**VOLUME 7; CHAPTER 12 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**MEN LOOKING FOR THEIR LORD by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning; and be ye yourselves like unto men looking for their Lord.*

*Luke 12:35,36*

EVERY MAN HAS SOME CONCEPTION OF LIFE AS A WHOLE, A conception which affects all his attitudes and activities, even though at times unconsciously to himself. This is illustrated by the different figures of which we make use when speaking of life as a whole. We liken it to a race, to a voyage, to a pilgrimage, to a quest, to a warfare; and in every case a complete conception is presented to the mind by the figure of speech. Under the figure of a race we think not merely of the track along which men run, but of the goal which they desire to reach. Under the figure of a voyage we think not merely of the seas which men cross, but of the harbor which they fain would make. Under the figure of a pilgrimage we think not merely of the pathway which winds through the valleys and over the mountains, but of that city, the habitation which men fain would reach. Under the figure of a quest we think not merely of the diligent painstaking search, but of that glad hour when what is sought for is found. Under the figure of a warfare we think not merely of the clash of conflict, but of the crowning joy of the ultimate victory.

In every case, moreover, the ultimate is the inspiration of the immediate. Men run in order to win. Men are careful concerning the navigation of their passage in order that they may reach the harbor. Men are earnest in their prosecution of the pilgrimage, that they may finally come to the city of their desire. The diligence of the quest is inspired by the passionate desire to find what is sought. All the earnestness of the conflict is born of the passion for victory.

Every man, I repeat, has some conception of life. He may not express it figuratively; indeed he may never have formulated it for himself; perhaps he has never talked about it, never thought of it, on the surface of his thinking; and yet underneath that surface thinking he has some conception of what his life means to him. To some men life would seem to be a day of business, the goal of which is the amassing of wealth. To others life would seem to be one constant opportunity for pleasure, the intervals being filled with strenuous work in order to secure that pleasure. Whatever his conception of life may be, it determines the conduct of a man and affects all his relationships in this world. Conduct based on conception creates character, and a man will conform in character to what he makes his conception of life.

In this word of Jesus He reveals the true conception of life in the case of those who have yielded themselves to Him. It is the Christian conception, that is, the conception of the follower of the Christ, of whatever man has seen His beauty and heard His call, and responding to both, has passed under His direction, and shares in all the values of His redeeming work. According to our Lord's teaching, that man becomes in all the activities of his life, in all his relationships with his fellow men, in all the conduct of the passing days, a man looking for his Lord.

This conception is altogether too largely lost sight of by Christian men today. When Dr. Denney wrote his volume on the Thessalonian epistles he said some things that are very worthy of consideration. He declared that the bloom of beauty on apostolic Christianity was created by the upward look, by the fact that those early Christians did most certainly live, looking for the Lord. He went further and declared that where that expectant attitude is lost, the upward look abandoned, while there may remain very much of Christian strength, that bloom is lost. I believe all that to be most true and most important. Therefore I have turned this evening to this subject, and I shall ask you to meditate with me the conception of life which our Lord suggests; the attitudes of life which will result from such a conception, and the character which response to the conception will invariably produce.

First, then, what is this conception of life? Life becomes, according to this view, a period the duration of which, long or short no man knows, a period ending not with death but with the coming of the Lord Himself. According to this view, in that moment when a man yields himself to the Lord Jesus Christ, the boundaries of his life are changed for him. The boundaries of life to the man not yielded to the Christ are his birth and his death; that man looks back through the years to the day of his birth, the day of beginning; and he looks on speculatively, wonderingly, tremblingly toward the day of death; life is bounded for him by the day of birth and the day of death. To the Christian man the boundaries are altered. The boundary of his life begins with his first meeting with Jesus. In the hour when the Lord comes to him, in the hour of the Lord's first advent to his personal experience, life begins. The other boundary is the moment when the Lord shall come to him again, gathering him to be with Himself. All that is expressed by Paul in that one brief and wonderful word, "To me to live is Christ." Those are the words of a man who had lost count of all except that in his life which was Christ-conditioned. He said, in effect, after three and thirty years of personal comradeship with the Lord, Life began for me when Jesus apprehended me, "to me to live is Christ," He is the origin of my life. Before that first meeting with Christ I had other experiences, other ambitions, other values; but things that were gain I count loss, I blot them out, I cancel them; they are of no value. Life began for me, said the apostle in effect, when above the brightness of the sun, the Lord shone upon me and possessed my life. What is the other boundary of life for this man? According to his own writing in that same autobiographical chapter, it is the hour in which He shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory. To all Christian men life's boundaries have thus been changed. Said the same apostle to the Thessalonian Christians, "Ye turned to God from idols" - such was the beginning - "to serve the living and true God" - such was the process - "and to wait for His Son from heaven" - such is the consummation. The coming of Jesus to the soul is the beginning of the Christian life, and it is to be consummated by His coming again.

This means that the goal of the life of the individual Christian is always out of sight. Finality is never reached, ambition is never fully realized in these passing days. It means that all other hopes are subservient to this one glorious hope of the coming of the Lord Himself, of looking into His face, of being changed into His likeness. That is to be the hour of supreme, perfect satisfaction in the experience of the Christian man. The man thus looking and waiting for the Lord is willing that every other hope should not be realized if but the interference shall be that of the glad hour of the Advent of the Master. The man waiting for his Lord recognized the larger hope in all the smaller; and the smaller hopes are for- evermore conditioned by the larger. Every man here is living in the expectation of some event toward which he is moving in the ordinary course of things in his own life; looking for the day of graduation, looking for the day when he shall commence the stern work of life, looking for the day when after the process of effort he shall have arrived at a place of power. Such hopes are the very inspirations of conduct. But the Christian man, while having all such hopes, has as the supreme, the ultimate, the profoundest hope, the coming of the Lord; and all these lesser hopes are conditioned by that supreme hope. The truly Christian man will have no desire in his heart to postpone the coming of the Lord that he may reach some other goal; he will be perfectly ready, willing, glad, to know that every other goal toward which he properly runs is lost, canceled, because the Lord Himself will greet him.

This conception of life means that all fear is checked, corrected, hushed to rest. The man who lives waiting for the coming of the Lord will know nothing of panic in the midst of catastrophe, will know nothing of despair in the hour of apparent defeat. The glory of that certain Advent of the King will transfigure all the sackcloth, illuminate every hour of bereavement, irradiate with glory every dark cloud that sweeps across the life. The man who lives forever waiting for the Lord, looking for Him, is the man in whom fear never gains the mastery. Fear will assail the soul, for so are we fashioned; fear will threaten the courage, for so are we made; but when fear arises, then the upward look and the eager expectation will check the fear and cancel it so that the soul is again filled with new courage.

Yet I pray you observe that the ideal is this: if the goal is out of sight and finality can never be reached for this man until he see his Master, nevertheless, the goal reached, the hope realized, the fear forever ended, these things are always close at hand. In the midst of the most strenuous running the goal is expected immediately. In the hour when fears threaten the soul, hope is victorious because at once the Lord may appear.

The Christian life is not a race the end of which is seen, nor a course of probationary preparation the length of which is known. The end of the Christian life to the Christian soul, according to the Lord's conception, is always the next step.

"Men looking for their Lord." This is a return to first principles, the life dependent on the unseen. In the terms of the abiding values of the incarnation, that is the true view of life, that it is forevermore linked to the unseen and waits the disturbance of God. The life that is never disturbed is the life that is always prepared to be disturbed. The life that is always disturbed is the life that is seeking never to be disturbed. When a man's life is poised toward eternity and God; when a man understands that God has a plan for his life and is leading, guiding him, and may at any moment change the direction, thwart the purpose, recall the order, issue new commands, then that man finds profound peace and content, and with loins girt about, and lamps trimmed and burning he is ready for the commanding word, undisturbed because for-ever waiting to be disturbed. So in the terms and value of the incarnation that master principle of life is made real and personal to the Christian soul. As the God Whom no man hath seen at any time came into observation by the way of incarnation, so ere He passed from the earthly scene He left this word with the sons of men: Expect Me again. I shall return, I shall come again in My glory. Live as though expecting Me.

In the forty days between the resurrection and the ascension our Lord trained His disciples to this conception. Have you ever tried imaginatively to enter into the experience of those men during those forty days? They never knew where they would see Him next. Suddenly appearing in their midst, no door opened, no bolt shot, no preparation made; but He was there with them. His presence, parousia, nearness, they were made conscious of! With equal suddenness He disappeared. The appearances and disappearances of the forty days were but to train these people to the consciousness of His constant presence, and to the fact that at any moment He might appear. That is the teaching of the New Testament about the coming of our Lord. Nothing in human pomp or pageantry can express the true idea of this great truth of the New Testament as to our Lord's second Advent. Even in the hymns tonight we were away from Scripture truth. When we speak of the sound of chariot wheels, we are affected by the coming of kings and queens of earthly lands. When King George V is to appear, we wait for him, and there are signs and tokens, outward signs, of his approach. It will not be so when our King shall come. He will come with a voice and a shout, and the voice and the shout will synchronize with the manifestation; and ere we know it, as swiftly and suddenly as He appeared in the upper room, we shall be face to face with the King, we shall see Him, and the vision will be the final movement in our transformation, for we shall be like Him.

This, then, is the true conception of life according to Christ: He came to me in the hour when I yielded to Him, He is coming to me again; when, I know not; and life, between the initial coming when I became His and that final coming when He will become mine in a profounder sense than ever before, is a waiting, looking, watching for Him.

That leads us to the consideration of the attitude of those who hold this conception: "Ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord." That is the old version. The Revised Version reads: "Ye yourselves like unto men looking for their Lord." In this case I think we suffer loss by the change. Looking for - yes, if we quite understand what we mean. But it does not mean star-gazing! In the word translated "looking for" there is really no thought of the activity of the eye. The real thought is that of men who are eagerly expecting to receive, to receive a guest, men who are expecting to give hospitality. Not men who have abandoned duty in order to look for portents and signs, and presently for the Lord; but men who in fulfilment of duty are forevermore prepared for the King Himself, and in that sense looking for the coming of the Lord.

The attitude, moreover, is that of men waiting for the Master, for the King, for the Supreme One! Not looking for a servant, although, infinite mystery of His great and wonderful grace, He does say to them that if, when He comes, they are waiting, He will gird Himself and serve them. Not men who are waiting finally to give hospitality to a friend, although they are to give hospitality to Him, and He comes for the reception of that hospitality, for He cometh and knocketh and asks admission. The attitude is that of waiting for the Lord Himself. The thought is that of supremacy, of control, and leads us back to the initial words which reveal the true attitude of waiting: doing His business, "let your loins be girded about"; seeking His interests, "let your lamps be burning."

For an understanding of our Lord's meaning we may go to the scene of His glorious ascension. When He had ascended on high and passed out of sight, the Galileans stood gazing up into heaven, and were immediately, if not rebuked, at least corrected: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? This Jesus, which was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld Him going into heaven." Then at once the upward gaze ceased, and they turned back to obedience and waiting; and presently, when baptism of the Spirit came to them, they went out into service, with loins girded about, the girding of the loins the sign of bond-service to the King; with light burning, the flashing light the revelation of their care for His interests. So are men to wait for the Lord: with loins girded, and lamps burning, going about the King's business.

We wait for His coming as we fulfil our appointed tasks, as girt about, His bondslaves, we carry the light of His own life, and serve Him and our fellow men for His sake. Such is the true attitude of waiting for the Lord.

So finally let us inquire what is the character that is produced by those who adopt this attitude as the result of this conception of life.

First, the character toward the Master Himself will be partly of separation and partly of submission. It seems to me it needs no argument, and hardly requires illustration. If I really am expecting that He may come, then my relation to Him will ever be that of separation to His will and of submission to His law. Make what personal application of it suits your individual case. Suffer the personal application which I venture to make. If a man shall always preach, expecting that he may be interrupted in his preaching by the parousia, the presence of his Lord, what a difference it will make to his preaching. If a man shall always transact his business through the six days of the week expecting that at any moment in the midst of any transaction, the Lord Himself may be there, to call him away from things material to the eternal habitations, how it will safeguard his transactions.

It will not make him less diligent in his business, but it will make him infinitely more diligent in seeing to it that his business conforms to the will of his God.

The effect of this doctrine on a man's character in regard to his fellow men will be that of the constancy of his cheerfulness, and love. Cheerfulness! I freely confess that to me herein is a problem! I have long been strangely puzzled by the fact that some men who profess to hold this doctrine, and to be waiting for the Lord, are the most cheerless men I know. I cannot understand it. Surely it is the result of some wrong conception of the doctrine itself. Is He coming? Then there should ever be light on the brow, and the eye should never lack luster. Let me speak the things of actual experience. How often my brow is shadowed and my eye lacks luster. It is because I forget. When next you see me in that mood know this, I have forgotten that the Lord is at hand! When we remember, the result is perpetual sunniness, rejoicing forevermore, an eager, glad look of expectation in all our attitude toward our fellow men. That cheerfulness, moreover, will proceed out of a great love; for if I expect to meet Him, I know how He loves all men, and to quote the language of John, I should surely be ashamed before Him at His coming, if coming He found me lacking in love toward my fellow men.

How does this expectation affect Christian service? It has been declared that to hold this doctrine of the New Testament and preach it, to believe that the apostles were not mistaken and that Jesus was not mistaken, is to cut the nerve of Christian service. I declare that to expect that the Lord may at any moment appear to me, coming to me Himself, is to give immediateness and thoroughness to every piece of work that I take up in His name. Immediateness. He may come and the thing He has commanded me to do may not be done. Therefore let me do it forthwith, straightway, lest the opportunity be gone at His coming, and I be found to have neglected the thing that He commanded, and gave me time to do.

Again, to expect Him, is to give the quality of thoroughness to all our work. I should like when He comes that whatever I am doing, whether preaching or playing. I may be doing thoroughly, for there is nothing this Lord of life hates more than halfheartedness : "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of My mouth."

Take one larger outlook. If in very deed this be our conception, and we are waiting for the King, that waiting and that expectation will create patience in the soul, patience with God, patience with the Church, patience with the world.

Patience with God. Did the suggestion sound somewhat irreverent? Then bear with me, if perchance I speak only for a few in this audience. There are some for whom I know I may speak. There are hours in which we feel impatient with God; at least - shall I amend the declaration? - there are hours in which we are tempted to be impatient with God. I am not referring to the hour of personal sorrow and suffering; I am not referring to the hour in which we ourselves are buffeted, bruised, defeated, but to those larger hours, those more tragic hours, when the world's agony surges on our souls, when we stand face to face with wrong; then we cry out with old Carlyle, God is doing nothing. If we have never had such an hour it is because we have never yet put our lives very near to the world's agony and the world's need.

If I take this word of Jesus and believe it, and interpret it, not as men too often have interpreted it, but according to the whole scheme of His teaching; and I see that His coming means, not a catastrophe in which the world will be destroyed, but that it will be the advent of yet another day of opportunity for the world, the beginning of another movement in time; that it will be a crisis as real and definite, and no more mysterious than the crisis of His first advent; and that proceeding from it, His Kingdom will be set up - if I have caught that view I shall count that the long-suffering of God is due to His patience, to the fact that the processes of today are necessary to the perfection of the crisis of His coming, and a preparation for the larger process that lies beyond.

Patience is not laziness! Patience does not say, Therefore, because He is coming, I have no responsibility and have nothing to do. Patient waiting for Christ and patience with the world in the light of the glory of the coming of the Christ mean loins girt about, lamps burning, service rendered, haste upon the King's business, restful haste, peaceful speed, dignified diligence, recognition of the fact that in all the details of my service today I am in co-operation with the great processes by which God is preparing for that Advent, and which are necessary for the larger movements that lie beyond this age.

So to wait for Him is to have the life forevermore full of song and of peace:

My life flows on in endless song;

Above earth's lamentation

I hear the sweet, and glorious hymn,

That hails a new creation;

Through all the tumult and the strife

I hear the music ringing.

It finds an echo in my soul -

How can I keep from singing?

Finally, it is a very solemn and searching consideration that our Christian life may always be tested, gauged, valued, by this fact of the Lord's return. His word is, "Behold I come quickly." The true answer of the Christian heart is always, "Even so, come Lord Jesus." Anything that prevents that answer is out of place in our lives. Anything that makes it difficult for us to say, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus," is an element of weakness. That ambition which makes me seriously hope, even though I hardly dare confess it, that He will not come yet is a false ambition. That enterprise, however high and holy it may seem, which makes me desire to postpone the Advent until it be accomplished is a false enterprise. That hope, that new joy, to which I am looking forward, has in it something of wrong, producing in my heart something of disloyalty if it make me desire to postpone His coming. So we are to test all ambitions, all enterprises, all hopes, by this ambition, this enterprise, this hope of the Lord's return.

I have most carefully avoided any reference to human almanacs and calendars, to mechanical and mathematical calculations. Their effect has been to bring this doctrine into disrepute, and thousands of men desiring to be truly loyal to Jesus Christ are afraid of it because someone once said He would come on such a day at such a time, and He did not come! Men have been trying to find out the day and the hour which the Lord said no man knoweth, not even the Son, but only the Father. The moment we introduce into this great doctrine the element of the mathematician, the element of the almanac and calendar, times and seasons, we postpone the sense of the coming of the Lord. If it should be that any man in this house has ascertained for absolute certainty that Jesus the Lord is coming again, let us say, for the sake of illustration, on the 25th of December, in the name of God let him not tell me, because that knowledge would put Him all those months away and I expect Him now. The moment men begin to try to fix a date they controvert the teaching of the New Testament and contravene the purpose of the glorious truth. The Church has been commanded to wait for His Advent.

There are many apocryphal stories of our late beloved Queen Victoria, but there is one story that is certainly true coming on the authority of the man to whom the word was spoken. Talking with him one day on this very doctrine, she said, "There is nothing I should love more than to live long enough to lay my crown at His feet when He comes." That is the true attitude. It was not in His will that she should do so. It may be that I also shall come to the valley all shrouded in mist, but even there the consummation will not be the mere consciousness of death, but the dawning glory of His presence breaking through the mist, the vision of the face of the One Whom not having seen I have loved.

So we are to live, not as men fearing death or thinking of it, but as men looking for the Lord. May the Lord direct our hearts into patient waiting for His coming.