**VOLUME 9; CHAPTER 22 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**LIFE IN THE LIGHT by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*While ye have the light, believe on the light, that ye may become sons of light.*

*John 12:36*

THESE WORDS OF OUR LORD WERE SPOKEN TO CRITICAL AND unbelieving men, and as their context shows, their intention was that of urging these men to yield to the light which was so soon to be withdrawn. They virtually constituted the last public utterance of our Lord.

Let us think first of the assumption of our Lord which we know is so certainly fulfilled; that we have the light; second, of the true attitude towards the light, "… believe on the light …"; and finally, of the issue of such belief, "… that ye may become sons of light."

First, then, as to the assumption of our Lord. Light is peculiarly a word of John, and the sense in which he uses it is made perfectly clear in his prologue. Therein he said, "… the life was the light of men." Dealing with the relation of the Word to the whole creation, he declared inclusively that in Him was life. Then, marking the distinction between human life and all life below that in the scale of being, he said, "… the life was the light of men." That is to say that in man there is a spiritual and moral understanding. In the great process of creation when life reached the height of man, it looked back into the face of God and was conscious of Him. In man life became light.

Then further he declared, "The light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. …" In that statement there is a recognition of the fact that this light in human life has never been wholly extinguished, but there is also recognition of the fact that this light is shrouded in darkness. The darkness and the light are both recognized.

At last he came to what was the supreme thought in his mind. His eyes fixed upon his Lord and Master with Whom he had walked the holy fields, with Whom he had become so intimately familiar, he said, "There was the true light, … which lighteth every man, coming into the world." It had always been in the world, it had been in every man; but there it was, coming into clear shining and clear observation. In the Incarnation, the hidden light that had been shrouded in darkness but never wholly extinguished, came from the darkness into visibility so that Jesus could and did say, "I am the Light of the world."

Light is that shining of truth which interprets life; the capacity for apprehending that light is in every human soul, and through man, as he receives the light, believes on the light, becomes a son of light, the effects of that light pass to the whole creation. "… I am the Light of the world, …" said our Lord, and He also said to His disciples in the days of His flesh and thereafter to all who believe on His Name, "Ye are the light of the world."

The light then, for us, has been focused in a Person and that a Person of our own humanity. Jesus was a human being, a perfect human being. That is not all of the truth concerning Him. There are deeper and profounder truths concerning the Person of our adorable Lord than can find expression in that statement. To that, this very prologue bears witness in the mystic sentences with which it opens; "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." But we must remember that the completion of that statement is found in the fourteenth verse: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." For the purpose of understanding the light then, we are not called upon to think of Him in the terms of the eternal and the mysterious. These He came to reveal, but He came to reveal them through the things that are temporal and through our own humanity. Therefore, when we think of the Light, we think of Him, our Lord, as a perfect human being.

What shining forth of light was there in that human Being with regard to the physical, with regard to the mental, with regard to the spiritual?

First, as to the physical. When He, the Word, came into human history as a human being, all conditions were open to Him for His coming. He might have come into any sphere or condition of human life. He might have come into the courts of kings; into the fellowship of learning. He might have entered life amid all its material splendor or, on the other hand, He might have come into the most abject and absolute poverty. All conditions were open to Him. How then did He come? Into what conditions did He come?

The conditions that He chose for Himself in order to give us light upon the physical side of human life were those which may be described as simple and sufficient. We often speak of the poverty of our Lord. It is a comparative and relative term. In certain senses, yea verily, He lived a life of poverty. But we never ought to think of Jesus with pity when we think of His poverty. His was not the grinding poverty which is a tragedy. His life was characterized in His boyhood, in His young manhood, and through the years of His public ministry, by a stern simplicty, but He had all things sufficient. In the Book of Proverbs we have the wonderful prayer of Agur,

Remove far from me vanity and lies;

Give me neither poverty nor riches;

Feed me with the food that is needful for me;

Lest I be full, and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord,

Or lest I be poor, and steal,

And use profanely the name of my God.

That prayer was answered perfectly in the case of Jesus of Nazareth, He was removed in the material surroundings of His life from vanity and lies; He had neither poverty in the extreme sense of the word, nor riches. He was fed throughout His life with food that was needful for Him. He was never full having to face the temptation that comes from repletion, of denying God and saying, "Who is He?" He was never poor having to face the temptation to steal and to use profanely the Name of His God. He chose to enter human life and live as to the physical in circumstances that were characterized by simplicity and by sufficiency. That is light upon human life. It is the interpretation of the true place of the physical therein; it should be without poverty and without riches.

Then as to the mental. So far as the thinking of Jesus is revealed in His teaching and in His acting - and surely these are the means by which thinking is perpetually revealed - His mental outlook was that of a perpetual apprehension of the spiritual and appreciation of the material. He was forever conscious of the spiritual, forever acting as in the presence of the abiding and the eternal, but never withdrawing Himself from the material or treating it as though it were unimportant or valueless, appreciating it everywhere, in flowers, in children, in all the commonplaces of life. Of course, that was the trouble created in the minds of certain men of religion concerning Him; so much so that exaggerating their language as men in criticism usually do, they said, He "… is a gluttonous man and a winebibber. ..."

His whole mental outlook, however, was most evidently that of the apprehension of the spiritual. This, of course, is in some senses difficult to speak of. The spiritual is so difficult to reach, to understand in other human lives. It is so profoundly difficult that I question whether one human soul can ever, even after long comradeship, know perfectly the spiritual secret of another human soul. We become acquainted with physical and material manifestations; we pass by dint of friendship into fellowship with the mental attitudes and movements of mind; but that most strange dignity, the spiritual being, dwells always in an inner shrine. Sometimes we get a little nearer to it in the case of each other and then some day are surprised to discover how little we know of the spiritual fact. I believe that this is wholly beneficent and gracious, for God deals with us alone and none other can intrude. Yet we must know something of the spiritual fact if we are to understand life. As we look at this Man, and follow Him on His journeyings, and listen to Him in His teachings, we become familiar with His mental expression and with the physical fact. But how shall we describe the spiritual truth about Jesus? I think we may do so by saying the same things that we have already said concerning His mental outlook, only attempting to say them in the deeper and profounder terms that express the spiritual.

He lived in unbroken fellowship with the eternal and, consequently, in unceasing control over the temporal. He was never mastered by anything temporal, because He was always mastered by the eternal. He reigned over circumstances, because He was reigned over by the static facts of God and eternity.

The fact that He lived in perpetual fellowship with the eternal was manifested in that there was no evidence of haste or of panic. His complete control of the temporal was proved by the fact that there was no evidence of delay or of paralysis. No haste, no panic, because He was dealing with eternity; no delay, no paralysis, because in the conscious power of eternity He dealt with time and mastered it.

There are many of His words which might illustrate these two things. I shall make two selections. That fellowship with the eternal, which meant no haste and no panic in the case of our Lord, always seems to me to have had wonderful expression when He said to His disciples:

Are there not twelve hours in the day? If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.

There is something wonderfully Eastern about that. The Eastern mind is the mind which is conscious of eternity, of the vastness of things, and, therefore, cannot be hurried. This attitude of mind is expressed in the highest sense in these words. His disciples were afraid for Him, afraid that He should go back to Jerusalem. He said in effect, "There is no need for haste, there is no need for fear. When a man walks in the day of God's own measurement, he does not stumble; he walks in the calm, hasteless freedom from panic which is the result of the spirit life in fellowship with the eternal." He was a Man in time, in the midst of the running hours, mastering the whole of them in their movement because living in fellowship with God with Whom one day is as a thousand years, to Whom a thousand years are but as one day.

Yet let us hear Him again upon another occasion, and we shall find another note balancing this first one and showing that when a man touches the temporal, there must be no delay and there need be no paralysis. Said He to His disciples:

We must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work. When I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

That is singularly Western. That is the language of movement, that is the language of haste that cannot brook delay, that is the language of the soul that seizes the present opportunity for the doing of the present duty. In the Old Testament are two statements, far separated and in some senses having no connection. Nevertheless, I borrow them in this connection. Jesus lived so in fellowship with the eternal he that it might be said of Him, "… he that believeth shall not that make haste"; and He so lived mastering the temporal that it might be said of Him with equal accuracy, "The King's business requireth haste." He was free from all haste but always hasting; free from any panic and paralysis but seizing every hour and doing the thing appointed therein. Every hour presented to Him an open door of opportunity, only open in that hour, and He, girded with the strength of eternity and acting in cooperation with the impulses of Deity, passed through the open door, met the opportunity, and fulfilled the duty.

If this is the Light of the human personality and being of Jesus, let us see the light that came through Him on human activity. Here we need to remind ourselves that all human activity is fundamentally spiritual. There is nothing that I do with my hand that is not the outcome of my spiritual life. The spiritual life may be degraded, or it may be noble; it .may be true, or it may be false; but every physical activity is the outcome of spiritual activity. Processionally, human activity therefore is mental. Out of that deep unfathomable mystery, the spiritual life, the mind forms its conception of things external, and spiritual life and mental process become manifest in things material and physical. We must observe, then, as far as we are able, the mental attitudes of our Lord a little more carefully. Things we have already said will be repeated, but with a new application. The intelligence of Jesus was characterized by the seeing of the whole instead of the part. Does that seem a poor thing to say? As a matter of fact it is a big thing. There are men who see this earth only, and men who see this earth only are sensualists. There are men who strive never to see this earth at all but to see the heavens only and the spiritual only, and they practice their endeavor alone and live the ascetic life. Both outlooks are false, and each is as false as the other. The man who sees the earth only becomes a sensualist but never destroys the harrowing, hungering cry of the spiritual life; he simply refuses to listen to it or attempts to drug it. The man who attempts to realize the spiritual at the expense of the material, thinking of the flesh in a vulgar material sense which is never the New Testament sense, never escapes from his flesh, never escapes from the material. He was not intended to escape thereby. In the long issue the ascetic becomes as sensual as does the voluptuary. Our Lord saw the whole of things. He saw God and His creation. He saw all ages as well as an age. Perhaps nothing more beautiful was ever written than Thomas Whytehead's poem on the Second Day of Creation. Let me remind you of two or three stanzas from it:

This world I deem

But a beautiful dream

Of shadows that are not what they seem,

Where visions rise

Giving dim surmise

Of the things that shall meet our waking eyes.

But could I see,

As in truth they be,

The glories of heaven that encompass me,

I should lightly hold

The tissued fold

Of that marvellous curtain of blue and gold.

Soon the whole

Like a parched scroll

Shall before my amazed sight uproll,

And without a screen,

At one burst be seen,

The Presence wherein I have ever been.

May I reverently say that all that Thomas Whytehead so beautifully imagined was the commonplace experience of Jesus. Wherever He looked He saw the creation and the God of creation. He never abused the material. He never flagellated Himself. That was an iniquity wrought by his enemies. He realized the glory of the physical and the material because of His keen understanding of the glory of the spiritual.

Emotionally we ever discover in Jesus the feeling which resulted from the vision. He knew the beauty of holiness, and He knew the possibility of renewal even in the case of that which was degraded. He loved the true, He hated the false. He was passionately moved and provoked and consumed by a desire to end the ugliness and restore the beauty, to destroy death and release life, to banish the darkness in the shadow of which He lived and flood the world with light.

Volitionally, all His choices were consonant with that emotion and that outlook.

Thus we have light upon life's activities. There are senses in which we cannot have light upon the activities of today by looking at Jesus. There is a sense in which there is no activity of today on which we cannot have light by looking at Jesus. In the mere external and local facts of the day, we are not in Judaea, we are not in Galilee, we are not living in that strange hour of misery when all the world lived under the incubus of the Romans. Nevertheless, in the deeper things of life, Jesus is still the light of human activity.

What then, must be our attitude toward the Light? Said Jesus: "While ye have the light, believe on the light, …" I could very much wish that this had been rendered, "believe into the light." Activity is suggested. It is infinitely more than believing in the light. That is fundamental, but being only intellectual it may stop short there. That is not what our Lord meant. We are to do more than believe in the light; we are to believe into it. He calls us to action in consonance with conviction. Already in this discourse He had interpreted His meaning as He said: "Walk while ye have the light." To walk in light is to make use of it, to yield ourselves to it. To believe into the light is not to admire the glory of it, it is to obey the call of it.

Those who have the light have this responsibility, that they must seek it. This Light is shining, is shining clearly. Our business is to seek it by considering Him, by giving ourselves to holy contemplation of this Person. If we are to believe into the light, we must acquaint ourselves with the light. We need to get back again and again to Him to understand that light.

Then it means also the trusting of the light as it shines, trusting His ideals, consenting to His conceptions, and refusing to postpone to a more convenient season any great command of Jesus. We are to trust the light and to act in accordance with it.

In our case it will mean perpetual spiritual re-adjustment; the constant activity of mind that brings it into conformity with the spiritual re-adjustment. In our case it will mean the perpetual watchfulness over all material and physical expression that these things shall be in harmony with the mental conformity to spiritual re-adjustment.

If we will do these things, what then? Then we shall be sons of light. Sons of light, not children. There is a difference. There is a difference in the New Testament, and there is always a difference. Canon Westcott says that the word "child" in the New Testament indicates community of nature; the word "son" always connotes the dignity of heirship. Dr. Erdman, of the United States, says: "Sonship relates not to nature but to legal standing. A son is no longer a minor, a son has attained his majority. That is the force of the word 'sons.' All sons are children." Yea verily! but all children are not sons. All children have not attained their majority; all children have not entered into the dignity of heirship. Our Lord did not say "children of light"; He said, "… sons of light." We have the light. Let us believe into it, seek to trust, it, obey it, and we shall come into the full dignity of our heirship in light. That means that life will be interpreted, service guided, suffering transfigured.