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

**02. THE CONDITIONS OF HOLINESS by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

HOLINESS OF CHARACTER has no attraction for the unregenerate man, but no one born of God denies the beauty of holiness, or the desirability of attaining to it. We all acknowledge that it would be indeed a glorious thing to have the intellect and emotions and will in right relation with God. We know that it would be a blessed thing to be perfect in faith, in hope, in love. But are there not very many of us who question the possibility of our realization of this holiness? We cannot believe that it ever can be a present personal experience. But we surely believe that we shall realize it in heaven. Now consider what those two admissions mean. We are prepared to say that holiness is delightful and desirable, and that holiness will be the actual experience of the child of God in the Father's house; then if it is not possible here, death must accomplish for us a change in character that the living Saviour cannot. You surely do not believe that the process of separation between the spirit and the body can work in the character of the saint any change that is impossible to the saint now by the power of Christ. But if we are to decide this question the only court of appeal is the New Testament. We cannot depend on any system of theology, because they often do not square with the New Testament. Neither is the question to be decided by the experience of the church or of individual members. If you could prove, which, blessed be God, you cannot, that in the whole history of the Church there never had been a single person who had entered into the personal experience of holiness as taught in the New Testament, I should still believe what the New Testament teaches.

What then does the New Testament teach? I hold that the New Testament declares holiness of character to be possible to the believer and gives seven very definite proofs of that possibility.

**1.** Because it announces that such a character is God's will for His people.

**2.** Because it was for the creation of that character that Jesus did His work.

**3.** Because it is for the actual creation of that character that the Holy Spirit is the administrator of the things of Christ.

**4.** Because the devil is defeated.

**5.** Because by the work of the Spirit it is actually imparted to the believer.

**6.** Because the whole territory of the believer's life is possessed by the indwelling Spirit of God.

**7.** Because of the limitless resources at the disposal of the believer.

The first three reasons have to do with the Godhead; the central one has to do with the devil, and the last three have to do with the actual experience of the believer. These things lap and overlap and lace and interlace, but the New Testament is full of the subject, and its teaching on all these is perfectly clear.

**1.** Turn to Romans 8:29, "Whom He foreknew He also foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." That is the first proposition the New Testament declares holiness of character to be possible because that is the will of God for His people, and whatever is God's will is possible because He links with the will the power to do. He never wills anything for me that is impossible. What is His will? He has foreordained that I should be conformed to the image of His Son. Notice that the word that furthest back in the magnificent argument is the word "foreknew," not "predestinated." Predestination is the result of the foreknowledge, and the predestination is not to salvation but to character. God, foreknowing that you would be saved, foreordained you to be like His Son. I am not dealing with the question of election, but I say without hesitation that all the election of God is to service, never to salvation. God has foreordained us to be conformed to the image of His Son. It is possible then, for God wills it. Now notice Hebrews 1:2, "God has spoken unto us in these last days by His Son, who is the effulgence of His glory, the very image of His person." The Son is the image of the Father, and the Father wills that you should be the image of the Son. Holiness is the coming of the character of man into right relationship with God, and is God's declared will for His children.

**2.** Now that being the will of God, I say, in the second place, that holiness of character is proved to be possible because that was the purpose of the work of Jesus Christ. Among all the wonderful verses that teach this truth, look at Matthew 1:21, "She shall bring forth a son. Thou shall call His name Jesus" - why? - "because He shall save His people from" hell? Nothing of the sort. From the punishment of sin? No. Because He shall save His people from sin? Nothing of the kind. "He shall save His people from THEIR SINS." You will do no violence to the spirit of the text if you read it, "He shall save His people from sinning."

Now in that great passage in Philippians about Christ's emptying of Himself when those marvelous steps of humiliation have been traced down to the lowest, in that simple, sublime, tragic, awful sentence, "even the death of the cross," how does it go on? "Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name" - what name? "the name of Jesus" - Saviour. It was a prophetic name until at last the work was done, and then God gave Him that name as a possession and an accomplished fact as He went back into heaven. Jesus came to do and has done the work by which His people shall be saved from their sins, and for any man to go on sinning after that, and say there is no help for it, is to say that Christ failed to accomplish the work He came to do, and that God was mistaken when, exalting Him, He gave Him as a forever the name of "Jesus." It is awful blasphemy to say that holiness is impossible.

**3.** For the third turn to Romans 8:2. There is no condemnation - why not? "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and death." We have two laws here, the law of the Spirit of life, and the law of sin and death. Law, as it is used in this verse, is a governing principle. Two laws: the law of sin and death is contrary to holiness, but the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus cancels, makes inoperative the law of sin and death, and therefore there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. There is condemnation for the believer who is living an unholy life, but there is none for those of holy character. The work of the Spirit in the realm of character is the force of the law of sin and death. George Macgregor endeavored to show how the law of the Spirit operates against and cancels the law of sin and death, by taking his Bible in his hand. There were two laws now The law of gravitation was pulling it down, but the Bible did not fall because that law was counteracted, canceled, by the law that held it up. Let this law cease to operate, down the Book. Live in the Spirit and the law of sin and death ceases to affect you, but step outside that realm and you will find that the old law will drag you down to the old level. There must be the abiding in Christ, in the Spirit; if you live in this realm, that is holiness of character and will issue in rightness of conduct.

**THE DEVIL DEFEATED.**

**4.** Again, the New Testament declares holiness of character to be possible because the devil is defeated. Turn to Colossians 2:15, "Having put off from Himself the principalities and the powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it" - that is, in the cross. Here is a wonderful picture of the victory of Jesus Christ. He put off from Himself, stripped Himself of the principalities and power, hurled them from Him, and triumphed over them. Believing as I do that the devil does not know everything and believing that he fought his battle with Christ step by step notwithstanding the perfect issue of it, I want you to see what that means. Do you not think that the fallen principalities and powers felt when they nailed the God-man to the cross that they had won their greatest victory? But He put them off from Himself, smote them to destruction. He made the cross the tool that they used to crush Him - the weapon with which He smote them hip and thigh for the deliverance of man. The prince of this world is cast out. Never forget it. The fight with the devil has been fought and won. As Billy Bray used to put it: "You need not be afraid of him. Keep on praying and you will have him wound up tight at the capstan and he can only grin." What then is the business of the devil now? To attempt to prevent the formation in you of the image of the Son. Satan is not seeking so much to ruin the believer as he is trying to prevent Christ's victory in you, by your being conformed to the image of Christ. But you say, "How am I going to be holy when that subtle, implacable foe dogs my footsteps through all the days to ruin me?" Man, woman, do not forget that he is defeated. The Son of God has won the triumph. If You are going to do battle with him alone, wounded as he is, he will defeat you, but if what you are seeking is what God is seeking, holiness of character, in proportion as we are living in fellowship with Jesus Christ by the administration of the Spirit, we share the Master's victory over the devil all the time. So if you are not holy, the devil is not to blame. It is you who are to blame.

**5.** The New Testament declares holiness of character possible because it is imparted to the believer. Turn to 1 Corinthians 6: "And such were some of you." Well, what were we? "Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with men, thieves, covetous, drunkards." "Oh, no," you say, "we were not!" Wait a minute. "Revilers, extortioners." It is a very healthy thing sometimes to read these blacklists of the New Testament and see how these things that we carefully differentiate and separate are by God lumped all together. "Such were some of you; but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified." Washing refers to the loosing of the soul from sin; sanctification is the separation of the soul to God; justification is the making right with God. Holiness of character is here described: washed, loosed from sin; sanctified, separated to God; justified, brought into the place of just life. If you have been really born again, then there was imparted to you the holy character, and if today you have not that holy character which blossoms into righteous conduct, it is because you have been disobedient to the heavenly vision, have not been abiding in the possession that you accepted when you first gave yourself to Christ. Holiness is rendered possible by the supreme miracle of regeneration, a miracle that contains within itself all that the soul needs for time and eternity. Your very new birth is the supreme proof of the possibility of holy character.

**6.** What follows? The New Testament declares holiness of character to be possible because the sanctified - separated - territory is possessed by the Spirit of God. In 2 Corinthians 6:16 we read: "We are a temple of the living God; even as God said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." If indeed you are a newborn soul you are the temple of God. What do you mean by a temple? Listen. "I will dwell in them, I will walk in them" - not with them merely in them. "I will be their God." What more do you want? "I will dwell in them," - divine residence. "I will walk in them," - divine activity. "I will be their God," - divinity itself committed to them. You cannot be holy? Why, you are a temple of the Holy Spirit. Begin there, when you are studying this question. If you are a child of God say, "I am a temple of the Holy Ghost, therefore I can be holy; and if I am not holy I am desecrating the temple of the Holy Ghost." God wants you to be holy. Do you want to be holy? Then do not say, "I cannot be." You dare not say it if you believe this. God resides in you, God walks in you, God is your God.

**7.** One more point. The New Testament declares holiness of character to be possible because of the limitless resources at the disposal of the believer. Colossians 2:10: "Ye are filled to the full in Him." Remember that in Ephesians we have the fullness of God in the Church, in union with Christ; and in Colossians, the fullness of God dwelling in Christ and the believer. "Ye are made full in Him," a child of God. Look all around and see if you can find anything but Jesus Christ. Look back; I am complete in Him; "The cross now covers my sin, the past is under the blood." Look around at your circumstances, enemies; I am complete in Him, for in Him I have learned the secret of turning adverse circumstances into opportunities for progress, and in Him I have learned that great power by which I am more than conqueror over my foes. Look within; Christ in you the hope of glory. It is wonderful how blind some of us are. We do not see Him there at all; it is a great mistake. Grant that you are the worst in America, if you are His, Christ is in you, and He is able to conquer all the evils within you. You are complete in Him. Then what do you see when you look on? The shadow land of death? Then you do not lift your eyes quite far and high enough. The horizon is filled with the glory of Himself. He is coming. When? Oh, you can't measure the doings of God by calendars and almanacs. He is coming. But you may die. No, Christians never die, never. "He that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." Jesus abolished death. There may be a falling asleep but it will be only to awake with Him.

God wills then that I should be holy. Jesus died to make me holy. The Spirit came to make me holy. The devil who would prevent my being holy is defeated and judged and cast out. In my new birth there was given to me the very dynamic of holiness: I was washed, and sanctified and justified. I am the temple of the Holy Ghost. God dwells in me and walks in me and is my God. In Christ I have all resources. The whole of this is in order that I should be holy before Him. You dare not say that you do not believe it to be possible if you read and believe the New Testament.