**VOLUME 6; CHAPTER 04 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**THE DIVINE WORKER by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*Not by might, nor by Power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.*

*Zechariah 4:6*

THE EARLIER PART OF THE PROPHETIC MINISTRY OF Zechariah was contemporary and co-operative with that of Haggai. Its burden was that of inspiring the people in the rebuilding of the temple of God. In the book bearing his name there are five great messages, three of them according to internal dating were delivered during the building of the temple; the last two give no indication of the time of their delivery or writing. Of the first three messages the central one is apocalyptic. It consists of eight symbolic visions setting forth the history of Israel from the time of her trouble to the perfect restoration and realization of Divine purpose. The first of the visions was that of the shadowed places among the myrtle trees. The final vision was that of the chariots of might and of magnificence.

The text I have chosen is found in the fifth of these eight visions, that of the golden candlestick setting forth the ideal mission of the chosen people as light bearer to the world. There can be no doubt whatever that the first application of that vision is the prophecy that Israel must finally realize her mission in the world according to the purposes of Jehovah. As I understand this book, none of these visions has been fulfilled. The ancient people of God are still beneath the myrtle trees; they will not abide there; these visions must all be fulfilled. (Israel was proclaimed a Free State May 14, 1948). With this first application of the vision and of the text I am not, however, concerned now. The great principles underlying the history of the ancient people are, for the time being, embodied in the Christian Church. I do not mean to suggest that Israel is forever and wholly cast off, or that in Church of God are fulfilled all the prophecies spoken concerning God's ancient people Israel. But, broadly stated, it is true that the principle of the Divine government, the illustration of its meaning, the proclamation of its fact, and the propagation of its power, are all committed to the Church of God. Consequently, we do no wrong to the sacred text if we borrow the symbolism intended pre-eminently to show forth the responsibility and privilege of Israel, and make application of it in certain respects to the immediate responsibility of the Christian Church.

There are three things, then, to which I desire to draw your attention. First, the implied mission of the Church, that of scattering light over all the darkness of the world. Second, the refused methods in the economy of God, "Not by might, nor by power." Third, finally, and principally, the secret of fulfilment, "By My Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts."

With regard to the implied mission of the Christian Church, let us glance at the suggestive and beautiful symbolism of this vision of Zechariah. Wakened as from slumber by the touch of an angel hand, the prophet was challenged as to what he saw, and replied that He saw a candlestick all of gold. We recognize immediately that this was a reference to something in the past economy of the people to which he belonged. Instinctively the mind is carried back to the sacred ritual of the Hebrew religion, through the temple which was then rebuilding, and the temple which had been destroyed, both of which were imperfect, faulty fulfilments of the Divine ideals of worship, to the tabernacle in the wilderness. A part of the central symbolism of that tabernacle was the golden candlestick, found not in the holy of holies, where were the ark and the mercy seat and the overshadowing cherubim, but in the holy place, where were the table of shewbread and, according to the ancient economy, the golden altar of incense. In that suggestive darkness was the great seven-branched candlestick, symbolic to the people who gathered around that holy place for worship of their own responsibility, perpetually suggesting that as the golden candlestick was the means by which the holy place was illuminated - for the holy of holies was illuminated not by the golden candlestick, but by the shekinah - so their responsibility in the world was that of shedding light abroad.

In the mystic book at the end of the New Testament, the writing of the Seer of Patmos, we find the visions of the seven churches unified by the presence in their midst of the living Lord Himself. Every church had as its symbol a golden candlestick, and the seven were unified by the fact that in the right hand of the Master were seven stars, the angels, the ministers of those churches - by that symbolism of light there was carried over into New Testament imagery the suggestiveness of the golden lamp in the holy place of the Hebrew religion. The scene of the revelation is a night scene. The churches are seen fulfilling their function of casting on the darkness of the days the light which is in them.

I go back to the vision of Zechariah, and I see the two olive trees and the oil; and I listen to the inquiry of the prophet, and to his honest confession that he did not understand the symbolism. The angel's answer was strange and mystic, yet surely clear, "This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit saith the Lord of hosts." Thus there is no need for human imagination or speculation; it is definitely stated that the oil supplying the golden lampstand, touched by fire and becoming light, symbolizes the supplying of the Spirit of God in order that the instrument may fulfil her function of illuminating the darkness and scattering light in the world. We remember again the sacred oil of the tabernacle. We remember again the stars in the right hand of the living Lord Who walked amid the churches; and, in this imagery of Zechariah, the sons of oil who stood one on each side of the lampstand, Zerubbabel and Joshua, the king and the priest; and we know how all that was therein symbolized, typified, prophesied, was fulfilled in Christ. We see in Him our Zerubbabel and Joshua, uniting in His own Person the two great offices of King and Priest, and by fulfilling their meaning, supplying to His people the Holy Spirit, that thereby they might fulfil their function of giving light to the world.

Moving a little away from the symbolism, or perhaps a little nearer to it to find its heart, the great truth suggested by the vision of Zechariah, by the golden lamp in the holy place, by the apocalyptic vision of Jesus Christ in the lampstand, the darkness, the light, is that the function of the Church of God may be inclusively and finally expressed thus: She exists to give light.

Have you ever noticed the first occurrence of the word "light" in the Bible? Have you ever noticed its last occurrence? It occurs first in the first chapter of Genesis; it is the word which ends the first Divine fiat, "Let there be light." Call to mind that vision of chaos, darkness, disorder, brooded over by the Spirit of God, then the Divine word, "Let there be light." That was the first word, not of creation, but of the restoration of a lost order, and it produced the dissipation of the darkness. The first thing, without which nothing else was possible, was light. The last occasion on which this word occurs in the Bible is in the Apocalypse, in the fifth verse of for the last chapter, "There shall be night no more … for the Lord God shall give them light." That is the picture, not of the millennium, but of the great and gracious Kingdom of the Son which lies beyond the millennium. It is a picture of the Kingdom of God re-established on the earth. It is a picture of the hour when all human sorrow, sighing, and sinning will be forever ended. It is not a picture of the heaven that lies beyond, but of this world won back to its allegiance to God. It is the picture of that hour when in perfect light, the light of the presence of the Lord God amid the sons of men, all lamentation and all sorrow shall forever have passed away. Between that first fiat and that final word announcing the shining of the light in the earth and consequently in the whole universe, Israel was the light-bearer, Jesus was the light, the Church of God is the light-bearer. The service rendered to God by Israel, by the Lord Himself, and by His people, is that of supplying light by the shining of which chaos turns to cosmos, darkness into light, sin and shame and sorrow flee away, and the great Kingdom of our God comes.

Standing in the midst of human history nineteen centuries ago, this Lord and Master of the race, having emptied Himself of the essential glories of the perpetual manifestation of Deity, and taken upon Him the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, in the midst of His ministry said, "I am the Light of the world." He also said to a handful of faulty, failing, feeble men, men of like passions with us, "Ye are the light of the world"; and He also said to them, "Tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high." Reverently to change the words of the Master that we may in the present hour of meditation understand His message, He said, You cannot be light save in the power of the Holy Spirit; "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

That takes us immediately to those two words which reveal the refused methods, "Not by might, nor by power." The difference between might and power is not at first easy to determine. There is a difference, but it is very difficult to define it. There is a twofold suggestiveness. First as to the word "might": the Revised Version has as a marginal reading, "not by an army." While that is very valuable and helps us, I do not consider it is final. I presume the Revisers made the suggestion because the Hebrew word here translated "might" is more often translated "army" than in any other way. It means force, of men or of means. Sometimes it means an army, the embodiment of might. Sometimes it means wealth. Sometimes it means virtue in the ethical sense, and sometimes virtue in the sense of strength. Sometimes it means valor. Wherever we find it, it suggests resources: of an army, to fight our battles; of wealth, in order that the army may be maintained. All sorts of resources are suggested by this Hebrew word. For the purpose of carrying over what seems to be the special message here, I adopt that word, Not by resources. It is not translation, but I think it is fair interpretation.

Power means force, just as might means force, but never in the same collective massed sense. Power is persistent and purposeful force, as dynamic, strength, vigor. If I use for the first word, "resources," I would use for this word, "resoluteness"; and again this is not translation, but I think it may be accurate interpretation. "Not by might, nor by power"; Not by resources, not by resoluteness. These may be high, pure, mighty; but in so far as they are human they cannot accomplish the work of God in the world. By might and by power, by resources and resoluteness, we may be able to legislate for England; but we cannot build the Kingdom of God. By splendid resources and magnificent resoluteness we can do much upon a human level; but by these things we cannot shine as lights in the world or bring in the Kingdom of God.

Briefly, comprehensively then, this is the meaning of the passage: Not by anything man can do, can man do anything for God. We are very far from believing that. If I were asked today to give what I think to be the reason for the comparative failure of the Church of God in missionary enterprise, I would say that we are terribly in danger of imagining that by our own splendid resources and resoluteness we can accomplish the work, and of forgetting the superhuman factor, without which the work of God can never be accomplished.

That leads us at once to the very heart of this meditation, to the most sacred and solemn and strengthening thing in all the word of the prophet, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit."

"Spirit," how well we know the word, and yet what vast significance there is within it which we have never grasped.

The first value of the word is its indefiniteness, the fact that it makes a suggestion to the mind that the mind can never finally comprehend. The Hebrew word, that wonderful word so constantly translated Spirit, ruach, really means invisible force, a force perfectly patent by the results it produces, but a force invisible, intangible, imponderable, which cannot be discovered by any method of the chemist or any cleverness of scientific investigation. The Greek word pneuma simply means wind, and is a figurative, poetic word. When Jesus said to Nicodemus, "The wind bloweth where it listeth," to illustrate the working of the Spirit, He employed the word for Spirit which is the same as wind. The Spirit bloweth where it listeth. Wind, we are perfectly sure of it; but no man knoweth whence it cometh or whither it goeth. Yet even that breaks down, it is only a figure of speech. You can weigh the wind, you can register the weight of it, the pressure to the square inch, and it immediately becomes material; but through the material sign there is suggested the great essential reality which is at the heart of the universe and permeates everything.

There is a special value in the qualifying pronoun, "My Spirit." The first occurrence of the phrase in the Bible is in the declaration, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever" that word which foretold the limit of the activity of mercy among the antediluvians. It is to be found occasionally in subsequent relations, until we come to the words of Isaiah, "Behold My servant … I have put My Spirit upon Him; He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles"; and again we find it in the book of Joel, "I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh." At last we come to that flaming wonder wherein the Church of God was born, and then the great Apostle declared in the midst of the gift of tongues, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel."

By that Spirit alone can men accomplish the work of God in the world. Not by our splendid resources; not by our resoluteness of purpose touched with the dynamic of persistent endeavor, not by anything that is human; but by that selfsame mystic Spirit of God, intangible, imponderable, invisible but present and potent, "By My Spirit saith the Lord of hosts."

Said Jesus, "I am the Light of the world. He was born of the Spirit, baptized of the Spirit, led of the Spirit into the wilderness; He went in the power of the Spirit to proclaim the Kingdom of God; He offered Himself through the eternal Spirit unto God. Of Him, the meek and lowly, the Galilean peasant according to human measurement, the great central truth may be spoken: "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith Jehovah."

Said He to His own disciples, and through them to the whole Church to the end of the age, "Ye are the light of the world." They are born of the Spirit, baptized by the Spirit, sealed by the Spirit, anointed by the Spirit, filled with the Spirit. They speak with tongues as the Spirit gives them utterance. They receive gifts which equip them for service in the Spirit. They are a spiritual company, and the power which makes them able to shine as lights in the world is the power of the indwelling Spirit of God. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord."

Now let us take this great essential truth so familiar to us all, which I have attempted to restate, and make application of it to the present time. The Decisive Hour of Christian Missions is the title which Dr. Mott has given to that wonderful little book which we have been studying together in our Missionary Study Circles. Its suggestiveness is full of solemnity. Dr. Mott, who has a right to speak on this matter, believes - and if I may venture to add my own conviction to his, he is absolutely correct - Dr. Mott believes that this is the decisive hour of Christian Missions. We have attempted here to consider that fact. What makes this the decisive hour of Christian Missions? The world's present unrest, the fact that God is saying to His people as never before, Now is the acceptable time; the activities of the Spirit of God everywhere manifest, the fact that the door is opened before the Christian Church to all peoples and nations as it never has been in the history of the two millenniums of the Christian Church. The Decisive Hour of Christian Missions!

What does the Church of God supremely need to remember at this moment? The truth embodied in my text, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit saith the Lord." Neither by our resources of intellect, of wealth, of enthusiasm; nor by our resoluteness of effort, of propaganda, of cleverness. All these things are necessary, but none of them, nor the whole of them, can do God's work in the world at this critical moment.

"By My Spirit": let us make this particular and immediate. The Church of God can operate in any country or among any people only when the Spirit of God has prepared the way for her coming. If you look back at the history of Christian missions you will find that to be true. Wherever the Christian missionary has come and his work has been successful, bringing men out of the thraldom of darkness into the liberty of light, that missionary has been conscious that the Spirit of God had been at work ere he came; the Spirit of God was at work in the measure of light which existed in the religion of the people before he came; the Spirit of God was at work in proving to these people by generations of failure the insufficiency of the light they had. The Master said to His disciples, "Look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest." What did He mean? He spoke of Samaria, away from the Jewish covenant. If you had talked to the disciples they would have told you it was the most impossible, hopeless place wherein to proclaim the Kingdom of God. Did they not practically say so? Did they not ask permission to seek for fire from heaven to destroy the ungodly crowd? But that was not the view of their Master, Christ said the fields are white unto harvest, by which He intended to teach us that the fields which we look upon as most disappointing and barren, are white, we have only to reap; our work is not that of plowing or sowing, it is that of reaping. If we are to be successful in missionary work we are to go to a new country, to fresh territory, to un-evangelized people, not imagining chat we are going to do God's work, but that God has been ahead of us, and not by our might nor our power in this respect, but by His Spirit the work is to be done, and that we simply go, saying as the early apostles said, "We are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Ghost."

The Spirit of God must choose and appoint the workers. I have touched on that in this pulpit before. I am almost overwhelmed by the sense of the solemnity of this great truth, and the awful danger there is of forgetting it. Nothing is further from my heart than to discourage anything which is of God; but l do feel we are in danger of hurrying out young people whom God has not called. I think the peril of the Student Volunteer Movement is in that direction. I have often been asked at student meetings to appeal to young men to go to the foreign field, and I always absolutely decline to do so, lest by my might or my power, youth or maiden should be lured to this work uncalled by the Spirit of God. Do we imagine for a moment that our Lord did not understand the sacredness of this whole matter? Did He say to His disciples; "The harvest is plenteous but the laborers are few, hasten therefore through Galilee and Judaea and try to persuade men to do this work"? No, a thousand times no! He said, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He send forth laborers into His harvest." Any man or woman who goes sent by a missionary board, persuaded by a Christian evangelist, or prophet, or apostle, uncalled by the Holy Ghost, is not only unable to help, but will hinder the progress of the work of God. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit saith the Lord."

We must also realize in this enterprise that it is the Spirit of God Who overrules occasions and events. We are to depend on Him; but we are also to act with Him. When the Church of God asks the aid of governments to protect her missionaries she is depending on the arm of flesh and is acting contrary to the genius and spirit of the Christian fact. It must be by the heroic, and yet perfectly safe, adventure, that trusts in the Spirit of God for the manipulation of difficulties and the bringing together of circumstances that the mighty work is done.

Finally, we must remember that in all our work it is the work of the Spirit of God to convict of sin, to turn the heart back again toward God; and when in response to His constraint men turn, it is His work to change the character and conform it to the image of His Son.

These things are not for the foreign field only, they are for us who are at home. What dire mistakes have I made in my own preaching because I have imagined that it was my business by argument and appeal to convict men of sin. "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit"; by being content to take what He has commissioned me to say, and to utter it, knowing that the thing He said is true, "My word shall not return unto Me void"; and to understand that the word becomes the seed of harvest only as the Spirit interprets its meaning, fertilizes its letter, until it becomes the germ of life in the soul of a man.

I think this great fact explains the solemn injunction of our Lord to His first disciples, to which I have already referred, "I send forth the promise of My Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high."

I realize that there are certain senses in which that word has no application to us; but there are senses in which it has immediate application and is of paramount importance. The sense in which it has no application is that when He uttered this word the Holy Spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified. These men had to wait until Pentecost for the power of the Spirit. Pentecost for us is not in the future, not in the past; this is Pentecost. The Spirit of God is here in all the gracious fullness and freedom and force which result from the accomplishment of the redeeming mission of the Son of God. I need wait no ten days for the equipment of power, or ten moments.

But the sense in which that word applies is that unless we have that power of the Spirit, then in God's name let us keep our hands off God's work and especially that most delicate, difficult, sacred work of the foreign field. Unless we know what it is to live the life of fellowship with the Lord in the Spirit, let us neither go nor give: "Tarry ye until ye be endued with power from on high." Let our going and our giving be in and by that Spirit, or let there be no going and no giving.

To my own soul the word is full of solemnity, reminding us as it does of the danger of depending on false strength and strange fire both collectively and individually. Yet the word is full of strength and hope, for that which Zechariah announced as the word of Jehovah to Zerubbabel, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts," comes to us in this age with new meaning and more intimate values because of the fact to which I have referred, that the Spirit has been given in a new way, and new power is available for the doing of God's work. If we will, we may depend on Him and answer the world's woes with the message of His peace, co-operate with the Spirit in that activity in the midst of human life which is so patent at this hour, go through the doors the King has opened to claim the vast territories in His name.

Yet the last statement is this. The matter of supreme importance is that the superhuman factor, God the Holy Spirit, needs the human. Here is the infinite and appalling wonder: the Spirit by Whom alone the work is to be done cannot say the word of Christ finally to the people in darkness unless He can have my lips.

So let us not think of these missionary matters as though they were small and unimportant, or things we can take up as hobbies. We are in the realm of fire, of force, and of eternal things. May it be ours to recognize that only by His Spirit can the work be done, and that His Spirit can do the work only as we are at His disposal.