**SERIES 04 (PREACHED IN 1907) - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**01. THE CHARACTER OF HOLINESS by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

THE GOSPEL of Luke is the Gospel of the Son of Man and of the universal Saviour. Here the true ideal of Israel is recognized; the Messiah is seen as of the stock of Abraham and yet as the Saviour of all men. The song of Mary, the prophecy of Zacharias, the chanting of the angels and the speech of Simeon alike recognized Him as Messiah and as Saviour. In the prophecy of Zacharias (Luke 1:68-80) it is declared that Jehovah, the God of Israel, has visited His people and has raised up a horn of salvation in the house of David in order that light might shine upon them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. Let us look carefully at these phrases.

The prophecy, which is a song, begins, "Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel: He hath visited and wrought redemption, and raised up the horn of salvation." This prophecy marks three great facts in the advent of Christ. He hath visited - incarnation; He hath wrought redemption - atonement; He hath raised up the horn of salvation - the ascension and Pentecost. What was this for? "To show mercy towards our fathers," not to our children, not to us, but to our fathers who died in faith - "and to remember His holy covenant; the oath which He swore unto Abraham." The mission of Christ is said to be that we might be "delivered out of the hand of our enemies," and the purpose of the deliverance is that we should "serve Him without fear in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days."

With that as a background let us examine the thought that lies within the compass of those words, "holiness and righteousness before Him." The word here translated "holiness" occurs only twice in the New Testament. Ephesians 6:24, "And put on the new man, which after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth. " It is worth noticing that both times it is linked with "righteousness."

Holiness signifies an intrinsic value in character. Righteousness signifies the equitable dealing of a person with other persons. Holiness is right, but it is the rightness of character. The word translated "righteousness" occurs about ninety-two times in the New Testament; it is right, too; but is the rightness of action that results from right character. Jesus Christ came to set men free from their enemies that they might serve God in holiness of character and righteousness of conduct. These two things can never be separated.

There have been mistakes made in putting emphasis on each of these in forgetfulness of the other. But Jesus Christ came that we might have both. If we speak of holiness as a blessing, or a state, and there be no corresponding righteousness of conduct, we are speaking of something that we have not experienced. In these days we have come to that point where behind our service, behind the ethics of the kingdom of Christ, scores of hearts have come face to face with the great necessity for holiness of character. I prefer to take the consideration.

**A. WHAT HOLINESS IS.**

Holiness is the rightness or the rectitude of character which lies behind and is the cause of righteousness or rightness. Holiness is what a man is; righteousness is what he does. These two can never be separated. Holiness and righteousness presuppose a standard. That standard is the character and activity of God. Holiness is not an idea by which we measure God; it is an idea derived from the revealed facts of God. I quite believe that there are gleams of lights in religious systems outside of Christianity, but they are not to be compared with the perfect light of Christianity. If it were possible to blot out all knowledge and revelation of the character and activity of God we could have no standard of holiness or of righteousness. God Himself is the standard of holiness and the standard of righteousness. The holiness of a man is that man's approximation to the character of God, and the righteousness of a man is that man's partnership with the activities of God, and no man ever has living, powerful partnership with the activity of God unless he shares and approximates to the character of God. God's purpose for man is that he should be like Him in character, and that he should work in partnership with Him.

What is this holiness that Jesus came to make possible? Kant has said that conscious personality consists in intelligence, emotion, will. For the sake of argument I accept that formula. Conscious personality is the power that thinks and appreciates and knows, the emotional nature that is capable of love, and the power to choose. Holiness, then, is the right relation to God of these facts which constitute personality: the enlightened intelligence, which appreciates the things of God; the enkindled emotion, which admires the things of God; the energized will, which chooses the things of God. Righteousness will spring out of these things.

What are the things of God? Spiritual things, eternal things. The very essence of worldliness and of the sinning and self-centered life is that a man has no appreciation of the spiritual. The essence of unholy living, as Peter has put it by inference, is near-sightedness. "For he that lacketh these things is blind," near-sighted "seeing only what is near." Spiritual things are smiled at, laughed out of court; eternity is banished from the mind, held to be incomprehensible, and man settles down within the material and the temporal because he has no appreciation of the essential facts of God. Now holiness is the enlightenment of the intelligence of man, by which he appreciates the things of God. He sees the things unseen, hears the voices that are never heard, and he endures as seeing the invisible.

Holiness is, moreover, the enkindled emotion which loves the things of God - the rectitude of God; the very fiery law which declines to make compromise with sin, delights not in the mercy that forgives but in the law that insists right. In proportion as I know what this holiness is, in that proportion only my love is going out toward the law, the rightness, the judgment, the precision of God.

Then, holiness also is the energized will that chooses the things of God, the pathway that God marks. A man who has this holiness is a man whose intelligence, emotion and will are all brought into right relationship with God. Essential holiness is God's holiness; my holiness is always relative holiness.

Fallen man is ruined at all these points. His intelligence is clouded so that he sees the things that are near, he lives in the material. He does not see God; he cannot understand God; he has lost his vision of God. Therefore, the emotion is prostituted. He loves the crooked thing; he finds satisfaction in the principle that is absolutely antagonistic to God, the principle of hatred and revenge. The purpose of God is therefore obnoxious to him and the pathway of God is objectionable to him. Jesus Christ came that "being delivered out of the hands of our enemies we might serve God in holiness," that is, in that condition of life in which the intelligence is enlightened, the emotion is enkindled, and the will is energized in right relation with God. That is what holiness is.

How is this work wrought? The great dispensational movements of God have their corresponding individual application. Notice again the song of Zacharias: The work that Jesus came to do was that of visiting His people, working redemption for them, buying them back from the slavery of sin and the lifting of a horn of salvation whereby they might be delivered from the whole consequences of sin. That deliverance must include the illumination of the intelligence, the enkindling of the emotions toward God, and the energizing of the weak, paralyzed will so that it shall move in harmony with the Divine Will. Who shall deny that Jesus finished the work that He came to do, and that in the redemption He wrought there is everything that man needs in order that he may have that holiness which is approximation in the character of man to the character of God?

If the vision of God is clouded, a man and the love of God is feeble, and if the will is not in harmony with the will of God, then Christ is being defeated in His purpose in that man and he cannot serve God as he ought. Let the light of this break upon our lives. The reason why there is such an absence of righteousness in the dealing of Christian people, one with the other and with the world, is that holiness of character is lacking.

**B. WHAT HOLINESS IS NOT.**

**1.** The holiness of character which is possible to the child of God here and now is not freedom from all sin. It is time that many of us faced anew the whole question of what sin is. Both in Old and New Testament the words that are most often employed in regard to sin indicate a missing the mark, a short-coming, a failure. Into the thought of these words the question of willful action does not enter. There is a sin of ignorance. God chargeth the very angels with folly. No persons that know anything of what the life of God is and of their own true condition can say that they have reached the position of sinless perfection. There is the sin of limitation, the sin of failure, the sin of unprofitableness, the sin which is the result of limitations of life that at present cannot be overcome. Holiness is not the sinlessness of unfallen Adam, not the sinlessness of unfallen and unconquered Jesus, not the sinlessness of the glorified saint; this sinlessness is not possible to us here and now; but holiness is freedom from the dominion of sin and freedom from the necessity for willful sinning. We cannot believe that after what Jesus has done, after the provision made for us, there is any real necessity why we should at any point willfully disobey. The saint of Christ is not a saint in the sense of being perfected, but in the sense of being sanctified and triumphant in Christ Jesus.

**2.** Holiness does not mean that there will be no more mistakes in judgment - there is no infallibility of pope or anyone else in this world - but holiness does mean that I need no longer trust to my private judgment, that I may take the minutest matter of my daily life and seek for the definite, immediate, personal illumination of the Spirit.

**3.** Not freedom from temptation, nay, verily. but a new consciousness of the potency of the of temptation. The nearer we live to the Lord, and the more our character approximates to that of His holiness, the more subtle will be the onslaught of the foe, and the more keen shall be the appreciation of what temptation is. Not freedom from it, but freedom from the paralysis that accompanies it. Within the provision and the purpose of our blessed Redeemer, there is power instead of paralysis. Temptation, yes; necessarily defeat, never! Always victorious in the will and of our blessed Lord.

**4.** Holiness does not mean freedom from bodily infirmities. That has not been promised; that has never been realized. People ask. "Do you believe in faith healing and my reply always is, No. I believe in divine healing, which is a very different thing. I do not think there is any healing which is not divine, and I recognize as the gift of God all the marvelous medical and surgical skill of this age, and I would not for a single moment so narrow down the kingdom over which my Lord reigns as to exclude these wonderful discoveries and this marvelous service to humanity that the medical and surgical faculty are now rendering. I believe that God can, if need be, give me healing without a doctor. But, if we are to be perfect physically, then not only must I be maintained in health, but I must have perfect physical proportions. A man standing about four feet two inches, came and told me that every Christian ought to have perfect bodily conditions, and I said, "Then you need to grow up, and I need to grow out." This is not a small question, and I do not believe it is God's purpose today that we should have perfect physical conditions. To the end we shall dwell in what Paul speaks of as the "body of humiliation." Presently, blessed be God, we leave that behind us, and we will be conformed to the body of His glory. Holiness does not mean that we shall be free from bodily infirmity, but it does mean that we shall not suffer from the ailments which are directly traceable to our disobedience of the laws of God. There is a great deal of living under a cloud spiritually which is the result of eating things one has no business to eat. If a man is living a life of holiness, he will be as particular about his diet as about anything else, and then he will be free from numberless little ailments that are a disgrace to the children of God.

**5.** Holiness is not freedom from conflict. No; conflict begins. It is the holy of God that the devil is always trying to upset. After the magnificent argument of the first three chapters of Ephesians and the searching application of the heavenly life to the earthly walk in the last three chapters, the apostle says, "Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." Then he tells us about our conflict, for he says: "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." If you are realizing what Christ came to make you realize, holy character, you will never want to argue with a man again about the existence of the devil; you know him as you have never known him before. Conflicts, certainly; defeat, never necessary! That passage in Ephesians has the tramp of battle in it and never a note of defeat from beginning to end. "Take the whole armor of God" - and again, "Take up the whole armor of God." Take the armor, take it up; the one is preparation, the other is use. Do not imagine you are on parade; you are going to fight. How will the fight issue? "That ye may able to withstand in the evil day and having done all, ye may stand." The fight is beginning; what am I to do? "Stand," panoplied in the armor of God. The fight thickens; what am I to do? "Withstand." The fight is ceasing; what is my Standing, not beaten down, but victorious. The Apostle Paul did not come to the end saying, "Well, I have done my best; but it has been a great failure." No; he said, "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of victory." That is the way I want to finish, by God's grace; but we will not finish that way unless we live that way.

**6.** Freedom from liability to fall, certainly not. Perfect man fell at the beginning; the angels have fallen. But freedom from the necessity of falling. "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from stumbling" (Jude 24). He is not only able to keep us from falling down, but from stumbling. There is a liability, but no necessity.

**7.** Lastly, holiness does not mean that we have now come to that in life in which there can be no more advance; that we have reached the very height of Christian experience. Holiness is the health of babyhood, and the health of childhood, and the health of strong young manhood, and the health of old age. It is health, not finality; condition, not consummation. Holiness is the right relation of man to God.

The Lord hath visited and hath wrought redemption for His people and hath lifted up the horn of salvation; what for? That we being delivered from our enemies should serve Him in holiness. Are we serving Him in holiness? If not, we are not realizing the full salvation that He wrought through redemption, wrought when He visited His people. Is our conduct the conduct of righteousness, of perfect straightness in our dealings with each other and with our God? If not, it is because holiness is lacking.