**VOLUME 10; CHAPTER 08 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**HOW THE WALL IS BUILT by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*So the wall was finished.*

*Nehemiah 6:15*

THESE WORDS CONSTITUTE A DECLARATION OF SUCCESS. THEY are vibrant with triumph and joy. So far as the actual event to which they refer is concerned, they record what I may term an incidental victory. Nevertheless the story is microscopic. It is suggestive of vaster truths than the actual narrative in this wonderfully fascinating book of Nehemiah contains.

Our purpose is to find out the secrets of that remarkable success. I shall take it for granted that the story is well known. How came it that such desolation was turned into so excellent a construction within seven weeks? What were the secrets of success?

The wall was intended to enclose a Divine idea, and to preserve it until the hour for its development should arrive. Zerubbabel had come back first, and had erected an altar, and immediately following thereupon had commenced building the temple. For long years the temple, rising but a few feet from the ground, had remained until it had become overgrown with weeds, a picture of desolation. Under the ministry of Haggai and Zechariah men had turned again to its building, and it had been completed. Thus life was gathered round the altar and the temple in the city of God. As Paul said long after, in writing to the Galatians, referring to this very fact: "Before faith came, we were kept in ward under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed." Within those walls was to be gathered, and preserved, the Divine idea, until after four centuries had run their course the coming of Christ should be the first movement forward to the accomplishment of the Divine purpose.

There arose a prophet in those times, named Zechariah, who saw a young man going up to measure Jerusalem, and heard an angel declare to him that Jerusalem cannot be measured. Eventually, Jerusalem will not be contained within walls; it will enclose villages, and its only walls will be the glory and fire of the Divine presence. Long, long centuries after, another seer beheld the city of God coming down out of heaven to earth, and described the walls as great and high, and made of jasper, the symbol of conflict, including a new order. So the figure of the city of God runs through the Book, and the figure of the walls recurs again and again. In the narrative of Nehemiah we have the account of how in seven weeks walls were rapidly flung round the city, and the deed was celebrated by the writer in the words of the text: "So the wall was finished."

Looking at the work of those seven weeks, observing the man who came up to do it, observing his method with those who surrounded him, observing their response to his enthusiasm, watching them carry out their work, seeing them as difficulties presented themselves and were overcome, I want to find out what were the elements that made for the success.

The first element I observe is that, in the case of Nehemiah and under his influence, in the case of the whole of the people for those seven weeks, there was the element of forgetfulness of self in the presence of the passion for the accomplishment of the great end. When the need for building of a wall was manifested and these people came to an understanding of the need, each sank himself and worked for the common weal. The vastness of the work to be done filled the souls of the people, and created a natural, unstrained spirit of self-abnegation. That is always the first secret of success. It must be by natural, unstrained selflessness. When a great passion fills the soul, when some high, holy purpose is to be accomplished, then a man forgets himself. In working as a community this is very necessary. It is an element that moves to success whether it be for good or evil. Along the line of individual self-denial that became a corporate self-abnegation the men moved to the building of the wall, and so it was finished.

That involves another element. It is unity. Unity was not sought, not mechanically arranged, it was not the outcome of consultation. I read of only one consultation in this book. I will quote it: "I consulted with myself, and contended with the nobles." That is the consultation that arrives somewhere. There is no other consultation here at all. Here each man built over against his own house; every man did the piece of work that was nearest to his own dwelling. As self-denial was unconscious, born of the vision of the importance of the work, so the unity was unconscious as to any effort to produce it; it was born of the passion for the accomplishment of the great object. It is an old saying - but we need to be reminded of some of the trite sayings today - that unity is strength. All the fibrous strands of hemp are of no use, but weave them together, and by their very entanglement, skillfully arranged, you create the cable against which the mighty ship will strain in vain. For the best illustration of unity outside the Bible that I know I recommend that all, young people especially, read Rudyard Kipling's The Ship that Found Herself. When that ship started on her voyage across the sea, how the parts talked to each other! The rivets grumbled at the bolts; the planks objected to the upheaval of the beams; but through stress and strain and storm and tempest, at last the ship arrived, and the grumbling voices of the bolts were silenced, the complaints of the rivets were heard no more; all the parts had forgotten themselves in the realization of the unity of the ship that found herself.

Apart from such unity there can be no success in toil. Too often, we have been busy building, and we have tried to build the piece of wall near at hand, but we have been so busy building it high that we have not broadened it to touch the building of our neighbor; and the devil passes through the gaps, and laughs at us and destroys our building.

I look at those builders again during those busy weeks and I am impressed by their consecration. What is consecration? The expression of real consecration is the perfect discipline of life as it submits to the law created by the necessity of the case. These men were doing their work by hard discipline. At the heart of all real consecration there must be discipline, submission to authority.

I remember as a boy how I read with almost breathless interest the story of the taking of Quebec by Wolfe. It comes back to me almost with the scent of the flowers under a Gloucestershire hedgerow, where I sat to read. I remember, too, how vividly it all came back to me when I stood on the Heights of Abraham and saw the place where it was done. How was it done? By discipline. How was discipline expressed at the taking of Quebec? The boats dropped down the St. Lawrence, and the one order issued to every man in every boat was to be absolutely silent, not a word was to be spoken. That army, comparatively small, must climb the Heights of Abraham by way of a narrow defile which could easily be held at the top by twenty men. They dropped down the river without speech, with scarcely the sound of oars; they climbed silently to the heights, and waited in silence until the order to charge was given. That is consecration. "So the wall was finished."

I watch them again, and I am further impressed by their consistency, their cohesion, their holding together. I do not now mean the holding together of all in unity, but the consistency of every man, the all-roundness of them. The whole thing is graphically suggested by the use of a phrase that we always think of when we think of this building of the wall - the sword and trowel. These men were girt with a sword ready for conflict, while the trowel was busy. Every man was building, but every man was ready for battle. That merging of caution and courage, that splendid bringing together of the sense of danger and the readiness to meet it - that is consistency. Under Nehemiah's inspiration these men were ready to bring every part of the forces of their personalities into this one work. The whole thing is condensed into a statement of the book: "We made our prayer unto God and set a watch." These men neglected no side that was necessary to completeness, left nothing undone that must be done. What wonderful cohesion is manifest in the activity of every man, and this consistency within each personality, multiplied by all the workers, made for the finishing of the wall, until Nehemiah was able to write, "So the wall was finished."

But there was something more than all this: there was that indefinable, wonderful force which we describe as earnestness or enthusiasm. That is expressed in one sentence from the pen of Nehemiah: "The people had a mind to work." The work lay near their heart and captivated all their powers, so that it was commenced, continued, and completed. They were men who believed in the possibility of that to which they set themselves. They knew the importance of that completed wall and all that it meant to their city. That earnestness was the central secret of all their success. Men who lack enthusiasm will never do anything for God. Men who lack earnestness will never build any wall for God. Not by the dilletante discussions of committees will work eventually be done. I am not undervaluing committees, provided they are small enough! Certainly not by disparaging the work in hand, nor by declaring that the wall never can be built, will the wall be built. It is only when the fire that inspires construction and perfection fills the heart that a man can do God's work. When the fire in the individual heart is multiplied by the fires of united, consecrated souls, then the work of God goes forward.

Out of the fire of their enthusiasm emerges another quality making for success - stability. When Paul was writing of Christian work he said, "Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." The two words do not mean the same thing. Steadfastness is that square-backed quality of fidelity that stays at work however long it take, however hard it be, however much drudgery there be in it. Unmoveableness is the same thing in the presence of opposition. If ever a man was hindered in his work Nehemiah was. Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem, sent four times to lure him from his work, but his answer was quick and sharp, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?" Opposition arose within the city when Shemaiah advised Nehemiah to hide in the temple. He indignantly refused, "Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being such as I, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in." The spirit of the leader permeated them all. Nothing moved them, nothing hindered them, because their enterprise was deeply rooted. The secret of stability is to have the life so completely rooted in the Divine enterprise, the Divine will, the Divine power, that life becomes-unmoveable in the presence of opposition. By stability of this kind that wall was built.

Yet again, the wall was built, finally, by the sobriety of the rank and file, by the quiet, steady, plodding work of all the men whose names certainly are not mentioned in the record, and probably were hardly known at the time. Great enterprises are always won by that element of sobriety and self-control, with its quiet, steady, plodding work. That is the work that tells in the building of the city of God and the building of the wall around the city of God. It is so everywhere. There is a place in nature for the volcanic; but it is occasional, not regular. Some of you, perchance, have sailed across the great Pacific, and have seen the thousand islands that gem its waters, all things of beauty and joy. How came those islands there? Ever and anon a volcanic island is seen; it was flung up in a night by some convulsion; and it is sure, stable, beautiful; but the majority of the islands were not so flung up, but were formed by the tedious, persistent work of coral insects through long millenniums. When at last God's city is built and the wall is finished, there will be recognition of the volcanic men who did things explosively, and suddenly and magnificently; but if there had been none but they the wall had never been built. It is the quiet, steady workers, going on through what would seem to some of us the hopeless monotony and dulness of days and years who build the wall. How I could illustrate where I stand tonight, as I think of the work of this particular church through all its history. There are those here today who were here fifty years ago, who through stress, and toil, and storm, hoped, prayed, believed, and wrought with God for the building of the wall! These are the men and women that the Church needs if she is to do her work. That is the element that builds. "So they finished the wall."

If we have really seen these things we have discovered that the note on which I began is the note on which I must end. These people had perfect confidence in the work they were called to do. They saw the whole of it. There was one man who went down to the dung-gate and built there, where nobody wanted to go; but he built there until he had finished the work; there was another man who, perchance, had to cover a larger piece of work, and his daughters helped him, they went and built with him; one chapter gives us many such details. The secret of every individual effort was that of the vision of the wall itself, the absolute confidence of the people in its importance, and the integrity of the one appointed to lead them in building the wall. In answer to that vision they wrought, and the wall was finished.

In God's great economy two processes are going forward still, as they have been through all the centuries and all the millenniums: the processes of building and of battle, of destruction and of construction, of the sword and of the trowel. As I said before, this is a story, an incident by the way; but it is microcosmic. The whole Divine process is revealed in the picture of these men and the seven weeks of building the wall.

Are we engaged in this business of God? If we are, how can we prosecute it so as to be perfectly sure of ultimate success? The day will come when the city of God shall come down out of heaven, when its jasper walls shall flash with beauty, and its streets shine with gold - all figurative and symbolic language, figurative because the fact is so fine that can be expressed only in figurative language. God's victory is yet to be won. That we believe with all our hearts. Are we doing anything to hasten it? Are we engaged in the building? Are we doing anything in the battle?

There are times when the question reacts on the soul and almost scorches us as with flame. There are days when looking ahead to the ultimate victory one feels as though one would be ashamed to share it if one had no scars of battle and had never known weariness in the process of building.

All this is most pertinent today. Surely we have felt as though the walls were broken down and the gates burned with fire; all the fair things that we had hoped and longed for lie about us in catastrophic ruin; but to sit and lament is to be disloyal. Our business is to hear the cry of the leader, Come and let us build again the walls of Jerusalem. If we hear the cry of the Leader, then with our eyes on Him, and our eyes fixed also on the consummation toward which His lovelit eyes are ever looking, let us bear in mind that we shall do our building only as we learn the secrets of this lesson and yield ourselves thereto.

Self-denial is the first necessity if we are to succeed, and that must be after the pattern of Christ's Cross, which was the supreme revelation of self-emptying in the interest of God's high enterprise. That Cross leads the sacramental hosts!

We must also know unity in Christian service. Could anything be more ghastly today than that this nation should divide itself as within itself, and begin internecine quarrels in the presence of a common foe? Yet we are in a little danger in that very direction, and I say to you here and now publicly that I would suppress half the newspapers that are keeping up this unholy strife in the national life. At the heart of the struggle today is this supreme spiritual necessity for unity in the Church, I think there can be nothing more disastrous than that the Church of God should emphasize its divisions today. Oh for such a vision of God's purpose and of the necessity for building the wall and the restoration of Jerusalem that would bring every section of the one Catholic Church side by side to stand for the Christian ideal of the compassion and grace, the righteousness and justice, of God. Under the stress of the present conflict we are seeing many things as we have never seen them. We are seeing drink as we have never seen it before, but it has been here all the while. There has been no more drinking in the aggregate, but rather less because of the war; yet if a newspaper refers to the fact that a deputation waits on the Chancellor of the Exchequer with regard to this question it points out that they were no teetotal fanatics! Is fanatic ever the proper word with which to describe men who see the dire disaster that drink has wrought in the commonwealth? At least there must be no internecine strife. The Church must come into unity for the process of righteousness if the wall is to be built, or perhaps I should say, if the wall is to be rebuilt, for it seems to lie in ruins, burned and blackened with devilish fire.

There must be new consecration under the authority of Christ's Lordship expressing itself in discipline and obedience to every command that falls from His lips or is whispered by His Spirit to the soul of a man.

There must be a new consistency in the communion of Christ's Spirit holding together in balance and proportion. There must be the sanctifying of all life and the secularizing of all religion. Religion must proceed from the high altars of the Church, the cloistered quietness of the sanctuary, into the market place, the legislative halls. Wherever men go they must carry the force of religion in order that the walls of the city may be rebuilt.

We must also know that holy enthusiasm in the enterprise of Christ's Kingdom which may be analyzed by the use of three words: faith, fervor, fidelity.

We must know stability. We must have our lives rooted in the things unseen and eternal, or we shall be entirely unable to touch the things seen and temporal. This we may find in the fulness of Christ's eternity, and only as we live in that relationship with Him can we ever hope to be stable in the midst of the stern and terrible conflict.

We want as we never wanted before all the quiet, persistent sobriety of the unnamed workers. In this hour of national crisis and religious catastrophe we depend most on the multitudes who are unknown and inconspicuous, and on their remaining quietly in the home, the office, or the shop, doing in the strength of Christ's patience the commonplace drudgery of the darkened days.

Mistake me not. As God is my witness, there is no panic in my heart and no fear in my soul. The walls are yet to be built. The city of God is yet to come down out of heaven. The triumph of our God is assured. Whatever Armageddon there may be ahead of us in some dispensational, prophetical sense, the central Armageddon of the ages is accomplished, and the victory was with God. In that hour of loneliness when the universal Man, gathering into His own personality all types and temperaments and nationalities, trod the wine-press of the wrath of God alone, in that hour when He bent to death and by dying slew death, in that hour He won the victory. Every subsequent catastrophe is by comparison with that but the administration of victory already won. The ideal of the Christ is the master ideal, the all-conquering ideal, only I want to have some share in the travail that makes the Kingdom come, I want to have some part in building the wall so that when at last He who came first to visit the ruin and inspect it - taking counsel with no man but Himself - when He shall write as the summary of the battle and building of ages, "The wall is finished," I want to have some share in the thrill of His triumph, some partnership in the joy of His victory. These things I can have only as I stand by Him building, and stand by Him fighting until the work is done.