**VOLUME 2; CHAPTER 02 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**MARAN ATHA! by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be Anathema Maran atha.*

*1 Corinthians 16:22*

THESE WORDS DO NOT CONSTITUTE A MALEDICTION. IF YOU ARE inclined to question the accuracy of that statement notice what the Apostle himself says about them. "The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand. If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be Anathema Maran atha. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen." They are not a malediction, but part of a salutation.

Yet they are words of astounding severity and scorching heat, and are indeed words intended to make men stop and think, words gaining heat and force from the fact that they are surrounded by loving, tender, gracious words of salutation. They are a statement of a logical and inevitable sequence. If a man do not love this Lord Jesus "let him be anathema. Maran atha."

This is the close of a letter written to a Christian church, a church which had departed from the simplicity of Christ Jesus, a church which had lost its power of testimony in the midst of a great and wealthy city. This letter was written to correct the failure of such a church because its testimony was paralyzed, and it had ceased to be influential on account of its shortcoming and failure. The city of Corinth at this time was the home of learning and of wealth. It was full of a false wisdom or culture. Factions and rivalries existed throughout the city. The school men were quarrelling amongst themselves concerning emphases and diversifications of ideas on nonessential things. Intellect was more highly esteemed than morality. Consequently there was abounding looseness of moral standard. Selfishness was dominant. There were a few wealthy people, living in luxury, while beneath them was a great mass of men and women in slavery. There was a popular denial of immortality. In one word, tragic and terrible, Corinth as a city was materialized, and the Church of Jesus Christ had been contaminated by all these things. Instead of fulfilling its mission as salt, and being pungent, antiseptic, it had lost its savor. Instead of being light, shining clearly, rebuking the darkness and guiding stumbling men back into the way of perfection, the light had become darkened. To correct the carnality which lay at the root of the spiritual failure in the church, this letter had been written. In imagination I see the apostle, suffering in all probability from such nearness of sight that he could hardly see what he wrote, taking from the hand of his amanuensis the pen, and writing, "The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand. If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be anathema. Maran atha. The favour of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen."

So the great letter closes. That is the setting of my text. We must see it there if we would understand its meaning. The Apostle writing to a church of Jesus Christ, to men and women called saints, says in effect, "The claims of Christ are such that if they be once known and appreciated, and yet the heart does not answer in love, which is for ever more the inspiration of loyalty, then there is nothing for such a heart save that it shall be accursed, anathema." After the statement, to emphasize it, to defend it, to vindicate it, he writes, "Maran atha."

I have already several times recited those two words. Let the now say by way of explanation, before we proceed to a closer examination of them, that the Apostle in their use here defends the thing he has already said. That is their intention. He is not declaring that if men do not love Jesus Christ, when presently the Christ comes they will be accursed. They are already accursed. They are in the place of the curse. They are in the grip of the curse. Therefore, before we can understand the first part of our text we must understand the second part of it. Before we can fully appreciate what the Apostle meant when he wrote, "If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be anathema," we must inquire what he meant when he wrote, "Maran atha."

Therefore, I ask you, first, to consider with me the great fact "Maran atha," and, second, the sequence: "If any man love not the Lord, let him be anathema."

There is great gain in the fact that our revision has written two words and not one, "Maran atha." There are certain things concerning these two words which are indisputable. There are other things which are doubtful, about which no final, dogmatic word can yet be said. There are two interpretations of their meaning. One affirms that they mean, "The Lord cometh." The other affirms that they mean, "The Lord has come." You will see that the difficulty arises concerning the tense of the verb. There is no difficulty concerning the substantive, the subject "Maran," the Lord; but whether the word "atha" means "cometh," or "has come," cannot be dogmatically affirmed. The central principle is not interfered with whichever interpretation be correct. I am not proposing for a single moment to argue as between the two. I will say, in passing, I am personally convinced that the words mean "The Lord has come," and that here the reference is not specifically and immediately to the second Advent but to the first, and yet to the second also. According to all the New Testament writers, the first involved the second. If you believe the words mean "The Lord cometh," then you also hold the fact of the first Advent. "The Lord cometh" for "the Lord has come." If you hold that the words mean "the Lord has come," then you also see that they mean the Lord is yet to come again, for He Who has come "shall appear a second time, apart from sin ... unto salvation." The second Advent includes the first. The grace of the first demands the glory of the second. These words constituted a form of Christian salutation in the early days. Whether they meant "The Lord has come" or "the Lord cometh" matters nothing. The early Christians greeted each other in the market place or on the highway, saying, "Maran atha," and the reply would be "Maran atha." Whether the Advent referred to is past, or to come, the truth insisted on is that the true Lord is manifest - has been manifested or is to be manifested. The fact is not one of date, but of the manifestation in human history of the one supreme, lonely, imperial Lord of men, "Maran atha." The Lord has come, is coming: the Lord is coming, has come. The text summons us to the judgment seat of the one perfect Lord of men. When the Apostle with his own hand - stumblingly perchance, and in those large characters to which he referred in another letter - is writing his salutation, he sees his Lord. He has been following Him for years along the perilous and rough pathway. He saw Him first on the way to Damascus and he heard His voice. He has become familiar with Him. He knows Him for what He is. No other teacher divides his attention. No other lord makes demands upon his loyalty. He is the one Lord Jesus Christ, and Paul writes to these people in Corinth, "If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be anathema," and then, as though he had said, "He is the Lord, and He is revealed as such," he writes, "Maran atha." So finally he brings the saints of Corinth, and all Corinth, to confront the one Lord, and he says in the presence of that Lord, "Hear this, ye sons of men, if ye love Him not, ye are accursed." Logically, necessarily accursed. Not to love Him is to love the base, the mean, the ignoble. "If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be anathema. Maran atha." It is the great cry of a loyal soul bowing in adoration in the presence of the supernal royalty of the King.

The central fact suggested therefore is that of the Lordship of Christ.

This Lord Jesus Christ is Lord in a threefold sense. On His head are many diadems, but for us men, for the purposes of our salvation, I propose to speak of three only. He stands absolutely alone as Lord - first, as presenting a perfect pattern of human life; secondly, as paralyzing the paralysis which prevents men realizing the pattern; and, finally, as providing for men the power by which they may become what He reveals to them they ought to be. The territory covered by these three suggestions is small. I turn away from all the glorious diadems which rest upon His brow, and of which I might speak, because I want to speak of His Lordship as it presents itself to the needs of sinning men. I want us to see Him as the one Imperial and only Lord of the man who knows his sin and fain would escape it.

In the first place, I say He is royal in Lordship because He presents to men the perfect pattern of human life. I am not going to defend that statement. All I intend to do is to ask, What is this pattern He presents? What answer has Christ given to the old question of the psalmist, "What is man?' Christ's answer to that question is a threefold one. By His teaching He first of all declares that man is the offspring of God, that man is not of dust but of Deity, that in every man there is that which cannot be slain by the physical hand of his fellow man. "Be not afraid of them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." According to His teaching, every man - the question of his bruising and battering and spoiling by sin is not now being discussed, in spite of these things - every man is a child of the eternities, offspring of the spiritual, in the deepest essence of his being related to God and eternity. That is Christ's first word about man. Then He has also revealed to us the fact that man is being who can realize himself only within the realm of one simple and sublime law of conformity to the will of the One Who created him. By all His teaching He arrested the wandering will of man, and attempted to readjust it to the will of God. By all the deeds through which He manifested His thought and purpose for man, He sought to bring him back from the trackless desert of his own self-chosen wandering to the straight and narrow pathway of the good and perfect and acceptable will of God. So that Jesus said, and still says to men, "You can find your rest only in the will of God. You can find the answer to the deep questionings of your own life, you can find satisfaction for the perpetual sign of the deepest in you only as you find your way back again to God, and hand to Him your life, and choose His law as the law of your life.

Finally, Christ taught that man is created for service. He is an instrument for carrying the will of God beyond the circle of his own personality. That indeed is the teaching o the whole Bible. Man was not the final flower of Eden. He was its master. Man was not put into Eden for decorative purposes at the close of the great procedure. He was put in to dress it, to keep it, to govern it in co-operation with God. We have strange notions about the Garden of Eden. There are people who imagine it was an actual garden such as we in this country of ours, beautifully laid out with flower beds and paths. Nothing of the kind. It was a rough bit of soil full of potentiality, blossoms in it, fruit in it, magnificence in it, glories in it, but not manifest. What were they waiting for? The touch of God's partner, man. God put man into the garden to dress it and keep it. Christ emphasized that in all His teaching: "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

The great ideal of Jesus concerning man is that he is spiritual in essence, perfected within the law of God, and created for co-operation with God. He Who revealed that as the pattern of human life is the Master Teacher of the ages. I defy you to find me any such conception anywhere else. Other men have not dreamed of such things as these. Other teachers have said wonderfully luminous things concerning man, but they were all things of dust compared to these. He came to men, the Man of the home-made garment and little Nazareth, and in simple sentences and childlike speech He uttered great philosophies of human life, which have taken hold of the hearts of men; and we bow before Him as we say Maran atha," the Lord, for none other has ever spoken of possibility of human life as He spoke of it.

Had that been all He did, it would have been a great thing, but for me it would have been an awful tragedy. In the discovery of the spirituality of my being I should have found I was orphaned, the offspring of God, and unable to find my Father. If I had found that my life could be conditioned only by the law of God I should have found that I was absolutely ruined, for I could not discover the law of God for me. If I had been taught that I was created only for service I should simply have stood gazing out upon a lost dignity, for I had lost the secret of co-operation and fellowship with God, and the very garden of Eden would have answered me, not with flowers, but with the thorns of the wilderness. If this Man be Lord only by revelation of the pattern, He is Lord, I bow to Him, but bowing to Him I am undone.

He therefore presents Himself in a new aspect of His Lordship as the One Who touches with a strange and mysterious power the paralysis of man which prevents him realizing the purpose and ideal, until the paralysis itself is paralyzed, and man is set free. He comes to destroy the destroyer. The conception of man as material is forever more destroyed. From the lawlessness which had become another law working in my members and making it impossible for me to obey the law of God He sets me free. The self-life which had prevented my realization of God's purpose in serving God He crucifies. The process is not easy. But this is how He, arrests me. He takes hold of me and reveals to me the pattern until I am ashamed, and just as I am hopeless, He touches me with some new power, and I feel that the forces which prevented my realization are relaxing their hold upon, me, and if a man is saved by hope, I begin to hope. If a man is saved by faith, upon the basis of my hope I fling my trust out toward the Lord Who has revealed the pattern and has touched me with power. If a man be saved ultimately by love, I rise from hope through faith to love, and "if any man loveth not the Lord, let him be anathema."

Am I a spirit? He brings my spirit back into relation with the one eternal Spirit, and I live. Is it necessary for me to find the law of God. He presents Himself to me and says, "Follow Me. I am the Word, the incarnate revelation of the will of God, the thought of God rendered visible to thine eyes. Thou hast wandered away from the Father's home; follow Me; step by step, line upon line, precept upon precept I will lead thee in the way of His appointment." You can fling away the Ten Commandments then as an external law which you are attempting to obey: "I will write His law upon thy heart. I will come and dwell with thee. I am with thee all the days. I will lead thee step by step through all the pathway. I will be to thee the law of God which thou hast lost."

Finally, He communicates to me the energy of the Spirit, and out of the mystery of His Passion He gives me power. Out of the darkness of His death He gives me the light of life, and the life of light. So He confronts me not merely as pattern, but as power; not merely as revelation, but as energy. He brings to me in my loneliness and in my wandering all I need.

"Maran atha." The Lord, the only One Who has any right to such a title, the imperial, lonely, splendid, royal Lord, has come, is coming - which you like, both if you please. Between the "has come" and the "is coming," the Lord is here. In the words of the Apostle, in the presence of His royal Lord Jesus the Revealer of the ideal, the Destroyer of the paralysis, the One Who communicates power, in the presence of this Lord who has in His government everything that sinning man needs. "If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be anathema."

I return to the statement which constitutes the first part of my text. "If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be anathema." This is wholly in view of the Lordship of Jesus. I can imagine that someone here is at once startled and damned by the peculiar term of the Apostle, "If any man loveth not." Some soul trembling upon the very brink of yielding to the Lordship of Jesus may say, 'I do not love I Him.' Why did the Apostle use that word? He did use that word, and as a matter of fact, if you would rightly understand this passage, as Mr. Rotherham, in his Emphasized Bible, has beautifully and as I think accurately rendered it, you must read, "If any man dearly loveth not the Lord." It is the thought of supreme affection for the Lord Who lays His claim upon man and demands his allegiance. Yet I recognize the difficulty. Why does the Apostle use this word? Do not forget he is writing to saints, to such as have heard the Word and have yielded obedience thereto, and have already come into some measure of light, and he mentions the ultimate stage in relation to Jesus. What are the matters which precede love? I take you back for a moment to his letter to the Romans. In the course of that letter concerning salvation Paul wrote these words, "Belief cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." That is how you would state the Gospel to the man who has not yet obeyed it. Take that verse and state it in the other order. "The Word of Christ," that is the whole Evangel. What then? Hearing it. What then? Faith in it. In the Corinthian letter, writing to saints, he takes all these things for granted, as though he had said, 'You have heard the word of Christ. You have believed the word of Christ. If any man do not love Him, then let that man be accursed.' That is to say, in the thinking of the Apostle, if the Word be presented and if the Word be heard and be obeyed - and of set purpose I substitute the thought of obedience for that of faith, for the only faith that saves is the faith of obedience - then necessarily, always, absolutely without exception, the experience of the obedient soul is the experience of love. This word of the Apostle indicates the final stage in the relation. I do not mean that it is postponed. There is some soul who has come into this house tonight. You hear the Word of Christ, the Word of His Lordship. You hear it, you believe it obediently, submit yourself to it in all honesty, then at once you will begin to love Him. Love comes in the pathway of obedience. You do not love Him, you tell me. Then where have you failed in this order? Have you never heard the word the Word of Christ? That can hardly be true of anyone here. You have heard it now. The Word heard, what will you do with it? Will you believe it? I do not mean theologically. I do not mean intellectually merely. I do not mean, Do you assent to the fact of His Lordship? I mean that first, for there can be no submission on the part of any honest man to any but absolute royalty. I cannot be loyal to inferiority, so help me God. My King must be royal. He must appeal to all that lies within me and demand my loyalty by what He is in royalty. Have you seen the Royalty? Do you know that this Christ is the one Lord of men? Will you obey? If you say No, you pass away, it may be in reverent recognition of His imperial majesty but without one pulse of love. Do you say Yes? Then you will begin to love Him tonight. I do not say, "Perhaps," or "Peradventure," or "It is reasonable to suppose." I affirm it dogmatically. No man can see the light and obey it without feeling the love.

Hear me again for a moment. How will that love first manifest itself? Not in your consciousness always as love for Him, but far more commonly in your love for someone else, and your desire to bring that one to Him. The first movement of the love of God in the soul of man, woman, or little child, is a love impulse which drives that one out to bring in someone else. Do you not at once see what that proves? Father, tonight you obey, and immediately you think of your boy, and your heart says "I would fain bring him to Christ." You love your boy, and if you love him you would hardly lead him to any but the One you loved supremely. You demonstrate your love for Christ by the love which drives you to bring someone else to Him.

When obeying, you begin to be anxious about father, mother, wife, husband, child; it demonstrates the fact that although you have hardly dared say it, yet in your heart there, has come love for the Christ.

Thus the Apostle is stating the logical sequence. If a man is separated from the Lordship of Christ of his own will and choice, then he has no true vision of his own highest possibilities, he has no understanding of life's truest laws. There is within that man no force making for perfection and permanence. That man is already in the grip of destructive forces. If you turn your back upon Christ when He has shown you the spirituality of your being, what have you done by that action? You have consented to the materialistic conception of your own life which proceeds to corruption. If you turn your back upon Christ when He reveals Himself to you as the revelation of the will of God, then you turn your face toward lawlessness which lies at the root of all evil and calamity; you are already in the grip of disintegration and break-up. If you turn your back upon Christ when He calls you into service and co-operation with God, then your life henceforth must circle around your own selfish desire and motive and lust. The self-centred man has created for himself the grave in which he must lay his own individuality. So that if any man love not the Lord, it needs no Apostle to curse him, but it does need that the Apostle with the pen of inspiration should write that he is already accursed. "If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be anathema."

As the old year passes away from us and we come again to the turn of the highway and to another mile post, this message is alive and as real in London, in Westminster Chapel, as when the Apostle wrote it upon parchment for the Corinthian Church centuries ago. Here and now and everywhere, "If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be anathema." He is in the grip of destructive forces; and all the subtlery of his brain, the cleverness of his intellect, and ingenuity of his mind cannot deliver him from dire and irremediable ruin. "If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be anathema." Hear it, ye sons of the new age. My brothers, sisters, living in the midst of our boasted civilization and progress, "Maran atha." There is but one Lord. There is but one Master of men. There is but one Revealer of the true ideal. There is but one Redeemer of failure. He is here in spiritual power and presence, in our very midst tonight. Do you love Him? Are you loyal to Him? Have you crowned Him? If from the heart even tremblingly there comes the answer Yes, then the last part of this verse is reversed. 'If any man love the Lord, let him be blessed' and blessed is he! AIready in him there burns the light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Already in him operate the forces which at last will bind the universe about the feet of God in perfect and eternal harmony. Already in him thrills the love that cometh forth from God and returneth back to Him in the cycle of the centuries. Blessed art thou, brother, sister, mine, in the midst of the burden-bearing and strife and toil, testing and tempting, if thou hast crowned this Christ, all hell cannot destroy thee. All the, forces of evil in the universe cannot accomplish thy undoing.

If your answer is No, already the touch of eternal death is upon you. Already the break-up that ends in the eternal and infinite disorder is within your soul. "Maran atha." I bring you this final word. Back again to the Lord, the one and only Lord of men. "The Word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is the word of faith, which we preach." You are familiar with it. Will you obey it? If never before, now answer it obediently.

Oh that all alone, forgetting your past history, and present difficulty, and neighbor and friend whom you have brought with you to the sanctuary, oh that now you would look into the face of the one Lord Jesus Christ and say to Him simply as a child, with all the courage and conviction your manhood, "I will trust in Thee and follow Thee, Thou Lord and Master of men." Then He will enwrap you with His love, and lead you in His light, and bring you into His life.