**VOLUME 9; CHAPTER 24 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**WAITING FOR GOD by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*For from of old men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen a God beside Thee, Which worketh for him that waiteth for him.*

*Isaiah 64:4*

*Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, And which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love Him.*

*1 Corinthians 2:9*

THE SIMILARITY BETWEEN THESE TWO PASSAGES IS PATENT. There is, however, an equally definite disparity. In the letter of Paul the words constitute a quotation. He introduced them by the formula, "As it is written. …"

Now, there has been much discussion as to where the apostle found these words. Jerome affirmed them to be found in the Apocalyptic literature, with which Paul would certainly be familiar, but did not suggest that he quoted them from that literature. If they were quoted from the Hebrew Bible, this passage in Isaiah is the only one in the Old Testament which could in any way be looked upon as that from which Paul quoted. But there is a difference between the thing that Paul quoted and the passage which we are bound to notice. It is possible that he quoted from some other manuscript than that from which our translation was made. It is interesting to Bible students to observe in passing that both in Isaiah and Corinthians the revisers in the margin have not referred to these passages as being direct quotations but have indicated the relation by the use of the word "compare." By that method they suggest that it was not necessarily a direct quotation, but that it moves in the same realm of ideas.

Let us observe, then, the disparity between the two passages. In that in the prophecy of Isaiah, the emphasis is on the marvelous God Who works for those that wait for Him. "… from of old men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen a God beside Thee, Which worketh for him that waiteth for him."

In the Corinthians the emphasis is not upon God at all; it is upon the marvelous things which God does for them that love Him. "Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love Him." Isaiah says that no other such God has been heard of or seen. Paul says that such wonderful things as those which God prepares have not been seen, or heard, or apprehended by the human heart; so wonderful are they that they can only be made known by the Holy Spirit. In Isaiah the cause of wonder is that God works for them that wait for Him. In Corinthians the marvel is caused by the things that God does for those that love Him.

This recognition of disparity moves toward a recognition of the true spiritual relationship between the two passages which makes it more than probable that Paul was indeed quoting this very passage, only he did as New Testament writers perpetually did - changed the literal wording of the Old, caught a higher spiritual harmony, went further than the suggestion of the Old, modified it while not contradicting it in order to bring out a fuller and richer phase of truth. In each of them it is evident that the thought is moving in the same realm of ideas. In one it is occupied with the marvelous God Who works for them that wait for Him; in the other it is occupied with the marvelous things that God prepares for those that love Him. And so it seems to me that we may weave these two things into one statement: Our God is marvelous in that He does marvelous things for those who wait for Him because they love Him.

Now let us observe the similarity between the two declarations, in the light of the circumstances under which they were uttered or penned.

Historically the passage in Isaiah is not easy to place, but the nature of the circumstances is most clear. It was a day of darkness and of difficulty, when it seemed as though God had abandoned His own people and had ceased to act. Glancing back at chapter sixty-three, in the fifteenth verse, we find these words: "Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of Thy holiness and of Thy glory: where are Thy zeal and Thy mighty acts? The yearning of Thy bowels and Thy compassions are restrained toward me."

Or again in the close of verse eighteen and in verse nineteen:

"… our adversaries have trodden down Thy sanctuary. We are become as they over whom Thou never barest rule; as they that were not called by Thy name."

It was a day, moreover, when there were those among the people who with passionate desire were making appeal to God:

"Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence; as when fire kindleth the brushwood, and the fire causeth the waters to boil: to make Thy name known to Thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Thy presence."

Then suddenly the prophet seems to have taken a backward look which was born of his intense desire that God should thus appear, and the backward look was one which brought to mind God's past appearances:

"When Thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, Thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at Thy presence."

It is as though the prophet had said: "I am not asking for things that have never been; I am asking Thee to return to Thine ancient attitude towards us, and to the activities of the past." In that very note of memory an idea was born. "… Thou didst terrible things which we looked not for. ..." Then he enunciated a central philosophy of life, as he declared: "For from old men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen a God beside Thee, Which worketh for him that waiteth for him." Thus we discover the value of the declaration. God's words for a waiting people, and they only fail when they try to manage without Him.

Now let us turn to the New Testament and look at the circumstances that were in the mind of the apostle when he wrote. In this Letter to the Corinthians he was dealing with the difficulties that were confronting the Christian church, and in his mind was the fact of the darkest day in all human history. He was thinking of the day in which the cleverness of the world had crucified the Lord of glory. That was the day, that very day of unutterable and unfathomable darkness, in which God was preparing things for those that loved Him, too wonderful for human understanding, apart from the interpretation of the Spirit. This, then, is the second phase of the truth. God prepares in darkness and in mystery things for those that love Him that are so wonderful that they can only be understood by the interpretation of the Spirit.

From the wealth of ideas suggested by these two kindred passages I propose to make two simple deductions and to apply them.

The deductions are these. In the hour of darkness and difficulty the true attitude of those who believe in God is that of waiting for Him. The only strength sufficient to enable men to wait for God is that of love to Him, for love is the capacity for receiving the interpretation of the things which He is doing.

Waiting for God is not laziness. Waiting for God is not going to sleep. Waiting for God is not the abandonment of effort. Waiting for God means, first, activity under command; second, readiness for any new command that may come; third, the ability to do nothing until the command is given.

The Hebrew word translated "waiting" here has a pictorial affinity which is peculiarly suggestive today. It has affinity with a word that means "to entrench." We do no violence to the real thought of the text if we read it in that way. God worketh for him that entrenches himself in Him. The idea of waiting for God here is that of digging ourselves in to God.

Waiting for God, then, is the adjustment of our lives to the truth concerning Him which we know. When circumstances are chaotic, when it is impossible to understand their movements and to know what will be the outcome of this or that combination of circumstances, that is the hour in which we are to wait for God. God is certain; the one and only certainty of which we have any knowledge; far more certain than the fact of our own being. There is a sense in which we are sure of ourselves, we are sure of our existence, but there are infinite mysteries behind us as to the how of our being and far more unfathomable mysteries lying ahead of us as to the issue of our being; and as to its present continuity, there is no certainty. God is the one unchanging fact from everlasting to everlasting. Waiting for God means putting this life, of which I am so uncertain in a thousand varied ways, into right relationship with Him of Whom I am absolutely and everlastingly certain. Waiting for God means that I adjust my life to Him rather than to circumstances, and that I set my hope on Him rather than on the wit and the cleverness of men. Waiting for God means that definite personal activity which is busily occupied in adjusting the whole fact and circumstances of life to the unchangeable and unalterable fact of God.

Waiting for God means, therefore, readiness for any command; that state of perpetual suspense which listens for the word in order that it may be immediately obeyed. Those who wait for God are pilgrim souls that have no tie that will hold them when the definite command is issued; no prejudices that will paralyze their effort when in some strange coming of the light they are commanded to take a pathway entirely different to that which was theirs before; having no interests either temporal or eternal, either material or mental or spiritual, that will conflict with the will of God when that will is made known. Souls who wait for God are such as have their loins girt about, their lamps burning; they are alert, awake, ready.

Waiting for God, then, means power to do nothing save under command. This is not lack of power to do anything. Waiting for God needs strength rather than weakness. It is the power to do nothing. It is the strength that holds strength in check. It is the strength that prevents the blundering activity which is entirely false and will make the true activity impossible when the definite command comes.

For those who thus wait, God works; and as surely as men wait thus for Him while He Works for them, there will come to them, presently, the clarion call to arise and co-operate. When it comes, the plan is almost invariably a different one from that which had been expected. "In ways we looked not for," said the prophet, "Thou hast wrought for us in the past."

Is not that the history of every forward movement in the economy of God? A period of darkness, a period of desolation, a period of difficulty in which His people were brought to the point of knowing that they did not know and understanding that they could not understand. A period of being clever enough to be done with their own cleverness, and then, while they waited, a period of adjusting their lives to God, severing all ties that held them, abandoning all prejudices that paralyzed, putting an end to every effort that was likely to conflict with the practical definite command and program and plan.

When the call comes, it is almost invariably to something new and surprising and startling, in the doing of which we seem to have to go back upon things that we have said and done in the past. The peril of the people of God is always that they shall be so wedded to yesterday that they are not ready for God's tomorrow; or that they shall be so busy today making their programs that when God brings His program, their own arrangements interfere with the carrying out of His will.

This is no easy conception of life. Waiting is far more difficult than working. It would be a much easier thing for the church of God at this very hour of her darkness to call conferences and councils and make plans for tomorrow than to wait. Waiting requires strength. It demands the absolute surrender of the life to God, the confession that we are at the end of our own understanding of things, the confession that we really do not see our way and do not know the way. The waiting that says: "Until God shall speak we dare not move and will not move, we will not be seduced from our resolution to wait"; requires strength. There is only one motive that is sufficiently strong to bring us to the place of true waiting and that motive is love. Isaiah in effect said, "God works for men that wait for Him"; Paul in effect said, "Marvelous things does God prepare for men that love Him." Love is confident in the authority; love is eager for the command; love rests in the wisdom of God; love is the alertness that waits and moves immediately. No fear of God will produce this waiting in the soul. There may be a waiting which is the result of fear, but that will be the waiting of inertia, the waiting of incapacity, and the waiting that, presently, when a call shall come, shall have no preparation for advance. The waiting that is to have the alertness and eagerness and strength enough not to do must be the outcome of love.

This is an hour and power of darkness. The supreme hour and power of darkness came two millenniums ago when the world in its cleverness crucified the Lord of glory. That was a darker hour than this. The situation was more hopeless and helpless than anything the world had known before or since when the rulers of this world, knowing not the wisdom of God, crucified the Lord of glory. So far as our lifetime is concerned, this is the hour and power of darkness. The similarity of our condition and those of the days in which Isaiah's word was spoken is perfectly patent. This is a day in which it seems as though God had abandoned men and ceased to act. This is a day in which the cry is going up from many hearts, "Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down." This, then, is a day in which God is surely acting in ways that we cannot see. Gleams of light there have been. Great principles have been discovered, and in the light of them we have lived through all these weary months. Yet I do not believe there is any man in the Christian church who is prepared to tell us exactly what God means and what God is doing. But faith affirms its conviction that God has a meaning and that God is at work. There is a similarity between this hour and that condition of darkness to which Paul referred. Today the rulers of this world are crucifying the Son of God afresh and putting Him to open shame. Then, by the sign and token of Golgotha and the unutterable darkness of the Crucifixion, we affirm our faith that this is a day in which God is preparing for those that love Him, things that eye has not seen and ear has not heard, things that have never entered into the heart of man and which can only be interpreted by the Holy Spirit.

What, then, is our duty today? Our duty is to wait for Him. Every activity which brings us into more perfect adjustment with Him is to be the eager occupation of our busy life and that combined with the resolute refusal to take any action which may prejudice His purpose.

During recent days the Congregational ministers of London have been gathering together to pray and to wait on God in the very sense which we have considered, that of seeking the adjustment of their own lives to the will of God. They are not creating machinery but seeking to be ready for God. That is the true attitude.

It is impossible for us to have lived through these months, critical as they have been and still are with new and sinister evils in our midst assaulting our souls with fear, without wondering.

That day of new conditions in this England of ours! That day of the new problems ! Are we ready for it? Letters lie upon my table from men in the war and most of them speak of the new sense of life that has come to them. They are coming back presently. Shall we be equal to the call?

One peril that confronts us is that of making our plans and setting up our organizations. As surely as we do, we shall make ourselves unready for the day of God. What, then, shall we do? Wait for God. Our activity must be that of setting our own lives in right relationship to Him, of placing all our organizations at His disposal. Waiting for God means being free and alert so that when the breath of God moves over us and the voice of God sounds, we shall be ready for departure along the new highway which He will mark out for us. While God works and we wait, He is preparing for a working in which we must co-operate. The new working of God will be revolutionary, the breaking up of our ideals, the scrapping of our mechanisms. Today we must get ready for this. If we are thus to wait for God, we must love Him as we have never loved Him. The question that comes to us as we look honestly within our own souls is the question, "How are we to increase our love to God?" The central need of the moment is a new and passionate love for God, burning and flaming in His holy church. In proportion as that love comes, the church will be able to wait with the waiting that means alertness and readiness for service. Our love to God will be deepened by two things: a new and earnest cultivation of our fellowship with Him and a new and simple and definite obedience to Him.

How are we to cultivate our fellowship with God? By the contemplation of Christ. No man hath seen God at any time. The Son Who is in the bosom of the Father hath declared Him.

Would we see God's brightest glory?

We must look in Jesus' Face.

There must be a new contemplation of the Christ. There must also be a new consideration of human history from the standpoint of the Divine over-ruling; an attempt to focus upon the present situation the light of past situations. Do you not think that when Israel of old came down to the river which prevented her crossing into the land and the command was given to her that she should go across that river and take possession, that she was greatly helped in the interpretation of the problem by the history of the divided sea at the exodus? We are altogether in danger today of looking out with the men of the world, with the men of affairs, with the men whose only look is horizontal and never perpendicular. We are in danger of looking at things on the level, and there is no light anywhere. It is for us to be cultivating our fellowship with God by climbing to the heights and looking back and seeing how God has acted in the past, not in Bible history only, but in all history, for all history is divine. God has abandoned no nation utterly in all time. The man of faith who knows God, especially through Jesus Christ, will look out on the history of the past and the whole history of humanity and see it as a history of the denial of human cleverness and the proving of the folly of the wit and wisdom of the world even when it seemed at the point of victory. He will see everywhere an over-ruling providence, or, better, he will see the over-ruling God.

Let us cultivate our fellowship with God by considering the past and interpret the present hour of stress and strain and darkness, not by the things that are at our disposal in the material or the mental world, but by the activities of God in human history through the running centuries and the cycles of the years. Let us cultivate our fellowship with Him by practicing that which we hear referred to in every Christian service at its close: the communion of the Holy Ghost.

The final responsibility is not a communal responsibility. It is an individual responsibility. It is a responsibility that rests upon me. The cultivation of God must be personal, it must be lonely, and it must be intense. It demands time, it demands effort, it demands endeavor. The waiting for God of the whole church depends finally upon the waiting upon God of the individual members of the church. Through the busy rush of these terrible days, when every hour must sweat its sixty minutes to the death, we are failing unutterably if we do not find the hour of retirement, of separation, of quietness, that we may find God and cultivate our fellowship with Him. Waiting upon God, we shall learn to love Him more, and by loving Him more, we shall be more perfectly prepared to wait for Him.

That which must accompany that individual fellowship is quick, simple, ready obedience to every shining of the light at whatever cost and to every inspiration of the love at whatever cost.

In proportion as we thus love Him and wait for Him, we shall be ready for whatever may be the plan of God in the days to come.