

The Divine Government Op Human Lives

by G. Campbell Morgan

The divine government is a fact, a disturbing element, a progressive element, and a methodical element, where God's will is supreme and His word is the final authority.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 1:6, Isaiah 40:31, Romans 13:11

Topics: "Obedience to God", "Divine Guidance"

Description

G. Campbell Morgan emphasizes the significance of God's divine government in human lives, using the Israelites' experience at Horeb as a backdrop. He explains that God's voice calls for movement and progress, urging believers to be ready for disturbances that lead to growth and higher purposes. Morgan highlights that divine governance is not only a disturbing force but also a methodical one, guiding believers step by step towards their promised land. He encourages immediate obedience to God's call, reminding that true freedom lies in surrendering to His authority. Ultimately, he calls for a response to God's voice, urging individuals to leave behind complacency and embrace the journey He has prepared.

Transcript

"Jehovah our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mountain." (Deut. i. 6.)

The sojourn of Israel, the ancient people of God, at Horeb had been important and interesting. There they had received from God the words of the law, the pattern of the tabernacle, and the ritual of worship. They fild there had revelations of the glory of God, and revelations of their own hearts; they had found in themselves rebellion and sin, even in that brief time. They had also had revelations of the tenderness and compassion of their God.

At last the organisation is complete; they are ready to move forward and to take possession of the land which God has given them, and the word comes to them suddenly, with a pertinence that reminds them that in actual practice they are a theocracy under the direct government of God. Every man of them holds to the theory of the divine government; but now a sudden order takes hold of the creed which they had professed, and turns it into a fact to be put into practice. To these people sojourning at the mount, in the place of revelation, in the place of wonderful blessing, the word comes swift and sudden and startling:

"Ye have dwelt long enough in this mountain." (Deut. i. 6.)

This was indeed a startling and urgent word, revealing certain great truths concerning this government of God, which it is of the utmost importance that we should perpetually bear in mind.

It reveals to me, first of all, that the divine government is a fact. It also reveals certain truths concerning that divine government, namely:

1. That the divine government is a disturbing element in human life.
2. That the divine government is a progressive element in human life.
3. That the divine government is a methodical element in human life.

If it be a fact that God governs my life and your life, then He will disturb us; He will disturb us in order that we may make progress; and He will disturb us that we may make progress along certain definitely marked lines.

First of all, then, these words reveal the fact of the divine government. How easy it would have been for Israel to settle down there and say, "We believe in God and in the divine government." Had there been no voice speaking to them in actual leading, no word coming to disturb them, they might have come to hold the divine government merely as a theory. Then it would have passed out of their lives, and would have failed to be what it was intended to be to them.

Beloved, let me remind you that the divine government is a very definite fact. God is absolute monarch wherever He is King at all. His government is autocratic. He does not consult us as to what He shall do with us, where He shall send us, what He would have us to do. Moreover, His government is an imperative government. He never permits us to make compromises with Him for a single moment. He speaks the word of authority. He marks the path without ever consulting us, and having done so, our only relationship to that government is that of implicit, unquestioning, immediate obedience.

Now, consider what this government means. Imagine the stir that must have been created in that camp when the word came, "Ye have dwelt long enough in this mountain." Imagine how tents would be struck, and camels loaded throughout the whole of the camp. The people, who had been living there for a little more than a year, were suddenly rooted up and ordered to move away. Think how at the sudden proclamation of that word of God all social and family arrangements had to be set aside. That word touched every tent and touched every soul, and wherever families had arranged to meet together at a certain time for social intercourse, the whole plan was swept away. The divine voice had spoken, "Ye have tarried long enough," and no engagement is of sufficient importance to hinder the divine word. Tents must be struck immediately. All the minor arrangements of every-day life, important in their place, must be set on one side, because the word of the King is supreme, and is sufficient in itself to set aside every arrangement that these people have made.

What a disturbing business! What a serious thing to be under the authority of some one who can upset everything in our lives without consulting us, and by a word can mark for us the moment of departure! That is the government of God. We may talk and sing about the kingdom, and pray about the kingdom, but until we face that fact we know nothing of what it is to be living in the kingdom of God and under the government of the Most High.

Human arrangements are constantly disturbed in the kingdom of God, and what is more remarkable still, divine plans seem to be changed, and orders that we have most definitely received from on high are

countermanded, and the whole program of life again and again is changed for the men and women who are in the kingdom of God, and are desirous of obeying only His will. To-day a man is in a sphere where God has put him, and on every hand God is graciously setting His seal upon the work that He has given him to do. But the divine voice comes: "Ye have tarried here long enough." That work must be dropped. All its hallowed associations must be left behind, and all the Bender ties that have become entwined around the heart on account of that work must be snapped. The divine voice is heard--the only voice to which a man in the kingdom of God should pay any attention--and the sphere of work entered into because the divine finger pointed that way must be left the moment that voice bids the man move forward.

God comes into our lives in strange, mysterious ways when we are under His government. He may pluck away a loved one, and leave us with broken hearts, and almost desolate homes for a time. Earthly friendships are often severed by divine government. Two souls knit together in the sacred bond of friendship, seemingly created for mutual service in the kingdom of God, are taken by the divine government and separated by thousands of miles. Divine government is a disturbing element, breaking cherished plans, and associations, and hopes. The aspiration of our heart, centered upon a friend, a child, an event, is suddenly crushed, and in a moment we find ourselves stranded in darkness! All this comes to men and women in the line of the divine government. It is a disturbing element in every human life. God has made His heroes and heroines by such dealings.

In the twelfth chapter of the Gospel of Luke, verses thirty-five and thirty-six, we have very clearly indicated the attitude of a Christian.

"Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning; and be ye yourselves like unto men looking for their Lord, when He shall return from the marriage feast; that, when He cometh and knocketh, they may straightway open unto Him."

Here is the character of the Christian. The loins girded like a pilgrim; no settling down amid the things of the earth, but a continual waiting for the divine voice; ready to be disturbed when God would disturb; willing ever to respond to the expression of the divine will, and satisfied in obedience. Of course the ultimate issue of this is the waiting for the Master Himself to come, but if I am living with my loins girded, waiting for the last summons that calls me to fellowship in the ages beyond, then am I ready for every call that precedes, whether it be to suffering or to service.

The same thing is taught by Paul in his letter to the Romans, the thirteenth chapter, the eleventh and twelfth verses: "And this, knowing the season, that already it is time for you to awake out of sleep: for now is salvation nearer to us than when we first believed. The night is far spent, and the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."

The figure is that of a military camp. Soldiers have been sleeping in their tents, and suddenly the cry goes out that the day is breaking. Men rise, fling off the garments of the night, and gird on the armour, ready for the coming of the king and for the word of command. The awakening here referred to is at the end of the dispensation, but it has its application to the whole of life. Men and women who are under the government of God are always homeless men and women, sojourners in tents, never dwelling in houses. That is the character of the people whom God governs.

But you ask, "Would you break down home life?"

Of course I would not; but my home is to be my lodging-place, and if God orders me to strike my tent and move away, immediately the tent is to be struck and I am to move. See how Abraham, the father of the faithful, lived. "A tent and an altar, a tent and an altar." He pitched his tent and erected his altar. His altar was the mark of the fact that he lived in relationship to the divine. The tent marked the fact that he was only a sojourner, a stranger, and a pilgrim upon the road.

The divine government is a disturbing element. My duty is so to live that I shall be ready to be disturbed at any moment when God pleases.

Now turn to the second point, because that explains the first. The divine government is not only a disturbing element in human life, it is a progressive element.

God disturbs a man. Why? To move him on to something better--never that there may be retrogression, never merely for the sake of disturbance. If God asks me to strike my tent to-day and move out yonder, it is because yonder there is a higher possibility, a more glorious outlook, a more perfect sphere. I may not see the advantage at first, but God's eye is always on the consummation, and He moves His people step by step at the right moment in the right way, and ever, ever onward, towards that glorious consummation.

Progress is not necessarily pleasant. Notice how, years after, Moses speaks of the departure from Horeb. In the nineteenth verse of the first chapter of Deuteronomy, he says:

"And we journeyed from Horeb, and went through all that great and terrible wilderness, which ye saw, by the way to the hill-country of the Amorites, as Jehovah our God commanded us; and we came to Kadesh-barnea."

That was the movement. But how? Through that great and terrible wilderness. It was not a pleasant experience, but it was progress; it was moving onward. It was a further march into the purposes of God.

Now, beloved, if the divine government is a disturbing element, to be undisturbed is to be God-forsaken. If we know nothing of the voice calling us to alter plans, and set aside arrangements, and simply step out upon the divine word in faith as Abraham did, then we are God-forsaken men and women. Beyond that, to be God-forsaken is to settle to failure.

"Oh," you say, "let me stay here; my home is so comfortable, I am so happy."

God says: "Move from this place and go yonder."

You say: "I cannot. Let me remain where I am."

What are you asking? You are asking for your own breakdown and failure. God's plan for you is progress, growth; and you are asking for arrested development and for failure.

"Oh, no," you say, "I am only asking not to be disturbed."

It is the same thing. When you and I pray, in our foolishness, that God will not disturb us, we ask Him to give us no more progress, but to let us settle where we are and pass down to failure.

There is no more exquisite figure, I think, in the whole Book of God of the disturbing element of divine government and its issue than that in the thirty-second chapter of Deuteronomy. It is a beautiful picture. Read from the ninth verse, "For Jehovah's portion is His people." This is exactly what Paul says to the

Ephesians about God's inheritance in the saints. Very well, then, if the Lord's portion is His people, He will value His people; and what will He do to them?

"Jacob is the lot of His inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the wast* howling wilderness; He compassed him about, He cared for him, He kept him as the apple of His eye. As an eagle that stirreth up her nest, that fluttereth over her young, He spread abroad His wings, He took them, He bare them on His pinions. Jehovah alone did lead him, and there was no foreign god with him. He made him ride on the high places of the earth, and he did eat the increase of the field; and He made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; butter of the herd and milk of the flock, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the finest of the wheat; and of the blood of the grape thou drankest wine."

That whole passage is full of exquisite beauty, but here is what I want you to notice. Jehovah's portion is His people; where did He find them? "In the waste howling wilderness, and He compassed them about." Then comes the verse that reveals both the disturbing and the progressive elements in divine government: "As an eagle that stirreth up her nest, that fluttereth over her young, He spread abroad His wings, He took them, He bare them on His pinions."

That picture is full of poetry, full of life and truth and beauty. Mark it. Have you ever seen an eagle stir up her nest? You know what happens. There in the nest, right upon the rocky height, are the eaglets; the mother eagle comes, and taking hold of them, flings them out of their nest. They were so comfortable there, but she flings them right out of the nest high above the earth. They begin to fall straightway. They have never been in air before; they have always been in the nest.

Is not that mother bird cruel? Why does she disturb the eaglets?

Watch her and you will understand. As long as you look upon the struggling eaglets in the air you miss the point. Watch the eagle. Having stirred up her nest, "she spreadeth abroad her pinions," the pinions that beat the air behind her as she rises superior to it. Where are the eaglets? Struggling, falling. She is superior; they are falling. Then what does she do? "She beareth them on her pinions." She swoops beneath them, catches them on her wings, and bears them up. What is she doing? Teaching them to fly. She drops them again, and again they struggle in the air, but this time not so helplessly. They are finding out what she means. She spreads her pinions to show them how to fly, and as they fall again, she catches them again.

That is how God deals with you and with me. Has He been stirring up your nest? Has He flung you out until you felt lost in an element that was new and strange? Look at Him. He is not lost in that element. He spreads out the wings of His omnipotence to teach us how to soar. What then? He comes beneath us and catches us on His wings. We thought when He flung us out of the nest it was unkind. No; He was teaching us to fly that we might enter into the spirit of the promise, "They shall mount up with wings, as eagles." He would teach us how to use the gifts which He has bestowed on us, and which we cannot use as long as we are in the nest.

Imagine the issue of keeping eaglets in the nest! It would be contrary to their nature, contrary to the purposes for which they are framed and fitted. There is a purpose in the eagle. What is it? Flight sunward. There is a purpose in your life, newborn child of God. What is it? Flight sunward, heavenward, Godward. If you stop in the nest you will never get there. God comes into your life and disturbs you, breaks up your plans, and extinguishes your hopes, the lights that have lured you on. He spoils everything; what for? That

He may get you on His wings and teach you the secret forces of your own life, and lead you to higher development and higher purposes. This government of God is a disturbing element, but, praise His name! it is a progressive element.

Now take the third point. Not only is the divine government disturbing and progressive, but it is methodical. Strike your tents, get away from this mountain. Where to? The land! That is the ultimate issue--possession of the land.

Now notice, beloved, that not only is there an ultimate issue in the mind of God when He disturbs His people, but there is clearly marked direction. We see this in the seventh verse of this chapter:

"Turn you, and take your journey, and go to the hill-country of the Amorites, and unto all the places nigh thereunto, in the Arabah, in the hill-country, and in the lowland, and in the South, and by the,, seashore, the land of the Canaanites, and Lebanon, as far as the great river, the river Euphrates."

There is direction towards possession.

But the most exquisite statement of all that marks the divine arrangement for the journey is in the thirty-second and the thirty-third verses: " . . . Jehovah your God, Who went before you in the way, to seek you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night, to show you by what way ye should go, and in the cloud by day."

Did you ever read anything more beautiful than that? It is one of those things that absolutely master me. God going in front; what for? Choosing them a place in which to pitch their tent. They have struck their tents, and given up their plans, obedient to the disturbing voice of His government. Then what does He do? He goes in front and shows them the next place. At nightfall the cloud stands still and changes into a pillar of fire, giving them light.

There is nothing haphazard or accidental in such a life. God's people move in a plainly marked pathway, step by step. The government of God not only disturbs them, and disturbs them for progress, but every inch of the way He has arranged for them.

O men and women, as we ask you to submit to the government of God, remember this: God is not making an experiment with you. We are not pawns upon a chessboard, moving which, God may win or lose. Every move is arranged. I did not know what was to come to pass to-day, but God was in this day before I came into it. Doing what? Choosing the place for me, making arrangements, controlling everything. If your life is under the divine government, do not forget that every day you come to, God has been preparing for you. Do you believe it? Is God sending you to some foreign land? God is there getting ready for you to come. God goes in front as well as behind me. He is my rearward, but He is also in front, choosing, selecting, planning, arranging everything for me.

It is something to be thankful for, then, if God is disturbing me that I may progress, and if He is all the way marking out the path before me. There can be no accident to such a man. Nothing can go wrong in the life surrendered to such a divine government. A disturbing element, a progressive element, and yet, thank God, a government that makes no experiments, but that moves along lines of perfect order.

Now, what is my relation to this government of God? I can put it in very few words: First, I should be always ready; and second, I should move the instant the word comes. That marks the line of wisdom. Ready to be disturbed if God disturbs; immediate obedience when He calls.

Now I do not think that any one can possibly say, " But that is very hard." It would be hard if we did not know God, and if we did not know that the disturbance is for progress, and that the progress is along lines definitely marked and divinely arranged. Oh, the inexpressible comfort, the absolute rest of life, to men and women who say:

"If God disturb me to-morrow, in being disturbed is my chief rest, because I know that when He moves it is to higher reaches of life, to better positions beyond; and though the ultimate issue of this present disturbance may be far on, every mile of the journey He has chosen, and every place where I pitch my tent He has selected for me."

That is the kingdom in which I want to live; that is where I want to abide perpetually. I want to be a man waiting for the disturbing element, responsive to the progressive element, rejoicing in the methodical element, by which God leads me day by day and hour by hour.

And, beloved, how may we mark our folly? By doing just what Israel did. They were characterised by wisdom at first. They struck their tents and moved, but at last they came up to the borders of this land that God had told them to go in and possess, and then they began to doubt the King; they began to wonder whether He knew His business. When they reached the borders of the land, they said:

"We will send men in to spy out this land."

When the men came back with the report that there were giants and walled cities, those who up to that point had been responsive to the divine government, said:

"Ah, well, you see God did not understand this when He sent us here. We cannot go on. He did not know that there were walled cities; He had no idea of the giants."

Did they not say that? They said, " We had no idea," which is the same thing. If they had believed that God knew, and had been moving before them, choosing the place, what would they have cared for walled cities and giants? Some of you have obeyed thus far. God has said to you, "Ye have tarried long enough in this mount." He has broken up your nest somewhere. You strike your tent and start; but there comes a moment when you say:

"But somebody tells me that ahead are giants and walled cities."

So there are; it is quite true; but the giants are for you to slay, and the walled cities are for you to live in. The God Who disturbed you did it in order that you might come into possession of that very land; and if you live in His government, rest assured that for every step of the way that lies ahead He will move before you, and choose the place, and equip you for life and for service.

But it was a very sad business for these people. They disobeyed God, and were sent back. What then? They thought they would go and try by themselves. They were defeated and driven back, and for nearly forty years they had to stay in that wilderness instead of possessing the land straightway.

Now, in conclusion, I want to ask this one pointed question of my own heart and of yours: Where do we stand in relation to this government of God? You may have just heard the voice saying, "Ye have dwelt long enough in this mountain," and He marks for you a new course of life. It is as clear as the sunlight in the blue. Wherever there are hearts waiting for the voice of God, that voice is to be heard. You know what God wants you to do. Now, what are you going to do? I beseech you for your own sake, as well as for the

glory of the kingdom of God, that you do not stop to count the cost of obedience, but that you say:

"He bids me go, and I go."

That is the spirit which has brought men into the places of heroism and victory.

You know the old story of Luther; when he was warned against going to Worms, he said:

"Though every slate on every house were a devil, I would go."

God had marked the path, and he was bound to go.

If you begin to count the cost, you are in the place of peril. It is the man who says to the King, "At thy word, O King, in the face of what seems to be a combination of circumstances that must wreck me completely, I will go." You need have no fear, for He goeth before you to choose you out a place in which to pitch your tent, and the life abandoned to God is in perfect safety forevermore.

But perhaps you heard that voice speaking to you years ago, and you disobeyed, and you have been in the wilderness ever since. You have been away from the land towards which God was sending you forward to possess it. Thank God, He is full of tender compassion, and graciousness, and all He asks is that you go back to the point of disobedience, and obey. God's path led that way, and you turned from it; go back. You know how you got off the definitely marked pathway, and missed the place that God had chosen for you to pitch your tent. Go back, man, and go along that path.

But you say: "That path is thorny and rough."

Tramp it; for, mark you, you will find that whenever you put your foot upon a thorn, another foot has been there first and taken off the sharpness; and whenever you begin to tramp a rough piece of road in obedience to the divine voice, another by your side will take the roughness from it, and you will simply walk in perfect harmony with Him Who is your perpetual companion in the way of His own marking out. God not only goes before me to choose me a place, He walks with me along the pathway, and leaning on His strength, then am I strong.

One word more. There may be some to whom all this is as a foreign tongue. You have never heard the voice of God, and say: "The day of miracles is past. I am never disturbed. I make my own plans and live where I please and do as I like. What do you mean by a disturbing element?"

Beloved, you are living still among the fleshpots and the garlic of Egypt. You are still in slavery. Oh, if men could but see themselves! The man who does as he likes is the greatest slave. The man who never does as he likes is God's free man. You know no disturbing voice? God never points out for you a pathway altogether different from the one you had planned? Then, my brother, you are living still in the land of slavery, in the land of darkness. Back to your King! In His government alone lies safety, in His government alone is the place of life, and light, and liberty, and love. Any man who lives outside this government of God is in the place of dust and ashes and emptiness. Oh, back to your King!

O men, O women, my brethren, my sisters in Christ, those of you who have never yet submitted to Him, come under His control actually and positively. Fling away your theories, and get into the actuality of this business, and let God govern your life, disturb you, mark for you your progress, and prepare for you your sphere of service. He will call you away from some loved relationship, from some cherished habit, and will

say, "This is the way." As you look at the pathway, you will think that it is a hard one; but as you begin to tread it, you will find that He is with you, and every step is leading you into finer air, and larger life, and more infinite possibilities.

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