

~Other Speakers M-R: Thomas Reade:

## 26. ON HYPOCRISY, AND DEADNESS TO THE WORLD

"In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness." Matthew 23:28

"You are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." Col. 3:3.

The Bible addresses the hypocrite, and the sincere worshiper of God, in words which cannot be misunderstood. Each is painted in his true colors, by that hand which cannot err. He who looks at the heart cannot be deceived by outward appearances. He sees through the veil which conceals the motive from our view. Man may deceive his fellow man, and often does. That charity which hopes all things forbids mistrust, until facts expose a character which even charity can no longer screen. How often is religion wounded in the house of her friends. The falls of the sincere, as well as the scandals of hypocrites, give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, and bring a reproach upon that Gospel, whose command is, "Abstain from all appearance of evil.."

There is scarcely a grace in the true believer, which does not find its counterfeit in the hypocrite. A hypocrite is nothing but 'a pretense' of something excellent. He plays a part, and impersonates a character, which is not his own. Were there no excellencies in religion, or were those excellencies not held in estimation, there would be no hypocrites. Hence we find, in seasons of fiery persecution, but few, if any, who will be hardy enough to risk their worldly interest, ease, or reputation, to obtain a name which is branded with obloquy, and followed by death. But when religion obtains credence in the world, when the profession of it raises a person in the general esteem, and when it opens the door to some valuable place, or preferment, then these hypocrites abound, like summer flies, fluttering in the beams of the mid-day sun.

We may use an old adage, "All is not gold that glitters." There is a living faith, and a dead faith; a blessed hope, and a false hope; a fervent love, and a mere verbal affection; "with their mouth they show much love;" a filial fear, and a slavish fear; a spiritual joy, and carnal excitement; a peace which passes understanding, and a delusive peace; a godly sorrow, and a worldly sorrow, which works death; a genuine humility, and an hypocritical humiliation. We read also of a desire to be something when we are nothing; and of a vain endeavor to appear esteemed in the eyes of men; and yet, to stand, on acceptable terms with the Great Searcher of hearts.

Alas! that we should take such pains to impose upon ourselves, and deceive others. Wretched, indeed, is our state, when insincerity and deception are hourly needed to prevent exposure and disgrace. Truly pitiable is that man, who, conscious of his falls, and dreading to have them known, is alive to every 'whisper'. Oh! how invaluable is simplicity and godly sincerity; a heart full of the love of Christ, and a life on which slander cannot justly breathe! Such a one is conscious of much evil over which to lament. He mourns in secret, with Daniel, over his transgressions; with Paul, over the sin which wars in his members; with Isaiah, he cries out, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips;" and with Peter, I am a sinful man, O Lord." But before men his walk is blameless. He shines as a light in the world. He dares to be singular, though made a by-word and a proverb of reproach.

Lord, have mercy upon me, a poor, fallen, miserable sinner! Oh! allow me not to lie on the couch of carnal security, or to be bound by the chains of that false hope and false peace, which Satan throws around the souls of countless millions. Without your almighty power I must perish; for nothing, O blessed Jesus, but your grace can rescue my soul from death and hell. When I look into my heart, I may well turn from the sight. What swarms of evils do I discover, unknown and unseen by the world. I do indeed loathe and abhor myself. O give me grace to repent before you in dust and ashes. I sigh for deliverance. I long for your presence. I want the enjoyment of your favor. It appears like winter in my soul. Darkness covers me. I know, and precious is the knowledge, that You, O blessed Jesus, are the Savior and Friend of sinners. Be pleased to say, "I am your salvation," and the joyful tidings conveyed by the Holy Spirit to my soul, will cause light, and life, and joy, and gladness, to abound within me. Methinks I hear the distant sound of mercy sweetly advancing towards me; oh! let me believe, and not despair. Let me trust, and not be afraid. Let me lie at the foot of your Cross, and there behold your bleeding wounds, until every wound in my soul be healed, and all be holiness and peace within.

As the hypocrite lives for the world, so does the true believer live unto God. The one is ever seeking the praise of men; the other, the approbation of God his Savior. The hypocrite's hope perishes with the earth; the hope of

the believer will be realized when sublunary things shall have passed away. O! that I could feel my heart dead to all things here below, and alive only unto God.

This desire to die unto all things here below, may appear to many, to be inconsistent with our natural state, as inhabitants of earth, where various objects require our close attention, and call forth continual application; where relative duties demand our anxious care; and public duties our active labors. Yet still the desire is a Christian desire. "You are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

Without this spiritual deadness to the world, I shall never be able rightly to fulfill the duties which God requires of me. A heart, glued to the world, a heart enchained by its pleasures, profits, and cares; a heart, in which the world sits enthroned, can never be a heart acceptable unto God. Such a heart can never serve both God and Mammon. Two masters so opposite in their commands, can never, by the same servant, be wholly and universally obeyed. A man might as readily hope to reach the North Pole, while steering towards the south, as to think of attaining to the favor of God, while seeking, with all his powers, the favor of the world.

The first and great commandment is, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart." But how can I even aim at this high command, if created objects have the upper, or equal place in my affections? To be dead to the world, is to be weaned from it; to live above it, and not to be captivated by it. This deadness to the world may exist with the greatest vitality, as regards the fulfillment of relative duties. I may be all alive and active in the performance of duties which are more immediately connected with the world, and yet, at the same time, as respects my heart and affections, be dead to it. Oh! this is a great attainment- to be in the world, and yet not of the world. Without this, I cannot be a Christian. Jesus said to his disciples, "If you were of the world, the world would love his own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

And in his intercessory prayer, "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word." "I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours." "I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it."

To be, then, a worldly Christian, is a contradiction in terms. Nothing can be more evident than this; that every true disciple of Christ, like his Lord and Master, is not of the world. He is different in spirit and in practice. As Jesus went about doing good, so do his faithful servants. Avoiding the superstitious abstractions of monkish indolence, and the distracting pursuits of nominal Christians, the true believer, with his heart in heaven, labors with prayerful zeal to glorify, in every station, his God and Savior.

If it be asked- How can this be done? The reply is ready. Through the grace and power of Christ, sought for by diligent prayer. Oh! how encouraging is the Savior's command; "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find." "All things whatever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." Faith, working by love; faith, overcoming the world; will set all inferior objects in their due place and order. A heart, in which Christ reigns, knows well how to estimate the vanities of time, and the glories of eternity; as the artist can appreciate the exquisite touches of the master, while he passes by the rude attempts of the mere learner.

The second great commandment is; "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." This command calls forth, at once, all the energies of the mind, and all the best feelings of the heart. This beautiful order of the commandments is most important. When I can love God supremely, then I place the world and all things in it at the foot of his throne, and look unto, and worship, and place all my dependence upon, and seek all my happiness from, God and God alone. This is to honor him, in some humble measure, from whom I have received my being, and on whose will I every moment depend.

When I can love my neighbor as myself, with a pure heart fervently, then selfishness is destroyed, that weed of fallen nature, which so rankly covers the soil of the natural heart, and chokes the good seed which may be sown upon it. Alas! when I examine my affections, and all the secret springs which move and guide my outward actions, what cause have I to be humbled and confounded before my Almighty Creator! What spiritual idolatries, what backslidings in heart, what worldly motives, what wandering affections, what selfish principles, what evils of every name, too often rise and rebel in the heart of the true believer! He groans, being burdened. He cries out- "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Lord! purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Sprinkle my conscience with the atoning blood of Jesus. Elevate my motives, spiritualize my affections, and wean me from

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**the world. You can supply my every want out of your fullness. Blessed Lord, I want to love you supremely, and my neighbor as myself. I want to be made conformable to your Will, to be renewed after your Image. O, perform this great, this gracious, work upon my soul. Deliver me from all iniquity. Purify my heart by faith, and fill me with holy, heavenly love, to the praise of your own everlasting grace, through Jesus Christ my Savior.**