**VOLUME 5; CHAPTER 25 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**WHAT IS MAN by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*The Jehovah God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Jehovah God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*

*Genesis 2:15-17*

THIS PASSAGE OF SCRIPTURE INCLUDES TERMS WHICH demand the context if we are to understand them or gain the full value of the statements made. The terms "Jehovah God," "the man," "the garden," "every tree," all demand the context for interpretation.

I have selected this particular paragraph, because it presents before the mind a simple picture of primitive conditions; the picture of a virgin garden, and of a man, perfect in condition of body, mind, and spirit.

These first two chapters of Genesis deal with Divine activity. The first activity is that of primal creation. There is no description; no account of the method; and no portrayal of the final issue of that primal activity. In a brief and comprehensive declaration, the fact is broadly and inclusively stated, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." What that earth was, what its form and fashion, what its peculiar characteristics, who were its inhabitants; these are things not revealed. We have no story beyond that declaration of a primal creation. Then, with startling suddenness, the whole scene suggested to the imagination is over-clouded, and instead of a creation fresh and bright and beautiful, and full of splendour, we look upon the earth void and waste, desolate and dark.

Then that which is the particular story of this second chapter commences, the account of another Divine activity, the activity of God in the restoration of a lost order. We know nothing of what happened between the facts chronicled in the first verse, and those described in the second; but we have the story of reconstruction, of the renewal of a lost order. All the processes of this restoring activity of God culminated in man. Everything moved toward that consummation. Everything was in preparation for the advent of man. The coming of light, the redistribution of land and water, the restoration of the earth to its solar relationships, the creation of new forms of life, vegetable and animal; all these prepared for the coming of another; and all culminated in man.

In this paragraph which I have read, that man is seen in all the strength and beauty and simplicity of his manhood. He is seen in a garden, a garden not yet cultivated, but a garden potential, and presently, under the touch of his hand to be prolific. It is the simplest of all scenes; it is the most primitive of all pictures.

According to the teaching of these Scriptures, this man is the father of the race, the progenitor of that humanity which in the process of millenniums has multiplied and divided into the strange and bewildering complexities of races, temperaments, and accomplishments, in the midst of which we live today. We turn to the picture, that we may escape for a little from the bewilderment of the complex and find the illumination of the simple, in order that by the blessing of God we may presently return to the complexity and live therein the true life of simplicity, and make our contribution toward the working out of the Divine consummation for the human race. It is difficult to escape from the complexity of the life of today; how complex it is, yet in the complexity I see no reason for grief or complaint. Let me say at once, that we are not now dealing with the subject of sin. We are dealing with essential humanity, and in doing so, it is difficult to escape from the complexities of life, complexities which are the outworking of the marvelous potentialities of the simple as we see it in the garden; for every city is the result of a garden. London is a garden, or it is on a garden! It is a long time since we saw it, but right underneath this great city with its appalling multitudes there is old mother earth, and flowers once bloomed and blossomed, and the harvest was reaped. London is humanity's complexity. By the inspiration of the Spirit of God let us get behind these complexities; away from the multitudes to the individual; away from all the marvels of humanity in its toil, and suffering, endeavor, defeat, accomplishment, back to this simple picture and see man as he is there revealed to us.

There are four things for our consideration. They are recognized in the text and explained in the context. First, the being of man; secondly, his true circumstances, surroundings, environment; thirdly, his vocation in the economy of God; and finally, his limitation.

As to the being of man, the context teaches us three things. First, it reveals his origin; secondly, it declares his substance; and finally, it unveils his nature.

It first of all declares that this being is the creation of God. In the declaration it makes use of two different terms to describe the Creator. In the first picture one name alone is used; in the second two are employed in conjunction. In the first chapter the name used is God, or - and I am bound to use the Hebrew word because of its values - Elohim; the Hebrew word in the plural number, signifying not two or three, but intensity, a method adopted by Hebrew writers when some fact is to be expressed, and the singular form will not convey all the strength and glory of the thought. This name stands for might, essential, sufficient might.

The second chapter of Genesis gives an explanatory account, in order that we may more perfectly understand the nature of the man described as the culminating glory of the process of restoration. Now the same word, Elohim, is linked to and prefaced by that word which we have translated and which has become familiar to us as Jehovah; a word suggesting voluntary and sufficient resource at the disposal of man. We see then that man, according to Scripture, was created by the God of all-sufficient might; and by the God Who in the interests of that man He has created is Jehovah, the becoming One, the One Who voluntarily becomes everything that man needs, or ever can need, for all the processes of his being to consummation. Man is the definite, direct, immediate, voluntary, creation of that Being.

The second teaching concerns the substance of man. He is of the dust of the ground; but as dust he is not man; even as dust when formed and fashioned into some external shape or manifestation, he is not man; he becomes man only when enswathed, enwrapped, permeated by the breath of lives. Man then as to substance is a mingling of dust, and the essential spirit-life of God.

Finally then, emerging from that declaration concerning the substance of man, we have the revelation of the nature of man. Because he is of the dust and of the very essence of the Spirit of God, he is, in the whole creation, the only link between the material and the spiritual. He is not material alone, and not spiritual alone; no man is a man as a disembodied spirit; no man is a man as body minus spirit. Every man is at once of the dust, and of Deity; of the material, and of the spiritual.

The final fact as to the nature of man is that he is made in the image and likeness of God. That is not the same thing said twice over. By the words "image" and "likeness", two separate ideas are conveyed. "Image" suggests the fact that he is the one by whom God is represented. "Likeness" suggests the fact that he is in himself like God. There may be an image which is unlike. A man may set up as representative of himself a sign or symbol which may not be in the least like him. Only yesterday, moving along one of our streets, I saw upon a wagon a vast block of stone, and one sign upon it, the broad arrow. Whose image and superscription is that? The king's. The broad arrow is the image of the king, but not the likeness of the king. Man is placed in creation as the image of the King, the representative of the King to all creation beneath him. He stands in the midst of the earthly order as the representative of God to everything beneath him; to all beasts, and fowl, and fish; to all fruit, and flowers, and trees. But man is not merely a broad arrow, something unlike God, nevertheless representing Him; he is in the likeness of God, modeled upon the pattern of the infinite mystery of the personality of God. Personality is not perfect in man; but perfect in God. Personality is perfect in the infinite God, but man is in the likeness, though he is finite. In the great essentials of human nature, intellectual, emotional, volitional, man is not only in the image of God, he is in the likeness of God; only it is necessary to remember that I am speaking of man as I see him in this garden, and not of man as I meet him in London. The image has never been entirely defaced, but the likeness has been almost entirely lost.

Now let us consider the simple suggestion of this passage concerning man's surroundings, his circumstances, his environment. We see him in a garden with - what for lack of a better term I will describe as a double environment. As he is dual in his nature, material and spiritual, so also his environment is dual, material and spiritual. His material environment was that of the garden. We have all sorts of foolish notions about the garden of Eden, notions unwarranted by the actual facts of the story in Genesis. I have seen pictures of it, and they were mostly pictures of Italian gardens. Genesis gives the picture of a garden uncultivated, in which God had planted trees; none of which had yet appeared, because there was no man; but they were there, in the soil, scattered there by God - and I hope that term does not suggest anything capricious, "I report, as a man may of God's work - all's love, yet all's law! "

The garden was potential. There was potentiality resident within the garden, not merely of tree and flower and fruit, but of the city which has never yet been built; for not only is it true that London today stands upon a garden; it is equally true that everything in London has come out of a garden; all the stones, all the woodwork, all materials have come from a garden. The garden was imperfect; the flowers not yet blossoming, the final issues waiting for the touch of power, waiting for the guidance of the hand of the man God made. Into that, man was placed. Materially, that was his environment.

But that was not the closest fact of his environment. There was a spiritual environment. This man was living in the midst of the very spirit life of God. That spirit life which being inbreathed had made him a living soul was that in which he lived and moved and had his being. Man lived in the deepest fact of his nature in immediate touch, and connection with God. Man as I see him here in the earliest picture of the Divine library was not only in immediate contact with God, he was in conscious contact with God. There was speech between this man and his God. There was, to use our great evangelical word, communion between this man and his God. The agonized cry that perpetually breaks from the lips of sinning and fallen humanity, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him" is the natural, and necessary outcome of the very nature of man himself. Here in this garden was a man conscious that the nearest fact of his environment, from which he never could escape, and from which he did not in these early days desire to escape, was not that of the garden which in some senses was outside him, but that of the God of the garden in Whom he lived and moved and had his being, and with Whom he had communion.

Let us take the next step, and notice what this picture teaches us concerning primitive man, original man, as to his vocation. There are two little phrases, how easily we read them, how glibly we pass them over, how little we understand them. His vocation was to dress and to keep the garden. The whole vocation of man in this temporary and probationary life in the economy of God stands startlingly revealed in that sentence. What is this word, to dress? Quite simply the Hebrew word is one which in a score of instances is translated to work. If you feel after the heart of the word for its true significance and original intention, when the verb is transitive or causative, it means to enslave. We must not abuse that word by thinking of slavery as something cruel; man was put into the garden to capture it, to discover its secrets, to lead them out to fulfilment, to lay his hand upon its potentialities and guide them into generous realization. To dress it, to work it, to capture it, to realize it. Ponder that conception long enough, and you will see that the ultimate completion of it will be the city of God. As I have already said, there is more in the garden than flowers and weeds, all the potentialities of material life lie slumbering in any garden covered with green grass. Charles Kingsley manifested a fine instinct when in effect he wrote to his friend, "Don't be anxious to entertain me. Put me down under any hedgerow and in two square yards of mother earth I can find mystery enough to keep me occupied for all the time I stay with you." In the garden were all the potentialities. The vocation of man was to discover what God had hidden there, and in co-operation with God to lead it toward its ultimate blossoming and fruitage; and to its final, glorious perfection.

Not only was he to dress it; he was to keep it. I confess that to me is a startling word. What does it mean? Literally to hedge it about, figuratively to guard it. In that little word there is the suggestion of the fact that whereas this is the picture of a restored order, and whereas man is seen in all the primitive strength and simplicity of his new-made man-hood, he is in a universe in which there are forces that threaten. He is not merely to capture the garden, he is to guard it; and his very vocation, as here revealed, is suggestive of the fact that somewhere, not clearly defined, there are forces that threaten his garden; that there is possibility of blighting, possibility of these forces spoiling the best fruit. He is therefore to capture and develop the garden; and to guard it against attack.

Once again, what does this simple picture of man in a garden say to us concerning his limitation? You will notice that the symbols here are trees. What else would you have in a garden? If I am asked if these trees were real trees, I ask, "Was the man a real man, and was the garden a real garden?" The symbols of this man's limitation were in the realm of the sustenance of the physical; for the physical is always in the economy of God the symbol of the spiritual. The outward signs and tokens of limitation were in the realm of the material, but they were the signs and symbols of limitation in the spiritual. I pray you mark the first fact, it is not that of narrowness, but of breadth; not that of restriction, but of infinite possibility; the first fact is not that of bondage, but of liberty. The word limitation does not necessarily connote narrowness; it simply indicates a bound and a boundary. Where is the boundary? Of every tree he might freely eat, of all the trees, including the tree of life. Surely you say, that is a figure of speech. By no means. You have here the picture of primitive conditions, and there was one tree the fruit of which was peculiarly good for the maintenance of life, that is for its sustenance. Of all these trees he was allowed to eat, and he had to cultivate them and keep them and find his sustenance therein. The material fact was the symbol of the spiritual fact. This man in material surroundings was a spiritual being, and the nearest fact in his surrounding was spiritual, and so the spaciousness of spiritual possibility was revealed; of all the great spiritual sources of strength this man might partake. It is a picture of wide and glorious liberty.

Then we come to the word "but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it." What was this tree? I do not know. It might be quite helpful to us if we cease talking about an apple tree; there is no warrant for it in Scripture. The fact as declared is that there was one tree which was made the symbol of man's limitation in the economy of God. One tree was marked off, looking upon which, man must remember that his moral life could only be led to perfection, and his spiritual life to glory, as he lived in relationship to God. In the activities of his finite life in that garden, that tree was the sacramental symbol, for which he must care, and which he must tend and guard, but of which he must not eat.

Such was his limitation. First the spaciousness "Of every tree"; then the boundary which indicated that he was not supreme but a subject; just one tree that reminded him of his relation to God.

Let it be remembered that this is a picture of primitive man, potential, imperfect, but sinless; elemental man. The only adumbration or shadow of sin or evil that I find in all the story is in the revelation of vocation in which he is told to guard the garden, and in the indication of his limitation, the one tree of which he must not eat. This man is sinless in his nature, perfect in his being; not perfected, not completed, because his work is waiting for him, and the essential glory of man is not that of his being, but that of his vocation. Until he had fulfilled his vocation, until by dressing the garden and guarding it, he had produced results, until he had become a worker with God, producing results after which God was seeking, he was not perfected. No man is perfect because he is a perfect being. It is only by fulfilment of function that man can be absolutely perfected.

These then are the simple facts of every human life. I say simple facts; these are not, in some senses, the facts of your life and mine; but these are the facts of our life, fundamentally.

In its being, human life is of God and like God. That is the profoundest truth concerning every human being.

In its environment, human life is placed among the things of God; this world is God's world, the seas are His, the hills are His, the birds are His, the flowers are His; all the mysteries and forces which men today are discovering and harnessing for the accomplishment of their purposes in the world, are God's forces. The environment of every human life is that it exists among the things of God.

As to vocation, every man is made to be a fellow-worker with God. By co-operation with God, man perfects Creation.

As to limitation, according to this picture, human life is absolutely free within the government of God.

All this is strange to us today and one of the reasons men are so anxious to get rid of these chapters of Genesis is that they do not suit the facts of human life as these men know it. This is not a picture of human life as we know it. This is not even a picture of human life as we have found it in our own experience. Superadded to these things are other things with which we shall have to deal presently; swelling rivers of poison that desolate the life, great forces and fires that burn the life; great foes of evil that are against the life. We have not reached that point in this evening's meditation. We are simply considering what the Bible says about our nature in the economy of God.

Men do not start today where this man started. This man was innocent knowing neither good nor evil. Today innocence is only true of infancy, and ah me, how soon it is gone! How soon? I do not know; but ah me, how soon! Neither is the man in Christ standing where this man stood in the garden. The man in Christ is not innocent. The man in Christ knows good and evil; but blessed be God, he is made able to choose the good and to refuse the evil.

We have been turning back to elemental things. I have been trying to bring this life of mine, so full of mystery, to the measurement of this picture; and in spite of all the changed conditions, in spite of all the forces of evil, the presence of which we shall attempt to understand in the progress of our studies, in spite of all, I find that my own life beats true to this revelation. The very mystery of my being makes me believe I am after all of God. Dust is not the final word concerning me. Yes, I believe I am in God's garden even yet. I wander a little away from the place where man has bunglingly attempted to realize the city, and has always realized sorrow, and I know it is God's garden. Yes, I am among the things of God. Somehow I am coming to be quite sure that I am intended for co-operation with Him, for my life rises to highest heights, and feels the largest ecstasy, and becomes conscious of the greatest things, in those moments when I know I am doing something with God. I am not speaking only of Christian service - that ultimately, that is the crowning glory - but of the smallest things. When you are really in your garden, doing the thing in the garden that presently will smile back at you in all the colors and beauties that come out of God's earth, those are the days and moments when you live. Ultimately, when we are dealing with the spirit of man or woman, helping to lead such into realization of relationship to God, these are the moments, of all moments, the greatest. There is nothing like it. I believe I am intended to co-operate with God. Then as to limitation, how spacious it is. Would you have the story in the terms of the New Testament? "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." That is the spaciousness of life. Yet, how definite it is; not a tree always, but that which is of your position, of your calling. For a man in a garden, it is a tree. You know what it is for you; your ledger, something else! As you turn your way back to tomorrow, to the office, or shop, or store, you know it, there it is; not some mystic heavenly vision, but simple and natural, close at hand, something reminding you of your relationship to God. These elemental things are still with us; we are of the first man, and of the God of the first man; sons of Adam, "the son of God."