**VOLUME 1; CHAPTER 7 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**THE BURNING OF HEART by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*Was not our heart burning within us, while He spake to us in the way, while He opened to us the scriptures?*

*Luke 24:32*

BURNING OF HEART. THAT, I TAKE IT, IS THE SUPREME NEED OF the Church today. We have principles, but we very largely lack passion. I believe that our understanding of Jesus Christ is more spacious and correct than ever before in the history of the Christian Church. I do not mean to say that we are not still making mistakes concerning Him, for let it be remembered that He can be appreciated only by that whole Church of the firstborn of which He is the Head. No man can ever know all there is to be known concerning Christ, and no age will ever be able perfectly to comprehend the height and breadth and length and depth of the riches of His grace and His glory. Yet, in spite of all the failure of the Christian Church, there has been slow and sure progress in her understanding of Christ. I repeat, therefore, that we have more spacious and more correct comprehension of Him than ever before.

Yet sometimes I am afraid that our sense of emotion and fire was never less. We are afraid of anything in the form of passionate enthusiasm, lest we should hear some cynical grumbler on the outside edge of the crowd murmur the dreaded word "fanaticism." I am sometimes inclined to think that the "Jesus, Lover of my soul," of whom we so often sing, is standing in the midst of His people sighing after their lost first love. I am not pleading for anything like an attempt to manufacture passion which is not real. Painted fire never warms anyone. There may be a great deal of noise, which is not significant of power. There may be a great deal of protestation of love, while the overwhelming and majestic passion is absent. I am not suggesting that a single person in this audience should go away to talk more of love for Jesus Christ. I do say that the Church sadly lacks burning of heart, fire, fervour, passion, devotion.

The story which I read to you, and from the midst of which my text is taken, is most interesting, and I venture to think most suggestive in the light of these opening words. It is one of the post-resurrection stories, and we are still living in post-resurrection times. Christ as He appeared to these men was the same as before His crucifixion, and yet utterly and forever different. We are the followers of that self-same Christ in the identity and disparity which characterized His relation to men after the cross. Such a story as this has a very great value for us, because these men were exactly in the condition which I have just described. They had lost their devotion - not their love altogether, not their faith, save in some senses, but their devotion - their passion, their fervour, and their fire.

I shall ask you to think with me first of what this story reveals to us of these two men as to their possession and their lack. I shall then ask you to look with me at the Christ, as to His quest, His method, and His victory, all of which is not merely that we may contemplate an old story, but that we may find its new, present, living application to our own souls.

Looking back, then, to the road that leads to Emmaus, and to the two men, one named Cleopas, the other a nameless disciple, I ask you carefully to observe what they still possessed. They still loved their Lord. They still believed in Him. Jesus had said to Peter not very long before His crucifixion, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat" - that is, the whole of you, for there the pronoun is plural - "but I made supplication for thee," - and though this pronoun is singular, no one imagines that all the rest were outside the prayer of Jesus - "that thy faith fail not." I am bold to say that that prayer of Jesus was answered. Peter's faith never failed. The faith of none of these men failed; I mean that peculiar quality of faith which saves a man. Their faith in Jesus did not fail. Their journey to Emmaus was not one of forgetfulness. They were still talking about Him and the things which had happened. Amid bitterness and disappointment, amid the darkness of disgrace, they still spoke a kind word for Him. When Jesus joined Himself to them they did not know Him, they did not suppose but that He was a stranger journeying the same way, He entered into conversation with them, and asked them what they were talking about, because they looked so sad; and they answered: "Dost thou alone sojourn in Jerusalem and not know the things which are come to pass there in these days?" And He said, with that fine art which characterized Him, in order to draw them out to confession, "What things?" Listen to their answer, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word."

That is their testimony to Him. They had not lost their faith in Him. They had not lost their love for Him, and even though He had been beaten, crucified, and is dead, they loved Him. They loved His memory. They believed that He meant well, that He did good, that His ministry was a blessed ministry, and they were journeying toward Emmaus with faith in Him and love for Him still in their hearts.

Yet listen to them for another moment, and you will discover what they lacked. They had lost their hope, and they had lost their confidence in His ability to do what they thought He was going to do. Their attitude toward Jesus was the attitude of men who should say, "Oh, we believe in Him, we love Him, He meant well, but He has not succeeded." "We had hoped that it was He which should redeem Israel." I pray you mark carefully the past tense. Their hope was gone. He meant to redeem Israel. He meant well, but He has been defeated. He tried but He failed. The hope which had been burning like a beacon before them in the days when He was still amongst them had died out into gray ashes; but they will not say anything unkind about Him. They love Him still, and still speak a tender word for Him. "He had tried to do something He could not. He was a good man, a loving man. He was a prophet mighty in deed and word, but there were things to which He was not equal. We had hoped that He would break the chain of our oppression and lift us back, out of our ruin, and redeem Israel and set up the Kingdom. We hoped - but it is all gone. We have lost our hope."

Consequently, there was a cooling of enthusiasm, and instead of tarrying in Jerusalem they had started for Emmaus, and there was sadness upon their faces, a lack of gladness in their tone. The fire was burning low. There was no passion, no vision, no virtue, no victory, no force, no fervour.

That is the picture of these men as they set their faces toward Emmaus, and it is largely the position of the Church today, as it seems to me. Personal loyalty to Jesus Christ is undoubted. It is impossible to meet with assemblies of God's people, or to meet with individuals anywhere, without finding men who still believe in Him personally, and yet there is manifest a very widespread cooling of the Church's passion, and a dying down upon the altar of the fires which blaze in the day of the conflict which makes for victory. We are not quite confident in His ability to do what we thought He was going to do. The movement seems so slow. The chariot wheels are tarrying, and the victory does not come. We are inwardly, if not confessedly, pessimistic, and this pessimism manifests itself in the prevalent consent to compare Him with others. We hang his name on the wall beside the names of others. We put some picture of Him in our galleries be-side the pictures of other men, and we say, "Of course, He was easily first. We love Him. We admire His ethic. We admire His ideal, but He was sadly mistaken, and He took His way in semidarkness toward failure." We are comparing Him with others. We are modifying our conceptions of His victories. We are even allowing ourselves to read and discuss magazine articles which suggest that perhaps, after all, the religion of Buddha is more suited to Eastern lands than the religion of Jesus Christ. We are discussing the possibility of His ultimate triumph, and are asking whether, after all, the victories in Japan recently did not prove that another and a finer ethic is finding its way into the thinking of our age. And all unconsciously the fire of the Church is cooling. She is not so passionate as she used to be in her endeavour. She does not break into song so often, or sob in tears in the presence of the world's agony.

This attitude is born, not of the fact that we are individually less loyal to Jesus Christ, but of the fact that we are not quite sure whether the ancient psalmists were right who sang of His Kingdom extending to the ends of the earth. We are not sure, and are not perfectly at rest. He is so near to us, and yet we do not see Him. He is walking with us along the shadowy pathway, but our eyes are holden. There is today an appalling lack of the clear vision of the Christ which makes the step elastic and the spirit buoyant, and the outlook spacious, and the heart burn with fire and fervour and passion.

How does Christ deal with these men? For, after all, I have said we shall have to reduce this to individual application. We go back again to our story. If I am surprised, looking back over these centuries, at the attitude of the men, I freely confess I am far more surprised at Jesus. I am surprised at the wonder of His coming to these men. I know my confession of surprise is a revelation of the fact that I have not perfectly learned the lesson of His love. I know it, and yet I am surprised. If I may turn aside from the main line of my argument I would like to say to you, Be very much afraid of yourself if Jesus Christ is ceasing to surprise you. If you are losing that sense of amazement that startled you in the olden days there is something wrong in your life. He is always surprising us if we will but follow Him simply. He surprises us now by the fact that He comes to these men. Listen to His own estimate of them, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe." That is not my criticism of them. That is His estimate of them, and He knew them. O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe; and yet He comes to them and joins Himself to them, and walks at their side, and deals with their foolishness, and stirs up the slow heart until it burns and flames. That is the grace of God, and I am amazed. It is a radiant revelation of the tenderness of His heart and of the strength of His love for us.

Why does He come? He comes because He is seeking love. It is there in those doubt-shadowed hearts, and He knows it, and He will come and renew it. He always seeks the beautiful. Christ always sees the beautiful, and therefore seeks it where you and I would never look for it. There is an old legend about Jesus. I really do not know whether it is true. But suppose it is not true, still there is a principle involved which is true. They tell how that one day He was passing out through the gates of Jerusalem, and there lay on the roadway a dead dog, the horror of all the Hebrew people, to be held in supreme and bitter contempt. As one and an-other of the teachers and scribes and rabbis, and the ordinary people passed by, they but kicked it farther away with contempt. But Jesus, as He passed, stopped and looked down on it, and said, "Behold the pearly whiteness of its teeth." You are quite at liberty to reject that legend, but do not give away the truth which underlies it. Jesus can always see something of beauty and glory which other eyes cannot see. Perhaps a few of you do not know what I am driving at. Some do. I have lost the fire in my life, my passion and my fervour. I want to say here - out of place if you like - that Christ sees the little that remains, and will say to me today, "I have come to seek that. Strengthen the things that remain." In the case of these men He saw personal loyalty underneath the hope abandoned and the confidence shaken, and He went and joined Himself to them in order that He might fan to flame the fire which was dying out upon the altar of their hearts.

How did He do it? Mark His method. He made their hearts burn by giving them a new interpretation of familiar things. I would like so to say the next thing that you remember it if you forget everything else. In the memory of it you will have the very heart of the message I bring to you. He made their hearts burn by talking to them. Their hearts did not burn within them while they talked to him, or while they talked about him. Their hearts burned within them when He talked to them. That puts everything I want to say into a few words. Not in their questioning concerning Him was the fire rekindled. Not in their pouring out of complaint to Him did it burn, but when they had ceased talking to, or about Him; when they were silent and listened, then the fire burned. "Was not our heart burning within us, while He spake to us in the way?"

What were the things that He said? Nothing new. I am increasingly impressed with this. He did not bring to them any new message. It was the old, so said as they had never heard it said before. "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets He interpreted to them in the scriptures the things concerning Himself." Have you not felt as I have, that you would have given almost everything to have walked to Emmaus and heard Him interpret the Scriptures? It did not take Him very long. It was not a long journey, and they had done a good deal of talking before He commenced. He talked of the Scriptures with which they were perfectly familiar, of Moses, of the ancient history and the law, of the prophetic writings in which they had been instructed from childhood, and tracked for them all the pathways that culminated in the Man Whose loss they were mourning, Who had been crucified. He showed them how all the prophets gave witness to Him, and all the symbols of the ancient ritual found their fulfilment in the work that He had done. They did not know the Man talking to them was the One of Whom He was talking. They did see a new meaning in their own Scriptures concerning their long-hoped-for Messiah and His relation to the cross. They began to see a new light and glory flashing back upon the cross where their hopes had been blighted, and the fire seemed to have been put out. He interpreted in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. I have often felt that it would have been worth a whole lifetime to have walked with Him and heard Him tell how the shadow of the Mosaic economy found its fulfilment in Him.

Then when He took their prophets one by one, how wonderful to hear Him explain, and how marvellous the rapture of their heart as they heard Him tell how all the prophets led up to the Messiah Who died just as they had seen that Man die, of Whom they had been speaking so kindly. As they listened to Him they would find out that He was David's King, "fairer than the children of men"; and in the days of Solomon's well-doing He it was that was "altogether lovely." He was Isaiah's child - king, with a shoulder strong enough to bear the government, and a name Emmanuel gathering within itself all excellences. He was Jeremiah's "Branch of Righteousness, executing judgment and righteousness in the land"; Ezekiel's "Plant of renown," giving shade and shedding fragrance; Daniel's stone cut without hands, smiting the image, becoming a mountain, and filling the whole earth; the ideal Israel of Hosea "growing as the lily," "casting out his roots as Lebanon"; to Joel "the hope of His people and the strength of the children of Israel"; the usherer in of the great vision of Amos of "the plowman overtaking the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed"; and of Obadiah the "deliverance upon Mount Zion and holiness"; the fulfilment of that of which Jonah was but a sign; the "turning again" of God of which Micah spoke; the One Whom Nahum saw upon the mountains publishing peace; the Anointed of Whom Habakkuk sang as "going forth for salvation"; He Who brought to the people the pure language of Zephaniah's message, the true Zerubbabel of Haggai's word rebuilding forever the house and the city of God; Himself the dawn of the day when "holiness unto the Lord shall be upon the bells of the horses" as Zechariah fore-told; He the "refiner's fire," "the fuller's soap," "The Sun of righteousness" of Malachi's vision. All these things passed in rapid survey as He talked. He was taking their own prophets and unlocking them, flinging back the shutters and letting the light stream in. He talked to them, and they were silent; and there broke upon them a new vision of the truth, a new understanding of things with which they were perfectly familiar, and in this new vision they found new understanding of all the things which they long had known.

Their burning heart, what was it? The thrill of a new discovery of their Lord and the shame of the past failure to appreciate Him, and the passion of a new endeavour which should set their feet in the pathway which led to ultimate victory.

All this came when they listened, not when they spoke to Him, or of Him, but when He spoke to them. Here, then, as it seems to me, is the supreme need of the hour, that we should "strengthen the things that remain" - the doctrines which we hold as true, the ordnances of the Church which we observe with painful regularity lacking passion, the service to which our hands are placed, which so often becomes dull as mere routine duty. We need that these things should flame with a new meaning, that the doctrine that we hold as true, and about which sometimes we fight, should flame into passionate vision, driving us into actual service. A man may talk generalities for half an hour and get no further. What did I mean by the doctrine we hold as true, driving us? Let me give you one small quotation from Jesus' last words. He said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age." We have recited it, we have sung it, and once or twice we have felt it burn; but in the majority of days we do not feel it burning, driving us. That declaration of Jesus that He was always with His disciples was made in connection with His command, "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations." If you want to know why we are not moved with the fire and fervour of the promise, it is because we have been attempting to appropriate the promise without fulfilling the condition, because we have not sat still and let Him tell us His deepest meaning about this thing. If once we sit in His presence and listen quietly we shall feel moving in our heart His own great passion for the nations of the earth, and we shall hear His "Go," and then we shall know that the supreme thing to hear is, "Lo, I am with you alway." When He whispers it, it will be to us as the driving force of God sending us out upon the pathway. We have not listened. These things have become so familiar that we are not at all familiar with them in their actual power. The cooling of our passion is due to the fact that we have attempted to spell these things out for ourselves, to explain them by our own philosophy in-stead of sitting down while He talks to us.

What, then, is the message I bring to you today? It is this. In the midst of your discussion, I beseech you, at all cost, make time to sit still while He speaks to you. I think I am safe from the possibility of misunderstanding when I say we supremely need a little more sitting still, a little more silence, a little more time of listening to the voice of Jesus. I am speaking as much to my own heart as to the heart of anyone in this house. There is a terrible danger that in our attempt to discuss Jesus Christ, and in our attempt to serve Him, we should fail to remember that no discussion can ever place Him finally. He defies the grasp of the intellect merely as such. We may discuss Him in our colleges and theological halls, and all the while we discuss Him the fire burns low. That is the peril of the age in which we live. We may be so busy running on His errands and attempting to do His work as never to sit still and look into His face.

I do not want that application to evaporate as a mere generality. I pray you test it by any day in your life, and test it by asking yourself, How long have I taken today to listen to Him? Someone will ask, "Do you really mean this? Are you practical, or are you indulging in some kind of sentimental talk? Are we really to listen to Him, listen for Him? Men do not hear Him today as they did of old." Shall I make your statement from another standpoint. It is not true that men cannot hear Him as they did of old. Men do not wait to hear Him as they did of old. In this present age they do not listen enough. Listen in the morning, listen amid the babel of other voices, listen at eventide for Him. In the Scriptures, those self-same Scriptures through which He spoke to men of old, listen for Him. The study of the Bible will curse us in the next ten years if we are not careful. Men will tabulate and analyse, and think they know everything. Man, listen, for, unless as a result of your study of the Bible you hear the imperial tone, the voice of the living Christ talking in your inmost soul, your Bible knowledge is a mere technique that will burn you and ruin you within the next ten years. Listen, listen for His voice. Cease petition sometimes, cease praise sometimes, cease your questioning every now and then, and listen. No man or woman, young man or young woman, youth or maiden, will cultivate the habit of waiting to listen for the direct message of the Christ and be disappointed. Then your Bible will be a new book. Then your organization will throb with the propulsion of a new power. Then the missionary fire will blaze and drive you out upon the path of service.

There must be more burning of heart. We are in danger of being overwhelmed with our principle and our machinery. My plea today is that we take time to listen, that by His interpretation of the meaning of the things we have, they may flame with light and with fire, and create in us that holy passion which sings and sobs, which serves and waits, which travails and makes His Kingdom come. May God give us all the opened ear that we may hear what He says to us, for His Name's sake.