**VOLUME 9; CHAPTER 15 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**THE SUPREME INSPIRATION OF FAITH by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead. ...*

*2 Timothy 2:8*

THIS IS AN HOUR PECULIARLY TRYING TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE of our church. The child, thank God, has no consciousness either of the suffering of the hour or of the problems by which we are confronted. It is wonderful how God fashions the heart and does not allow a little child to apprehend agony until it is strong enough to face and bear it. A sweet little girl this week said to her uncle when he came into the house, "How many Germans have you killed?" He, wise man, understanding the child-heart, said, "Not more than twelve!" She hugged him and kissed him! Dear child-heart, knowing nothing of the agony, knowing nothing of the problems. God help us to guard our children from understanding.

In all probability, those who are older have had to face these very problems before in some other guise, and they are affected, chiefly, by the tragedy of the suffering.

To the young, that is, to those who believe and who think, this is a critical hour. The problems they are called upon to face concern the goodness of God and the government of God. Believing and thinking young life is compelled today irresistibly and in spite of desire to ask whether God can be good, whether God is really governing at all. How can belief in the goodness and government of God be reconciled with all that is going on in Europe today? That is peculiarly the problem of believing and thinking young life. The difficulty is created because the facts remain too well authenticated to be doubted. The fact of the goodness of God and the fact of the government of God as well as the appalling facts of the suffering and wrong of the hour are certain.

I have selected this text because it reveals a principle of life and action, steadying, inspiring, strengthening. It does not solve problems. Indeed, it brings some of them yet more acutely to mind. It does, however, remind us of a fact in history, stupendous, mysterious, assuring, which makes it possible for us to wait for the hour of solution in the sure confidence that there are explanations. How it does this I think we shall see as we proceed.

First, let us give ourselves quite simply to the text itself without any further reference now to the problems of the hour. To these we will return briefly in conclusion.

These words are found in the last writing of Paul preserved for us. When he wrote them, he was in prison and facing death. He was charged with crime; mark the significance of his own words, "… in bonds as a malefactor." What the charge was specifically we are not told. Different conjectures have been made; that he was arrested and imprisoned on a charge of sedition, on a charge of having complicity in the burning of Rome, on a charge of treason. Most probably it was this latter charge of treason which was preferred against him on the ground of his preaching of the Kingdom of God and the Kingship of Jesus. In Thessalonica they charged him with acting "… contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another King, one Jesus." His trial had two stages. The first was over when he wrote this letter. In it he had been deserted. Listen to his pathetic words, "At my first defence no one took my part, but all forsook me. …" He seems to have expected some delay before the second stage of the trial for he urged Timothy to hasten to him bringing Mark with him. He charged him also to bring a cloak, a suggestive revelation of his physical suffering in the chilliness of the dungeon, and also some precious parchments. The probability is that there was not the delay he expected and that Timothy never again saw him alive. Mark it well, in those days of loneliness, in the grip of a hostile world-power, forsaken by his friends, suffering the chill of the dungeon, and anticipating the end, he wrote, "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David. …"

Timothy almost certainly received this letter in Ephesus. The first letter was sent to him there, and the probability is that he remained there having the care of the churches. Tradition has it that he was martyred in Ephesus. Ephesus was the capital of Pro-Consular Asia. It was the child of Athens with its culture, and Asiatic paganism; a strange mixture. It was the center of the worship of Artemis or Diana, and it was also a commercial center. Wealthy, superstitious and corrupt, it was a place of grave peril to the infant church. The man in oversight of that church held a position of peculiar responsibility and subtle peril. The struggle against almost overwhelming odds must have been fierce, and to that man in those circumstances these words came: "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David. …"

It was the charge of an old man in the darkest hour when all the reward of fidelity to Christ seemed to be the dungeon and death. It was a charge to a young man called upon to live and exercise his Christian service in a city where the forces opposed were mighty, subtle, and apparently overwhelming; "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David. …"

Let us, then, consider these words in the simplest way; observing in turn, first, the meaning of the injunction; second, the reason of its giving; and third, how it may be practiced and what is the value of such practice.

"Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead. …" the Authorized Version the text reads thus: "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead. ..." When we put the two versions together, we recognize the fact that they both say the same thing in different ways. The Authorized Version is strictly accurate in interpretation in that it fixes attention upon the main thought of the apostle. The main thought of the apostle here was that Jesus Christ rose from among the dead. The Authorized Version is faulty in that it deflects attention too much from the Person. It need not do so; when once we have begun to think, it will not do so; but the first sense of the soul in a natural reading of the text in the Authorized Version is to have the attention fixed only upon the Resurrection. That is the ultimate value, but it is not all the value. The Revised Version rendering is far more literal and direct, and I venture to say far more helpful and accurate.

There are two possible mistakes that we may make in the reading of our text. We may over-emphasize the abstract idea of resurrection, as though all the apostle charged Timothy to remember was the Resurrection. We may over-emphasize the fact of the Person, making Jesus Christ supreme apart from the fact of the Resurrection.

There is a twofold thought here; first, remember the actual Man, and remember that He was an actual Man. Mark the balance of the apostolic writing for there is great care evidenced in it; "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead. …" That is the central thing, there the light is focused, from there it flashes, but that there might be no mistake, he added, "… of the seed of David." Let me miss out the central thought - to which I am bound to come back.." Remember Jesus the Messiah … of the seed of David." Immediately we are brought back to recognition of Christ's actual, positive humanity. He was "… of the seed of David"; a Man descended from and related to humanity and knowing all human experience.

We must keep this fact central to our thinking of Him. "... risen from the dead. …" Necessarily that involves the actuality of His death. It has been asserted that He never really died but swooned and was resuscitated. The actual Man of our humanity did most actually die, but we are to remember Him as risen from the dead, not "raised from the dead," but "risen from the dead." The apostle was fixing attention not upon the act but upon the fact. Paul said in effect: "Let your last thought about Jesus Christ, and your perpetual remembrance of Him, fasten Him upon your mind as alive, though having been dead." That is Paul's more logical way of saying that which John said more poetically, quoting the words of Jesus as he heard them in the Isle washed by the sea, "… I am the first and the last, and the living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore." "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David. ..."

Having realized the importance of the central note of the injunction, we may fasten our attention upon the Person. Necessarily we think of more than the Resurrection, but in the process of remembering Jesus Christ, we shall qualify everything by the final fact of the Resurrection. So let us think of Him, of His Person, of His teaching, of His Cross.

Think of His Person. John the Apostle of love said concerning Jesus: "... we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." "Remember Jesus Christ. …"; and in so doing we think of incarnate grace and truth. There are no better words than these, and if for a moment I borrow other words, it is only that we may catch some of the splendors focused within them. "Remember Jesus Christ …" and remembering the Person of Jesus Christ, we remember sweetness and strength; light and love; justice and compassion; righteousness and mercy; the merging in a personality of those qualities and quantities which sometimes seem to be in antagonism but when perfectly blended are seen to present the true man. "Remember Jesus Christ. …" Yes, but He was murdered; those hands that were ever doing good were nailed to the Cross; those feet that were ever hurrying upon errands of mercy were transfixed with brutal and bloody nails; He was mauled, spit upon, done to death! I remember Him! Then remember Him risen! Grace and truth cannot be finally crucified, it must rise again. All the high things that make humanity beautiful cannot forever be laid in the dust spattered with blood. "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead. …"

Remember Him again in order to listen to His teaching. How shall I summarize the teaching of Jesus? I will do it by the use of three words; righteousness, peace, joy. I wonder if I have put them in the right order. It is the apostolic order, yet listen to the teaching of Jesus; remember the keynote of His great Manifesto, the first note. Presently, as you read that Manifesto through, you hear the deep and awful tones of stern denunciation, and you hear again and again the infinite music of perfect tenderness, each marvelous strain blending and merging into the ultimate and final harmony; but the first note of the Sermon on the Mount is "Happy!" "Blessed" as we read it, but it is far more accurately, "Happy!" Before He is through with that great ethical enunciation, He will make you shake and tremble and shiver with fear if you are a man at all. He will probe the innermost recesses of your soul and bring to bear upon the secret things of your life the white light of the eternal throne; but the keynote is "Happy." That is the ultimate purpose, but happiness must be based upon righteousness. So He went about teaching.

Have you ever taken time in your busy lives to write out for yourselves all the words of Jesus? When you do it some day - and it is a good exercise, only do not in God's name buy that red-letter Testament to do it by, that is laziness - get a small practice book; you will not want more, the recorded words of Jesus will not fill an ordinary practice book. Having thus written them, read them through, forgetting the context just for once and the occasion on which they were spoken. Read them again and again. Ponder them and you will find three notes running through them: righteousness, peace, joy. Yes, but they silenced Him; they buffetted the mouth that had uttered the words; they murdered Him so that the dear, sweet lips could say nothing else. "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead …"! You may for a while silence the voice, but you cannot silence the Word of the living God. After the drear, deep, dense darkness of those days and nights in which the world and heaven were without Christ, His body in the grave, His spirit descending to Hades, behold Him risen! Now He will speak not with one human mouth, but with twelve, with five hundred, with ten thousand, until today the speech of the risen Son of God is being proclaimed by all the sacramental host who are born again of His Holy Spirit. "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead. ..."

When I remember His Person, I see Him murdered. When I remember His teaching, I find His voice silenced, so that the central, awful, appalling thing I remember is the Cross. Dare to look at it, dare to face it! Here is one perfect example of humanity, of beauty, of strength, of tenderness, of compassion, of clarity of intellect, of marvel of emotion, of balance of volition; dead at the hands of lawless men. Where is God? You have never seen the Cross if you have never been driven to ask that question. When modern philosophers take the Resurrection away from me and leave me only the Cross of such a Man as this, they leave me an infidel in revolt against God, declining therefore to believe that there is a God, or if there is, that He is good. The Cross alone is the place where all hope goes out in hellish darkness, and all faith is eclipsed forever. You tell me the Cross is vulgar! So it is and with a vulgarity too terrific for words. The vulgarity that mauls and puts to death the most beautiful things the world has ever seen. The Cross; oh the brutality, the scandal of it!

"Remember Jesus Christ, risen …"! Then I must look at the Cross again; I must think about the Cross again; I must find some other explanation for it. Now I find that if He was slain by the hands of lawless men, encompassing the men in their lawlessness was the "… determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God …" and the very things I was made to doubt in the presence of the Cross - His government and His goodness - flame out with new meaning. Here is the government of God. Here is the goodness of God. This is a mystery for which you will find no solution in your heart, which the wise men of the world never understood nor do they today. It is the mystery of God, Whose highest exercise of government and authority is put forth for the saving and making again of the men who smote Him in the face and trampled Him underfoot.

Let us now go further and inquire why Paul charged Timothy to "Remember Jesus Christ, risen. ..." Timothy had been ordained to a life and service which were extremely difficult. There are two notes in this letter which are of supreme importance. The first is: "Be not ashamed of me, and be not ashamed of the gospel." The other is: "Suffer hardship."

Be not ashamed. By that first charge we are imaginatively in Ephesus, cultured Ephesus, and there Timothy was to preach a crucified and risen Christ. It was not easy, or popular. Christ crucified to the Greek was foolishness, and the shame of the Cross was in front of the young evangelist. The apostle knew it, he also had felt it, the shame of the gospel!

"Suffer hardship." The word has in it the actual thought of privation and suffering, pain and agony. Because he had to exercise a ministry and live a life in which these notes were necessary, the apostle said to him, "Remember Jesus Christ, risen. ..."

Paul used three illustrations in this connection; those of the soldier, the athlete, the husbandman. "No soldier on service entangleth himself in the affairs of this life … if also a man contend in the games, he is not crowned, except he have contended lawfully … the husbandman that laboureth. …"

This is no mere piece of rhetoric; mark the suggestive selection. First the soldier, whose sphere of service is conspicuous, heroic, magnificent; then suddenly, the athlete, who walk in life was one of discipline and training in order to crowning; finally, the husbandman, the notes of whose work are patience and obscurity. The soldier, conspicuous, dashing, daring; the athlete, carefully training himself, contesting for crowns and reward; the husbandman quietly going on from day to day with regular duties. Note the different emphases. The soldier, called to conflict in order to win the approval of him who enrolled him; that is an ancient method of saying a soldier serving king, fatherland, and country. The athlete, contending for the crowning that shall be just and true and honorable. The husbandman, toiling for the fruits without which the soldier and the athlete are no use.

Once again, look at these illustrations, in order to come to the supreme thing that was in the apostolic mind. All this has been incidental; there is a unifying principle, something that is common to each of these illustrations. You may express it in the old way - no cross, no crown; no pains, no gains. It is true of the soldier, of the athlete, and of the husbandman. Did you ever understand this verse so well as you understand it today? "No soldier on service entangleth himself in the affairs of this life …"! That does not mean that the soldier will not waste time playing; it means that nearer and dearer to the soldier is the call of duty, than mother, wife, sweetheart, child. No cross, no crown! No pains, no gains! The athlete must contend lawfully. Again it is the same principle. No cross, no crown! No pains, no gains! No sloughing off of things unnecessary, no restraint put upon the forces of the physical and mental life; then no crowning, no garland, no winning! Most wonderful of all, and I do not say that carelessly, the husbandman laboreth. We must read into that word laboreth all its full significance. The Greek word means the toil which reduces strength, the toil that brings fatigue, the work that brings the weariness which is the touch of death. That man away back in the country today who ploughs and watches is laboring; putting down into dear old mother earth his own vitality and strength, and if he does not, then there will be no reaping of the harvest and no golden fruitage.

Those are the illustrations. Paul said in effect to Timothy, the young evangelist called to the Christian service and ministry: "You are called to a service and ministry so difficult that you will need the quality of the soldier with its touch of heroism, the severance of every tie that binds to this life; the quality of the athlete, the careful training which refuses the things that hinder and contends lawfully; the toil, the labor, the fatigue of the husbandman," Who is sufficient for these things? Where is there sufficient inspiration to enable a man so to serve, so to live? "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead. ..."

So we pass to the final word, the injunction itself. We have now reached the point where we are very likely to say, "How can we remember Jesus Christ risen?" The word remembrance is very accurate and beautiful, yet unless we are careful we may miss its meaning. Strictly the word does not mean remembrance, recollection; it means fixity, having in mind, keeping it there. The memory is not being referred to as something which works spasmodically, but as a faculty of the soul which is to be charged forevermore with this wonderful image of the risen Christ. How can that be? Bear in mind the memory is not moral, it is not immoral, it is non-moral. Memory has no relation to the right or wrong of a thing. You tell me it is more easy to remember an evil thing than a good thing. No, it is not. That is your fault. The result of the low level on which you have trained your mind! There is no such thing as a cultured memory. Neither is memory automatic, self-acting. As Professor James once said, "Never forget, memory does not act by itself. If I say to you, Remember; you will say, What? Memory will be of no use until I tell you what to remember." It is well to have these things in mind, for by doing so we shall get rid of a good deal of false thinking about memory.

The exercise of memory is scientific, philosophic, pragmatic. It is scientific. The basis of memory is knowledge. You cannot remember anything you do not know. It is philosophic. The activity of memory is thought. You have to think upon the thing you know, to set your mind on it. Finally, it is pragmatic, that is practical. There must be application of the thing you know or memory will become atrophied, paralized. I will take three other words. The activity of memory may be defined thus: association, imagination, inspiration. We must know Jesus Christ risen from the dead. That is the basis of association. Then we must think upon Jesus Christ risen from the dead and that imaginatively and not merely logically, allowing our imagination to work and have full play. Finally, let association interpreted by imagination become inspiration. That is to remember Jesus Christ.

Mark the value of that exercise. I go back quite hurriedly to the things I have suggested. In the difficult, unpopular, severe service, "Remember Jesus Christ risen. ..." Put it in another way, I will borrow from another New Testament writing probably by the same man: "… consider Him that hath endured such gainsaying of sinners against Himself … Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." Is your service difficult, must you endure hardness? Consider Him Who endured the Cross, the ultimate hardness. Is your service difficult, must you be careful not to be ashamed? Consider Him Who despised shame. Never forget the rest, "…and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." "Remember Jesus Christ, risen …"!

"Remember Jesus Christ risen . ..." in the hour of darkness and mystery. Goodness and truth are violated, they are trampled in the streets; goodness and truth are wronged in reeking tube and iron shard and smoking cathedral; "Remember Jesus Christ risen, ..." and be perfectly sure that goodness and truth are not buried beneath the ruins of Rheims, but that they will rise again and their victories will be mightier for the baptism of blackness and blood. Righteousness, peace, joy, are destroyed. "Remember Jesus Christ risen, …" and know that righteousness marches to its last throne trampling down the hosts of wickedness, and that peace finds its final realization as death is slain in death, and hell in hell laid low, and that joy will come at last even though it finds its way to the ultimate anthem through sighing and groaning and tears.

Where is God? "Remember Jesus Christ risen. …" Why does God permit war today? "Remember Jesus Christ risen. …"! Why did God permit the Cross? In that Cross His government and goodness were challenged. In that Cross His government and goodness were vindicated. "Remember Jesus Christ risen . …"! But Christianity has failed; all its precepts are trampled in the dust! What then? "Remember Jesus Christ risen. ..." Did He fail? Through suffering and. weakness and all that made Him contemptible, He won His victory. That is the story to the end.

I would say to every Christian man today who enlists in his country's service and boldly faces death: "Remember Jesus Christ risen. …"!

I would say to every Christian man today who remains at home true to duty's call, in some cases a more difficult thing to do than to go to the front: "Brother, 'Remember Jesus Christ risen. …'"

But there is no comfort in this for those who fool in such an hour as this. To the men who are neither going to the front nor doing anything at home there is no comfort. Remember it was Jesus Christ who rose - not Judas, not Herod, not Pilate, not Caiaphas! It is a curious thing that when I searched my New Testament to find some man in the days of Jesus who was a dilletant, fooling, I could not find one. When Jesus passes by in any guise or garb, He forces superlativeness, and there is no man in all the story who was fooling! Men today who do not see that the day of the Lord is at hand and drop into line somewhere ready to suffer and die, for them there is no comfort in this.

But to the man, the woman, who faces the problem, the distress, the darkness, and then buckles on the armor and goes by way of the Cross; I say to such: "Remember Jesus Christ risen. …"