**VOLUME 9; CHAPTER 17 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**CHRIST AND SINNERS - IDENTIFIED AND SEPARATE by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*... He was reckoned with transgressors ...*

*Luke 22:37*

*... separated from sinners ...*

*Hebrews 7:26*

THESE TWO STATEMENTS CONCERNING CHRIST ARE NOT CONTRADICTORY; they are complementary. To understand them correctly is to see that one is the necessary outcome of the other in the case of the Person, the imperial Person, concerning Whom they were both written. To appreciate their unity is to discover the very heart of the great gospel of the grace of God. The first words were spoken by the Lord Himself. He was making quotation from the ancient prophecy claiming the fulfilment of the prediction in Himself. The last words from the letter to the Hebrews constitute a statement made by one who was showing the superiority of the Priesthood of Jesus over all priesthoods which had preceded. The first statement "… He was reckoned with transgressors …" refers ultimately to His death. The second statement refers finally to His indestructible life. The first statement finds its fulness of meaning in the Cross. The second statement has its ultimate demonstration of truth in the Resurrection and the Ascension and the session in glory of the self-same One Who was crucified. Taken together, they reveal the method by which Jesus Christ became the Saviour of men. "… reckoned with transgressors, … " but "… separated from sinners …"

I think perhaps the truth may thus be stated. Christ's separation from sinners in identification with them, made possible their separation from sin in identification with Him. "… reckoned with transgressors, … " He came into their midst but was always by infinite distances separated from them; but by the identification with them of the separated One, He made possible their separation from sin as He brings them into new and living identification with Himself.

Now, because that seems -to me to be the very heart of the gospel of the grace of God for weary and sinning souls, let us reverently consider it. First, we will take these statements as declaring the truth about Him, Who was at once "… reckoned with transgressors, … " and yet "… separated from sinners …" Then, we will consider them as revealing the relation creating the salvation which is at the disposal of man. Finally, we shall see that these two statements not merely indicate something true more than nineteen hundred years ago, but true here and now as they reveal the perpetual method of Jesus with men, that of identification with sinners in separation from them, that by such means He may bring them into separation from the thing that blights and spoils and ruins, by living identification with Himself.

First, then, let us take these two statements quite separately - "… He was reckoned with transgressors, … " He was "… separated from sinners …"

"He was reckoned with transgressors ..." in His place in the world. He was reckoned with transgressors in His own choice of companionships. And in the economy of the grace of God, He was reckoned with sinners even unto death.

"… He was reckoned with transgressors ..." in His place in the world. Born of a woman, He so entered into the very life of man, coming into the currents of that life in personal and close and intimate identification. To use the very graphic phrase of a New Testament writer, He "took hold" upon our human nature, made it part of Himself, made Himself part of it.

Then even by the outward sign and symbol of human process of the Roman taxing and the imperial counting, He was reckoned, counted among sinners. There went out a decree from Caesar that all the world should be taxed. In the process of the Roman taxing and the imperial counting. He was in the world, one more added to the number of the Roman census, another life added to the great whole. He was one of the crowd, so small and insignificant that none knew of Him, or would have known of Him apart from heavenly revelation of His coming in songs of angels to the waiting shepherds and the shining of a star to men who sincerely gazed out into the heavens and attempted to unlock their great and profound secrets. Apart from these supernatural signs, He was One amongst the rest, reckoned amongst them. It is very wonderful how Jesus Christ has sanctified all life, even the taking of a census. There is no phase of human life, if we have eyes to see and ears to hear and hearts to understand, but that the sanctifying touch of Jesus is upon it. It is such a prosaic thing, this taking of a census! Think on the morning when you write your name down that "… He was reckoned with transgressors ...", conformed to the economy of man, part of the great bulk of sinning, suffering, sorrowing souls; reckoned among sinners, even in the commonplace of His placing in the world.

He was reckoned among sinners strangely and wonderfully enough in the choice of His companions. Think of those boyhood days at Nazareth! Remember that He was reckoned among the children in Nazareth, and never believe the picture that shows you the boy Jesus with a halo. All such pictures misinterpret Him. He wore no halo other than the sweet halo of a disposition strong and gentle, heroic and tender. They loved Him in Nazareth. Until He began to preach, Nazareth never tried to fling Him from the brow of the hill into the valley. I read that He "increased … in favour with God and man"; He was one of them, just one of the children of the son of Nazareth. They said later "Is not this … the son of Joseph …?" It was a mistake, but they were to be excused, for "… He was reckoned with transgressors ..." one of themselves all the way through. One of themselves also, presently, when passing from youth into manhood, He worked for His living as a carpenter. There is infinite music in that statement to all who toil for their living. He was one of us, working, toiling, tempted, trusting; reckoned amongst us, reckoned amongst us by heaven's decree of infinite love, reckoned amongst us by earth's observation, reckoned amongst us by hell's attacks; one of us, "… reckoned with transgressors ..."

But, presently, He left Nazareth, left the carpenter's shop, left the quietness and the seclusion and came into public life. Now, let us see His friends. Who are the men who were His companions and gathered about Him? Let me be careful here to use only the statements of Scripture. Who were the people that He received unto Himself? It is very difficult to translate the word. We talk today in certain sections of society of "receiving." What is it to receive, according to the word here, according to its real meaning? We may read it, "He receiveth sinners to Himself"; that is, He takes them to His heart, He takes them to His secret love, He takes them to His confidence, That is the thing that startled and appalled the whited sepulchers who pretended to be teaching God's law and God's Kingdom. He received sinners; sat down at the table and ate with them. He was the friend of publicans and sinners.

Let me tell you what so eminent a scholar as Dr. Bruce once said about this. Speaking to Mr. Samuel Chadwick, he said, "You know, Chadwick, that word 'friend' is not good enough; it does not really catch the meaning of the word be- hind it." Mr. Chadwick looked at him and said, "What would you put there?" "Well," he said, "the face of the matter is, the only word that catches it is the word the boys use - 'chum.' " He is the chum of publicans and sinners. I tell you who said that as you might object to it if I said it. He so lived and acted that these men who stood for righteousness - the righteousness of scribes and Pharisees - said, "That man is the companion, the chum, the intimate friend of publicans and sinners."

"… He was reckoned with sinners ..." by His own deliberate choice. Oh, if we did but know Him, how surprised we would be! If we did but understand this radiant Son of God, how startled we should be if we watched Him! The scribes and Pharisees would have been more astonished if they had known Him better. Imperial mentally, He might have been the chosen companion of the savants of His time. Imperial artistically, He might have taught painters how to express in colors the visions which they saw. He might have whispered symphonies to waiting musicians as He has been doing ever since. But He passed the learned and the great and found the sinners and made friends of them. "… He was reckoned with transgressors ..."

What did this identification with sinners finally mean? First, by way of incarnation He was reckoned in the human census as one of a crowd. Then by chosen companionships, so that He became the butt and scorn of the unrighteous and blind teachers by whom He was surrounded. We never understand all that means until we see Him at last on the rough Roman gibbet. With whom was He there? With political prisoners? No! With those guilty of first-class misdemeanors - what a curious phrase that is, as though there could be a first-class criminal! - No! Numbered with whom, then? Oh, my masters, would God we could see it, with robbers, thieves, or to take the wholly expressive word of our translation, "malefactors," evil-doers, numbered with them, in the midst of them, by His own choice! Listen to the gibe of the men in front of the Cross, to the cruel, devilish, cynical, self-satisfied sneer, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save. ..." Oh, how they lied! He could have saved Himself. He could have come down from the Cross. He could have called for ten legions of angels who would have swept the unholy mob that mocked Him into hell.

Yet, again, He could not, Why not? Because He had chosen to be "… reckoned with transgressors ..." and in His dying there was a sacramental symbolism in those hands outstretched between two men - the refuse of humanity, malefactors. He was reckoned with transgressors!

But He was "… separated from sinners …" first in His character, therefore in His conduct, and finally, beyond the brutality of the Cross, in the marvel of the Resurrection.

"… separated from sinners …" first of all in His character. When He was coming into the world, in one of the wonderful New Testament songs concerning Him, it was said that God had visited and redeemed His people in order that they should serve God in holiness and righteousness before Him all their days. Mark those two words, "holiness and righteousness" - not two things but two manifestations of the same quality and quantity and fact. What is holiness? Rightness of character. What is righteousness? Rightness of conduct. Holiness refers to the inward, righteousness to the outward. Holiness is something internal. Righteousness is something external. They belong to each other. Apart from holiness there is no righteousness; apart from righteousness there is no holiness. That is to say, if a man sing to me of his holiness and I see no rightness in conduct, I deny the holiness he claims. These two things are always together, and we have perfectly learned their meaning in human history from this Man.

In these facts He was separated from sinners - reckoned with them but always separated from them. Separated in that character of holiness, separated from them because He was a Man of true conceptions, of pure desires. These are the two things that underlie all life: the conception which is intellectual, the desire which is emotional. These are the things that create the volitional, drive the will, and help it to make its choices. If I can only find out what your conception of anything is, if I can only find out what your desire is, then I know which way you will choose. That is the revelation of your character. I can only learn it as I wait for the activity. I trace back from the external activity to the internal character, and there in the making of the character I have the conception, the desire, the choosing. That has been the trouble in my life, has it not in yours? My conceptions have been false, my thought of things has been wrong. I wish I could put this into one sentence. Every sin committed externally is the outcome of a sin committed internally. Whatever I do that is wrong in conduct is due to the fact that I am wrong in my underlying conception of things.

But this Man sat down at the table with men of impure conceptions, of untrue thinking, and He was of true thinking and pure conception. He saw everything in its true relationship to everything else. There was nothing distorted in His outlook, nothing out of place. True in His thinking, in His conception, and pure therefore in all His desires and so separated infinite distances from the men whom He made His friends, from the men among whom He sat and with whom He ate. Reckoned amongst them for He sat with them at the board; separated from them by the distance between high heaven and deep hell.

Thus He was not only apart in character, which is holiness, but also in conduct, which is righteousness. Never deceiving, never oppressing, never taking advantage of weakness. I will not argue it. We know it.

But my text having all that as supposition, yet in absolute fact, makes a statement that goes infinitely beyond all. Now for one moment let us look at the context. "For such a high priest became us, holy, …" that is the first thing; "… guileless, …" that is, without deceit, without crookedness; "… undefiled, …" that is, not taking into His character any defilement by which He was surrounded in other people. Now, hear this, and mark the continuity, "… separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." What, then, is the real meaning of this passage, "… separated from sinners …" Not separate, but separated. The final thought is of the Resurrection. He had been reckoned among transgressors unto death, and yet had been separated from transgressors in all His life, was at last separated from sinners by the act of God, when He took Him out of the midst of them, out of the grave into which they had put Him, separated Him from them and made Him higher than the heavens. That is the final fact in Christ's separation from sinners.

The Resurrection of Jesus in some senses is the severest, the profoundest condemnation of the sinner. In some senses, when God raised Jesus, He said to the listening race, "this is the Man of My choice. This is the Man Who satisfies My heart. This is the Man Who has accomplished My purpose. This is the Man I choose to come back to Me out of death. I separate Him from sinners and make Him higher than the Heavens. "

Reckoned with transgressors by the stoop of the incarnation, by the reckoning of human governments, by the choice of His own free will in friendship, by the mystery of His passion in the economy of God. Separated from sinners in the purity of His character, in the rectitude of His conduct, and therefore in the splendor of His crowning.

And now, I pray you notice how these two things create the gospel. The gospel at once smites me with condemnation and heals me with salvation. The gospel makes me know my sin as the law by Moses never did. The gospel frees me from sin as the law by Moses never could. This paradox and contradiction of the great Evangel only has its explanation as we see that both these things are true concerning Jesus. Because of His separation from sinners He was powerful; because of His identification with sinners He brought that power into touch with the sinner; and wherever the sinner consents to unification with Him, He communicates to the sinner the power which is His by separation from the sinner.

Separation is the cause of power. Identification is the contact of power. Unification is the communication of power.

Separation is the cause of power. We must come down from the Son of God who is infinite - and consider finite things if we would understand. Tennyson sang about Sir Galahad:

His strength was as the strength of ten,

Because his heart was pure.

Look through that little window of poetry and imagination and see this tremendous truth flaming in letters of fire. Purity from sin is that which creates power to help men beaten by sin. Look at it in your own life. If you want to help a sinning man, the measure of your ability to help him is the measure in which you do not sin yourself. We know perfectly well it is utterly useless for us to say, "Be pure," to a man if there be impurity in our own heart. Fathers - God Almighty say it to me! - it is no use telling your boy to be pure if you are impure. Power to make other people pure consists in personal purity. Now we are all agreed. Separate from sinners so that no taint of impurity was on Him, blessed, holy, perfect Man of Nazareth, and in that purity which man misinterpreted and hated lay the power by which He lifts men. Said the Pharisees, "This Man receiveth sinners. …" Now, do let us be fair, even to Pharisees, though it is very hard. What did they mean? They meant, "You cannot touch pitch without being defiled." They meant, "If this Man is going to make a friend of sinners, He Himself will become a sinner." The Pharisees were quite right, they were perfectly correct, if I had been the one they were talking about, or you. If I make a companion of sinning men, I shall be contaminated. Young man, you have just come up to the great city. You have been a month in the city. Tell me, who are your friends. If your friends are impure, for God's sake and your soul's sake, quit them now. They will make you impure.

But there is a difference in this Man. Why is it if I make a friend of sinners, I shall become contaminated? Because in me there is sin, there is that to which sin appeals; there is corruption calling to corruption and answering back to corruption. But in Jesus purity was not negative. It was positive, and so it was power, and when He took a poor, wretched sinner to His heart, and sat and ate with him, instead of the defilement of the sinner spoiling Him, the virtue of His purity lifted the sinner. "… reckoned with transgressors, ..." but, Hallelujah! - separated from them! In that infinite separation of His purity lay the dynamic by which He was able by contact to lift the man who was impure.

That leads to the next thing. If He had not been "… reckoned with transgressors ..." His separation from them could never have saved them. His purity cannot save a man until He identifies Himself with that man. You may be pure as the snow, and if you stay on the mountain top where pure snows are, you will never make pure some loathsome thing that lies in the valley. You may be pure, but if you shut yourself up within convent walls and never touch the sinning masses without, you cannot help to make them pure. The greatest saint is not the person who cultivates his or her own life within such convent walls by severe austerity. The greatest saint is the slum sister in the Salvation Army who puts her sweet womanhood against the surging sorrows of her fallen sisters. Where did we learn this lesson? From the Man separated by the distance of the infinite snows, Who came down and lived among sinning men, made friends of them - yes, I will say it, made chums of them. He took them to His heart in an embrace of tenderness and brotherhood and so helped them to feel the tides of His purity and to sob out upon His dear and wounded heart the sorrows of all their sin. "… reckoned with, …" and therefore by such contact able to bring the power of His purity into touch with men.

Yet He could only finish that great work which He began in life by dying. How far must He go with me if He is to correct my impurity by His purity? He must go all the way. He must go on and on until in His soul He fulfils the prophetic word that was always so mysterious, "… the pains of hell gat hold upon Me …" May God have mercy on us if we lose sight of that Cross and its deepest meaning. Oh, brutal Cross of Calvary, oh, hateful Cross; but it is my Cross - that is the place of my sin. This selfish heart of mine ought to be transfixed with wounds. These evil hands of mine ought to be nailed there. These unholy feet of mine, swift to run in the ways of evil, ought to be there.

In my place condemned He stood,

Sealed my pardon with His blood,

Hallelujah! What a Saviour!

"Reckoned" with me there when the pains of hell enwrapped the soul, and the darkness of the hiding of the face of God broke upon the spirit; reckoned with me there! That is the mystery of salvation, and because of that, if I come to that Cross, and coming to it say,

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,

Let me hide myself in Thee!

Let the water and the blood,

From Thy riven side which flowed,

Be of sin the double cure;

Save me from its guilt and power,

then by such reckoning with me in the power of His infinite separation from me, He takes my guilt and gives me His purity; or in the far finer and more majestic and wonderful language of Scripture, "… He was made to be sin on our behalf: that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

The last thing I want to say is this - that was not merely His method historically; it is His method now; it is His method here. Then what? He received sinners, He ate with sinners, He was the friend of sinners, He was without sin. And tonight, what? Are you a sinner? I will leave the whole congregation now, except the man who says, "Yes." I have no gospel if you say, "No." I am not here except to preach to the people who are sinners, because I have been ordained by the One Who said, "… I came not to call the righteous but sinners." I have no message for the righteous man. Are you a sinner? Is the burden of it on your soul? Is the filth of it on your character? Is the poison of it in your blood? God help you, my brother! Did you creep in here tonight thankful that nobody knew all about you? Are you sitting somewhere in the midst of these people, a leper, and conscious of it? He is by your side. If there should happen to be in this house a hundred righteous people who need no repentance, He is not with them, He is with you. These are not distant things that have passed; these are present living realities. He is down there by the man who is an outcast from his own self-respect, by the side of the man abhorring himself, loathing himself, and yet sinning.

He is calling to you. Oh, He is unlike you, absolutely unlike you, pure as the white light in which God dwells. Oh yes, you say, "l am afraid of the white light." My brother, the white light in which God dwells is the red, passionate love of His heart, and if the light of God enwrap you until you are afraid as it burns to save, the Man is with you tonight - this Man, Christ, God-Man, mysterious and wonderful, calls to you, but He is unlike you.

Now, what will you do? Will you turn from all His pure presence reproves, and will you yield to all His pure presence approves? That is the final question. You know your sin as you have never known it before. Will you turn from it?

To what shall I turn?

To Him.

To what in Him?

To His purity. Will you choose it?

Ah me, but that is the one thing I cannot do!

Behold Him again,

In His feet and hands are wound-prints,

And His side;

and know this, that as you turn from the impurity His separateness reproves to the purity that separateness approves; because He was "… reckoned with transgressors, …" because He still is near to every sinning heart, by the mystery of His death He will blot out your transgressions like a thick cloud, He will cleanse your inner life of the very forces that have ruined it, and He will make you like Himself.

Will you let Him? More marvelous, more mysterious, more overwhelming than anything else is this final fact to which we ever have to come. He stands and waits and asks, and you can say "No!" I beseech you as though God did beseech you. I pray you in Christ's stead, "… be ye reconciled to God," and be reconciled to God by yielding your life to Christ, Who was "…. reckoned with transgressors …" and "… separated from sinners …" and therefore is the supreme and perfect Saviour of sinning men.