**VOLUME 3; CHAPTER 14 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**THE PROBLEMS OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE: THE OPPOSING FORCES OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE - THE WORLD by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

THE WORLD, THE FLESH AND THE DEVIL CONSTITUTE THE trinity of forces which oppose the religious life. These are distinct from each other, yet they act in perpetual concert, so that any two of them are powerless apart from the third. I say this at once in order that we may realize the folly of dealing with the world alone, or with the flesh by itself, or with the devil as unrelated to both. Given the world and the flesh, minus the devil, and there is no opposition to religion. There is nothing inherently evil in the world or in the flesh. The flesh and the devil apart from the world cannot successfully oppose the religious life. The devil needs the medium of the world to appeal to the flesh. The devil and the world apart from the flesh cannot make any appeal to the spiritual essence of man. The world can appeal only to flesh. The world plus the flesh, plus the devil, equals conflict. In dealing with the world as an opposing force to the religious life we shall consider, first, the world in itself; second, the world as opposed to religion; third, the world in relation to the flesh and the devil; and, finally, the victory over the world.

We begin, then, first with the subject of the world itself. There is a great deal of nonsense talked about the world and worldliness. A great many things are called worldly that are not worldly, and a great many things are never called worldly that are of the very essence of worldliness. We need to be very careful to understand what is the real meaning of the term "the world" in the New Testament when it is used in such sense as to warn us against it. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Such an apparent contradiction should at once compel careful investigation of the sense in which the world is a peril and an opposing force. Perhaps one suggestive illustration may be worth a great deal of argument at this point. I know men who denounce others for worldliness because these others play cards, and go to the theater, and dance. I am not now asking whether these things are worldly or not, but rather insisting that men who do none of these things may be as worldly as men who do them all. Worldliness does not necessarily consist in these things. I repeat, therefore, there is necessity for great care as we approach this subject.

I begin with the world in itself. Of course, you understand I am speaking strictly within the limits of the use made of that word in the New Testament. The word has become almost part of our everyday speech. The word "cosmos" originally meant simply order. It was then used to describe the whole of the universe because of its orderliness and its beauty. So that the world itself does not at all suggest evil. It does not hint at disorder but announces order. It has in it no suspicion of ugliness, but breathes the very spirit of beauty. That in itself is enough to make us pause and consider what is meant by the world, and how the world becomes an opposing force. When a child speaks of the world it thinks of the earth on which we live, and up to a certain point, quite accurately so thinks. May we not say that the word stands for the facts and forces of which man is conscious in his everyday-life. That is not a perfect definition, because there are multitudes of men and women who are conscious of facts and forces in everyday life which lie beyond the material. The world means the facts and forces of which material man is conscious, the facts and forces of which material man is a part, the facts and forces of which material man is or may be master. In childhood some of us were taught that the earth and the things therein were divided into three kingdoms, mineral, vegetable, animal.

These things have two qualities in common. They are all material, and temporal. Material, that is appreciable by the senses. Everything of form. Everything of sound. Everything of fragrance. Everything of colour. Everything of flavour. Everything of tangibility. The things that can be seen and heard, and smelled and tasted and handled. All that the senses can know is the world. I hope you have imagination, then the vastness of this breaks upon you, for it is, a great world.

These material things are also temporal, transient, passing; none of them abides, The form and the colour change and fade and pass. Sound, though it be the most discordant or the most harmonious, ends. The fragrance passes away. The flavour dies. Nothing on which man has ever laid his hand is lasting. All the rocks are crumbling. Temporal, transient, passing.

The world, then, is the sum total of things material and temporal. I feel the utter inadequacy of the statement in certain ways. One might stay to speak of trees and plants and birds and beasts and men and cities. I leave all that to your imagination. All this is of God. This very material world in the midst of which we live is so marvellous that we are driven to the conclusion that it is easier to believe it to be the work of God than to believe that it originated in any other way. I take up my Bible and go back to the story at its commencement of the origins, and amid all the poetry and marvel of that ancient story I read this, "God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good." That is true until that hour. If you think of the world in its most material sense, if you think of the world in the simplest sense, there is nothing inherently evil in it.

Then in what sense can it be said that the world is opposed to religion? Let me answer that inquiry by quotation of one passage written by Paul in his letter to the Romans, "They worshipped the creature rather than the Creator." That is worldliness. It is when a man does that that the world is an opposing force to religion. Let us think of that a little more closely. What is the rational process. Given an object - I do not care what object, sun or star, bird or animal, tree or man - given an object, say a tree for the sake of illustration, behind that tree is a thought. Nothing ever has been, so far as human observation has any right to declare, but that the deed, the act, the fact, was preceded by a conception, an intention, a thought. Begin with the simplest thing in the wide world. I take in my hand this glass - an object. Behind it is a thought. It was seen before it was made. It was intended before it was constructed. Or take the most splendid and matchless building that your eyes have ever seen - the whole thing was thought before it was erected. What is true there we believe to be true everywhere. Here is a tree, a flower, more wonderful than the most splendid cathedral that man ever raised, far more mysterious than the most magnificent piece of machinery that man ever constructed. We may call it argument from design. I know it is the fashion to declare that argument exploded. I say it has never been answered. The rational process, then, is this. Behind the object is a thought; behind the thought is a thinker, for you cannot have a thought without a thinker, a mental mood without a mind, a conception without a conceiver. The rational process in the presence of the world is to pass through the object, sun, star, river, animal, to the thought behind it, and through the thought to the thinker, and in the presence of the thinker to bow in worship and service.

What, then, is the irrational process? To take the object, sun or star, animal or tree, and worship it, and serve it. That is the meaning of Paul's argument concerning the Gentile world. Instead of worshiping the Creator they worshiped and served the creature. They stayed in the realm of the things seen, and did not pass through them to the actuality of the unseen things. That is worldliness.

Let me put it in another way. Worldliness consists in dealing with the material, without recognizing the spiritual of which the material is an expression, dealing with the things that are temporal without recognition of the things that are eternal, living in the midst of the transient without having commerce with the abiding. When a man begins the religious life he still feels the pull of the world, the temptation to deal with finite things, without placing upon them the measurement of the infinite, without weighing them in the balances of eternity.

Let me attempt to illustrate this in a yet more immediate and practical way, There may be worldliness in religion, in education, in commerce, in pleasure. I take these only as illustrative. The fact may doubtless be illustrated in many other ways.

There are two manifestations of worldliness in religion. One is ritualism, the other rationalism. A man may be a ritualist, and not be worldly. I want to grant that at once. It is high time we were beginning to learn the lesson of being perfectly fair to men from whom we most profoundly differ. A man may be a ritualist and not be worldly. I have known men who through form and ceremony and splendor of ritual have commerce with God. But when a man observes so many days, so many ceremonies, and the observance being over, he turns back again to all the things that are contrary to the will of God, that is worldliness in religion. Worldliness in religion is the idea that things that are of the world, beauty of form and colour, and the fine fragrance of incense, constitute religion.

Worldliness may manifest itself in religion as rationalism. By rationalism I mean contentment with present conditions. When religion deals simply with the present conditions of men and women it is worldly in the extreme. Sometimes this type of religion charges those of us who believe in God and heaven and hell with being other-worldly, by which it makes unconscious confession that it is worldly. It is of the dust. It begins and ends there. Anything that attempts to deal with men simply on the level of this world, the betterment of human conditions, pure humanitarianism, is worldliness in religion. Hear me again. If a man have commerce with God and the eternities, he cannot be indifferent to the condition of his brother men in the slum. Let there be no misunderstanding of my position. In proportion as a man really lives the spiritual life, and has dealings with God Himself, he is hot and angry in the presence of all human limitation; but when a man attempts in the name of religion to deal simply with these conditions, and forgets the infinite and eternal, his religion has become utterly worldly. Worldliness in religion begins and ends in things that are material and sensual and passing.

Then there may be, as there is, worldliness in education. Education which deals simply with knowledge of the material and temporal, and never puts on these things the measurement of the infinite and eternal, is worldly education.

There may be worldliness in commerce. Someone says, That goes without saying. I pray you, then, remember that there may be the spiritual in commerce also. What is worldliness in commerce? Commerce that is based on a passion for possession of goods to the neglect of God. Jesus Christ has given us an accurate picture of it. It is not a flattering picture; but you can hang it up in London today, and thousands of men, if they are honest, will see their own portrait. The rich fool, the man who says, My lands are increased, my wealth is increased, what shall I do? "And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my corn and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry." He fed his soul on goods! That is worldliness in commerce, and ultimately it means selfishness, greed, oppression.

There is worldliness in pleasure. That needs no argument. Pleasure in itself is not wrong. God made no half measures in His universe. When He made a fish and gave it fins it was that it might swim. When He made a bird and gave it wings it was that it might fly. When he gave me a laughing apparatus it was that I might laugh. I have not said a more religious thing than that tonight. God made man for pleasure. The ultimate intention of God for man is pleasure. When Jesus began that great Manifesto of His Kingdom which scorches and burns, He used the word "happy." I read in my Bible that "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes," but I never read that He will stop laughter, pleasure. Worldly pleasure is abuse of the senses by forgetfulness of the spiritual.

These are rapid and almost haphazard illustrations of what the world really means. Though you never go to the theatre, you may be a very worldly man. Though you sit regularly - I will speak of no other place than this - in Westminster Chapel, and sing the songs, and give to the collection, you may be an absolutely worldly man. What is a worldly man? I ask once more. A worldly man is one who lives as though this were the only world. He may think about another. He may tell you in conversation that he believes in another. He may recite the creed on Sabbath, beginning with the august and stately measure, "I believe in God the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth," but Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, in business, at home, in pleasure, he lives as though there were no God in the universe. That is worldliness, though he recite the creed regularly and sings all the songs of the sanctuary. It is not the singing of songs, or the recitation on the creed that disproves worldliness. Worldliness is life lived in the dust to the forgetfulness of Deity, life that has no sense of the infinite and eternal, that does not bring the measurements of eternity and lay them on every half-hour.

Now I see how the world is an opposing force to religion. When it so engrosses my thought and attention as to make me unmindful of spiritual things, when it so obtrudes itself on my attention as to capture all my thinking and make me forget God, then it opposes religion. We have to face the fact that it is a very real force in opposition. "I see the sights that dazzle" - how often we have sung it, and how awfully and appallingly true it is!

For a moment we must stay here to notice the connection between the world, the flesh and the devil, because only by so doing can we understand how it comes to pass that the world opposes religious life. It ought to be the most natural thing in all material things to discover the presence of the spiritual. It seems as though it was impossible for the Man of Nazareth to touch anything of the earth but that somehow it flamed with the glory of the heavens. Yet He was quite natural. We hardly like to use these words about Him, yet you will understand me. A more artless and unaffected man never lived than Jesus of Nazareth. He loved the flowers, the gorgeous lilies of His own land. He looked at their beauty, and what did He say? Your Father clothes them, and "even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Children, how He loved them! Yes, but what did He see when He saw a child? The angel beholding the face of God. So you may pass through all His life and you will find a Man with feet firmly planted on the earth, of the earth, belonging to it, and yet different from the earth, Master of it, King of it. Whenever He touched it He revealed by His touch its relationship to the boundless spaciousness of eternity, in which forevermore He was at home. He stood on the plains of Judaea, and talked to men, and He used their own language. Their eyes looked at him. Their hands handled Him. There He was, and yet He spoke of Himself as the Son "in the bosom of the Father." That is the utter, absolute opposite to worldliness.

Now I ask this question. How comes it that the world which ought everywhere to reveal the heights, the world which ought to suggest God, makes me forget Him? Man's attitude in the presence of the world is determined by his conception of himself. To live in the flesh is to be imprisoned by the material and temporal, never to see through the garments of God in the green sward to the God Who wears them, but to see only the grass. A self-centred and self-contained life seeks its satisfaction in, rather than through, the material world. What is a self-governed life? It is a devil-governed life. A worldly, self-centred life always results from the dethronement of God, and the dethronement of God is always the result of listening to a lie from without. When you track back the forces that oppose religion, you find the devil behind them all. This world, all the fair and beautiful handiwork of God through which I ought always to find Him, hinders the essential spirit within me. Why? Because an enemy has come between my soul and God, and persuaded me to dethrone Him and enthrone self, and has blinded me so that I have lost the true perspective, and proportion of things; and the sense that discovers God everywhere. These are the themes of future discussion. They are stated now only that the intimate connection between the opposing forces may be recognized.

Finally, is there victory over the world? I read my New Testament statement, "This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith." I go back to that passage, and I find that the object of the faith that overcomes the world is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The soul believing is begotten of God. The eye is opened, the ear is unstopped, the lost sense is restored. That is the final Christian evidence. You cannot make it known to any other man. It must be personal and immediate. No man need waste time trying to persuade me there is no God. I know. No argument you can adduce in proof of the existence of God will convince me. No argument you can adduce as against the existence of God will convince me. I know. As one man said in the presence of a material sign long ago, so say I in the presence of heaven and earth, on oath, "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see."

Mark the issues of faith. Life becomes God-governed. That is the devil's defeat. Self is found at last, realized within itself. Flesh is made subservient to spirit. Then "all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world." Mark that well. I have not lost the world. I have found it. I have found it in that I have discovered that the material and the spiritual are related, that on every blade of grass shines the grace of God, and in all the prismatic colours of the rainbow is revealed His beauty. I have not lost the world. I have found it. Only the temporal is now seen in its relation to the eternal, and change and decay are no longer destruction, but the perpetual process of that which abides. The man who has faith has not lost his world, but he is no longer worldly.

What, then, is the final word of injunction in the presence of these opposing forces? Again I quote from the New Testament and from Paul. "Use the world as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away." That is to say, use the world, but never imagine that it is all; and never use it save in its relation to that larger whole of the spiritual and eternal. Deal with the things of dust, but touch them with the force of Deity. Enter into all that the senses can reveal to you of the life in which you live, but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment, not to punishment but to judgment, the finding of a verdict, and the passing of a sentence, the creating of a destiny. All the things of the world are mine, but I am not to live in them as though they were the whole. I am to understand that they are things of dust and I am to treat them as such.

To go back again to that word of John, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Dr. Chalmers' great sermon on that text is entitled, "The expulsve power of a new affection." What is the new affection? The true affection, love of God. What does it do for a man? Puts out of his heart that love of the world which makes him forget God, and puts into his heart a new love of the world because he sees it to be the handiwork of his Father. I remember as though it were yesterday something that happened in my own life at least thirty-seven years ago. I was a boy, and there came to my father's house a young man who had been brought to Christ in some meetings my father had been conducting in the Welsh hills. This young man was out in our garden talking to me about all sorts of things. I remember how he interested me, and how I loved him. Suddenly he stooped and picked a leaf from a nasturtium plant. He held it in his hand and said to me, "Did you ever see anything so beautiful." As a boy I looked at it, saw all the veins and the exquisite beauty. Then he said this, and I never forgot it. "I never saw how beautiful that leaf was until six months ago, when I gave myself to Christ." How true I know that to be now in my own experience. The worldly man loses his world. The godly man finds it. Where are you going for your summer holiday? I strongly advise you to get right with God before you go, and if you will, you will have such a holiday as you have never had. When a man crossing the ocean sits on deck and refuses to look at the sea because it is worldly, he is the most worldly man on board ship. He is self-centred and even though he is spiritually proud, he is godless and worldly. The love of the Father, let that fill your heart, and then what? Then all the things He made are exquisite with beauty. You will listen to the music of the thunder at night, and thank God that you are a child of the Thunderer. You will look at all the wonders in creation, and rejoice more than ever that you are the heir of the God Who made them, and that consequently they belong to you. I have lost neither poetry nor art nor music because I am His, in answer to the call of His grace. I have found them because I no longer believe that they are all. When you look on a painting and tell me it will fade, I tell you not half so soon as the pictures He paints. He is so great an artist that He flings a picture on the sky, and as you look it is gone, but in ten minutes there is another. All the things of beauty in the world are mine because I am His and He is mine. When you lose your vision of God you lose your sense of the eternal, and live wholly in the things of His beautiful world. Then you have imprisoned your own soul. May God deliver us from all worldliness by bringing us into such unity with Himself that we shall look nowhere without seeing Him, touch nothing without feeling Him, be in the midst of no circumstances without being conscious of Him.