**VOLUME 5; CHAPTER 23 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**THE KINGDOM: TRAITORS by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*Men shall be ... traitors ... from these also turn away.*

*2 Timothy 3:2,4,5*

WE HAVE IN THIS LETTER IN ALL PROBABILITY, THE LAST words of the great apostle. It is very largely a personal letter. One illustration of that will be discovered in the fact that there are twenty-three proper names found in its four brief chapters. It is the letter of an old man to a young man. It is a letter of an old minister of Jesus Christ to a young man commencing his work in the ministry of the Word. It is the letter of one who has borne the burden and heat of the day to one who stands facing the battle. It is the letter of one who has been careful to lay the foundations, and who charges men to beware how they build thereupon, to a man who is to continue to build. It is impossible to read this letter naturally, as a letter - that is, at one sitting, forgetting those false divisions of chapters and verses - without becoming conscious that the heart of the writer is full of conflicting emotions; full of sorrow, and yet full of joy; full of anxiety, and yet full of courage. He is perfectly conscious, as the time of his departure approaches, of the dangers that lie ahead. The peculiar message committed to him has been the doctrine of the Church; but he has never forgotten the Kingdom. Whereas it has been his work in the course of his constructive and educative ministry among the churches, to declare the truth concerning the Church of God; the passion in his heart has ever burned with vehemence for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

All about him are evidences of the foes, the forces that are against Christ and the Gospel of Christ. In his own personal experience he is conscious of the forsaking of friends. He bears in his body the scars, the stigmata that tell of his own buffeting. He sees ahead of the Church and of the enterprises of the Kingdom of God in the world, great and grave perils; and all these things make him anxious about Timothy, this young man - so dear to his heart, his own child in the faith, the fruit of his own preaching - as he recognizes that the ministry which awaits him will in many particulars be a more difficult one than his own has been. His letter, therefore, is a letter of warning. He says that in the last days perilous times - or, as the Revised Version has it, "grievous times," or as I venture to suggest even more literally, "difficult times" - shall come. Then follows a dark catalogue of evil things. I think I may be allowed to say that a hush of awe, of fear, fell upon this congregation as I read them tonight; one was conscious of it in the very reading - "Men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, railers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, no lovers of good, traitors, headstrong, puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof."

The one word that I have chosen from the dark and awful list is the word "Traitors." I take it because it suggests peril to the Kingdom. I have already said that this man was specifically, as far as doctrine is concerned, the apostle of the Church, I have also said that there ever burned in his heart the passion for the Kingdom. This man, looking ahead, saw perilous days, days in which evil men would become increasingly evil; days in which evil men and impostors shall "wax worse and worse." This does not mean that the world is to wax worse and worse, but that evil in itself will be worse and worse, as good will be better and better. The two elements are noticeable in their development in all the centuries, and in the day in which we live. Good is better than it ever was. Evil is worse than it ever was. The wheat and tares will grow together until the harvest, the full development of both good and evil; and then will come God's crisis and God's settlement.

Paul saw the development of evil things, and as he described the conditions of evil, one word passed his lips which reveals the truth of the thing I have already affirmed, that the passion for the Kingdom was still burning in his heart, "traitors." This is peculiarly a word of Kingdom relationship, a word indicating a peril threatening the work of the Kingdom.

This is the last in our series of meditations on the Kingdom. We spoke first of the King, the One upon Whose vesture and upon Whose thigh the great name is written, "King of kings, and Lord of lords"; of the Kingly character, the Kingly qualifications, and the Kingly authority of God's anointed King. In our second study we spoke of the Kingdom over which He is assuredly King, even though at the moment there may be rebellion therein; He is King in the material, mental, moral realms; and all because fundamentally, essentially, He is King in the spiritual realm.

We spoke next of the character of all such as are in His Kingdom; we heard the King standing at the wicket gate, saying, "Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of heaven." And then we listened to the King, speaking to men in the Kingdom, indicating to them what must be their sacramentum, or oath of allegiance, if they would be His helpers in building and in battle, "Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple."

I ask you tonight to think with me of the peril to the Kingdom, indicated in the words, "men shall be … traitors." In advance of our consideration let me say what I shall repeat at the close; that this is the gravest peril that threatens the Kingdom of God. The word indicates an appalling kind of resistance; that which postpones the Kingdom most successfully. "Men shall be ... traitors." These are not the men outside, arrayed in battle against the King; but the men and women inside, who are untrue to the King.

"Men shall be ... traitors," First, let us solemnly ask ourselves what does this word suggest to us. What is treachery? Let us, secondly, notice the concomitants of treachery; the companionships of treachery, which the apostle describes in these very words that surround the one word of my text. Thirdly, let us attempt to see the root of treachery as the apostle here in passing, and yet, quite clearly, indicates it for us. Then let us consider the punishment of treachery. Finally, let us take our way into the secret place and ask the King to show us whether we are traitors.

What is treachery? The word here translated "traitors" occurs only three times in the New Testament; in this passage, once in the Gospel of Luke, where Luke, giving the list of the men who were about Jesus in the days of His public ministry, writes this very remarkable and appalling word, "Judas the traitor"; and once in the Acts of the Apostles in that magnificent address of Stephen, when charging the men to whom he spoke with sin, he described them as betrayers, using exactly the same word. These are the only occasions where the awe-inspiring word is to be found in the pages of the New Testament. It is a somewhat interesting thing to discover the simple, root intention of the word. A traitor is one who goes before. That, of course, does not express its full significance. We must find, not only the root meaning, but the common use of the word if we are to understand it. There seems to be no suggestion of evil in the word if we simply take its root intention; but when we observe its use, we find that it was always used in this sense; a traitor is one who goes before the enemy, one who leads the enemy, one who surrenders a position before the enemy can capture it. The traitor is one who unlocks the gate of a city and lets the enemy in; one who gives away a secret of the State, and so leaves the State at the mercy of its foes. Thus the use of the word is always an evil use, or rather, a use that always suggests an evil attitude and action; a traitor is one who surrenders a position to the enemy.

In its bearing upon the Christian fact, and in its relation to the great business of Jesus, that of bringing in the Kingdom of God, which He made the very inspiration of prayer when, He taught us to pray, "Thy Kingdom come," and which He indicated as the master passion of life when He said to men, "Seek ye first His Kingdom"; this word describes one who names the name of Christ, but does not share His nature; one who recites the creed of the Church, but does not manifest the conduct of saintship; one who may be, and in all probability is, absolutely orthodox in doctrine intellectually, and absolutely heterodox in attitude volitionally; one who wears the livery of the Kingdom, but is disobedient to its government; one who hiding among the soldiers of the King becomes the vantage ground for the enemy; and, therefore, one upon whom the enemy can most perfectly depend, because he has a false position within; one, therefore, upon whom the King can not only not depend, but one who postpones, hinders, paralyzes the effort of the King most successfully, that effort that moves toward the bringing in of the Kingdom. The traitor is one who breaks the oath of allegiance, who takes the sacramentum in words, but not in deeds.

Said Jesus at Caesarea Philippi, immediately after telling His disciples that He would build His Church, and that He would give to His Church the keys of the Kingdom - mark the intimate relation of Church and Kingdom - "lf any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." The traitor is one within the company of those who are supposed to be obedient; but who reverses the whole process; denies the Cross, asserts himself, and refuses to follow Christ.

You say to me, that that is what the man outside is doing. But mark well the difference. The man inside sings of the Cross and refuses to be crucified; professes to be abandoned to Jesus, and asserts his own will, and his own self-life; lives a life self-centered, and sings a song as though he were God-centered. Traitors are men and women who are in league with the enemy, while to all human appearances they are marching with the soldiers of the King. I need not tarry now to survey human history so far as it has been written, to show how humanity in its deepest instinct hates the traitor. I suppose I am correct in saying that there are names in the history of almost all nations, not very many, but some, that are held in everlasting contempt. We forevermore hold in respect - I am now speaking along the line of broad human illustration - the foes of our national life who have fought us fairly, and whether we won or they matters little as the years go on. On the other hand, we hold in everlasting contempt the men in our ranks who gave away some secret to the enemy. There is no graver, greater peril to the Kingdom of God than that created by traitors in the camp. What then is a traitor? One who tolerates the evil against which the King is making battle; one who hinders the King in His building, refuses to help Him in the building, or pulls down what Jesus builds. He said, I came to build. His mission is destructive. The men within the ranks, those supposed to follow Him who never help in the building, the men who tolerate in their own lives and hearts the evil against which the King is fighting, these are traitors. The men who never help in the building - and I do not propose to speak of the men who attempt to pull down that which Christ is building, I content myself with the other statement, the men who do not help.

There is the great ideal of the Kingdom flaming like a vision before us, the great Kingdom of God for which He taught us to pray, for which we do perpetually pray with more or less intelligence, the one great Kingdom in which one law shall govern all human life, the law of perfect love: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. … Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." There is the ideal - call it what you will, call it Utopia, speak of it as though it were a dream that can never be translated into actuality, I care not. Christ came to realize that dream. He came to build. Here are men and women who name His name and make His sign, and sing His songs, but they are doing no building; men and women who have never lifted a hand to hasten the coming of the Kingdom in the world. Their very neutrality - I am not yet touching the deepest note of treachery - hinders and postpones the coming of the Kingdom. You remember that fine, majestic Hebrew song, the song of Deborah, in which she let loose the splendid scorn of her angry womanhood: "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord. Curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof." Why? Because they fought against the Lord? No! But "because they came not to the help of the Lord against the mighty." Read the whole song at your leisure. It is a song of infinite sarcasm, of satire - hear me very carefully for there is a very pertinent application of all this to our own age - satire poured upon those sitting by the watercourses of Reuben discussing the situation with great searchings of heart! Conventions, conferences, discussions, resolutions, but no building, nothing done! That is treachery of the worst kind; and every sanctified Deborah will sing her song of satire in the presence of it.

Or, will you come from the stately and almost tragic splendour of the song of Deborah, and listen to the quieter, calmer, more intensive word of Jesus, "He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth"? Mark Christ's implied claim for Himself, He is a Gatherer; to gather in the children of God who were scattered abroad, to heal the breaches, to bring humanity back into a common brotherhood around the Fatherhood of God; to end the strife of nations and of men by restoring them to the beneficence of the Divine government; to gather together; that was His mission. In view of that He said, "He that is not with Me is against Me," and if we are not helping Him to gather we are scattering. If we wear His livery and do not help Him in the building, we are traitors.

There is another form of treachery. He came not merely for building - that ultimately, finally, for that is the purpose and passion of His mission - He came also for battle. No word of inspired Scripture tells the whole truth with more graphic phrasing than this, "He was manifested to destroy the works of the devil." Am I helping Him in that battle? There are things that no preacher can say. There are searchings of heart that cannot find expression in the voice of a man. Am I tolerating - let me speak of myself and of no other - in my inner heart and life, in my thinking, in my living, something against which the King's face is set, against which He makes war; something of impurity, of unloveliness, something of greed? Then am I a traitor! I may sing all the songs of the sanctuary and recite all its creeds, and believe all its doctrines; and yet, if in some chamber of Mansoul, whether it be the chamber of the imagination, or the hall of the affection, or the palace of the intellect, I find house-room and hiding for some evil thing; I am a traitor. Such evil work is always done for a price - for thirty pieces of silver; and often for far less!

Traitors; not the man outside, the roué on Piccadilly; not the poor, sinning thief that we ought to rescue; but the man inside, who listens to the word Sunday after Sunday, and nought that it says touches him or makes him disgorge his ill-gotten gain, or cleanses his heart of lust. That man is a traitor. That man postpones the coming of the Kingdom, as all the forces of hell massed outside the Church can never do.

Look for a moment, now, at the things which surround treachery, the awful companions of treachery. The first two phrases describe the character of such; self-lovers; money- lovers; and immediately following there is a three-fold description of the conduct that grows out of that character, "boastful, haughty, railers." Once more Paul describes character, "unfilial, unthankful, unholy," and immediately again the conduct that issues from that character, "unloving, implacable, slanderers." A third time he deals with character, "uncontrolled, fierce, no lovers of good," and a third time describes the conduct resulting, "traitors, headstrong, puffed up."

Or take the list in another way. First we have the personal manifestations of godlessness; "self-lovers, money-lovers, unfilial, unthankful, unholy, uncontrolled, fierce, no lovers of good"; and then the social manifestations of god-lessness, "boastful, haughty, railers, unloving, implacable, slanderers, traitors, headstrong, puffed up."

Then at last he touches the deep, underlying root, the very wellspring out of which the streams flow, "Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof." Personal character is ruined, the social virtues are destroyed, because religion is dead. The form of godliness is ritual without religion; and this results in all the things that are unlike the Kingdom.

Now let us inquire, what harm traitors can do to the great Kingdom of which we have been speaking. First of all let me say this; our treachery cannot dethrone the King. It is well that we be reminded of that. What visions of God we have in this great and wonderful literature! Among them all one now comes back to me, that in the Book of Isaiah. Isaiah had never known another king than Uzziah. There came a day when Uzziah died, and Isaiah saw the empty throne and felt the sense of desolation. Then he came to the realization of the one great Throne, "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple." The empty throne; and the Throne that is never empty! So let us remember, in the midst of this solemn evening consideration, that our treachery cannot dethrone the King; but our treachery can postpone the Kingdom. As God is my witness, I speak to my own heart as well as to yours. The Kingdom of God can be hindered by treachery. Here is the heinousness of treachery; here is the diabolical nature of wearing the livery of the King while playing false to His purpose; we postpone the Kingdom. The sob and cry of creation is a sob and cry for a King. The measure in which I am playing traitor is the measure in which the agony of creation continues; or to put it from the positive side, the measure in which I am loyal to the King is the measure in which He is brought nigh to the suffering creation. I cannot dethrone the King, I cannot finally prevent the winning of His victory; but I can make the road longer and rougher for God and for humanity by my treachery.

Once again, what is the punishment of treachery? Suicide, spiritual suicide! Stephen charged the Hebrew people with treachery. He was speaking to the people of the covenant, to the children of promise, and in his great address, he revealed to them their privileges, tracked the way of God's dealings with them through the centuries, until he came to the Deliverer Whom he described as "My righteous One", and he said, "You murdered Him." But that was not the first thing; the first charge was, "You betrayed Him," and the word is identical in meaning with the word "traitor." You are murderers: but before that, and this is the deeper matter, you are traitors. Though Roman hands drove the nails, Hebrew inspiration moved the Roman hands to the deed. Roman hands were the hands of lawless men, men who were without the law; but you were men who had the law, and had light, and had the covenant and the word of revelation. You were traitors. You named the name of Jehovah, and when the ultimate Messenger of Jehovah came, you were betrayers, murderers. With what result? By that act the Hebrew nation as a nation committed suicide. I find the self-same fact of suicide in the case of Judas. How did it all end? You know the tragic story. Thirty pieces of silver! Have you ever noticed the solemn fact that he never spent one of them? He carried them back and flung them at the feet of the men from whom he had received them. There is no purchasing power in the price of disloyalty. What then? By his own act he ended his life. This is a principle of perpetual application. It is not merely the story of the Bible; you may read it in all history. I go back to the history of Rome. You have read "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire." Have you ever pondered the spiritual and moral teaching of it? Have you ever discovered the fact that the nation that disobeys law dies by its own hand? All the King's enemies are their own executioners. By the act of my treachery, I strangle my own life. I go down into the darkness which I myself have made. By the act of disloyalty to the King I erect the scaffold for my own destruction.

Our final word is, "Behold the King!" Here once again I see the great ideal. Lift your eyes and behold the city of God, not yet built, the work not yet completed. Then know this, that the men and women inside the Church who name His name and do not help Him build, who tolerate the things against which He is at war; these are the men who postpone the Kingdom. Consequently, my brethren, the thing I have to say to my heart and to yours is this, in the name of God and for the sake of the world; quit the form of religion, or cease to deny its power. Infinitely better to have done with the singing of the song, and the reciting of the creed, and the profession of faith if the life is not in harmony therewith.

My last word is to the man who says, "I have played the fool. I have been a traitor, is there hope for me?" Back to the Cross. The Cross was the outcome of treachery, and is the only remedy for you. Share its deep significance and abandon yourself to its death. If I will but go back to that Cross and take anew the oath of allegiance, by handing myself over entirely; then with infinite pity and in that meek mercy that lies at the heart of His majesty, the King will forgive me, and take me back again, and allow me to build with Him and battle with Him. Oh, Simon Peter, thou didst curse and swear that thou didst not know Him, by the flickering light of the fire His enemies had built; but by the Galilean lake in the dawn of the morning, with the flush of hope upon the sky, He will take thee back and give thee all thy work. Oh, the comfort of it!

The King of love my Shepherd is

Whose goodness faileth never.

Even though I have been a traitor He will take me back. Let us gather about His feet, and from this day be true to Him, and so hasten the Kingdom.