**VOLUME 7; CHAPTER 02 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**CHRIST'S NEXT OF KIN by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother.*

*Matthew 12:50*

IN ORDER TO HAVE AN ACCURATE APPRECIATION OF THE MEANING and value of these wonderful words of Jesus we must carefully consider the circumstances in which they were uttered. The story is told in a brief paragraph, of which these are the final words. There is a similar paragraph in the third chapter of Mark's gospel; indeed, the similarity is very remarkable. The story as Mark tells it is hardly changed by sentence or phrase. There is absolutely no difference in any essential matter.

However, in his context, Mark does give some details which Matthew omits. Christ was so pressed with His work, so eagerly sought after by the crowds, so eagerly responding to their seeking, so completely giving Himself up, without stint and without reserve, to the demands that were being made on Him that "when His friends heard it, they went out to lay hold on Him; for they said, He is beside Himself" (Mark 3:21). After recording that fact, Mark goes on to tell the things that were happening in Capernaum, and then, at the thirty-first verse, he resumes the narrative commenced in verse 21, "And there came His mother and His brethren."

Christ, as I have said, was giving Himself without stint, without reserve, to the thronging, pressing multitudes; they followed Him from place to place, came with their criticisms and with their agonies; and with patient courtesy He replied to their criticisms, and with infinite compassion He relieved their agonies. He was so busy that He had not time to eat, was so perpetually occupied that He had no time for rest. That news was conveyed to His mother and to His brethren after the flesh, who evidently were in very close association with Mary, and shared her anxiety and concern for Jesus. Hlis mother heard, and she said, and they said, "He is beside Himself," He is losing His reason. In consequence of this conviction they started on a journey to reach Him, in all probability from Nazareth to Capernaum. When they arrived, they found that He was in a house, surrounded by a crowd of people.

The word was passed to Him that His mother and brethren were without, seeking to speak to Him. He knew why they had come. "He knew all men, … He needed not that anyone should bear witness concerning man; for He Himself knew what was in man." His mother had come, full of anxiety for Him, persuaded that He was beside Himself, eager to prevent Him from killing Himself by excess of zeal and toil. She did not understand Him. That is revealed in the gospels from beginning to end. She loved Him with a great love; she knew the infinite and appalling mystery of His being; but she never understood Him. When He began His ministry she sought to hurry Him to some demonstration of power, and He had to say to her, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." Because she loved Him she would have persuaded Him to take care of Himself.

Knowing this, Jesus said, "Who is My mother? and who are My brethren?" and, pointing to the little group of disciples, exclaimed, "Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother."

This word was not a slight cast on the natural love of Mary for Him. He was not speaking slightingly of the mother love that had come after Him to stop Him injuring Himself. It was rather a revelation of the fact that there is a closer affinity than that of natural relationship. His word was a declaration that those next of kin to Him are such as share His spiritual conceptions and compulsions. He was revealing to His mother, to His disciples, and to the crowds, the fact that men and women who have fellowship with Him in spiritual vision and spiritual toil are nearer kin to Him than even the woman who had been highly honored as the one who bore Him and gave Him that natural life, through the mystery of which He wrought out into human history God's redeeming purpose.

Let us, then, consider two matters: first, our Lord's teaching in these words concerning the essential nature of that kinship with Him which all those of us who are truly His disciples share; and, second, the particular privileges of kinship which He here described.

First, then, as to the teaching of this declaration concerning the essential nature of our kinship with Jesus. May I ask you to observe negatively that our kinship with Jesus is not that of our humanity; neither is it that of His divinity. I think, perhaps, these things need to be carefully considered and most earnestly stated, for our investigation during recent years, our search, our inquiry, our pressing nearer to the fact of Christ, have resulted in real values, but also they have created grave perils. We have come to a new apprehension of the actuality of the humanity of our Lord. If there are any great artists in the world today they will not paint Christ as the great artists of the middle ages painted Him. We have escaped from those conceptions of our Lord which put Him at a distance from the ordinary things of everyday life. The music of the declaration that He was a carpenter is understood it never has been understood. Whereas I believe there is great value in this rediscovery of the human Christ, I feel that there is peril in the use we may make of the discovery. I hear people perpetually speaking of the Lord Jesus as though He were entirely, absolutely of their own humanity; or speaking of their own humanity as though it were entirely part and parcel of the humanity of Jesus. That is not the case. No man can come to anything like a careful study of the human Jesus without discovering the infinite distance between Him and ourselves. In all the things that demonstrate His nearness we find the supreme evidence of His distance. If you tell me He was a Man tempted, and therefore of our humanity, I agree. But His attitude under temptation, and his victory over temptation, demonstrate the fact that in His human life He was infinitely removed from any other man. If you suggest that He was a man Who lived on the principle of trust and faith, I perfectly agree; but in that very activity of trust I find Him at infinite distance from myself. His trust never faltered, never wavered; mine has been faltering and wavering all my life. It is when you press on me the fact of His humanity, and I come most perfectly to an apprehension of truth that He was human, that I am most startled, ashamed, driven back, defeated by the vision of His perfection.

The teaching of the New Testament is that He was not merely of our humanity, but that He was the second Man, the Adam, the Founder of an entirely new race. As the first race was created in the economy of God by the inbreathing of the Spirit of God to dust, the new race is to be created of that very humanity by a new birth of the Spirit of God. I go back to the Genesis story, and there I see a living creature of dust, enswathed in Deity, and by that enswathing, in-breathing, created man, differentiated by infinite gulfs from all the creation that lies beneath him. In process of time, out of that human nature, fallen and degraded, in an awe-inspiring mystery the Holy Spirit took of the seed of the woman and made a new Man, the first of a new race, all the members of the succeeding race, to be of fallen humanity but remade, reborn, recreated by the activity of the Holy Spirit. The first Man of the new race was, in an infinite mystery, of the old race, but separated from it by the mystery of His birth. I am not kin of Jesus by virtue of my humanity. That humanity is of the race fallen, and Jesus is the Head of a new race.

Neither is our kinship that of His Divine nature, I am not one with Him in essential spiritual life, for my spiritual life is created, His spirit life is uncreated, His spirit life is of the very life of God, absolutely without beginning. He was in Himself, in a mystery that has for two millenniums defied the analysis and explanation of the schoolmen and theologians, and which will defy them to the end of time, the very logos of God, with God, of God, very God from everlasting. To speak of that in man which may be of the Divine nature, that in which He is in the image and the likeness of God, as being kin with the essential mystery of the Deity of Christ, is to show there is no true comprehension of the Christ of the New Testament.

Thus the statement of Christ becomes illuminative and remarkable, for He reveals what kinship with Himself really is, in its deepest and profoundest. Not here does He tell the mystery of its genesis; here, rather, does He reveal the marvel of its expression. What is the expression of our kinship, what is the actuality of it, the nature of it? "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother." He is next of kin to Me, that soul who does My Father's will!

Kinship with Christ consists in doing the will of God, doing the will of God, interpreted in the light of His immediate actions, those very actions which His mother had come to hinder, and doing the will of God as interpreted in the light of His perpetual attitudes. If one should inquire what is to do the will of God, there is but one answer: Behold Man, and know what it is to do the will of God. Mark well the impulse of His activities; mark well the doing of all the days; observe carefully that the greater part of His life was spent, not in public service, but in private duty. Remember that first there was the naturalness of the child life and its development. Remember that, second, there was the daily round, the common task for eighteen years in the carpenter's shop. Remember that, finally, when the Voice called there was the abandoning of the carpenter's shop without any of that hesitation or modesty which is of the essence of rebellion. He went forward immediately to face the crowds, declaring the will of God, revealing the heart of God in tenderness and compassion. Know what the will of God is by observing Him pouring Himself out in sacrificial service, violating false sanctities in order to establish the true sanctity, breaking the Sabbath to heal a man in order that the man may forevermore find unbroken sabbath of rest in God. Now, said Jesus, whosoever is doing that is next of kin to me, My brother, My sister, My mother. That is the final word.

What lies behind doing the will of God? Knowing the will of God. The man who does the will of God is the man who knows the will of God. The will of God is discovered must be discovered in a life of personal, direct, immediate communion with God. The will of God must be discovered by persistent and perpetual inquiry as to what the will of God is. All these things are illustrated in the life of our Lord. We hear Him saying such things as these: I speak nothing of Myself; what My Father gives Me that I speak. I do nothing of Myself; what My Father commands Me, that I do. I am not alone, My Father is with Me. He did the will of God because He knew the will of God. He knew the will of God because He lived in communion with God, waited for God, submitted to God, inquired of God. He said, The men who do that are My next of kin.

What, then, is the fundamental thing? What lies at the back of this doing, deeper even than this knowing? Now, we touch not the activities of Life, not even the intelligence of life, we are at the central citadel of human life, the will of man. Once again let the light of the Lord's perfect revelation flash on our thought. We go back, as we so constantly have to do, to the prophetic Scriptures, in order to hear the very keynote of His life:

In the roll of the book it is written of me:

I delight to do Thy will, O my God.

The will of God chosen, the will of God inquired after in communion, and consequently known, the will of God done in the actual activity of life - that is the story of Jesus, the whole story, including the stoop from the height to the depth, including the whole mystery of incarnation and the process of the incarnate life and the ultimate darkness of the Cross. Everything is there. The will of God chosen, the will of God known as the result of communion, fellowship, inquiry - the will of God carried out.

Said the Lord: The men who live on that principle, choosing the will of God, inquiring after it in perpetual communion, carrying it out in all the details, in the crises and the commonplaces - these men are next of kin to Me, "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother."

Now we turn to what seems to me to be the peculiar and remarkable emphasis and value of this declaration concerning the privileges which He suggested. Let us hear the words again, "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother." That declaration emphasizes what we are to Him rather than what He is to us. Again, remember the local circumstances: His mother and His brethren after the flesh were outside; she was there out of great love for Him, but she stood outside the circle of His own vision, His own passion, His own mission. She did not understand Him; but these men did, the grace of the declaration is most marvelous when I renenber the men, when I remember how they blundered faltered and failed. Nevertheless, He did say this thing concerning them, and He did say afterwards that they had been with Him through all His temptations. He knew these men, and knew that the choice they had made of discipleship was far finer than the blunders they had made on the way. That is God's attitude towards man. God judges us at last, not by the accidents, but by the motive, the passion that lies underneath. They were twelve valiant saints. I take them the Lord's measurement rather than at that of any man. They failed and blundered; but He knew them in the deepest of them, and He said, I know all the imperfections, and failings of these men who are with Me, but I know that the central passion, the master passion of their lives is to do the will of God. They supply what I lack in the sympathy of My own mother. She has not yet reached this inner circle; they and they are to me all that is suggested by these wonderful words of human relationship, brother, sister, mother.

In that is the exceeding wonder and glory of my text. It does not declare that if I do the will of God Jesus will be Brother to me. That is true, perchance. The text does not declare that if I do the will of God He will be Sister to me in all the sweet suggestiveness of the word. That may be true. That is not what He said. The text does not declare that He will mother me with infinite tenderness. That is true, but that is not what He said.

There He stood, lonely, criticized, misunderstood, and He declared that those blundering, frail souls who nevertheless had chosen the will of God, and who were seeking to know it, and to do it, were by that attitude coming into such affinity with Him that they were to Him brother, sister, mother.

That is the highest, holiest privilege of doing the will of God. Oh, the privileges of doing the will of God! What are they? The perfecting of my own personality presently? The realization of all that is profoundest in my own being by and by? These are privileges; but this is highest - oh that I may say it reverently and yet say it as our Lord said it on this occasion, when He was being misunderstood by everyone - the highest privilege of doing the will of God is that I can minister to the heart of Christ, that I can be His brother, His sister, His mother.

Everyone sees that the words are suggestive, beautifully, exquisitely poetical, chosen by the Master of words and thoughts in order to convey to human hearts that are touched by these human affections great spiritual truths of the possibilities of the influence exerted upon Himself, by the men who do the will of God.

Did you struggle all last week my brother, my sister, to do the will of God in difficult circumstances, in places of temptation, with sorrow wringing your heart and problems pressing on your spirit? Did you steer straight for the goal so far as you were able? Was the passion of your Heart to do His will? Then you were brother, sister, mother, to Jesus.

What do these words suggest? Now, you must use your own faculty of imagination and interpretation. Imagination and interpretation never succeed save as they are love-inspired. You must begin with human love. What is a brother? "A brother is born for adversity." Yes, that is it! Those two boys live together; they are often terribly rude to each other; yes, they are brothers, but wait till one of them has been hit by sorrow, by sin, then you will discover that the other is his brother. "A brother is born for adversity." I love the Hebrew word there: A brother is born for a tight place! "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, he is My brother." God help us to see this thing. The words of Jesus can touch to heavenly music only chords that are already in hearts. Is Jesus ever in a difficulty? Yes, in London He is difficulty, in a tight place. Men are still buffeting Him, bruising Him, crucifying Him. Will you be His brother, standing up for Him, helping to bear His burden? I would Iike to be. We may be if we will do the will of God.

Not His brother only; His sister. Sometimes I think I could speak better of this. I never had a brother, but I had a sister. When I was getting this sermon ready I was greatly impressed to notice that there is no tender reference to a sister in the Old Testament, except, perhaps, the references to Rebekah and to Miriam. When I come into the New Testament every reference to a sister is thrilling with tenderness. You are quite welcome to charge me with imagination - I believe in imagination - but I wondered why this was. Among other things, I noticed a story which said, "A certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary." That is how Mary was known, as Martha's sister. John, in writing of them, put it the other way, "Mary and her sister Martha"; yet even he, in the course of few sentences, was saying "Martha and her sister." Mary was a sister. When Jesus said, "My sister," I wonder whether He was not thinking about Mary. If the courage that stands by you when you are in a tight place is the peculiar quality of brother, what is the peculiar quality of a sister? That you confide in her because she understands. There have been hours in the lives of many men when they had some confidence, tragic confidence; they could not tell father or mother, they told their sisters. When, presently, the priests seemed to be winning, and Judas was plotting, Mary made her way Jesus and violated all the economies by pouring costly nard on His feet. What did it mean? She knew His secret. She was doing it to His burying. I would like to be able to hear His secret. I would like to have some little part in the reception of His confidence in the hour when He needs someone to tell His secret to. Is it possible? Yes, "whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My sister."

We come to the last word, and it is the greatest word of all, "mother." What does "mother" stand for? There is but one answer. If brother is a synonym for courage, and sister for confidence, mother is the synonym for comfort. "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." Comfort: the heart of Christ comforted! Yes, said Paul, "To you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer in His behalf." We can comfort the heart of the Lord.

How shall I comfort Him, the sorrowful One, for He is still sorrowful in the presence of the world's sin and agony and sorrow - how can I comfort Him? By doing the will of God. Every life conformed to the Divine will, conditioned within it, devoted to it, busy about the Divine will, ministers comfort to His sacred heart.

"Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother."

Notice that the figures end there. He did not say the same is My father. Other than of God, He never spoke of any in that relation to Him. When at twelve years of age His mother came to Jerusalem looking for Him, having missed Him from the company, she said, "Thy father and I sought thee sorrowing." He answered her, "How is it that ye sought Me? wist ye not that I must be in My Father's house?" That inquiry was a revelation of His recognition of the fact that God alone was His Father. The figures made use of in my text were all on the human level. We can never be to Him in the place of His Father. When we apply these relations as implying what He is to us, He is brother, sister, mother, and all because He is able to look into our eyes and souls and say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

Those who do the will of God enter into the sacred possibilities of ministering to Him. Does not that make it supremely worth while to do that will? How have I sought to appeal to some of you to do the will of God for the saving your own souls, for the sake of the influences you can exert upon other men for their healing and help. I reach a higher level of appeal now: I pray you choose the will of God the principle of your life, find your way into fellowship therewith, and seek to do it, not merely for the sake of your own soul, not alone in order that you may help others, but you may minister to the need of the heart of Christ. I feel that is the highest motive. Oh, if in a life of service, by suffering and by sacrifice I might place another gem in the Redeemer's diadem, weave another garland wherewith to deck His brow; if by devotion to the will of God, and service expressive of that devotion, I can stand up for Him in a tight place, can receive the confidence of His sorrow, and break upon His feet some alabaster box of ointment; if I can only comfort the sorrowing Heart of Christ, then, so help me God, as I know it and am able, I desire to do the will of God.

The final word of the message is this. He made the assertion of my text not only with regard to those disciples who were there, but as a proclamation, and He introduced it with the greatest of all the words of the New Testament, in some senses. "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father."

If my name had been written there, I would have thought some other man had borne my name and that it did not mean me; but "whosoever" includes me, includes you. That is my appeal tonight. For Christ's sake, because He needs brothers, and sisters, and mothers, for courage, for confidence, for comfort, seek, and do the will of God.