**VOLUME 10; CHAPTER 19 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**FAITH'S OUTLOOK by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*Lift up now thine eyes; and look from the place where thou art.*

*Genesis 13:14*

THIS WAS THE WORD OF JEHOVAH TO ABRAM UNDER STRANGE circumstances. The point and the power of the particular words are found when they are placed in contrast with an earlier statement of the chapter, a statement found in the tenth verse. "Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of the Jordan that it was well watered everywhere, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt."

After that survey of the land, and after the choice he made, Lot moved east to the plain of the Jordan, to the circle of the five cities: Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim, Bela. Abram remained at Bethel, as it was subsequently called, the historian here using the later name, Luz, which, in all probability, was its name at the time. Abram remained in that neighborhood, where later Jacob arrived as an exile from home; it was a place that offered practically no hospitality to him in his wandering, a place where, after the long journeyings, it was necessary for him to pillow his head on a stone in order to rest, a neighborhood at that time undoubtedly characterized by its rocky fastnesses and its barrenness. Abram remained there, and there the word of the Lord came to him, introduced by the words of my text:

Lift up now thine eyes; and look from the place where thou art.

Let us consider the story and attempt to deduce some of its values for ourselves. In the light of these particular words there are three matters of interest to me in this story: first, the command itself coming to this man to lift up his eyes and look from the place where he was; second, I am necessarily interested in what he saw when he obeyed the command, and, finally, I am interested, therefore, in the results which followed that uplifting of the eyes and the vision which greeted him when he obeyed the Divine order.

In regard to the command itself, you will at once see that it was perfectly simple. Abram was told to look north, and south, and east, and west. We immediately see that he was told to look in every direction. In imagination, we see him looking away to the north. His vision would not penetrate far, for the mountains would be in front of him; but they would suggest the things that lay beyond them. He looked to the south. There, perchance, he could see farther, and he knew that beyond what he could see lay Egypt. He looked to the east, the very direction in which Lot had traveled. He looked to the west to what remained of the land until it came to the uttermost confine, from where the great sea stretched beyond. Thus he looked north and south, and east and west.

But the command becomes more than simple; it becomes significant if we lay our emphasis on two points. First, on the little word "now"; and, second, on the final phrase: "from the place where thou art." These indicate a particular time and a particular situation. "Now!" And immediately we begin to remember the things behind the point at which this man had now arrived in his life. Away there in the back, how far none can tell, was that mystic experience in which at Ur of the Chaldees Abram had heard in exile the voice of God. In all probability the voice had first been a whispered suggestion. But we know certainly that there in Ur of the Chaldees Abram had become discontented, discontented with the conditions in the midst of which he found himself, discontented with the splendor and the glory of that city, discontented with it because he had discovered its hollowness, its emptiness; discontented because he had learned something of the infinite glory of a better order of things. This discovery was born of his knowledge, through mystic intercourse, of the one God. At last, that whisper in the soul, perchance, as I have said, long continued and persistent, became a clarion trumpet call commanding him to leave Ur of the Chaldees and to travel long, long distances across the desert lands until he arrived almost at the confines of things in this strip of land which we now call Palestine. He had arrived at Shechem, the valley between Ebal and Gerizim, from which, perhaps, the grandest views of the land can be obtained. There he had pitched a tent and built an altar.

Then there had come famine in the land, and the man who had dared to leave everything for God became fearful; there was deflection from faith, and hurriedly he passed south, and crossed the borderland into Egypt. The man who was able to trust God with his whole destiny when he left Ur of the Chaldees was not able to trust Him when there was famine in the land. There had been strange experiences in Egypt, in which even this great soul had descended to deception, but there had been restoration, and he had come back again, back to his own land, back to Bethel. So we come to the immediate circumstances.

A vulgar household quarrel had been an occasion for the manifestation of two men, Lot and Abram. To Lot, the man seeking his own, first choice had been given, for faith is ever able to be magnanimous in its dealings with men; and he departed to this well-watered plain, choosing it because it was well watered. Mark the significant word: like the Garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt. Lot, pausing in that particular situation of possibility to compromise be tween his faith and his selfish desires, saw a region like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt. The Garden was near to the cities, where he might seek for his own enrichment. He had pitched his tent toward Sodom, and Abram was left - a man declining to be progressive, a man having learned a lesson through past deflection from faith and his sojourn in Egypt. Now, said the Lord, look in this hour; from the place where thou art lift up thine eyes.

Lifting up his eyes that day, what did Abram see? In the first place he saw, north and south and east and west, lands which belonged to others. There on the east was the land which now, in some senses at least, belonged to Lot, for Lot had chosen it, and Abram had handed it over to him, so that he could not travel there, nor take his cattle through. He must keep away from the circle of the cities. The Canaanites were then in the land, says the historian. That place where Abram stood was in the center of territory that belonged to others. No foot of land belonged to him. That is what he saw by sight.

What did he see that day as he looked by faith? The whole land as belonging to him. It was all given to him, even the land that Lot had chosen for himself belonged to Abram; those lands stretching away to the north that were possessed by strange and strong and warlike tribes belonged to him. Those lands stretching away south, leading on to Egypt, from which he had traveled, were his. The rich and fertile borderlands, down to the margin of the sea, all belonged to him.

What were the effects produced in this man as the result of his obedience to the Divine command, as the result of the things on which his eyes looked that day? The first result was the march from Bethel to Hebron. The Lord said to him: "Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it" - a poetic way of saying walk through the central strategic points of this land - and walk through the land as its proprietor and possessor. Bethel was nearly as far north of the site of Jerusalem as Hebron was south thereof. Of course, Jerusalem was not there. The stronghold probably was there even then, the fortress of Jebus which presently became the City of the great King. But Abram walked from Bethel to Hebron through the strategic center of the land, and he walked through it as its proprietor.

Suppose that we could have communicated at the time with any of the possessors, and told them that the man walking from Bethel to Hebron was the owner of the whole land, they would hardly have taken the trouble to oppose him. Probably, they would have smiled at his unutterable folly. Yet this is the picture of a man marching over a land that he does possess because God ordains it so. Arrived at Hebron, he settled down, so far as settlement can ever be consonant with loyalty. He pitched his tent and he erected an altar, the two abiding symbols of his relationship to the land and to his God, the tent forevermore a symbol of his readiness to obey the Divine command to remain or to move; the altar surely the symbol of his relationship to God through sacrifice, and the Divine grace. This man moving down through the land owned by others was the owner of it; this man journeying through a land that other people possessed was the possessor of it. He pitched his tent and erected his altar as the sign and symbol of the fact that he owned the land by the deed of God and the gift of the Almighty.

Then I glance on. I cannot go far. One page will suffice, half a page in the Bible, the next chapter. What is the next recorded activity of this man? There came news to him that the opposing kings had taken Lot captive with all his possessions, and had carried him and his possessions away to the far north. Immediately, this man, who by Divine deed possessed the whole land, went forth to restore the land, the things that really belonged to himself, to Lot. Struggling with the opposing kings, meeting them in battle, mastering them, he brought Lot back. He traveled over 150 miles in pursuit of those kings. He mastered them and came back. He restored to another man the things which God had given him. When he had done his work the king of Sodom offered to give him presents, and he declined. He would receive nothing from any other than the One by Whose deed he possessed everything.

But let us go a little further, and we will do so by turning to a New Testament letter and reading some sentences:

By faith Abraham became a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a land not his own, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. …

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

So far, that was the end of it all. This man never possessed anything in the land except a grave. He heard the Divine covenant which set aside every other right of possession; he walked through the length and the breadth of the land, and pitched his tent and erected his altar; he greeted the ultimate realization from afar with a song in his heart and confidence in his soul; but he died never having possessed; and yet, by faith, he possessed from the moment of the Divine covenant until the day of his passing.

Such briefly is the story. Now, from that story I want to deduce some of its lessons as I see them. Here is a wonderful revelation of the true outlook of faith in an hour of darkness. I may condense the whole thing into a very simple phrase: when faith looks, things are seen to be not what they seem to be. Faith sees farther than man's sight can perceive. The vision of faith is a clearer and more penetrating vision into the very heart and essence and truth of things than is ever possible to sight and to calculation. When faith looked out on the land on this occasion, it was seen that the land did not belong to those who were in possession, but to God, and to whomsoever God chose to make it over in the covenant of His great and sacred will. I am not proposing to delay to make any detailed application of this. It is the great conception that I would fain pass on to you at this hour. If, however, I make any application, let it be along these lines.

This is an hour when civilization is at an end. This is an hour when the very props and foundations of order seem to be shaken, to be going down in catastrophe and clash. To faith this is an hour when true civilization is seen producing the shaking and the catastrophe, and the things that are true and abiding are seen deeper down than all the things that shake and tremble and totter and fall. The vision of sight fills the soul with fear. The vision of faith fills the soul with songs. I choose my words carefully. He giveth songs in the night. Because, even in this terrible hour, the men of faith see God, endure as seeing Him Who is invisible.

I will make the illustration somewhat more personal. Take the kind of experience into which we all come ever and anon in our pathway through life, a situation created in a thousand varied ways, and yet a situation in which we are inclined to say, looking at things as they are, The bottom is gone out of everything. I have heard that said more than once this week. Faith knows that it is not so. The foundations are unshakable. If we seem to have lost the sense of foundation, it is only that life may become better, profounder, and that we may pass down to the things that never shake, that cannot be moved.

Let us clearly understand that this outlook on life is created by the Word of the Lord, and by human confidence therein. This outlook is not created by our own desires. Again and again, our desires are in conflict with the things which by faith we see. Again and again, our desires, if they were granted to us, would ruin both ourselves and all those with whom we are associated. Not according to our desires. If I simply take up an outlook on life which is inspired by my desire, then I have no peace, and no sense of rest, no quietness, no assurance, no authority. Neither does this confidence spring from our own conclusions. This man did not move with quiet, kingly dignity through the length and breadth of the land and pitch his tent and sustain his heroic soul in patience because he had concluded thus and so, and knew presently what the issue was likely to be and was assured that things would work out all right. By no means. This man heard the word of God in his own soul clearly in spite of all appearances, and so he knew the final abiding truth concerning the things in the midst of which he lived. That is always the secret of quietness and peace.

I want to emphasize at this point the duty of this outlook to the man of faith. This was a command which God laid on Abram, "Lift up now thine eyes from the place where thou art." It was Abraham's duty thus to look, and his duty to look in the light of the word that God spoke in his soul. Here faith might have halted, here faith might have wandered from its right relationship to God. Had this been so, then there had been no quiet triumphant march through the neighborhood, no pitching of the tent and the altar, and no conflict presently to restore the possession to another, no travail, no holy prayer after a while that Sodom might be saved. The great nation would have failed if faith had failed at this moment. Of course, this is our difficulty. There are days when faith is a march with banner and song and joy; there are days when faith is a march into the mists, into the darkness, with no glimmering light except the assurance within the soul that God is right and God is truth.

In the second place, observe what this story suggests as to the activity suggested by the outlook thus inspired. Life will now be conformable with the truth which it receives. In all the attitudes of the life there will be evidences of the conviction that possesses and masters the soul. Here perhaps is the point when faith becomes most difficult. I have referred more than once to this man moving down from Bethel to Hebron along that central tract of the land now given to him. Look at him again. It was the march of proprietorship. I think there is a word that we often have need of: "Strengthen the hands that hang down, confirm the feeble knees." There should be to the man of faith no trembling, no feeble knees, no yielding to the pressure of circumstances, but the courageous definite positive authoritative triumphant march that is conformable with the inner, sacred, deep conviction between the soul and God.

But if the activity is that of conformity to the truth it is that also of submission to the Revealer. There must be a pitching of the tent, and it must be a tent of submission, an erection of the altar, and it must always be the altar of sacrifice. Finally, here must be an activity which is the activity of co-operation with the patience of God, getting things ready for others, the ability to do without things. This is the picture of Abram to the end. Further on in the story, Lot is dwelling in the city, and, more, he is raised to a position of eminence, he is the chief magistrate, for that is the meaning of the Hebrew phrase, "sitting in the gate of the city." What influence had he in the city of which he was chief magistrate? None morally, none spiritually; in the day of Divine wrath not ten souls could be found that he had influenced. Yonder was the man who had pitched his tent and built his altar and walked, a lonely pilgrim, in the unfathomable comfort of the comradeship of God. He very nearly saved Sodom by his prayer, and would have, if Lot had created just one vantage ground from which God could move. So we see a man co-operating in the patience of God, enabled to wait, without ever possessing the things which were his own, and content to be without them, because of his comradeship with God Himself.

The last thing I learn from that story, coming naturally and simply out of the things already said, is a lesson concerning the results which we may expect when we obey the Divine command and lift our eyes and see, not the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen. What may we expect for ourselves? Nothing! Everything! Nothing of the land of promise, nothing of the success desired, nothing of the business which we toiled to do. Yet everything of the land and the fulfilment of high desire, and the ultimate glory, and the work accomplished in the God with Whom we work, and Who, when our pilgrimage is over and our day of toil is spent, will take our little things and link them with His eternal might, until the final goal is reached and the ultimate glory is obtained.

So, then, for the future we are to expect victory and realization, and for today the honor and the joy of co-operation with God.

Therefore we may draw these simple conclusions of faith. It is never important that we should get anything we desire. It is supremely important that God should get what He purposes. It is glorious to do without, and still to have by sharing in the process that moves toward God's final victory:

Others shall sing the song,

Others shall right thee wrong, -

Finish what I begin,

And all I fail to win.

What matter, I or they,

Mine or another's day,

So the right word be said,

And life the sweeter made?

Hail to the Coming Singers!

Hail to the brave light-bringers!

Forward I reach and share

All that they sing and dare.

Ring, bells in unreared steeples,

The joy of unborn peoples!

Sound, trumpets far off blown,

Your triumph is my own!

I feel the earth move sunward,

I join the great march onward,

And take, by faith, while living,

My freehold of thanksgiving.