**VOLUME 10; CHAPTER 11 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**THE CONDITIONS OF COMING TO GOD by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him.*

*Hebrews 11:6*

THE TEXT IS PART OF A VERSE WHICH BREAKS IN ON THE CONTINUITY of the chapter from which it is taken. That chapter constitutes the roll of honor of the heroes and heroines of faith. The second name on the list is Enoch, of whom it is said, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God translated him: for before his translation he hath had witness borne to him that he had been well-pleasing unto God." Then it is declared, "Without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him." In this interpolation on the continuity of the chapter we have the one clear Biblical statement for the necessity of perpetual and fundamental Biblical assumptions. Everywhere the Bible assumes the two things that here it is declared must be believed if man is to come to God. The Biblical literature from its first majestic sentence, "In the beginning God created," to its very last sentence, "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints," assumes that God is, and that He a rewarder of them that seek after Him. For these things it never argues. Of the men whom it presents to us, whether they be the great historical figures of the old covenant or the new, whether they be lawgivers, or prophets, or psalmists, none argues for the existence of God, none ever attempts to prove that He is a rewarder of such as seek after Him. This is supremely, finally true in the case of the one supernal figure, Jesus. He never argued for the existence of God. He never argued for the truth that God is available to souls that seek after Him. These Biblical writers argued for the love of God, for the justice of God, for the care of God; and some of them, in the midst of agony, questioned the love of God, questioned the justice of God, questioned the care of God; but none of them argued for Him, or for His availability to certain souls in certain conditions. The man who denies the existence of God is almost contemptuously dismissed, "The fool saith in his heart, There is no God." In my text, then, we are face to face with fundamental things.

Let us consider, first, the central idea suggested, that of coming to God; second, the declared condition in its two-fold application; and, finally, the involved teaching which may be of profit to our own hearts today and always.

First, then, the central idea of coming to God. Simply and inclusively the thought is of approach to God, drawing near to God, or of putting oneself into communication with God. In expression and in experience the thought is of speaking to God in praise and prayer and of hearing God speak. Of these two exercises of the soul in addressing God, prayer is the first in experience, but praise is the higher. I believe that praise may become so profound and so continuous that there is hardly any room left for prayer. But the experience of the soul in speaking to God is, first, of prayer, then of praise. In experience and expression, drawing near to God is not only speaking to Him, whether in prayer or praise, it is hearing God speak. That is the more difficult exercise, conditioned in silence and experienced in the reception of what God has to say. Of these, the second, the reception of what God has to say to the soul, is assured to all those who keep silence before Him. But again I say it is far harder to be silent before God than to speak to God. This is one of the lost arts of the Christian Church and of the Christian soul. We have almost forgotten how to listen for God. That is the reason why we so seldom hear Him speak. I would urge all young Christian people, at whatever cost - however busy the days with pressing duties, however important it be that you do something for God - not to fail to make time in which to cease praising and praying in order to cultivate the silence of the soul. That is the condition to which God addresses Himself directly and immediately. These are the highest aspects of the expression and experience of coming to God. Light on the conception comes to us from the context. "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God translated him: for before his translation he hath had witness borne to him that he had been well-pleasing unto God: and without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto Him: for he that cometh unto God must believe that He is." Immediately in connection with the great declaration we have this illustration: "Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." That is coming to God. "Enoch walked with God" in a godless age. Enoch was the seventh from Adam through Seth. The seventh from Adam through Cain was Lamech. Lamech and his sons were the originators of the arts and sciences, and of the enfranchisement of women. It was a wonderfully successful age, but godless. One simple soul walked with God in the godless age. That was coming to God. It involves leaving a good deal, cutting oneself off from many things; it means being out of date, peculiar, behind the times! Enoch walked with God in a godless age. With what result? God took him, took him out of the godless age while he was still in it, became his boon companion, making up for the loss of all such friendships, satisfying the inner cry of his soul, though all other things were denied him. At last God took him away from the age by translation, so that men sought for the strange, peculiar character who had been separated from all the progress of the age, and they found him not, for God had translated him. What was the deep secret of it all? Enoch believed "that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him." Answering his belief, he found God, he gained the reward; he marched with God through the weary years, and at last walked out into light and life forevermore. That is coming to God.

What, then, is the condition of coming to God? I pray you note the simplicity of the statement, and its sublimity. We "must believe that God is, and that He is a rewarder." Nothing can be simpler in statement, nothing more sublime in conception; for to believe that God is, and to believe that God is a rewarder, is to have all life conditioned by that belief, to see everything personal, relative, social, national, racial, set in the light thereof. To believe that God is, and that God is a rewarder, is to have solved the riddle of the universe, and then to march along the line of the solution, knowing that presently every tangled web will be made straight, all the mists will melt, and the discords of the straining and the tension will merge into the last and final harmonies of perfect order and perfect music. It is so simple that a little child will understand it, and agree that no one will come to a person he does not believe exists, no one will come to a person he does not believe will receive him and reward him. It is quite simple; and yet fundamentally, finally sublime.

The inclusive condition is to have faith. Faith is infinitely more than intellectual conviction. Faith is intellectual conviction expressing itself in volitional obedience. To me, trust is a greater word than faith. Faith is belief, conviction; trust puts conviction into practice. There is a chair, I have faith in it; when I sit on it I trust it! I have an intellectual conviction that the chair will bear me, I could argue it, demonstrate it, lecture on it: that is faith; but when I sit on it I am trusting it. That is the faith that is demanded of men who come to God: not merely intellectual conviction, but abandonment of the whole life to the truth of which the soul is convinced - that is faith.

First, we must believe that God is. I have said in my introduction that it is never argued for in the Bible. I will stand by that declaration. Therefore, is it necessary, or wise, or will I do any good if I argue for it, seeing that the Bible never argues for it? Yes, I think it may be well to discover the reasons of our faith, for the faith demanded of us is not blind, foolish credulity. Therefore we will inquire if there be any grounds for this great assumption of the Bible.

I first declare that belief in the existence of God is the most natural activity of the human soul. Effort is required to disbelieve rather than to believe. Wherever you find a person who does not believe that God is you have a person who has come to that condition of mind as the result of effort. I am not speaking disrespectfully of such; they may be honest; the disbelief may be the outcome of agony, but it is the outcome of effort. The human soul naturally believes in God, in the fact that He is. Is there anything more beautiful or wonderful than the story of Helen Keller? She was blind, dumb, deaf from birth, a soul imprisoned; yet with infinite, beautiful patience another soul took time to communicate with that imprisoned soul. Without the aid of eyes, or ear, or tongue, but with the touch of tenderness and delicacy of sensation, Miss Sullivan at last found Helen Keller's beautiful soul. In the process of that training, Bishop Phillips Brooks was asked to see her, and communicate to her the idea of God. With patience the great Bishop gave himself to the business. After a long while Helen Keller responded. She said to the Bishop, "Oh, I know perfectly well what you mean; I have always known Him; but I did not know what you called Him." That is a rare illustration, but by reason of its rarity the more powerful; a soul shut up in prison always knew God. It is perfectly natural to believe in God. Every child believes in God, unless you in your unutterable folly have told the child there, is no God; and even then it does not believe you at first. Every child believes in God. All simple souls believe in Him. I say it is the natural attitude of the human soul.

If you are not for the moment prepared to accept that, or it may be that in your struggle after truth you have got away from that, then there are lines of proof that it would be well for you to consider. I should be inclined to ask a man who told me he did not believe in God first to appeal to his imagination. I wonder how many of you young people have read Paley's Natural Theology. You young men, lay preachers, have you read it? I find no exercise more helpful when I am preparing a sermon than to get down some old book and read it again. I have been all through Paley's Natural Theology getting ready for this sermon. It was written in 1802, and contains the argument from design, which I am asked to believe is out of date. It may be out of date, but it has never been answered or refuted. The first argument, on which he bases all the rest, is the argument of the watch. Paley says that if walking across the moorland his foot struck against a stone, and he should inquire whence it came, it is possible that he might say, That has been there forever and forever, and not be able to demonstrate the absurdity of the reply. If, instead of a stone, he found a watch there, it would be impossible to say that it had been there forever and ever. The watch argues a watchmaker. That has never been answered; it has been laughed at, counted out of date: today I do not know that there is a theological college or seminary in the world where it is studied; but it has not been refuted. I appeal, then, to my imagination. The fact that watches are improved and that the skilful watchmaker would laugh at the old-fashioned mechanism does not disprove the argument; the more complex the mechanism, the more secure is the argument for the man behind the mechanism. Since that book was written what strides we have made in our understanding of the universe! It has been discovered to us to be far more complicated, mystical, marvelous than our fathers ever suspected; but that does not invalidate the argument from design; rather this additional knowledge accentuates the argument and makes it powerful. If there can be no watch without a maker and a mind, will your imagination allow you to be satisfied to believe that the universe so rhythmic, so wonderful, so beauteous in its processes, so regular in its irregularities, so irregular in its regularities, is a mere accident, a creation without intelligence, an order without arrangement? Take a twig from an apple tree and look at it; the leaves are set in spirals, and number five is always exactly above number one. Why is number five above number one? I do not know, I have no idea; but it proves regularity, order, design. My apple trees, with their spiral blossoming, make it impossible for me to believe that there is no God. An odd number of rows will not be found in any single ear of corn, among all the multiplied millions. I do not think these things are accidents. If I try to think of creation without intelligence, of order without arrangement, of man, the most marvelous thing in all the universe, without the God Who thought him, created him, my imagination is in revolt. Consequently, my appeal to imagination becomes an appeal to reason. I declare that for myself it is far easier to believe that God is than to believe that He is not.

I make my appeal finally to the manifestation of God which He has made of Himself in human history in a Man named Jesus, Who claimed to be one with the hidden God, Whose influence through two millenniums has been to make men believe in the one hidden God, Whose most glorious victories in the two millenniums have been the victories of the growing beauty of man's conception of the God Whom He claimed to reveal. We cannot decide whether God is until we have dealt with Jesus of Nazareth, have listened to His claims, and have begun to consider the influence He has exerted. Countless millions of souls have walked with God because they have trusted in Jesus, have found infinite comfort in the Divine compassion because they have dared to follow the lonely Galilean peasant; have felt the force, the energy of God sustaining them in conflict and in suffering because they have loved Jesus. We must remember also that the great conception men have of God, even though they may be denying Jesus His Deity, has nevertheless come to the world as the result of His presence therein and His teaching of the sons of men.

But there must be more than believing that God is. There must be belief "that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him." The general idea is that this means that man must believe in the moral government of God. Of course, that is involved. It is impossible to believe that God has abandoned the highest results of His creative power, man, and the moral element in man. It is impossible to believe that God rolls the seasons round, decks the sod with beauty, clothes the trees with verdure, maintains the equilibrium of all things in the great process of His order, and has nothing to do with man. It is impossible to believe that God cares for man on the physical side of his being and nothing for his moral nature. All that is involved, but that is not the declaration of the text. The declaration is of the availability of God to certain souls on certain conditions. Those souls and conditions are revealed in the words rendered in the Revised Version, "them that seek after Him," and in the Authorized Version, "such as diligently seek Him." I think the Revised Version has lost something by omitting the word "diligently." As a matter of fact, there is but one word in the Greek, but it is a strong word, and we need something more than the ordinary word "seek" to convey its meaning. The word means to investigate, to crave, to demand. God is a rewarder of such as investigate, crave, demand Him; or, in the simpler words of Jesus, such as ask, seek, knock. The attitude of soul described is persistent determination to approach God. God is not found of men who indulge in dilletante fooling. When the soul feels its need, when the soul gropes in the night, and, knocking, inquires, then God becomes a rewarder, a Payer of wages - that is the word, a Remunerator, one who gives what is demanded, pays over what is asked. God comes to the soul that comes to Him.

What proofs have we that God is a rewarder of them that seek after Him? There are hours in which the soul seems unable to find God. Said Eliphaz to Job, "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace." Said the man in his agony in reply, "O that I knew where I might find Him. ... Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand, when He doth work, but I cannot behold Him: He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him." The human soul knows that experience; but let us never forget that Job did find Him. Through the very process in which he thought he could not find God Job was preparing himself to find Him. By the strenuousness of his endeavor, by the stress of his agony, by the strong crying of his soul after God, he was preparing for the coming of God. The very pain and suffering and tribulation and unrest which seem to prove that God cannot be found may be the exercise of soul through which He will be found.

I find in the nature of man the first proof that God may be found. Man is made to ask, to seek, to knock. In her beautiful book, Laddie, Mrs. Gene Stratton Porter makes one of her characters say of man that he is a praying animal. Though he never prays, if he be in sudden peril of shipwreck, fire, or death, he will pray. Man has a natural capacity for prayer, and there is no half measure in this universe. Has that bird a wing? Then there is air in which to poise it. Has that fish a fin? Then there is water in which to use it. Does your soul go out in prayer? Then there is a God to pray to Who will answer prayer.

Another proof that God gives Himself to such as seek Him is to be found in the experience of men. If testimony is to be accepted as evidence on any subject, why not on this? Why do men rule out the testimony of souls who declare that they have prayed and have been answered. It is unscientific to rule out such testimony. There are tens of thousands who know what it is to pray and to be answered, to ask and to have, to seek and to find, to knock and to see the door swing open. Their testimony is not merely the testimony of their avowal. It is also the testimony of their lives, transfigured by their belief, and made beautiful, pure, compassionate, glorious.

The final proof is the testimony of the Man of Nazareth, Who, whatever doubts we may have concerning the meaning of some of the things He said, has left no room for doubt that He believed, and intended men to believe, that God is available to souls, will answer them, will reward them, will come to them in grace, in succor, in strength, in love, in help - when they seek after Him.

To believe that God is, is to believe in One Who knows all, is infinitely wise, is always close at hand, is all powerful, and is love. If that be true, then how easy it is to come to God. There is nothing to explain when you come, He knows it all. There is no journey to take to reach Him:

Closer is He than breathing,

Nearer than hands and feet.

Effort is unnecessary; in silence, and in the quietness of the soul that has ceased its struggling God makes Himself known. "Perfect love casteth out fear."

To believe that God is a rewarder is to believe, first, that He is interested in me. I can think of Him as interested in the universe, but to learn the corollary of that, that nothing is too small for His attention is the wonderful thing. God is great not only in the infinitude of immensity, but in the exactitude of littleness. Consequently, He is interested in me, in what I wear, in what I eat, in where I live, in my amusements. Think how easy it is to come to Him; no persuasion is necessary. That whole conception of prayer that declares we must persuade God is erroneous. Jesus gave us the figure of the importunate widow to prove that we need not be importunate. Importunity was necessary in the case of the unjust judge; it is not necessary in the case of God. Refusal is not possible in the heart of love, except that love will refuse what would harm us.

Nevertheless, the text reveals the need of urgency. The belief necessary involves conviction of the necessity for demand, craving, seeking. Such is the only condition to which God can give Himself.

Finally, do not let us forget the opening declaration of the letter from which the text is taken: "God hath spoken … unto us by His Son … the effulgence of His glory, and the very image of His substance." Christ stands to me in the place of God, and He is God. So that when I would come to God I come to Christ, the Man of my humanity, so that this frail imagination of mine may go out to Him apprehendingly. As I do so, I find I have included in the grasp of my comprehension the vastness of God and eternity. I come to God because I believe that He is, having seen Him in Christ; because I believe that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him, having seen Christ receive publicans and sinners, and heard Him say to them as they thronged to Him, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Believing these things I come to Him, and He comes to me, and we walk and talk together.