**VOLUME 6; CHAPTER 13 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**THE WORK OF FAITH by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him Whom He hath sent.*

*John 6:29*

THE MESSAGE OF THIS TEXT IS A SEQUEL TO THE SUBJECT of our previous consideration. I then spoke from the first words our Lord uttered when He began His public ministry. The keynote of the preaching of Jesus called for a change of mind in its initial word, "Repent," and indicated the direction of that change in the phrase, "for the kingdom of heaven," and proclaimed the possibility of that change in the declaration, "is at hand." That was how He began His preaching.

The words of our text were uttered at a crisis in the work of His ministry. These wonderful discourses from which the text is taken were delivered in Capernaum toward the end of the second year of His ministry, and they constitute the close of the Galilean part of that ministry. He was speaking His last words in Galilee, uttering His last message to that particular region and to those particular men, and the very atmosphere in which He breathed was alive with criticism.

Yet there was a species of interest in Him, born of low motive, manifest on this occasion. He had recently fed the people, and then, escaping from them over the sea, had been found by them on the other side. They came to Him with a question that seemed to be very simple and very natural - a question that was purely geographical, "When camest Thou hither?" There seemed to be no boat to bring Thee, how didst Thou reach this point? Immediately in the most startling way Jesus Christ flashed on His questioners a great light. "Ye seek Me, not because ye saw signs, but because ye ate of the loaves, and were filled." Having thus rebuked the low level of their interest, revealed the materialization of their passions, with wooing tenderness and winsome softness He called them to something higher. "Work not for the meat which perisheth," work for the bread that is "unto eternal life." And these people, willing to be religious if He wanted them to be - how many men are so, until He begins to reveal to them what religion is! - willing to discuss religion as a metaphysical question, said, Tell us, what work must we do to work the works of God? He answered, and perhaps men were never much more startled, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him Whom He hath sent." The keynote of their question is to be discovered in the phrase, "Work the works." They asked, "What must we do that we may work the works of God?" That was their idea of religion, of spirituality - to work works; and He said to them, "This is the work - believe."

Let us pay special attention to this word of Christ. In common with all His words, it was not spoken for a day but for all time; it is not only a message to the quibblers concerning Him, but also one to us. It came not only as an answer to the peculiar form of their rationalistic thinking; it comes as an answer to every sincere or critical soul who asks, What is the work of religion? What is the secret of relationship between God and man? I bring you this further word from the teaching of Jesus, as in advance of the one considered previously, on the need for repentance, and I pray you hear the Master as He says, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him Whom He hath sent."

The first matter of importance in order to have a full appreciation of the value of these words of Jesus is that of their presupposition. Postponing the consideration of its philosophy to the second place, I shall ask you first, then, to notice the presupposition of this declaration, that Jesus was sent by God. We shall never understand the meaning of our Lord's strange declaration that belief is work and that work is belief until we have taken some time to consider this underlying thought, that He who was speaking claimed to be sent by God, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him Whom He hath sent."

Looking at this inferential claim in the light of other passages of Scripture, I find that here, breaking into the text, is a principle which recurs throughout all the teaching of Jesus, and around which everything else gathers.

Turning to the Gospel stories, we find that our Lord distinctly declared that He had been sent of God. There are three references in Matthew's Gospel showing that Matthew heard Him make the claim. In Mark's Gospel are recorded two occasions on which our Lord declared Himself to be sent of God. In Luke we have four such references. Thus each of the Synoptics gives occasions when Jesus declared He was thus sent.

But when I turn from the Synoptics to John, which is the Gospel of the One revealed from heaven, Who also was the Revealer, I find an accumulated and remarkable testimony to the truth I am trying to emphasize. We may omit chapters 1, 2, 18, 19, and 21 ; but in every other chapter Jesus is reported as declaring that He was sent. In chapters 18 and 19 man was sending Him back, and there is no declaration that He was sent from the Father. But why do I emphasize this fact? Because I want to utter a definite protest against the idea that Jesus was a man who dreamed His way into Messiahship, that Jesus was a man who lived a pure life, and one day, as a recent writer has, to my mind, almost blasphemously said, woke up to imagine He could be Messiah and so became Messiah. No, He was sent from God, and throughout the whole of His mission there was the tremendous consciousness surging within Him that He was the sent One, the anointed One of the Father.

The matter of supreme importance for us in this connection is that of the bearing of this fact on the text. This is a distinct claim of personal authority based on the direct authorization of God. He was where He was because God had sent Him. That was the meaning of all the things He said in the ears of men. He was perpetually attempting to arrest the attention, and enforce the claim that men ought to hear Him, not because of what He thought Himself, not because of what He thought of Himself, not because of any testimony He bore to Himself, but because He was in the world, the One sent of God with a message to men, that He was the Sent of God.

The value of His presence in the world was twofold; revelation and reconciliation. Revelation of God, revelation of man, revelation of evil. Men never knew God perfectly until He revealed Himself. Fallen man has no conception to this day of what humanity is save as he sees his possibility in Jesus. The world never knew the truth about Satan; no writer had ever been able to say, "We are not ignorant of his devices" until Jesus dragged him out of the darkness and held him in the light of His own pure life.

Jesus was the Light of the world, flashing truth on men concerning God, flashing truth on men concerning their own nature, and in that light of truth concerning God and man setting evil in the light that man might know it, and know it as it really is. A great revelation, and yet the purpose of His mission was infinitely more.

A great reconciliation was the intention of His being sent, and that reconciliation was threefold, consisting, first, of mental conviction; second, of moral cleansing, and, finally, of mutual communion between the soul of man and God.

The reconciliation that Jesus came to bring comes first by this revelation, which results in mental conviction. When mental conviction has been realized by the revelation man is ashamed and conscious of his moral failure. Then he receives moral cleansing by blood, for He makes reconciliation by the blood of His Cross, and on the basis of that moral cleansing He restores man to the One Whom man has seen in Him, and there is mutual communion or fellowship between God and man in Christ.

This is a great claim that Jesus made. He stood amongst men and He said: You want to know the work of God? This is it: "Believe on Him Whom He hath sent," the authorized and appointed One, Whose work is that of revelation and reconciliation. You begin your religion when you believe in Me, said Christ; you work the work of God when you believe in Me.

This leads us to our second point. I ask you to notice the philosophy of our text. Jesus declared that belief is an act, that it is not a frame of mind that comes unconsciously to man without the activity of his own will. Yet you find men who tell us to-day that they cannot help what they believe. I think I may say scores and hundreds of young men have said that to me, and said it honestly. It is partially true. But Tennyson says:

A lie which is all a lie may be met and fought with outright,

But a lie which is part a truth is a harder matter to fight;

and that is true of this statement. Many a man is saying that he cannot help what he believes, and because he persists in saying that, he is uttering half a truth, and the half-truth is blinding him and preventing him from coming into the possession of all the fullness of the suggestion of the word "believe." What is it to believe? Let me take that word that lies in my text: "This is the work of God, that ye believe." What is that word "believe"? I do not mean now merely how we commonly use it, for we cannot understand the use of the word until we understand the true meaning of the word. What is the simplest meaning of the Greek word translated "believe" so constantly in our New Testament? In the last analysis, to believe is to be convinced. You may take this word, which has to be translated trust, or faith, and trace it back to the root meaning, and it will be found that the essential value of the word is to be convinced. A man believes when he is convinced, so that, after all, belief is a matter of the reason. Never trust any teacher who affirms that you must believe against your reason. God calls man to the exercise of every faculty He has given him. To believe is an act of reason, and the simple meaning of the word "believe" is to be convinced that a statement is true. Belief is conviction, and a man may believe a lie or he may believe a truth; but he himself believes it to be true. In the simplest analysis of the meaning of the word, belief itself is conviction.

You say, Then is a man a Christian because he believes something? Not at all, and that is exactly the point to which I am coming. The New Testament never tells men that they can be saved by belief. It always indicates the line of belief, always declares the facts that must be believed, and indicates an action of the will as accompanying the conviction of the mind. It is belief in or on Jesus Christ that saves. Well, but you say, surely we are still in the presence of the same difficulty. If belief is, in the last analysis, to be convinced, and it is belief on Jesus Christ that saves, I cannot help whether I believe on Him or not.

In my text this word "believe" is used with a little Greek preposition, translated here "on"; and forgive me if for a moment I quarrel with the translators and use the word "in." Everyone knows there is a whole realm of value in prepositions, and this preposition, when used with the accusative case, always means motion into something. Every man will see that if he will take Thomas Newberry's Englishman's Bible and study that simple, yet wonderful, diagram of prepositions at the beginning of the New Testament. There it is clearly shown that this little preposition means motion into.

What is the work of God? Belief, but belief in Him Whom He hath sent. The work of God is the acceptance of conclusions on testimony concerning Jesus Christ. The faith that saves a man is that act of the will by which he says, Yes; the evidence is conclusive. I will believe. And that is the act that brings a man into living relationship with Jesus Christ.

It is an act of the will. I need not argue that. Anyone who has read Professor James' "The Will to Believe will" not desire me to argue that the will acts in belief.

I suppose there is no single canto of Tennyson's "In Memoriam" more quoted, or in many respects more beautiful, than that which deals with doubt. Shall we have it all, that we may have the truth of the text in its context:

You say, but with no touch of scorn,

Sweethearted you, whose light blue eyes

Are tender over drowning flies,

You tell me doubt is devil-born.

I know not. One, indeed, I knew

In many a subtle question versed,

Who touched a jarring lyre at first,

But ever strove to make it true.

Perplext in faith, but pure in deeds,

At last he beat his music out.

There lives more faith in honest doubt,

Believe me, than in half the creeds.

He fought his doubts and gather'd strength,

He would not make his judgment blind;

He faced the specters of the mind,

And laid them; thus he came at length

To find a stronger faith his own;

And power was with him in the night,

Which makes the darkness and the light,

And dwells not in the light alone.

The arresting and most often quoted line of that poem is: "He would not make his judgment blind."

Now, forgive me, I am almost tired of hearing that line quoted by one class of men. It has been quoted to me north, south, east, west, in my own country; it has been quoted to me from the Atlantic coast to the Pacific, and almost always by the man who is critical, who does not accept certain truths which I accept, and who in vindication of his skepticism says, I will not make my judgment blind. I am not angry with him. I believe there is such a thing as "honest doubt." But "He would not make his judgment blind" is not merely a line that describes honest doubt, it equally describes honest faith. There is such a thing as making judgment blind by receiving credulously a statement that you cannot believe with your judgment; but there is such a thing as dishonesty in refusing to receive testimony. I will not charge you with that. There is such a thing also as neglecting to consider testimony. There is a peril that when men boast they will not make their judgment blind they are so boasting to cover intellectual indolence or moral failure. It is not always so. There are men who are fighting "the specters of the mind," men who cannot be convinced at present. But, oh, I am a little tired of the man who comes to me and says, I do not believe in Jesus. I say to him, How much time have you given to attempt to consider the arguments? And I sometimes find that he once heard some lecturer say something smart about Jesus, or else he heard some preacher cast reflections on the person of Christ, and, without taking one solid day out of his life, to say nothing of weeks and months of toil and thought, to find the truth, he says, I will not make my judgment blind. Why, man, you are making it blind, and you have no business to say you do or do not believe on Jesus Christ until you have taken time to hear the testimony and to weigh the evidence. The one thing Jesus said in the age when men were criticizing Him was, "Believe Me," examine Me, or else "believe Me for the very work's sake." Consider the arguments, take time to look into the whole question: this is the work of God, that you believe in Him Whom God hath sent. The claim is, God has sent Him, and here is the imperial claim Jesus Christ makes. If you will take time to consider Him you will have demonstrated to you the fact that He is sent of God, and there will begin your faith.

Jesus spoke one very terrible parable among many that were beautiful. He spoke of one lost soul crying out to Abraham that somebody should be sent to his brethren. You remember the answer Abraham is represented as giving to the lost soul. I pray you, think of it carefully: "They have Moses and the prophets … if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, if one rise from the dead." There "persuaded" is the word translated in other places "believe." So that our Lord said, in effect, that there is such a thing as being willing to be persuaded. The evidences are with them: they have Moses and the prophets, and if they will not hear them it will still be the same - they will not believe, they will not be persuaded. There is the element of will, and that is the element for which we are responsible in the matter of faith. Faith will not come as a sentiment creeping over the life, or if it so come it will be worthless, anemic, faithless. Faith is a great act in response to a great claim. Here is a man who says: I will listen and consider; I will not be persuaded by anything short of conviction, but as the conviction comes I will not make my judgment blind to that; neither will I, because the growing conviction is going to make claims upon me, shut it out. I will believe the thing of which I am convinced by yielding complete obedience to it.

We need to plead for this honesty to-day. I repeat that half the much-talked-of agnosticism of the present hour is due either to intellectual indolence, or to the desire to cover up some moral defect; and, if not, then, in the name of God and humanity, there is no Gospel. I stand here to declare that, if you will consider Christ, consider Him honestly, listen to Him rather than to the exponents of His teaching, bring your life into the light of the revelation He makes, as to its possibility - if you will measure your creed by His revelation of God, I think you cannot possibly do so without finding that there grows on you the conviction that He is right.

What, then, is belief? Belief is the action of the will whereby you accept the conclusion and abandon yourself to Him. The belief that saves a man is the attitude of will of a man who looks into the face of Jesus and says: At last, oh, Nazarene, Thou hast conquered.

Here I give my all to Thee,

Friends and time and earthly store,

Soul and body Thine to be,

Wholly Thine forevermore.

This is belief in Him: the motion into Him of all the life, under the impulse of an honest conviction which will not make its judgment blind.

Finally, and briefly, let us listen to the proclamation of the text: "This is the work of God: believe." It is the initial work making possible a new life. It is an inspirational work that goes forward through all life. It is an inclusive work that takes in the whole sum of things for a man.

It is the initial work of God. Jesus Christ is God's new point of departure, and from the moment when He came and lived and taught, God swept everything else away. The law and the prophets are no longer necessary, as they are no longer sufficient. Men had lived under conscience, men had lived under law, men had lived under the interpretation of the will of God by the messages of the prophets. God swept them all away when Christ came. The law made nothing perfect, and God, with the sending of Jesus, put His hand on every other method of human salvation, and from that moment until now God refuses to meet any man save through that Man. If the resurrection of Jesus Christ - if I may put this superlatively and finally - was demonstration of the fact that God accepted Jesus, it was also a demonstration of the fact that He rejects everybody else save as they come to Him in and through Jesus Christ. If you ask me whether a man can possibly be saved except through Jesus Christ I say absolutely, No. No man can be saved except through Jesus Christ. You say, Can I be saved by some educational, ethical method? I tell you, No. This is the work of God, that you believe on Him. This is not a mere caprice of Deity. It is not merely because God will not receive you on any other basis, but because you cannot come to Him on any other basis. Your highest ethical code appears sullied when held in the light of heaven's unsullied purity. Your educational method is the education of devilry when compared with the purpose of God. What He asks is truth in the inward parts, a pure unsullied spotlessness, and there is no man who can bring it to Him. And so, in His mercy, God, sweeping away all other methods, sent forth this Man to be at once Example and Saviour, Revealer and Reconciler; and the first thing in life and religion is that men believe in Him.

But it is not true that God saves a man on the basis of an intellectual assent. This work is not merely initial, it is inspirational. The work of belief is not one act, it is a maintained attitude. I believe on Him, and by that belief I am received of God. But that belief is not then over. It begins then, and it runs through all life; and real Christian living is living by faith in the Son of God all the time. Faith means not merely an intellectual assent; it means a moral obedience, a whole-hearted surrender, and a perpetual yielding of the whole life to Jesus Christ. If a man really believes in Him Whom the Father hath sent, that belief will affect all his thinking, all his speaking, all his doing. To work that initial work of belief is to bring forth all the works that are meet for repentance and manifest the fruit of the Spirit in all its diversity of beauty and of glory.

This work of belief in Jesus is also inclusive, including all the territory of the being, including all the forces of the life, and, thank God, including the utmost reach of the coming ages. This is the work of God. Not that God is mindful of the thing that you believe intellectually and unmindful of the actual doings of your life; but because God would correct the external conduct by the internal creed, because God would set right the last detail of daily activity by setting right relationship to Him.

I ask, therefore, in conclusion, Have you believed in Him? And if not, why not? If you tell me your difficulty is intellectual, then, I pray you, do not make your judgment blind. By that I mean, do not profess a faith you do not possess. But, in God's name, do receive the testimony and consider it, and. do not treat a matter so weighty as this with trivial attention, and then profess that you are a skeptic. Think, man, think! Face this claim of Jesus, face all the evidence, do not make your judgment blind.

But is there not a deeper reason? Is not the reason of your unbelief moral? Be honest tonight and answer that question as between God and your own soul. Do you not know that if you believe in Him it means that you must obey, and that means the going out of your life of the cherished thing that is wrong. I do not ask you to confess to me - may God deliver you from such folly! But, as the messenger of the Cross, the messenger of the living Lord, I charge you, look within. Why have you never yet abandoned your life in honesty to the conclusions that have come to you as convictions long ago? Remember that if in the inner shrine of your heart you are now facing some evil and immoral thing, then I must take you back to the former word: "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

But let my last word be spoken to the man who is close to Christ and is conscious that Christ is close to him. Right there where you are, without outward sign or sound as yet, believe in Him, trust Him, venture everything on the conviction that is in your heart of what He is and what He can do.

I have often told the story; I will tell it again; to me it illustrates faith so beautifully. It was an old Scotch woman who had been following the Lord for many years, and her minister said to her - I don't know whether it was wise or not, but yet, for the sake of her answer, I am glad he said it - "Maggie, supposing, after having been a Christian for forty years, the Lord should drop you out of His hand, and you should be lost, in spite of your faith." And Maggie, with a radiant smile, looked back into his face and said, "Nay, then I would just lose my puir wee bit soul, but He would lose the honor of His eternal Word." That is the faith that saves a man.

Oh, men, at this moment in the presence of God, I will risk heaven and eternity on this One sent from God. Will you do that? Then there will come into your heart the sense of His peace, the sense of His power, and you will find that in that initial work there lie all the forces of the works, and out of the creed of honesty will come the conduct of purity.