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

**05. THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*"O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."*

*Psalm 96:9*

THE WORD that attracts attention in this oft-repeated phrase of the Psalm is the word "beauty." It seems to lend its light and glory to the whole verse, and makes us desire to see what may lie within the compass of this injunction, "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."

There is a very old saying that "beauty is but skin deep." No falser thing was ever said. To say that, is to misunderstand the true meaning of beauty, and certainly that can never be said of the beauty referred to in these remarkable and suggestive words. This particular word translated "beauty" is only used four times in the Scriptures. In each case it is translated "beauty" save one, and in each case is used in connection with the other two outstanding words of our text "holiness," and "worship."

Proverbs 14:28, "In the multitude of people is the king's glory [beauty]; but in the want of people is the destruction of the prince."

1 Chronicles 16:29, "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name: Bring an offering, and come before Him: Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." This is part of David's song when the ark came from the house of Obed-Edom and entered into its resting place in the tent that had been prepared. That song is the Psalm from which the text is taken.

Psalm 29:2, "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." Both in the twenty-ninth and the ninety-sixth Psalms the song is quoted that David sang upon that particular occasion.

2 Chronicles 20:21, "And when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed them that should sing unto the Lord, and praise in the beauty of holiness."

These passages of Scripture in which the word "beauty" may be reduced in number; for the song of David when the ark came from the house of Obed-Edom to the tent is repeated in Psalm 29 and Psalm 96, so that the two occasions which the phrase is used are, first, the one now referred to; and, secondly, when Jehoshaphat was sending forth his men to battle he arranged that they should be preceded by the singers, and that they should praise the name of the Lord in the beauty of holiness.)

The word "beauty" signifies that which is in itself beautiful, that which is in itself honorable; it refers to a beauty which is not a decoration bestowed, but which is a quality that is inherent; and the beauty of holiness in which we are to worship the Lord is not the beauty of an external ritual or surrounding, but the beauty of condition, of spirit, which is indeed the blossoming of holiness in which we worship and without which no worship is possible.

In the Revised Version we noticed that the margin has suggested another reading, "Worship the Lord in holy array." That suggested alternation does not interfere with the thought, for this surely cannot refer to material clothing, but to that outshining of inner character which is the true array or adornment of life. One is reminded of how, when Jesus stood the Mount of Transfiguration, His outer garments became white and glistering, not by reason of the light that fell upon them from without, but because there shone out that day from the veil of His flesh, transforming and suffusing even His outer garments, the excellent glory of His character and life. Thus the word of the text is, worship the Lord in the beauty, not of decoration or of aesthetic surroundings, but the beauty of holiness, the beauty which is inherent, which has become part and parcel of the life, the beauty which has permeated every fibre of the being, and has become a veritable part of the whole disposition.

There are then two thoughts within the text to which I wish to call your especial attention: first, worship; and, second, its condition. The injunction of the text is a call to worship: "Worship the Lord." The whole text clearly indicates the one condition of true worship.

**1.** WORSHIP. What is worship? The question may be answered in two words: primary worship, and secondary worship; or essential worship, and the outward manifestation of worship. The distinction is necessary because there is a danger of imagining that the second is the first, of losing sight of the first in the attempt to perfect the second; and it is only as this fact of essential worship is understood that secondary worship, which is always external and of lesser will fall into its right place and be of the right character.

Let us then consider the essential fact of worship. The meaning of this word translated "worship" is to bow down, to prostrate one's self. Worship is the attitude of prostration before someone else. And the moment that simple statement concerning the word is lifted into the high realm of the relation of man to God, it is at once seen that worship is based a twofold recognition of Divine sufficiency, and human dependence; and that worship is in essence the yielding of man's entire nature to this double principle of personal need and Divine supply. In therefore as man's entire nature is prostrate before God, always recognizing need and sufficiency, living in the power of that double recognition, then all life is worship. The occasional and accidental worship of the Sabbath is of no value whatever save as behind it there is the essential and perpetual worship of all the days. The Sabbath is the day which we are to express the worship of all the other days, in outward sign and symbol and token. Therefore, I repeat, it is of the utmost importance that we understand what this worship is: a recognition of the Divine love, a recognition of man's dependence upon that power, of his dependence upon that authoritative guidance, of his dependence amid the conflict of life upon that all-thinking love. Wherever the soul recognizes this Divine sufficiency and this human need, then the life is prostrate before God, and forever more has to say in His presence, The Lord is my king; the Lord is my judge; the Lord is my law giver. God is worshiped by the man or woman who recognizes His sufficiency and His claim, and quietly, persistently, restfully yields thereto.

If this is the essential meaning of worship, now a word concerning secondary worship. By calling it secondary we do not undervalue it. I mean now the worship of those who gather together the first day of the week, or at any other time or place, to give expression in outward acts to this perpetual attitude. The essential worship is the attitude of a life; the secondary or occasional worship is the act that symbolizes, and sanctifies, and makes clear to the outward observer the fact of this essential worship.

The outward acts of worship are offering of praise to God, the asking from God things needed and the listening to the message of God and the delivery of that message, preaching and hearing it. It is at once seen how the offering of praise worships God; and when a congregation joins together a Sabbath morning in that hymn,

"Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty!

Early in the morning our songs shall rise to Thee,"

it worships; but the song is unworthy and impure unless men have worshiped through the days of the week that preceded the gathering on Sabbath morning. The importance of the outward fact cannot be overestimated, the praise that is offered to God. Having sung, when men are led by the voice of one into the place of prayer and they quietly speak out their heart's need through the words of one leading, they and their asking worships Him. He waits to give, and the soul that asks the gift, declares by the asking the soul's consciousness of His riches, the soul's consciousness of His willingness; and the very attitude of prayer is the attitude of worship.

But again we worship when we preach. People sometimes say that the singing service and the prayer service is the worship, and then comes the preaching. Prayer is man's speech to God; preaching is God's speech to man, and silent and reverent hearing of the message of God is quite as truly an act of worship as is the prayer that asks, or the praise that is given.

These are the outward facts of worship. All these things are robbed of their force and fervor and fire unless behind them is the preparation of life. The occasional act must have behind it the perpetual attitude. Think not of others but of ourselves. Has it not often been that hosannas have languished on our tongues, that our praying has been perfunctory and empty, that our listening to the Word has lost the attitude of reverent attention, because there has been no preparation for the worship, no preparation in the life of the week? We sometimes imagine that the week is a week of self-centred interest, and the worship of the Sabbath is the return to spiritual things; but every day of the week should be a day of preparation for the outward act of worship, and every hour of the week should be an hour of essential worship rendered to God in order that the gathering together of His saints may have in it the force and the power of a worship that is acceptable to Himself. So much for the first that of worship.

**2.** CONDITIONS OF WORSHIP. Turn now to the condition of worship as indicated in this verse, "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" - beauty, holiness, then the whole phrase, "the beauty of holiness." Every ultimate thought of God expresses itself in beauty. Every ultimate thought of God is beautiful. I propose to illustrate that by some lines with which, I doubt not, many are familiar, but here on this mount of privileges, amid all the wonders of this valley, I think they may profitably be heard as indexing a thought, and leading us to the point of importance. They are the lines of a man not generally known or admired as a writer, and yet having a quaint and forceful beauty of his own. They are the lines of Tupper:

"For beauty hideth everywhere, that Reason's child may seek her,

And having found the gem of price, may set it in God's crown.

Beauty nestleth in the rose bud, or walketh in the firmament with planets;

She is heard in the beetle's evening hymn, and shouteth in the matins of the sun;

The cheek of the peach is glowing with her smile, her splendor blazeth in the lightning;

She is the dryad of the woods, the naiad of the streams;

Her golden hair hath tapestried the silkworm's silent chamber,

And to her measured harmonies the wild waves beat in time;

With tinkling feet at eventide she danceth in the meadow,

Or, like a Titan lieth stretched athwart the ridgy Alps;

She is rising in her veil of mist a Venus from the waters,

Men gaze the loveliness, - and lo, it is beautiful exceedingly:

She, with the might of a Briareus, is dragging down the clouds the mountain, -

Men look her grandeur, - and lo, it is excellent in glory.

There is beauty in the rolling clouds, and placid shingle beach,

In feathery snows, and whistling winds, and dun electric skies;

There is beauty in the rounded woods, dank with heavy foliage,

In laughing fields, and dinted hills, the valley and its lake;

There is beauty in the gullies, beauty on the cliffs, beauty in the sun and shade,

In rocks and rivers, seas and plains, - the earth is drowned in beauty."

So sang quaint old Tupper and he was perfectly right. But how is it that beauty is found everywhere in nature?

"The beauty is God's handiwork.

The light glows from His face;

The perfume is His sweetness,

All earth's beauty is His grace."

Therefore, the whole earth, speaking in the language of beauty, shining with glory, flashing with the splendors of beauty, the whole earth worships Him in the beauty of holiness. Ugliness and deformity are not of God. The flowers in their form and color and perfume speak of Him Who created them. The seasons in their coming and going, - the gentle beauty of spring, and the golden glow of summer, and the majestic, almost profligate splendor of autumn, and the still cold and searching beauty of winter, - all these things speak of the beauty behind. Man as physically created speaks of God's beauty; and in his regeneration we discover that ugliness transfigured proves the same point. Every thought of God perfectly realized flashes and flames with beauty.

If this be so, why is it so? All God's works are the expression of God's character, and all beauty in the work of God on every hand is but the expression of God's holiness. So many people have come to think holiness and beauty as somehow different. They understand that the beauty of form and color is to be found everywhere, but they do not associate these things with holiness. As a matter of fact, all the exquisite, abounding, super-abounding beauty of created things is a proof of the holiness that lies behind.

Beauty as expressed in the handiwork of God is supreme. Nowhere else is there anything like it. Man fashions the marble into a form of beauty, but he is limited in his conception and in his power to reproduce; but God flings the token of His beauty along these hills, and no two trees are the same in form, and no two leaves are the same in form. Going home from America that last year that George Macgregor was here, I remember standing one night at the side of the vessel and watching the sun as it sank to rest behind a bank of clouds, lighting them with purple and golden glory. He said to me, suddenly, after a long silence in which we had looked out upon the wonders of that sunset: "What a blessed thing it is that before we go home God will enlarge our capacity. If there were anything much more beautiful than that in heaven, I do not think I could bear it." Then after a silence he said again. "How beautiful God must be when He paints a picture like that just to gladden us, and presently He will blot it out as though it did not matter." God's beauty is flaming and flashing everywhere. For it is the beauty of holiness.

God's ultimate thought is beautiful, and it is only realized by flower, or plant, or planet, or man, as flower, or plant, or planet, or man lives within the realm of His law. Break His law, and the beauty is marred; fulfill His law, and the beauty blossoms.

The law of God is the expression of His own holiness for the guidance of those whom He has made. One may speak in this way therefore of the holiness of the flower and the holiness of a man. The two realms of life are utterly different. One cannot safely argue from the natural to the spiritual, and yet again and again the same underlying principle prevails. The holiness of the flower is the fulfilling of the law of its being. The beauty of the flower is all the glory that comes, because it fulfills the law of its being; and the flower that blossoms the sod, when it is beautiful through the fulfilling of law, worships the Lord in the beauty of holiness. The holiness of a human being is the fullness of God's law for the human being. The beauty of a human being is all the character which is the result of the fulfilling of the law of God for the human being.

What is it then for a human being to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness? It is for a human being to abide in the law and the will of God, and then as character manifests itself, - the result of the perfect law of God, - there is the beauty of holiness, and there also is worship in the beauty of holiness. So that the suggestion of the text ever seems to be that the true worship man renders to God is that of the realization of the Divine thought by abiding in the Divine law.

Let us pass over the ground again, for there is but one thought to fasten our minds, and it is better done by illustration. Take any flower, the smallest or the most gorgeous of them all. That blossom is the result of life, the result of life conditioned within law; and looking at that blossom, so exquisite, so marvelous, so that if some glass be used that will assist the weakness of human sight, and it be examined under the glass, new beauties will be discovered that cannot be seen with the naked eye, this being a particular and ever-present fact of all God's handiwork. The more minutely it is examined, the more marvelously does its beauty flash. Take the flower and ask this question, What is the flower doing as it blossoms here? Worshiping God, worshiping God in beauty. It is the beauty of holiness, it is the beauty of abiding in the law of God, and fulfilling the will of God.

Or pass from the flower to the tree, or lift the eyes from the tree to the cloud that coming up from the horizon spreads itself on all the thirsty land, and as the rain pours down the thirsty earth the cloud worships God, fulfilling His intention in it, emptying itself the earth at His command. The rain as it falls from the cloud is the cloud's worship, worship in the beauty of holiness.

Or stand by the seashore and watch the coming of the tide and its recession. Hear the song it sings as it beats the rockbound coast, and listen to the marvelous music of its great recessional. What is this great sea doing as it advances and retreats? Worshiping the Lord in the beauty of holiness. The beauty of its march, all the wild splendor of its crest-foamed waves as they break the shore, what is this but stormy winds fulfilling His word, mighty seas staying at His behest, worship in the beauty of holiness?

Or listen for one moment to the song of a bird as it pours its lay of music the otherwise silent air, spending itself in an attempt to voice the thought not understood within it. What does the bird? Worships the Lord in the beauty of holiness; fulfills the function of its being; satisfies the heart of God, - worships.

Or turn from the flower and the tree, the cloud, the tide, and the bird, and look reverently and silently that human being who before the public services of the day commences, in some lonely chamber, looked right up into the very face of God by faith, and said to Him, "Our Father, Which art in heaven." That is worship.

That is all the highest function of which the human kind is capable. Not the toil for wealth, not the search for knowledge, but the attitude of prayer, the attitude of worship, the spirit of man speaking to the Spirit of God and saying, "Abba, Father." For that God made him, for that God has sustained him; and the toil of the week, and the business of the days, and the prosecution of the interests that so busily throng the life, what are these but attempts to unfold through the days the relationship existing between the soul and God? For if men labor outside the family where God is Father, or if they spend their strength in the doing of something that will grieve His spirit, then they spoil the beauty of their lives, make impossible their own worship, frustrate the purpose of God.

When this is so, then every day is a Sabbath, and all work becomes worship. The service of a sanctuary becomes a pause in which in word and in outward act we give expression to life's undersong. The song runs on, heard only of God through the busy days of the week, but gathered together we voice the song in unison and harmony, we speak the word which we live through the processes of the busy days. If there be no such under-song of worship in the life, then there is no worship. The worship that is occasional should always be the expression of the worship that is perpetual. Worship, and the worship in the beauty of holiness is the perpetual portrayal in the human life of Divine power and Divine love.

If man so live through these busy days that his life ever speaks amid the voices of earth of the Father's love and the Father's power, if he so live amid the restless ceaseless roar of these turbulent times as a soul that is in the secret place, that abides under the shadow of His wing, pavilioned in the home of God, that man worships Him; and turning to the assembly of His saints the worship will have behind it the force and the fire and the fervor of this perpetual unbroken worship.

The flowers are worshiping Him.

"The whole creation joins in one

To bless His sacred name. "

Archangels and cherubim worship. But all these worship simply by fulfilling His will in them, and then singing of the grace and beauty of that will. And shall we not worship Him thus in the beauty of holiness, fulfilling His purpose through the days, until holiness, the law of life, beauty becomes its expression, - beauty of temper, beauty of tone, beauty of character, beauty of aspiration, beauty of desire, - the beauty of the Lord our God us? This can only be as we live within His will in holiness, and only as these things are so can we worship. It is when the soul is really able to say, -

"My midnight is Thy smile withdrawn;

My noontide is Thy gracious dawn;

My rainbow arch, Thy mercy sign;

All save the clouds of sin are Thine. "

It is when the soul dwells there in holiness that the beauty of the Lord is manifest, and He is worshiped.

In conclusion may we not say one word of a very practical nature. If this is understood, and if man once pass from satisfaction with the occasional and the accidental into an earnest desire for the perpetual and the essential, - nay, verily, if he pass beyond desire and come to know in some measure what it is for the whole life to be worship, then the very consciousness of the Divine presence that will ensue will be such as to alter the whole character and tone of the accidental and the occasional. I want everywhere in these days to utter a new plea, a plea for the reverence in outward worship that can only come from a deep perpetual worship in the life. Gatherings for worship when the saints are assembled, should ever have upon them the hush of the presence of God; not the solemn, dreadful awe in which we dare not speak, but the holy, quiet, subdued reverence which is always the final and perfect expression of a great love. The external is not the most important, it is important and I have spoken of this worship that He seeks in the beauty of holiness, believing with all my heart and soul that in proportion as we render Him that worship, the outward worship will be full of reverence; and no person coming to worship God will ever dream of coming late, and no person assembled for the worship of God will ever dream of immediately after the benediction is pronounced of going back to the things that are paltry, and petty, and mean. There should be a solemn hush on our spirits, the hush, not of a dread, but of a great gladness; the hush, not of terror, but of a great and reverent love. So shall our worship of life produce the true worship of outward expression, and take on the beauty of God's order and all the splendid method of the place where He lives and reigns. May He teach us to worship in the beauty of holiness.