**VOLUME 10; CHAPTER 23 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**THE WELL-DOING THAT BRINGS HARVEST by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*Let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.*

*Galatians 6:9*

THIS APOSTOLIC INJUNCTION HAS A MUCH WIDER APPLICATION than its context. There the reference is to the fellowship which they that are taught in the Word have with their teachers. The apostle, writing to these Galatian Christians, charged them that they were to communicate unto their teachers in all good things - which, I may say in passing, means much more than that they were to pay their teachers' salary. The phrase, "good things," includes sympathy, prayer, co-operation, as well as the very necessary supply of material necessities. The injunction in itself may, and indeed must, be applied to the whole area of life and service.

The figure in the mind of the apostle throughout the paragraph was clearly agriculture. Having said, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things," he immediately adopted this figure: "Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Again he wrote: "He that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life." In our text the word "reap" shows that the same figure was in the apostle's mind. Thus the thought of the text is that the harvest is the issue of well-doing. Therefore, well-doing must be interpreted in the light of that figure. It is the activity which leads to harvest. This central idea of the text is introduced and followed by words that reveal the special perils which threaten such well-doing: weariness and fainting. The whole text is an injunction to guard against these perils. Let this, then, be the line of our thought: first, the harvest; second, the well-doing that ensures it; and, third, the perils that threaten well-doing.

First, the harvest. Here, as so often, we are in danger of taking a great word and interpreting it very narrowly, and perhaps very selfishly. It has been altogether too much the habit of our thinking to interpret the big things in the New Testament in the narrow circle of our own personality. What is the harvest? To what was Paul looking forward when he said we shall reap? I do not for a moment believe that uppermost in his mind was the conception that presently we shall reach heaven. I do not think the idea was a personal one at all. I believe, rather, that in harmony with all his writings, with all New Testament revelation, with all the unveiling of what Christianity is in the supreme and central Person of Christ - that when Paul wrote, "We shall reap," he was thinking of something much larger than his own winning of heaven. No one will suppose for a moment that I am undervaluing that grand hope. I think we are sometimes in danger of failing to do what Rutherford charged us to do - climb to the City of God, and walk its streets, and gaze on its beauties, and talk with its inhabitants, and so prepare ourselves for the day of our arrival. Yet this is not the biggest outlook. What, then, is harvest?

I turn from Paul's writings for a moment to borrow some words of another New Testament writer in which the same general idea was in mind. I refer to James. He wrote:

Be patient therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it, until it receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; establish your hearts.

James was using the same figure. The picture he suggests is the husbandman waiting for the precious fruit of the earth. It is a common, everyday picture, but one that perfectly reveals God's attitude toward the whole earth. God is waiting for the precious fruit of the earth, patiently waiting for it. James was urging men to come into fellowship with God's patience.

In that phrase, "the precious fruit of the earth," there is a rich and wonderful suggestiveness. It describes the very harvest for which God is waiting, the very harvest to bring in which there must be the well-doing referred to in the text, the very harvest to reap which we must fight against weariness and fainting. The words, "the precious fruit of the earth," might with equal accuracy be rendered, "the costly and valuable harvest of the earth." That is what God is waiting for. This is the reaping for which we are looking. Here emerges a vital principle of Christian experience. Our real hope, our true hope, is not a selfish hope. The real inspiration of the Christian, that which buoys him up, and prevents weariness and fainting, is not the idea that some day he will gain something. When the Christian soul is most truly in fellowship with Jesus Christ he is prepared to lose everything, even his own soul: "I could wish that I were accursed from Christ for my brethren." Do not let any expositor or preacher persuade us that Paul did not mean that. He meant exactly that, and never was he nearer to the heart of his Lord than when he penned those words. I go further and declare that his passion was not so much for saving his brethren as for the glory of God and the realization of the Divine purpose, for the healing of the wound in the Divine heart, and the satisfaction of the infinite and immeasurable and unfathomable love of God. True Christian hope is not selfish. The harvest we look for is not gaining things that we shall enjoy in our own personal life, but God's victory, God's triumph. This was the meaning of what Paul wrote in his Roman letter when he charged the saints to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not for a single moment does it mean that we are to rejoice that one day we shall reach the glory land, but rather that we are to rejoice in the assurance that one day God will win this earth, and the prayer that Jesus taught us will be answered, His Kingdom will come on earth as it is in heaven. The harvest will be the golden era when God's victory is won. This is the reaping for which we are to look.

Let us return to the phrase of James, "the precious fruit of the earth," the costly and valuable harvest of the earth. The idea of that phrase is that the harvest will be the realization of the Divine purpose and the victory of the Divine travail. The harvest toward which we are looking is that time when the whole meaning of the earth will be realized and manifested. In God's temple they perpetually sing of His glory, and the whole burden of their singing is that the whole earth is full of His glory. This earth of ours is surcharged with the potentialities of the Divine glory. When, at last, all that is realized, when those hidden things have been finally led out to manifestation, when out of the old there shall come the new, the new being the full realization of the first Divine intention, the precious fruit of the earth - that will be harvest. That includes, and is dependent on, bringing man to his true end, the realization of what was in the heart of God when, according to the poetic and accurate account of Genesis, He said, "Let us make man." That harvest will come when man, who is the offspring of God, shall be the offspring of God, understanding God, co-operating with God, revealing God. This "far-off Divine event toward which the whole creation moves" - this is the harvest, this is the reaping.

All that will be the, realization of the Divine purpose, but it will be the victory of the Divine travail. Harvest will be that hour in which He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied, that hour in which the ransom and renewal of man and the earth shall be perfected, completed. That will be the hour in which the Divine grace, as it was involved in creation but now shown therein, shall have its perfect and final outshining in the whole universe. I still think of this little earth of ours as central to the universe in some senses. Its material smallness matters nothing. I honestly believe that here on this earth of ours God is working out the infinite plans and purposes of a revelation and unveiling which are not for this earth alone, but for all the vast and splendid majesty of the universe of which we know so little. The morning stars sang together over creation; but the singing of the morning stars over creation was not so wonderful, nor could be, as shall be the singing in the universe of God of a people who were not a people, of a people who had not obtained mercy, but who have obtained mercy, and who, to borrow Mrs. Elizabeth Barrett Browning's wonderful phrase, shall sing "their passion song of blood." I do not know, I dare not say, that therein is the solution of the mystery of evil. Yet sometimes I dream my dreams, and think and wonder whether, at last, the vast problem of evil may not prove to have some value, in that through its long processes to the ultimate harvest God's heart by breaking has been revealed.

In the light of all that, I look again at this little paragraph in Galatians, and I see in it an illustration of the fact that in Christianity, as interpreted by these apostolic writings, every little thing becomes vast. People who have been taught in the Word are to communicate to the men who teach them in all good things. The really arresting phrase in that instruction is the phrase, "the word." We do not capitalize it in our printing, and we are in danger of thinking of what is preached, and of the people who listen, as being very small. As a matter of fact, the whole thing is big with the bigness of the Logos. The Word preached is the creative Word, the redemptive Word. The teacher of the Word, and those who are taught, are those who are brought into fellowship with God's vastest enterprise. When the teacher is doing his work, and when men and women are being taught, what is happening? Something is being done toward the day when God shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

And then we go on with the paragraph, and we read, "He that soweth to his own flesh." The man who does that is the man who takes the good things, whatsoever they may be, and makes them minister to his own selfish desires and appetites. Of the flesh such a man will reap corruption. On the other hand, he that of these good things, whatsoever they may be, soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life, the ultimate age-abiding life, God's great victory, the harvest, and the full harvest. So the apparently little things are found to be big indeed when they are set in relation to the harvest, wherein the old creation delivered from its bondage of corruption and death will rise into the new life, and God will be satisfied in His creation, in His redemption, in the gathering of the precious fruit of the earth.

It immediately becomes manifest that the word "well- doing" describes and covers the activities apart from which this harvest cannot be. The husbandman's expectations are always based on his work. The husbandman has not patience for the precious fruit of the earth unless he has put into the earth his toil. God's expectations in creation are based on the work of the six days that preceded the rest of the seventh, and God's expectations in redemption are based on the travail that abandoned rest. When men charged His Son with making a man break the Sabbath, the son answered in those exquisite and wonderful words: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." God cannot rest while man is restless and wounded. God cannot rest while a man lies in the grip of an infirmity thirty and eight years, and there is none to help and deliver. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." God's expectation of the ultimate realization of His own purpose is based on the infinite mystery of His travail! The measure of our right to expect the issue of harvest is our participation in the labor. The activities which demand patience are the activities of putting toil and seed into the earth in dull days, with no immediate sign of result. There I think is the point at which this figure proves itself to be of such value. Think of the autumnal days, and the days of winter - cold, bleak, dark days, often with no sun, when everything seems to be dead. Those are the days in which the well-doing is practiced that prepares for the harvest. Broadly and simply, then, well-doing is putting things into life when everything is dark, and apparently dead. It is the persistent going on, doing the thing on the day when there seems to be no use in doing it. That is well-doing. This is the whole story of our Lord's earthly ministry. If you and I had been called on to fix the date of the Advent we would not have fixed it when it was fixed. There was never a more hopeless hour than that in the history of the world. The hour in which we are living today is not half so deadly and dark and desolate as the hour in which Jesus was born into the world. There were no signs of life! Then God sent His Son. That was well-doing. Follow Him through the days of His public ministry: all His great ideals were implanted in human thinking in the day of philosophic decadence and deadness. There had been a great period in philosophy before Christ came, those first three centuries of philosophy, but He came when it was dead, He came when men were amusing themselves, and thought they were learned when they were discussing the difference between words and views. It was a barren hour. Jesus came, and taught, using words, parables, pictures. His words were so few that if you gather up them all they will not fill a penny exercise book, yet they are so wonderful that when he had done, the writer of the last Gospel said that if all the truth about Jesus should be written the world itself would not contain the books that should be written. Sometimes, after reading that, we close our New Testament and say, That is a very beautiful, a wonderful piece of hyperbole! It is nothing of the kind. John was right. If all the meaning of all Jesus said and did were written, the world could not contain the books, for the universe would be included. Yet all was of the nature of well-doing; it was patient continuance in doing things that brought forth no immediate result. The immediate result of our Lord's teaching, what was it? Not one single human soul to stand by Him in the hour of His catastrophe; they all forsook Him and fled!

What, then, is well-doing for us? Preaching when there seems to be no result, and yet continuing to preach. Teaching in the Sunday school, keeping on when it seems as though nothing were being done. Living by truth, living by grace, when a lie is on the throne and hate is the master movement of an age. Making the whole life the simple doing, putting toil and seed into the soil that seems to be barren, in a day when there is no light anywhere, and the birds have ceased their singing. That is well-doing.

Now, what are the perils that threaten us? We have seen them as we have tried to speak of well-doing. What are they? Weariness and faintness. What is weariness? Not tiredness. That is not the meaning of the word. We cannot do these things without getting tired. Tiredness is a sacrament that compels rest and prepares for new endeavor. Jesus was tired again and again. "And being thus tired, He sat by the well." What, then, is weariness? It is losing heart. It is losing interest. It is the sense of dullness that comes when the keen edge has gone off, when the thing does not seem to be worth doing. Weariness! We might translate the words thus: Let us not be worthless in well-doing. This word is the revelation of a subtle peril. It is the word of an inevitable danger which may be - I think it ought to be - overcome. We cannot, however, escape from the peril of it. It is the natural result of doing things that do not immediately realize themselves. It gets us before we know it. Its symptom is the sigh that escapes us when the thing has to be done. The preacher says, This is Monday morning! I must get ready for next Sunday. And he says it with a sigh. That is it. The teachers says, It is Wednesday. There is that Normal Class I have to go to again! And she says it with a sigh. That is it. We must guard against it. That dulling of the edge is weariness.

Fainting? What is that? That is quite another word, a stronger word. It is the issue of weariness. If weariness is losing heart, losing interest, fainting is that loosening carried to its ultimate, until there is dissolution. Fainting is failure of co-ordination, so that the thing we attempt is not done because we have lost the power to do it. Fainting is the out- come of weariness, the last issue.

How are we to escape these things? You say to me, You have admitted that these things get us before we know. It certainly is so, and perhaps the sermon is born of the fact that I am at the end of three months' preaching here, very probably so. How are we to escape it, how are we to miss it, how are we to be delivered from it? This vision of the harvest must never be lost. I pray you make a careful note of that. This is nothing new to say. It has been said again and again, but it needs to be said. I need to say it to my own soul. Man, lift thine eyes from the dull earth where no blade of grass is springing and look to the golden harvest. But that vision of harvest can be maintained only by maintaining fellowship with God. I shall doubt the harvest altogether if I look simply on things as they are. Does it seem as if God's great harvest can ever be gathered in Europe? What the answer will be depends on where you live and where I live. It is only as we live in the realization of fellowship with God, pressing ever farther into the secret place, beholding His face, listening for His voice, that we shall see the harvest and see it perpetually.

Yet once more. The relation of sowing and reaping must always be remembered. That dull piece of earth and those leaden clods with no song bird or sign of life! Yes, but these make the harvest, and there is no harvest without them. There never will be the fruitage of autumn and the golden sheaves unless there has been first the cold of the previous autumn merging into the snows and the desolation of winter. Through these things harvest comes to us. When we next face the well-doing, which is doing a thing that seems as though nothing were being done, let us say, Everything is now being done. It is by this travail that the triumph comes. By this sweat and labor and agony and continuity the great glad day shall come.

There is one other thing I would like to suggest to my own soul and to others. If we are to escape these perils it will be more than ever necessary as the days run on to exclude from our lives all things that deflect strength into false channels. In proportion as we can find the one thing God wants us to do and do it, and refuse to do anything else, in the very concentration of our attention on the well-doing that seems to be monotonous, that very thing will be transmuted, and there will be light and glory in it, and we shall begin to feel the throb of the life that triumphantly moves through the tyranny of death toward the final harvest of the world. These are days surely when we supremely need to hear these apostolic words, "Be not weary in well doing." The strain of darkness and death is on us, the terrible temptation to relax is powerful! Therefore these are the days when we need as never before to practice our fellowship with God, that we may see the harvest through the light of that communion, and that the doing of the apparently small things may be transfigured by the self-same light. So we shall not be weary in well-doing, nor shall we faint.