**WESTMINSTER PULPIT SERIES 11 (UNPUBLISHED, PREACHED IN 1907) - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**03. CHRIST AND SIMON, SON OF JOHN by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*"He findeth first his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah (which is, being interpreted, Christ). He brought him unto Jesus. Jesus looked upon him, and said, Thou art Simon the son of John thou shalt be called Cephas (which is by interpretation Peter) ... which is by translation rock. "*

John 1:41, 42

OF ALL the apostles of our Lord none seems to be better known than Peter. He is conspicuous in the New Testament narrative. He has been pre-eminent in Church history. He remains even today the most fascinating of that band of men which surrounded our Lord in the days of His earthly pilgrimage. This familiarity with Peter is both a hindrance and a help. It is a help as it obviates the necessity for anything in the nature of a detailed survey of his story. It is a hindrance in that it tempts us to be more occupied with the man than with the Lord's method with him. As this last is the purpose of our present meditation, let us avail ourselves of our knowledge of his story, using only such parts of it as shall enable us to see how Christ dealt with him.

Our last meditation was of Christ's calling of Andrew. There, in some senses, our work was simple, for the occasions upon which we see anything of Andrew after he first came to the Lord are few. Now we have to do with a man whose impress is to be found upon almost every page of the Gospel stories, who occupies the most prominent position among the apostles, and who in the volume of epistles has left us two, full of light and full of beauty. We must, therefore, take for granted our acquaintance with the story of Peter and attempt quite earnestly to see how Christ dealt with him.

We shall follow the method we have followed in the previous studies of the present series, attempting first to see the man himself, then to trace the method of Christ with him, and finally to notice the issues consequent upon his finding of Christ, or rather Christ's finding of him.

The name Peter did not describe Simon as he was by nature, but as he should be by grace. Indeed, it describes a condition which is in direct and remarkable contrast to the man himself. I am inclined to think that with all our surface familiarity with him, there are not very many who really know Peter. We judge him too exclusively by the great crises of his life, and do not watch him with sufficient carefulness as he appears along the line of the commonplace. If you would really know what a man is you must watch him in the commonplace. It is true that what a man is, is manifest in the crisis which comes unexpectedly; yet to know all the truth about a man you must see him along the line of the ordinary, as well as at the point of the extraordinary. I may as well be perfectly frank with you tonight and say that I am inclined to think I have discovered Peter during this last week as I have never seen him before. Drummond said of Moody, 'Moody is the greatest human I have ever met.' That was the opinion of the scholar, the professor, the man who was academic in all the attitudes of his mind. When Thomas Champness met Moody he put his estimate of him into other language. He said 'He bulks bigger than any man I have ever met.' Now I am convinced that in Peter we have the greatest human revealed in the New Testament. I do not say the greatest man in his achievement, or in one particular capacity of his being, but the most wonderful revelation of human nature. Peter was an elemental man. All the essential elements of human nature are manifest in his make-up. Forbear your criticism of him yet. I know his fears. I know the fact of his vacillation. I know all that you can tell me about his impulsiveness, and I will return to these things. But look at the man himself; I went yesterday through the four gospels to see Peter. The issue of the doing of that is the conviction in my heart that this man has fascinated humanity by the fact of his humanity. He is close to us. We may not be like him in all respects; but whatever may be the peculiar quality dominant in our own humanity we find it also in Peter. Let me fall back for a moment upon a very old, almost commonplace analysis of personality, that of Kant, in which he declared that man is essentially, intellectual, emotional, volitional. In Peter all these were evident and strong.

Peter was intellectual. He asked Jesus more questions than any other of the apostles. It was Peter who inquired, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?" It was he who inspired John at the last supper to ask who it was that should betray the Lord. It was he who in the solemnity of the hour in which our Lord was delivering his final discourses to His own, said to Him, "Whither goest Thou?" and "Why cannot I follow Thee even now?" It was Peter who by the side of the Galilean lake, on that wonderful morning after he had been restored over the fire which Jesus had built, suddenly turned round and said, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" The capacity for asking questions is a revelation of the intellectual. It may also be a revelation of ignorance, but the man who never asks a question is certainly deficient intellectually. The boy in your home who is going to make something out, by and by, is the boy who asks most questions. Do not be angry with him. His questions demonstrate the capacity of his mind. Peter was always asking questions. Whatever puzzled him, he inquired about. As it seems to us, on most awkward occasions, and in circumstances that ought to have been characterised by dread silence, he broke out into impetuous inquiry. This proves the activity of his mind.

I need hardly stay to argue that his emotional nature was strong. It breaks out over and over again. On that morning when he saw Jesus bring that wonderful draught of fishes; in the presence of that outworking of power in the midst of the daily avocation, while others were impressed with the power, this man in the sudden rush of his emotional nature cried out, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." It was this man who at Caesarea Philippi, when our Lord commenced to talk of the Cross, took Him aside and, mark the statement, "began to rebuke Him." This rebuke is demonstration of his emotional nature. It was this man who in the impetuous rush of his heart, when Jesus said to him, "Thou canst not follow Me now," said, "Lord, why cannot I follow Thee, even now? I will lay down my life for Thee." He meant it. Do not charge him with insincerity. Yes, and on that night of denial when Jesus, standing in the midst of His foes, "turned and looked upon Peter ... he went out, and wept bitterly." Again, when by the Galilean lake, Jesus at the third time of questioning him concerning love came down from His own high word for love to Peter's lower word, "Peter was grieved." He is a man of heart, sobbing and impetuous; a man whom you sometimes cynically describe as wearing his heart upon his sleeve. I am a little tired of that cynical remark. Would God we had more of them. We have all too few men who dare to show their heart today. This man dared. He could not help it, perchance. The hot, flashing impulse of his heart manifested itself again and again.

Oh, yes, you say, that is all true, but he was a man of weak will. By no means. He was a man of strong will. When Jesus called him that second time, saying, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men," he "left all, and followed Him." In the presence of that obedience of Peter, and others, it little behoves us to criticise. They left all to follow Him. Few of us have done it. Peter was a man of such strong will that when he made that impulsive and impetuous venture of faith in the storm, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee upon the waters," and Jesus said, "Come," he went! You say that is a revelation of faith. That is so, but do not forget that faith is nothing unless it has behind it will. Peter walked on the water. But, you say, he sank. Yes, but that is another story. He walked first. Do not always measure a man by the incidental failure. Measure him sometimes by the start. He manifested his strength of will in that he started. And so in the garden he dared to draw a sword and strike a blow for Christ. It was a mistake. It was zeal without knowledge. But it was will power, asserting itself in the midst of awful odds. When presently those mysterious days came in which he wondered what was going to happen, Christ being dead, he said, "I go a-fishing." It was a mark of independent volition. I do not personally think it was right, but I am quoting these things to show that he was a man of strong will.

I go back then to the thing I said at first. Peter was an elemental man. He was a human. All the forces of humanity were mighty in his personality. He was a man of intellectual ability, determined to find out, and therefore forever asking questions. He was a man of strong emotion, breaking out into tears and impetuous confessions. He was a man of strong will, daring at certain points to do things which other men dared not. That was the man as he came to Christ.

What else? If I may venture to follow my figure a little further; I would say that he was an elemental man, in whom the elements were not compounded. There was no cohesive principle, and therefore he was in danger of being wrecked by his own greatness. This man of intelligence was perpetually making blunders. This man of emotion was guilty of such impulsive actions that he worked harm in the very cause he desired to serve. This man of strong will was characterised perpetually by vacillation. So that you have in Peter the representation of humanity in chaos. All the elements are there, but there is something lacking. He is a man you cannot depend upon. He is a man who means well but does ill in his very attempt to do well. He is a man of whom, if you have him for a friend, you will sigh someday, so surely as you make him your friend, 'Deliver me from my friend!' All the while his intention is a right intention. It is the picture - mark the paradox - of a strong, healthy man, so weak that he is thought of by his friends as impulsive, vacillating, not to be depended upon. My brother, Peter is your brother. There are scores of us exactly like him. All the capacities of humanity possessed, all the very highest intentions entertained, but always blundering! Oh, this battle with my own personality; these tides of my emotion; these inquiries of my mind: these determinations of my will. Yet I cannot arrive. I do not succeed. I take my vow sincerely and break it. I make my inquiry and wait for the answer, and when it comes cannot walk in the light of it, for volition does not answer the voice of intelligence and the appealings of emotion. The trouble of my life - and this is the cry of hundreds of men if they will but believe it - is that I lack something, what, I know not, but having which my life would be poised, strong, victorious.

With that background, now see Christ's method with Peter. Andrew "findeth first his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah (which is, being interpreted, Christ). He brought him unto Jesus. Jesus looked upon him." This word "looked" does not occur often in the Greek New Testament. It only in one other place in the Gospel of John. It is a word which means He looked intently, looked with a look that penetrated, a look that was intended to convey to the man at whom He looked the consciousness of His perfect knowledge of him. "He looked upon him." Then He spoke to him, "Thou art Simon the son of John; thou shalt be called Cephas," rock. He named him naturally. He put him in his family relation. 'I know who you are. You are Simon the son of John, but thou shalt be called rock.' Let us think for a moment, what is the meaning of rock. Geologists agree that the crust of the earth has cooled from a state of fusion. Rock is the result of and the exhibition of principle. Rock is a number of elements held consistently together. "Thou shalt be called rock." The elemental man with all the natural forces of humanity strongly present, but inconsistent, is to become the elemental man with these forces compounded, and he shall be called rock. In that word Christ declared what He was able to do for Peter. He was able to take hold of that wonderful personality, of that great humanity, and so to deal with it in its separate parts that presently it should become consistent, strong, mastered by principle, rock. Simon the son of John was everything that was unlike rock; but at last, not immediately, but through he became rock, principle mastering his life, all the elements in right relation to each other. The vacillating man became the man to be depended upon. The man who was impulsive never wholly lost his power of immediate action, but the impulse was under the government of intelligence, and the will responded to both. He became a strong, rock man. Thus Christ first said to him a thing which I am inclined to believe no one understood at the moment except Simon. Notice that Simon did not answer. There is never a word recorded that he said. Do you not see that the very silence of the man is evidence of the fact that he had heard something that astonished him? You may charge me with imagination, but I think I know Simon well, having affinity with him. I know exactly what he had felt before he met Christ. Oh, if I could but gather myself together. Oh, these questionings, these impulses, these volitions that strive and struggle and fail. Oh, if I could be what I would be. If I could be a really strong man. Brought by his brother to the Stranger, Jesus looked into his eyes, looked intently at him so that Peter knew he was seen through and through, and He said, "Thou art Simon the son of John; thou shalt be called rock." I think from that moment hope sprang up in his heart. I think it was that word which won Simon. Not merely that he was convinced of the Messiahship of Jesus, I am not sure that he ever was until Caesarea Philippi was reached, but here was Someone who believed in the possibility of realising him, and Who promised that he should be rock.

Then notice the of Christ's method with him. He called him to service twice over, to abandon all, and to definite apostleship later on. There were four crises in the process; Caesarea Philippi; the transfiguration; the denial; the restoration. Each grows out of the one preceding it. At Caesarea Philippi Christ challenged him as to the result of His own ministry in his experience. Then, no longer as prophecy but as a statement of fact, Christ said the same thing that he had said at the commencement. When Andrew brought his brother to Jesus, Jesus said, "Simon, son of John, thou shalt be called Peter." At Caesarea Philippi He said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah ... thou art Peter." This did not mean that the work was finished. It was by no means finished, but the master principle was at work in his life. He had been obedient to the call of Christ. It was not yet all over. The mass of potentialities had not as yet become concrete by the mastering principle, but the principle was operating. He had found Christ. He had obeyed Christ. He had confessed Christ. Then the Lord took him to the mount of transfiguration, where he gazed upon the glory of his Lord, for the principle is not yet victorious. He was still the impulsive man, he still blundered. "I will make here three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." The principle was not victorious. Christ does not abandon a man because he has not learned his lesson at once.

Out of the glory came a voice, "This is My beloved Son ... hear ye Him." Peter was again committed to Christ, and He led him a little further. The denial which followed the transfiguration. In that hour Jesus unveiled to Peter the fact of His own heart, He "turned and looked upon Peter," and it is the same word as is used at the first, "looked." It was a penetrating look, full of love. The principle was mastering the elements, and there was a great convulsion. Peter "went out, and wept bitterly." Then presently the Cross being accomplished and the resurrection also, the morning of restoration came. This grew out of the denial. Jesus brought Peter to the side of the lake and challenged his love and made him confess it, and gave him his work. The elements are yielding to the principle. "Thou knowest that I love Thee" is very different from "If all shall be offended in Thee, I will never be offended." This man was passing in response to the patience of Christ into the true rock nature.

Look at him for a moment in the issues. See Peter on the day of Pentecost. You have there the unified man. What has been the principle? Loyalty to Christ. Who finally the agent? The Holy Spirit. What the experience? A clear vision, profound devotion, invincible courage! All the old elements acting in consort because unified by loyalty to Christ and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We spoke of his intellectuality; mark well in the first sermon he preached on the day of Pentecost the clarity of his vision. His emotional nature; mark well that profound devotion to Jesus manifested after which made him eager to suffer and work fix the Name. His strong will; see it in the invincible courage that made him say in the presence of all the rulers; "We must obey God rather than men." The same elements are there, but now consistent, held together. The Lord has won His victory. The man is rock. The evidences are to be found in the courage he manifested in facing the multitudes, and in his conviction of heart as he set forth the truth concerning his Lord, and in the clearness with which he stated the case as he faced those multitudes.

One other word, for I would not discourage any heart even in looking at Peter. The process was still going forward. It was not completed in a moment even by the baptism of the Spirit. We still find Peter making blunders. We find him coming down among the Gentiles and sitting to meat with them until certain Hebrews arrived, and then - mark the word, it is Paul's word - he dissimulated, and Paul withstood him to the face because he was to be blamed. There are the old elements; they are coming into perfect concord with each other under the rule of Christ; but the work is not done. That or the comfort of the soul who came to Christ and still has failed. The work is not over, but the Master never abandons him. I dare not detain you now to tell you all that he was at his best, but read his epistles if you would know. There are no letters more full of strength than the letters of Peter. The arguments of Paul are more stately, more mysterious; even Peter in one of his letters says about them "Our beloved brother, Paul ... wrote ... some things hard to be understood." That is a great comfort to me in trying to study Paul. John the mystic sees further, and hears more distant things; but for strength there is nothing to surpass the writing of Peter. Did not Jesus say to this vacillating man: "When once thou hast turned again, stablish thy brethren." When he was converted, turned back again, he fulfilled that commission most perfectly in his letters. As you read them you will find he says some remarkable things about stone, living stones built upon one foundation of living stone, in which there is a life principle so that they are - to borrow the figure of Ezekiel - "stones of fire," principle shot through with passion, passion held in check by principle. To that Peter came. The elemental man losing none of the elements of his humanity, but realising them in one consistent whole, so that he penned letters full of strength for the restoration of all such as like himself needed comfort and needed help.

In conclusion, what is the message of this study to us? First, as I study the story of Peter or attempt to see the character of Peter, and how Christ dealt with him, I am reminded of this primary truth. The natural man is a Divine creation. All the forces of his being are God-derived forces. All the possibilities of His nature are God-created possibilities. You say to me, Is that quite true? Is it true that all the forces of man's nature are God-derived forces? I maintain that to be absolutely true. What of sin? Sin is not a force. It is a poison, a paralysis. It is the thing that kills force. I speak of the elemental forces of human nature. They are all God-created things. Your intellect is the light of God. Your emotion is the love of God. Your will is that in which you are supremely akin to God. For the moment I care nothing about what you are doing with your intellect, emotion, will. They are essentially God's creations.

Now go one step further. I ask you to notice that this story reveals that the natural man without God cannot realise his own life. The forces are out of control. The possibilities are never realised. The essential forces of your life are perfectly right, but they are working devilish havoc in your own life and in the life of others. How is it? Intellect is right; yet here is a man who is asking questions, and for ever more seems to be getting away from solution. Emotion is right; but here is a man whose impulsiveness and the thrill of whose great heart is spoiling him and spoiling other people. Will is the final dignity of human life; yet here are men so exercising it as to ruin themselves and others. How is it? You have all the elements, but you have no principle that holds them together and creates harmony, without which there is disaster. What does this lead to? It leads to the fact of the victory of Christ's method with Peter. Andrew brought him to Jesus. Would God I could do that for you tonight! That is what I want to do. That is what, if I know my own soul, I would lay down my life to do. I want to get you, man, to Christ. I do not ask you about your creed or about your church. God help us to forget all the insignificant things, and see Him. Man, my brother man, conscious of the greatness of your own humanity you need have no mock modesty conscious of those terrific, marvellous forces that are within you, enquiring, feeling, choosing; yet conscious that you cannot realise yourself or live your life, I would bring you to Christ. Why? Because He can do that which you cannot do for yourself. He can realise your life. Would God I knew how to say this! Let us get to simple illustration. A man says, I am not going to be a Christian. Why not? I want to live my life. But you can never live your life until you are a Christian. I should have to give up inquiring! Who told you that lie? It is good that men of no faith have given up calling themselves free thinkers. I am a free thinker. Do not believe the voice today which insists that you shall believe a dogma which does not answer to your reason when it is illuminated by your faith. Christ will not prevent your asking questions. You say, But this emotional nature of mine which delights in the excitement of loving and hating will have to be crucified. Who said so? Oh, man, have you learned how to hate? It is a fine thing, only in God's name get on to lines where you will hate the things that ought to be hated - the devil, sin, the world. Do you know how to love? You do not until God's love is shed abroad in your heart, that thrilling, awful love, that gives to life the cross, the crown, passion and pleasure, suffering and rejoicing. Christ will take all the forces of your life and put them on to right lines. He does not want to make an angel of you. He wants to make a man of you. Those possibilities of your life - oh, how they have troubled you, dear heart! Why? Because you have not found the master principle, and the master principle is the government of God. To that Christ will take you. Tonight, if you will but hear Him, He is looking at you with a look that penetrates, and He is saying to you, "Simon, son of John," naming you by your name. If you will but listen in the silence you may be as startled as if I named your name from the pulpit. He is doing it. He is calling you by the name by which you are known. He says to you, "Thou shalt be called rock," strong, mastered by principle, realising your life. That is His message.

What is our responsibility? To go after Him. Can it all be done tonight? No, a thousand times, no. It cannot. Some struggling, beaten, broken heart is here, and you are surprised, you say, I thought that if I stood up, and went into an inquiry room, and took some definite stand, it would be all over. God deliver you from the mistake. Man, I will tell you what will be done. The work will be begun. The trouble is it is not begun with half of you. Go after Him. There will be many a rough path he will call you to tread, many a day of darkness through which you will have to pass; you will make blunders, you will fail, you may deny Him on some cold night when a serving maid laughs at you - God forbid, but you may but He will never give you up, if you will follow and trust. Let me talk out of my own heart. That is the only thing that helps me, as God is my witness. You do not know me. Thank God that you don't. I do not want you to. I would not have you know me. Done? A thousand times, No. The elements have not yet come into their final relationship in me, but I look into the face of the Son of God and I say to Him, Thou wilt perfect! I know He will never cease the of fire and pain, of tenderness and tears, until, to use the wonderful language of the New Testament, He is able to set me "before the presence of His glory without blemish."

Start tonight. Oh, to be away from our conventionality. Oh, that I could lay violent hands upon you and make you lay violent hands upon this Kingdom of God, not for a sudden perfecting of your life, but for a sudden adjustment of it. I call you to Him. I would with Andrew, by word if in no other way, assist to bring you to Jesus.