**VOLUME 2; CHAPTER 07 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**WORSHIP, BEAUTY, HOLINESS by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

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

*Psalm 96:9*

THE WORD THAT ATTRACTS OUR ATTENTION IN THIS TEXT IS the word "beauty." "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." Whether in application this word is of supreme importance may be another question. The very fact of its attractiveness compels us to consider its setting. In that consideration we shall discover its suggestiveness and importance.

The particular word translated "beauty" here is used only five times in the Scriptures: once in Proverbs 14:28, where it is translated in the Authorized Version "honour," and in the Revised Version "glory"; again in 1 Chronicles 16:29; in the psalm which was sung when the ark was brought from the house of Obed-edom to its resting-place in the tent or tabernacle; again in 2 Chronicles, in the story of Jehoshaphat's arrangement of the singers who were to precede the army, who were charged in their singing to "praise the beauty of holiness"; again in Psalm 29, and in the text.

It is a somewhat rare word therefore. Our English word "beauty" does most perfectly express the real meaning of the word, of which it is a translation. It suggests honour, or glory, or beauty, not as a decoration, but as an intrinsic value, an inherent quality. The Revised Version suggests in its marginal reading in each case that we should read, "Worship the Lord in holy array." But this does not for a single moment interfere with the essential thought of the passage, for it cannot refer merely to material clothing, but to that outshining of inner character which is the true array of the soul in its approach to God in worship, that outshining of inner character which makes even sackcloth beautiful, and homespun a thing of ineffable glory. We do not forget that when our Lord was transfigured, that transfiguration was not the shining upon Him of a light from heaven, nor even, as I venture to believe, the outshining of His Deity, but rather the shining through of the essential glory and perfection of His human nature. Eye-witnesses tell us that His very raiment became white and glistening, and yet as we read the story we know that it was the appearance of the glory of a raiment due to the essential glory of His own character there manifested to them for their sakes rather than for His.

And so with our word "beauty" here the thought is that of an inherent quality, not a decoration, not something put on as from without, but something manifest to the eye, and appealing to the emotion and the mind, as being in itself glorious and beautiful, and yet belonging essentially to the fact with which we are brought into contact. The text is a cry, calling upon men to worship, and declaring what is the true condition of worship, and so incidentally revealing the true nature of worship. Only once does this particular word occur apart from the same kind of setting - in the book of Proverbs. Everywhere else it is associated with worship, holiness. "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."

These words lie in the midst of language in which the psalmist is appealing to men to praise God, calling them to recognize His greatness, calling them to recognize His glory, calling them to think of His power and His majesty, and urging them to answer the things their eyes see, and their hearts feel, by offering praise to Him.

In this call so poetic and full of beauty there is a revelation of the deep meaning of worship, of its abiding condition, and glory. "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." The supreme thing is worship. But how is worship to be rendered? "In the beauty of holiness." Wherever you find beauty, it is the outcome of holiness. Wherever you find beauty as the outcome of holiness that beauty in itself is incense, is worship. To attempt to worship in any other way is to fail. To live the life of holiness is to live the life of beauty, and that is to worship.

What is worship? The essential and simple meaning of the word, and therefore the fundamental thought is that of prostration, of bowing down. Worship suggests that attitude which recognizes the throne, which recognizes superiority; that attitude of the life which takes the low place of absolute reverence in the presence of that which takes hold upon the life and compels it. It is a word full of force, which constrains us, and compels us to the attitude of reverence.

The word "worship" runs through the Bible, and the thought of worship is to be found from beginning to end. The thought of worship is on the part of man, the recognition of Divine sufficiency, the recognition of his absolute dependence upon the Divine sufficiency, the confession that all he needs in his own life he finds in the life of God. And the spoken answer to that conviction of the abandonment and surrender of the whole of man to God is worship. I worship in the presence of God as I recognize that in Him I find everything that my life demands, as I find that in myself I am incomplete everywhere, save as I am brought into relationship with Him. A sense of my need and His resource, a sense that all my life finds only its highest and its best, and fulfils itself in relation to Him, produces the act and the attitude of worship. The attitude of worship is the attitude of a subject bent before the King. The attitude of worship is the attitude of a child yielding all its love to its Father. The attitude of worship is the attitude of the sheep that follows the leading of the Shepherd, and is content in all that pasturage which He appoints. It is the attitude of saying Yes to everything that God says.

The height of worship is realized in expression in the use of two words which have never been translated, which remain upon the page of Holy Scripture, and in the common language of the Church, as they were in the language where they originated: "Hallelujah," and "Amen." When I have learned to say those two words with all my mind, and heart, and soul, and being, I have at once found the highest place of worship, and the fullest realization of my own life. "Let all the people praise the Lord, Let all the people say, Amen." And when I pass on presently to the end of the Divine Library, I hear in heaven, "a great multitude ... saying, Hallelujah... . And a second time they say, Hallelujah"; and the great responsive answer is Amen. Amen to His will, and Hallelujah the offering of praise. I know it is but a simple symbol. I know it is but the saying of an old thing, but I address my own heart as much as any of you, my brethren, and I say, Oh, soul of mine, hast thou learned to say Amen to Him, and that upon the basis of a deep and profound conviction of all His absolute perfection in government, and method and providence? Canst thou say, not as the boisterous shout of an unenlightened soul, but as the quiet expression of a heart resting in the perfection of God, Hallelujah and Amen? Then that is worship, that is life.

I am not going to stay to speak at all upon secondary worship, save to refer to it and recognize it. The outward acts are sacred. The songs of praise that tell of the goodness and the grace and the sufficiency of God, the prayer that pours out its burden because it is confident in God's resource to meet all human need, the quiet attention to the Word of God as we meditate upon it: these are the outward acts of worship, and behind the praise and the prayer, and the meditation upon His Word is this great consciousness that all I need is in Him, and that in proportion as my whole life is abandoned to Him, in that proportion my need will be met, and so my life itself, restful in God, powerful because of my relationship to Him, will be a song, a psalm, an anthem; or if I may go back and borrow the words, God's own poetry God's own poem, the music that glorifies Him.

So, brethren, the outward acts are the least important parts of our worship. If I have not been worshiping God for the last six days, I cannot worship Him this morning. If there has been no song through my life to God, I am not prepared to sing His praise, and the reason why so often

Hosannas languish on our tongues

is because "our devotion dies." This is a pause in worship, and expresses a perpetual attitude. The worship of the sanctuary is wholly meaningless and valueless save as it is preceded by and prepared for by the worship of the life.

We may now press on to ask the meaning of the psalmist when he says, "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." Let us fix our attention in the most simple way upon the word "beauty," in our common use of it.

When Charles Kingsley lay dying, he said, among other things, "How beautiful God is!" We are almost startled by the word. We do not often think of it in that connection. We speak of His majesty. We speak of His might. We speak of His mercy. We speak of His holiness. We speak of His love. And yet, brethren, there is nothing of God which He has made more patent to men than the fact of His beauty. Every ultimate thought of God is beautiful. Every manifestation of God is full of beauty. I recently came across some old verses of Tupper's. They are quaint, and somewhat curious. He says:

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 rosebud, or walketh 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 meadows,

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 upon the loveliness, - and, lo, it is beautiful exceedingly:

She, with the might of a Briarens, is dragging down the clouds upon the mountains, -

Men look upon the 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 dented hills, the valley and its lake;

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

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

Beauty coileth with the water snake, and is cradled in the shrew-mouse's nest,

She flitteth out with evening bats, and the soft mole hid her in his tunnel;

The limpet is encamped upon the shore, and beauty not a stranger to his tent;

The silvery dace, and golden carp, thread the rushes with her;

She saileth into clouds with an eagle, she fluttereth into tulips with a hummingbird;

The pasturing kine are of her company, and she prowleth with the leopard in his jungle.

Go back to the first lines of it with me for a moment -

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.

That is the key to it. Tupper saw beauty in all these things. We are so blind, and seldom see beauty, but he saw God's handiwork, evidences of God's presence and God's power, and God's law operating in the blossom of a perfect beauty.

My brethren, these are commonplaces to us. Yet how often do we see them? I am not here to remind you of these things. I am here to take you back to the thought of the beauty of God, blossoming in the daisy on the sod, blazing in the starry heavens, to bring you back to my text, "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness," to remind you of the fact that every ultimate thought of God is beautiful, and that ugliness and deformity are never of God. All the beauty of flowers in form and colour and perfume are of God. All the beauty of the seasons as they pass: spring and summer and autumn and winter, all that is beautiful in man physically, mentally, spiritually, and all that is beautiful in the inter-relation between man and man, is of God.

To put this same truth for one moment from another standpoint, everything which is of God is beautiful. The marring of a flower which makes it ugly is not of God. That in a man which is repulsive is not of God. God is a God of might. God is a God of glory. God is a God of love. But He is also the God of beauty. It is well for us to think of it for a moment and remember it.

I remember staying, some years ago, while conducting some special services, with a friend in Devonshire. There came by the morning mail to him some roses wrought in silk by deft fingers here in London. And he put some of these roses wrought in silk by me, and said, "They are very beautiful." And holding them up in my folly and short-sightedness, I said, "They are perfect." He replied, "Are they, really?" And he brought his microscope, and put the rose beneath it, and the very silk itself became coarse as sackcloth. Then he brought from his greenhouse a spray of God's roses, and put them under the microscope, and the more closely I looked, the more perfect they were. The beauty of God as manifest in the tiniest cell of the flower as in its completion is manifest in the blossoming of the flower, as in the rhythmic order of the heavens about me. Brethren, God is very beautiful, and everything which is of God is essentially beautiful.

Therefore, do not let us be afraid of our text when we come to the subject of holiness. "Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." In God's works beauty is the expression of holiness.

The Beauty is His handiwork,

The Light glows from His face,

The perfume is His sweetness,

All Earth's beauty is His grace.

If God's ultimate thought is realized only along the line of His law, then the law is that which creates the beauty; and everywhere beauty is marred by the breaking of law. Holiness, then, is rectitude of character, the condition of beauty. What is "the beauty of holiness"? The realization of a Divine thought by abiding in the Divine law. That is the one and only condition of worship.

Let me illustrate again. The flowers that blossom on the sod are worshiping God. But how are they worshiping? They are worshiping by their beauty. And what is their beauty? The beauty is the result of the operation of the law of God; and in answer to the laws of their life, not by effort, not by garments other than the garments of essential glory wrought out from their inner life, they worship. They worship in beauty because they worship in holiness. They worship within the realm of law. "The trees of the Lord," said one of the ancient writers, "are full," and I often regret the addition in translation which imagines that the Hebrew method of expression is so imperfect that we must add to it to complete it. Our translators have written, "The trees of the Lord are full of sap." They thought it was poetic. I think it was prosaic. I think they had been looking at a tree, and they thought there was nothing but sap. The Hebrew word is "full." Change the word "sap" to "beauty," and that would still be incomplete. There are things which are subtracted from by adding to. "The trees of the Lord are full," full of sap, full of beauty, full of health, full of poetry.

But let me introduce the word "beauty" here. "The trees of the Lord are full of beauty," and are they not? Oh, it is good to get away and stand among the trees. "The trees of the Lord are full." "The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars." What did the psalmist mean? He says, "The God of glory thundereth ... the Lord breaketh in pieces the cedars of Lebanon." The Word of God, the enunciation of law is upon them, and they have heard, and have answered, and in the uprising of their life, they have blossomed into fullness of form and beauty. Did you ever see an ugly tree? I have, but it was a tree some fool of a man had tried to cut into the shape of a bird. But a tree is full of beauty. What is its beauty? It is the beauty of law. You spoil the law of the tree, and you will rob it of its beauty, and you will rob God of His worship.

You may climb higher. The cloud rises in the sky, and you with your incipient infidelity grumble because the sun is shut out from your patch of earth. Presently the cloud is giving itself away, flinging itself out upon the earth; and gradually it exhausts itself, and ceases to be. Every rain shower is the worshiping of a cloud, its fulfilment of the purpose of its being. It is its answer to the movement of God in the economy of life. And as the cloud pours itself out it worships, it worships in the beauty of holiness. The tides that come and go worship, and worship in beauty, worship in majesty, the deep diapason of their voice roaring around us, until we are deafened, but it is all an anthem of worship. But what is their beauty? The answer to law, the fulfilling of the purpose of God.

So we climb by these illustrations to man. When does a man worship. A man worships when he is what God meant him to be. I may sing every song in the hymnbook, and never worship. I may recite every creed that was ever prepared, and never worship. I may inflict all manner of scourging upon this body of mine, and never worship. I may kneel in long lonely vigils of the night, and never worship; and the song, and the sacrifice, and the prayer are nothing unless I am, in this one lonely individual life of mine, what God Almighty meant me to be. When I am that my whole life worships.

How can I be that? Only as I discover His law, only as I walk in His ways; and here is the difference between the flower and man. The supreme dignity, the tremendous and overwhelming majesty of your life and mine is that of our power to choose, to elect, to decide, to will. Consequently the worship of the soul that can choose and decide and elect and will is profounder, mightier, greater than any other worship could be. It is not in the antiphonal song of choirs, or in the chanting of music to which we listen, or even in our own singing; it is in taking hold of our individual life, and the putting of it into such relationship with God that it becomes what He means it should be.

I do not worship God by going to China as a missionary if God wants me to stay at home and do the work of a carpenter. I do not worship God by aspiring to some mighty and heroic thing for Him if the capacity He has given me is for doing the quiet thing, and the simple thing, and the hidden thing, and the unknown thing. It would be very foolish for the hummingbird, instead of entering the tulip, to try to beat back the air and combat with the eagle. It worships by staying where God puts it. It would be very wicked for the eagle to cultivate a mock modesty, and say that it preferred to remain among the tulips when it ought to be soaring sunwards.

So that if I have spoken to you about the fact that God has foreordained works, that we should walk in them, I now remind you that if you worship when you find God's appointment, and when you walk in the way God has appointed, you realize your own life. Worship consists in the finding of my own life, and the yielding of it wholly to God for the fulfilment of His purpose. That is worship! You say, Would you tell us to find our life? Did not Jesus say we must lose it? Yes, "He that findeth his life shall lose it," but He did not finish there: "He that loseth his life for My sake shall find it," not another life, not a new life, not a new order of life, not an angel's life, for instance, but his own life. The Cross is necessary, restraint is necessary, sacrifice is necessary, self-denial is necessary; but these things are all preliminary, and when Paul describes the Christian life at its fullest, he does not say, I am crucified. That is the wicket gate, that is the pathway that leads out, that is the beginning. "I have been crucified with Christ: yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God."

Or again, he says, speaking of Christ Himself, "It is Christ that died," but that is not the last thing, nor the final thing, "yea rather, that was raised from the dead." And so if the Cross be absolutely necessary, and it is - your cross, my cross, my individual dying to the ambitions of selfish desire, till that is necessary; but beyond it, life. What life? My life. The new birth is but the passing into the possibility of the first birth. The new creation is but the finding of the meaning of, and the fulfilment of the purposes of the first creation. "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." Discover His law, answer His law, walk in the way of His appointing. Let Him Who made you lead out all the facts of your life to the fulfilment of His purpose, and then your whole life is worship.

Then, brethren, you will see that worship does not begin when you come here. This is a very valuable part of worship, but it is secondary worship, symbolic worship. This is the day in which we cease the worship that perfectly glorifies Him in order that in song and praise and prayer we may remind ourselves of the perpetual and unending truth that life lived within His will, and according to His law, the life of holiness is the beauty that glorifies God. This service is but a pause in which in word and attitude we give expression to life's inner song. And if there be no such inner song, there is no worship here. Worship is the perpetual poetry of Divine power and Divine love expressed in human life.

Angels worship not merely when veiling their faces they sing of His holiness, but when ceasing their singing at His bidding, they fly to catch the live coal from the altar, and touch the lips of a penitent soul who sighs. It is true "they also serve who only stand and wait." But it is equally true that they also worship who serve, and serve perpetually. And it is in the service of a life, not specific acts done as apart from the life, not because I teach in the Sabbath school, or preach here, that I worship. I may preach here today, and never worship. But because my life is found in His law, is answering His call, responsive to His provision and arrangement, so almost, without knowing it, my life has become a song, a praise, an anthem. So I worship! I join the angels, and all Nature, in worship when I become what God intends I should be. And in that blossoming of His ideal we sing the song of His greatness and His love.

Our midnight is Thy smile withdrawn;

Our noontide is Thy gracious dawn;

Our rainbow arch, Thy mercy's sign;

All save the clouds of sin are Thine.

Grant us Thy Truth to make us free,

And kindling hearts that burn for Thee,

Till all Thy living altars claim

One holy Light, one heavenly flame.

And so I pray that when the service is over, and the Sabbath day has passed, we may go back to know that in the shop, in the office, in the home and market place, in all the toil of the commonplaces, we can worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Where there is holiness there is beauty. Where there is beauty there is worship. However ornate the worship may be in external things, if it lacks the beauty of holiness, it never reaches the inner sanctuary, and never glorifies God.