sorrowful, a message to which I am constrained for a reason which I cannot give. I am content to answer the call, and attempt to lead such of you as are in sorrow, stress, strain, difficulty of any kind to an examination of this wonderful word of the psalmist of old, very familiar to all of us who have known anything of our Bibles from childhood, and full of wonderful suggestiveness. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; And He will shew them His covenant."

First, let us quietly meditate upon the blessing that is here referred to, "The secret of the Lord." Second, let us solemnly consider the condition upon which we may enter into the experience of the blessing described, "Them that fear Him." In conclusion, let us notice one result of the blessing which the psalmist describes, "He will shew them His covenant."

"The secret of the Lord." We need to be careful with this word. There comes to mind another of the great verses of the Bible, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever," I cite it only that I may ask you to remember that the word "secret" in that verse is an entirely different one from the word "secret" in our text. "Secret things"; that is, quite literally, veiled things, hidden things, things that cannot be discovered, things that cannot be revealed. There are always such, even for the saints, to the end of the journey; the secret, veiled, hidden mysteries of life and of government. But the word here is quite other, and I propose this evening to adopt a method of interpretation, wholly Biblical. I am going to illuminate my text by four other texts in which the same Hebrew word occurs, but in which it is used with a slight variation of application and of intention. If we can gather from these four the thoughts which they suggest, I believe we shall find something of the wealth and comfort that lie in this old and familiar declaration of the psalmist, "The secret of Jehovah is with them that fear Him." Let me be understood. The verses to which I shall now refer do not, in the whole of their statements, throw any light upon this passage; but the occurrence in them of the same word will help us to understand the richness of suggestion in our text.

I turn first of all to Psalm 111:1, and I find these words: "Praise ye Jehovah. I will give thanks unto Jehovah with my whole heart, In the council of the upright and in the congregation." We may therefore, with perfect accuracy, say that "The council of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

Let us turn to Psalm 55:14: "We took sweet counsel together, We walked in the house of God and with the throng." The word of my previous reference was "council"; "counsel" is yet another word with a slightly different suggestion. We should be perfectly justified in reading, "The counsel of Jehovah is with them that fear Him.

Let us turn to the Book of Proverbs 3: 32, and we have the word of our text translated in the same way, but another suggestion is made by its use in the light of the context: "The perverse is an abomination to the Lord: But His friendship is with the upright." With the suggestion of the word there we shall deal presently.

One other reference, again from the Book of Proverbs 11:13: "He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: But he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter." Let us now examine these four verses, not for their own statements, but for their use of our word, in order that we may find out what the psalmist meant in all fullness and richness when he said, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

When the psalmist said, "In the council of the upright," he used the word in its very simplest sense, a sense more truly in harmony with its root idea than that of any other of the verses we have read. The idea is that of a company of persons sitting together, of one mind, of one heart; of a company of people separated from the heathen and from strangers, unified, of one heart, with single purpose, at absolute agreement with each other. It is a very beautiful idea, rarely realized in the experience of any company of men and women. The poetic and beautiful idea of the psalmist is that of the gathering together of such as have no controversy as between themselves - a perfect company. Once in the history of humanity, so far as I know, there has been such a gathering. It was on the day of Pentecost, when they were all together of one mind, and of one heart, and of one spirit, under the dominion of one Lord; with one master passion in their heart, that of obedience to Him. It was soon lost, and we have never regained it. That, however, is the idea of the Hebrew word; perfect union because of no discord; perfect harmony therefore. "The secret of Jehovah is with them that fear Him." Jehovah sits in council - that is, in perfect union, in perfect harmony - with such as fear Him. There is no controversy between them and Himself, no controversy between Him and such.

The word suggests the consciousness of perfect friendship, though no word be spoken. It suggests that friendship which is equal to absolute silence. Not the friendship - let me carefully safeguard this - that must be silent, but the friendship that can be silent. Turn the thought back for a moment, for the sake of illustration, to the simplest things of love and friendship in your lives. You have not many friends in the world. Mark that well. Just a few friends; many acquaintances, thank God for them all; but not many people that you can be absolutely safe in being silent with. I sometimes think that in all human relationships the last sign of friendship is this ability to be quiet. The acquaintance will entertain the stranger, and weary him by talking to him; but the friend will sit by his side silently, knowing that there is no need for speech; in mutual understanding, with no controversy, no conflict, nothing that has to be hidden. There are children of God who know this secret in its height and depth. We know that they know by the serenity and calmness and dignity of their friendship with God. That is the first thought, the council of the upright, the assembly, the meeting, the sitting together. The idea of speech is not in the word in this connection. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

In Psalm 55:14, the word, as its context shows, has a slightly different meaning, or, rather, shall I say a slightly different suggestion? Let us hear it: "We took sweet counsel together." Here the silence is broken; here is speech, but it is the speech of familiar conversation. It is a step in advance of the last. The word in its use in this psalm suggests the freedom in speech that comes when friends understand each other well enough to be silent. I am afraid that that is awkwardly stated. Yet some of you know at once what I mean. When friendship can afford to be silent, then speech is the speech of friendship. I never can make such a reference as this without there coming to my mind a passage from a book written by Mrs. Craik. Many of you are familiar with it, and those who know it best will least object to hearing it again. She says: "Oh, the joy, the inexpressible delight of being alone with your friend, when you can pour out everything that is in your soul, all you think, wheat and chaff together, knowing that your listening friend will with the breath of kindness blow away the chaff and keep only the grain." That is the kind of speech that comes out of the capacity for silence. "We took sweet counsel together." We talked to each other by the way, amid the busy throng, in the courts of the temple. We talked, and each said to the other all that was in the heart. This is the freedom that comes when friends understand each other. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." The secret of the Lord is with the man who has no secret from Him. Who pours out before Him all the things that are in his own heart, God can talk too of the things that are in His heart, and in His purpose, and in His will.

Can God speak freely to me? I make the question personal. I had rather do it than put the question to you. I do not propose a public answer, but a private investigation. Can God speak freely to me? This age often affirms that God does not speak to men now as He used to do. I will not argue it save to say that the measure in which that seems to be true is the measure in which men have ceased to talk to Him. If I have a secret from Him, then He cannot have His secret with me. When I have learned friendship with God so as to be able to pour out everything before Him, then He can speak freely and unreservedly to me.

I turn to the use of the word in Proverbs 3:32. "The perverse is an abomination to the Lord: But His secret is with the upright." The setting of the word there suggests another phase of the same great and gracious and wonderful fact. Not now the silence; not now that familiar and confidential speech in which each pours out to each the deepest and truest things of the life. Here the thought is rather that of advice and guidance. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him," To such He can give advice, can guide, can say behind them as they walk the path all wrapped in mystery, "This is the way: walk ye in it"

Once again, while the verse seems to have least to do with our theme, the word is used in its fullest sense in Proverbs 11:13: "He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets," Secrets - what are they? Particular confidences, the last and most intimate demonstrations of friendship. As we grow older we do not talk so much about secrets. Take two children, especially girls, who are friends - close friends in the sweet, bonnie days of their winsome childhood, and the last proof of friendship is that one tells the other a secret! You smile at it. You have lost something since the days in which you were young enough to have secrets, and to tell them. Why do we cease talking about secrets as we get older? Because we are afraid someone will betray use Why? Because we have so often betrayed someone else.

When Jesus Christ took the child, and put him in the midst, He was right. The child is nearer the ideal of the Kingdom of heaven than anyone in this house tonight. So we get back to the children, and their secrets constitute the last seal of their friendship. God help us all to see the beauty of it, when two children have secrets between each other.

"The secret of the Lord is with the upright." We do not want any exposition of it if we will thus get back to childhood and look at the children. God can tell His secrets to some people. "Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do? For I have known him." And He did not hide it from Abraham. Lot, the successful, progressive, business man knew nothing; but the old-fashioned man of faith got the secret of the Lord. Do not tell me that is old history. It is as fresh as the morning. There are men to whom God can tell His secrets still, the deep confidences of His own heart, of His own economy, of His own purposes. They cannot tell them to other people. Do not misunderstand me. The secrets of the Lord are not for publication. "I knew a man in Christ, (whether in the body, I know not; or whether out of the body, I know not; God knoweth) such a one caught up even to the third heaven ... and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." God told Paul secrets, and you have never found out what they were. They were secrets that drove him and made him, and the revelation of the secret is not the telling of it, but the manifestation of the changed and glorified life resulting from it.

Mark the four things, then. I will but name them. The first thought is that of sitting in restful silence because there is no controversy. The second is that of mutual conversation. Just two, telling and listening. Then counsel, advice, guidance, and finally special confidences. The secret of the Lord.

Oh, sorrowful heart, God comfort you with this tonight. This is to be able to do what this man did in this psalm, say everything, the thing of sorrow, of desolation, of travail. The man who knows this will never play the hypocrite in the presence of God. He will never pretend resignation when he feels rebellion. He will pour out the rebellion in the listening ear of heaven, and God is never angry with that. To know this is to have found the light that turns the tear of sorrow into the medium of the rainbow of hope. "The secret of the Lord." Who does not desire it, long for it? To be able to sit in silence with God; to talk to Him and to hear Him talk to me; to know that when I talk He hears, and that if I listen He will speak; to have immediately and directly, not as the result of any mechanical contrivance or priestly intervention, His guidance, His counsel; someday, perhaps, to have Him tell me some secret.

Ere we pass from the brief meditation on the blessing itself, I must ask you to notice another word. Those of you who followed my reading of the psalm, perhaps wondered why, when it says Lord, I said Jehovah. Simply because it is the actual word. Every occasion in this psalm where the word Lord appears, the Hebrew word is Jehovah. I emphasize it because it is a significant word. This psalm, which is a sob of sorrow merging into a song of salvation, the psalm which has at its center this revealing verse that we are trying to think about, through all its process refers to God as Jehovah; not Elohim, which suggests His might, not the secret of the Mighty One; not Adonahy, which suggests His sovereignty, but Jehovah, which suggests His adaptability, His adaptation to the capacity of men and the needs of men. "The secret of Jehovah" the becoming One, the One Who becomes in all circumstances, to all men, the thing necessary to their succour and for their salvation.

Let us think for a brief moment of the condition. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." Though the distinction has often been made, at this moment we must make it again. Let us understand what fear really is. There are two kinds of fear. They have been defined as servile and filial. I sometimes define them thus. There is a fear which is fear lest God should hurt me. There is a fear which is fear lest I should grieve God. This last is the fear referred to in my text. They are utterly opposed. Servile fear dreads God, and issues in hatred, in deceit and in ultimate ruin. But this fear, how does it issue? Note the first fruit of this fear. I am certainly in the humor tonight for Bible definition. Let me go back to one of the wisdom books of the Old Testament, to Proverbs 8:13, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil." From that, turn over to chapter 16:6, "By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil." I am content with these two passages for our present purpose. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." What is it to fear Him? To hate evil and to depart from evil. The secret of Jehovah cannot be with a man who loves his sin. The secret of Jehovah cannot be with a man who, conscious of sin, hating it, yet refuses to abandon it. Is it true that we know nothing of being able to sit in silent fellowship with God? Is it true that we know nothing of holding familiar intercourse with God? Is it true that we know nothing of what it is to hear God directly, immediately, counseling, advising, guiding? Is it true that He cannot tell us a secret? Why not? There is only one reason. It is that our sin is shutting us out from God. The old prophetic word is a living word; it is the whole truth in a sentence for this hour. Hear me with patience. Have you been reverently, but decidedly, amused by the meditation of this hour? Have you said this is all a preacher's dreaming about the secret of the Lord? I can call witnesses in this house if it be necessary that the thing I have said is a thing of sober and immediate truth. There are men and women here who know the secret of the Lord. I charge you remember if you know nothing of these things, if the language is foreign to you, then it is because of your own sin. Your sin - not your father's sin, God has dealt with that in the economy of His grace, and can break its power - your sin, your persistence in some way of evil, your definite decision and determination not to depart from evil. The crookedness of your business methods! The dishonesty between yourself and other men! Some sin of which friend and neighbour nothing know until this moment, but in which you still indulge. Your sins are the things that shut God out of your consciousness. I pray you pause and consider carefully before you affirm that the religious affirmations of past generations and the religious declarations of living men are false. Inquire whether it be not that you have eyes and see not, ears and hear not, that the spiritual sense is so blunted by your own sin that it is impossible for you to discover the very things in the midst of which you live. "The secret of Jehovah," the friendship of God, living, actual, personal, positive, is with them that fear Him; with such as hate evil and depart from evil. God will not give Himself to such as love evil and persist in evil. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

One final word. The psalmist gives us one result of the great and wonderful blessing. "He will show them His covenant." What is a covenant? An engagement entered into. The covenant of Jehovah with His people is an engagement into which He has entered with them, and I may add today, for I speak under the shadow of the cross, the engagement which Jehovah enters into with His people through His Son. The old prophet of lamentations and tears foresaw and most wonderfully described the great and gracious covenant. "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people; and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more." The first application was to the house of Israel, and will be fulfilled to the letter. The principle within it is the principle of the covenant, an engagement entered into between God and His people. He enters into an engagement with all such as hate evil and, desiring to depart from evil, find their way to Him through the Man anointed, appointed to be Saviour and Judge.

"He will show them His covenant." The thought is not that He will make plain to them the terms of the covenant, but that they shall see the ratification of it in the experience of their life.

The fear of the Lord is to have His secret; with what result? We shall watch through all the processes, and disciplines, and trials, and sorrows of life, God's faithfulness to His covenant with us. There will be many a day when, by reason of our own frailty, our own fearful and trembling hearts, we shall wonder whether or not God has forgotten; but before many hours have passed we shall be ashamed of our wonder. Has it not been so? Look back, dear sorrowing heart, tonight if it be possible; look back out of the midst of the present stress and strain and difficulty. There are other days in the past - dark, mysterious days - when everything seemed to be failing, when we were foolish enough to say with Jacob, "All these things are against me." Then come a little way forward from that place at which you have been looking, and you had to say with Jacob again, "The God of the covenant has been with me all my days." Is it not so? The showing of the covenant is not wholly postponed to the life beyond. Then it will be perfectly shown. Then - ah, then - and we know it well, who know anything of the secret of Jehovah, then we shall look back over all the way, and we shall sing, "Right was the pathway leading to this.'" But we sing it already in measure. The music is already being wrought out into clearness to our astonished ears. He is showing us His covenant.

Those who have been in His fear longest, and know His secret most profoundly, can trace the meaning of this text in its last declaration. There are men listening to me tonight, and women also, who look back over a pilgrimage of faith far longer than that of which I have had experience, and it is good sometimes to take a backward glance. There lie the strange, devious paths of life; hours of agony and hours of deliverance; strange, perplexing phantoms of the night that came gliding over the storm-tossed seas, and then the voice, "It is I, be not afraid." He is ever showing us the covenant. That He will continue to do, until if our Lord shall tarry and we pass through the valley of the shadow, then there will be light in the valley, and the gloaming and the glooming will merge into the gleaming glory of the unveiled face of God. "He will show them His covenant."

We are sure of the last anthem because "The secret of the Lord" is already ours. Then may we learn to set the sorrows of the hour in the light of the present consciousness of God, and the sob of sorrow shall become the song of salvation.