**VOLUME 2; CHAPTER 22 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**SAINTS by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*To the saints. ... As becometh saints.*

*Ephesians 1:1 and 5:3*

IT WOULD APPEAR AS THOUGH THIS WERE AN UNWARRANTABLE wresting of texts from their context, yet it is not really so. I grant at once that nothing of the teaching of this letter can be gained from these isolated quotations; but if I may take it for granted that we are familiar with the whole letter as to its contention and intention, then I say that these phrases indicate its practical values.

In this epistle Paul reaches the climax of his great system of teaching. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that in this epistle, taken together with the Colossian epistle, he reaches that climax. In Colossians he deals with the glories of Christ as at the disposal of the Church, so that the supreme sentences are, "In Him dwelleth all the fullness," and "In Him ye are made full." In this letter he deals with the glories of the Church as realized through her relationship to Christ Who is the Head. In some senses it is one of the simplest, while in others it is one of the sublimest, of the apostolic writings. It is simple in its method. Paul first describes the Church as to its nature, as to its calling: in three chapters, as we have divided the epistle, dealing with predestination, edification, vocation. Then he turns to the application of this great calling of the Church to her present life with the words, "I therefore ... beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called"; and in the second three chapters he shows the walk that is worthy, as to the Church itself, as to individual and social conduct, and as to united conflict. There is no letter more sublime in its teaching. In its earlier chapters the apostle reveals - not in detail, but with sufficient clearness to leave an impression forever upon the mind of the student - that the ultimate vocation of the Church belongs to the ages to come. In the second part of the letter he shows what that means for the present life, how it is to affect all relationships; personal character and conduct; home relationships, husbands and wives, children and parents; household responsibilities, masters and servants. In brief, he first floods the soul with the vision of the heavenly calling, and then flashes that selfsame light upon personal conduct.

From this epistle, then, believing that the general conception of it is upon the mind of the Bible student, I take these two phrases. He is writing "to the saints"; and the great burden of his letter as to present, personal, and practical application is that they should live "as becometh saints."

Our theme, then, is saint-ship. Let us say at once that we are still suffering from mistaken ideas of what saint-ship really is. We are by no means free from the false interpretations of what we now sometimes speak of as the dark ages. We are still held in bondage to a far greater extent than we recognize by mediaeval thinking concerning saint-ship. This you will discover, not so much by the art, or poetry, or Christian literature of the present day, as by the common converse of Christian people whenever they approach the subject of saint-ship. In the past saint-ship was misinterpreted in art, in poetry, in Christian literature of all kinds. The conception of a saint was that of a person separated from the ordinary and everyday life of his own age by some geographical, external, material separation. The idea of saint-ship was that of a vocation granted to a few rather than that of the calling of all who indeed belong to Jesus Christ. Of course, the simplest way to illustrate this is to ask you to think of the art of the past, and you will find in all the representations of saint-ship indications of this false conception. The saints that we see in pictures of the great masters are men separated from their fellow men by the very garments they wore. Raphael paints Galilean fishermen in ecclesiastical robes such as they never wore: and the great artists all suggested a holy sanctity by things added to the personality that are by no means connected with human nature. The monastic idea was false. It was based upon an excellent intention born of the passion of man for fellowship with God in seclusion and quiet, born of a strong desire to enter a life of separation; but it is utterly false in its philosophy. In the moment when you separate a man from the actual and everyday affairs of this life, you cut the nerve of his praying, and remove all the friction which is necessary to the perfecting of his saint-ship. Christianity is not an exotic, it is a hardy perennial. The symbolic language of Canticles, whatever it may have meant in its first intention, teaches this exquisitely: "As a lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters." The lily of the Lord prospers in the soil which produces thorns. It is a hardy plant, not an exotic. You do not make a saint of a man the moment you take him away from the friction of the world; you put him in awful peril of losing the last trace of sanctity. The moment you take a man or a woman away from close contact with the sorrow and agony of human life you cut the nerve of prayer. If I am to pray for the world I must live in it and know it. If I am to be one of the saints of God, I must be a saint in the midst of all the ordinary and everyday life of the age. Sometimes we make use of the phrase "counsel of perfection." I wonder how many people know the history of that phrase. We say of something that is proposed to be done: it is an admirable proposition, but it is not practicable; it is a "counsel of perfection." That phrase has come to us from the Roman Church, in which "counsels of perfection" are instructions for such as devote themselves to the holy and saintly life. "Counsels of perfection," according to that Church, are rules which cannot be obeyed by those who remain in the ordinary life of the world, but only by those who come into holiness by separation from such life. All this is contrary to the New Testament ideal of saint-ship. Let me put that again in a simple way. If you cannot be a saint in the house of business where you are, you will never be a saint when you enter the Salvation Army. If you cannot be a saint in your own home, you cannot be a saint in this pulpit.

That we are still suffering from these ideas of saint-ship is evidenced by the converse of saints today concerning saint-ship. A Christian man says: "I do not profess to be a saint," yet he is a church member, a church officer, sometimes a minister. What does he mean? If not a saint, then not a Christian. If a Christian, then a saint. The fact is that in his mind there still exists a false conception of what saint-ship really is. Sometimes, moreover, in saying this there is an indication of a contempt for the saint. It is not merely that the speaker does not consider himself a saint; there is a quiet undercurrent of satisfaction in his heart that he is not one. That also is born of this false conception of saint-ship.

Because the conception is false, the protest is a healthy one. If saint-ship consists in absolute abstention from the ordinary affairs of everyday life, then it becomes unmanly and anaemic, thin, mean, and there is no robust man or woman in the world who ought not to hold it in superlative contempt. That, however, is not the saint-ship of the New Testament.

Let me ask you first, then, to remember, gathering up the teaching of the New Testament, that a saint is one who is united with the life of Christ. In the first chapter of this letter, following the words, "To the saints," is a qualifying, illuminative phrase, "the faithful in Christ Jesus." That does not mean such as are faithful, in the sense of fidelity, but those who live upon the principle of faith. These are saints. Every Christian is a saint. The moment in which a man, or woman, or little child hands over the life to Christ is the moment in which saint-ship begins. I am not denying for a single moment that there may be very great distance between the fact of saint-ship and the realization of its ultimate perfection of experience; that there may be, as some of our fathers would have put it, a distinction between our standing and our state, between what we are in the economy of God, by the provision of His grace as to resource, and what we are in the actual experience of our lives. This is taught with equal clearness in the New Testament. That is the burden of this letter. It is as though the apostle had said, I am writing to saints, to those men and women in Ephesus, or other churches, who belong to Christ. What have I to say to them? Realize your resources. You are Christians; be Christians. You are saints; live "as becometh saints." That is the burden of the letter.

Let us inquire a little more in detail what this letter teaches concerning the nature of saint-ship. I am not going to stay to read these three first chapters to you, though that would be a profitable exercise; neither am I going to stay now to turn to them; but I am proposing to remind you that Paul teaches us in the course of these first three chapters three great things concerning our relationship to God. They are illustrations of one great truth, and when we understand them we shall know what saint-ship really is; and we shall be able to understand the meaning of the Apostle's charge that we live "as becometh saints."

In the first chapter he prays for these Ephesian Christians that they may know what is "God's inheritance in the saints." A little further on, in the second chapter, he declares to them that they are "His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them." Yet a little further on in the same chapter he declares that the saints are being built together for a "habitation of God in the Spirit." Take from these quotations the descriptive phrases and leave all the setting: Inheritance of God, Workmanship of God, Habitation of God.

In these three phrases we have the revelation of the Apostle's conception of the position of every Christian man and woman.

First, the saint is the inheritance of God, His property. Second, the saint is the workmanship of God, one upon whom He is working toward an end. Finally, the saint is the habitation of God, His home. This is not a low ideal of saint-ship; that would be impossible in the light of New Testament teaching.

It would be well for us if, instead of listening to another voice, we would utter to ourselves in quietness these truths, making them our own, declaring them, affirming them. If I do that, I do it that you may follow and do it for yourselves. Forgive me, therefore, if I use the first person. I am God's property. I am God's workmanship. I am God's home.

I am God's property, absolutely His. I am that by creation. I had lost the sense of that relationship, but now I am His by redemption, by all His infinite work in me, whereby sin is put away as to its guilt, is being dealt with as to its power, and ultimately will be put away as to its presence. Whatever that personal pronoun stands for, all that is indicated by that simple yet terrible formula, "I," belongs to Him. I am not my own, I am His. Speak, if you will, of spirit, of soul, of body; of the essential spirit, of the body through which the spirit acts, of the mind which is consciousness, either spiritual or fleshly, according to the yielding of my will - I am His. I belong to Him. Speak, if you will, in the terms of that analysis of personality, emotion, intellect, will, all belongs to Him. For the moment I am not discussing the question whether God has possession or not. I am discussing the question of His absolute proprietorship. As a saint I belong to Him. I may be using these hands contrary to His will; I may be using these feet to take me some journey which is out of the way of His appointment; I may be robbing Him, but I belong to Him. The sin of the prodigal son in the far country was that he wasted his father's substance in riotous living. I belong to God. That is the first fact of saint-ship. I would to God I might almost cease speaking, and that that first fact might take possession of the heart of every professing Christian. I am His, not my own, but His.

I take a step further. I am His workmanship. If I simply speak of the fact that the saint is the property of God I recognize the imperfection of God's property. The saint is not an absolutely perfect being who can make no advance. The saint as the property of God may be most imperfect, but, being His, I am His workmanship, and that means that He will take the imperfect thing and make it perfect. Not in a moment, not by some mechanical readjustment of things, so that the imperfect is immediately made perfect, but by processes; by teaching, pain, discipline, affliction, baptisms, fire; by crushing, breaking, making, God will perfect. The first thing is that I am His. The second thing is that I am His workman ship. I never can read that word "workmanship" myself, and I daresay it is so with many of you, without the Greek word of which it is a translation singing itself into my heart, poems, which does not mean rhyming merely, but a thing of beauty, the thought of God revealed in concrete form that others may see it. I never can read the word "workmanship" without the familiar figure of the Old and New Testaments coming to mind, that of the potter and the clay. There is no finer figure to teach the meaning of this truth than that. We are always in danger of spoiling the figure by looking too long at the clay, and at the wheel, and not sufficiently at the potter; yet we must see the clay and the wheel. The clay is the potter's property, that is our first point. It is that when it is still an inert mass, without fashion, or form of beauty; nothing in it attractive. That is the first fact of saint-ship: without form or comeliness, without beauty, I am His.

Now watch the potter. He takes the clay and puts it on the wheel. The process is very old, but watch it. What is the potter doing? His own foot is turning the wheel. His own hands are upon the clay. What is happening? In the mind of the potter there is a vision of a vessel for use and for beauty. I cannot see what is in the mind of the potter. I do not know the thing he is thinking. I am not familiar with it. Watch, his hands are upon the clay. It is plastic to his touch, and as the wheel revolves the thought that is in the mind of the potter is being revealed in the clay. He is translating his thought of beauty into an appearance of loveliness. "We are His workmanship." As clay in the hands of the Potter, so am I. Unlovely and useless is the clay until the Potter lay His hands upon it, yet what marvellous material it is for the Potter to use. God's hand is upon the saint, moulding, making, perfecting something of beauty for all the coming ages. I am His workmanship as well as His property.

I go one step further, to this last thing the apostle says. The saint is the habitation of God. The figure changes, yet becomes more full of beauty, more full of life. The habitation of God, the home of God. There is a great difference between home and any other dwelling-place. Someone says, the heart has many a dwelling-place, but only once a home. I think there is truth in it. Most of you have a home. Some of you are not at home just now. You are in hotels. No one will ever hear you speak of the hotel as home. What is the difference? Who can answer? No man yet has ever spelled "home." No man yet has ever sung "home." Home is a sigh, a sob, laughter and rapture. Home cannot be defined, but I will tell you what it is. It is the place where you are "at home." I do not mind your smile. I can do no better than that. I know what it means and you know what it means. It is the place where you never need to keep up appearances - unless you have visitors. It is the place where you are supremely conscious that you have right of way, not the right of dogmatic authority, but the right of love. Every door swings open to you. Every picture indicates your welcome. The flowers that are placed by your side breathe an atmosphere of love that makes home. You are the home of God, the place into which He comes and rests, the place where there is no chamber locked against Him. You are the home of God.

That is saint-ship. His property, poor, worthless, lacking in beauty, but His. And the comfort of it, "His workmanship," feeling the pressure of His hand until I am in agony sometimes, yet knowing the Potter. It is not the principle that helps me. It is the Potter Who helps me. If you emphasize only the principle I am afraid. If you tell me only of the sovereignty of God, I am overwhelmed, but when I know the Potter I know that His crushing hand is crushing only to create. I love that one touch in the old prophetic story about the potter. If he break the vessel he will make it again. If the vessel be marred the potter will make it again. I am His workmanship. That is the second fact. Finally, I am His habitation. He has purchased me for a residence.

It seems to me that I might read the second phrase now almost without a word. "As becometh saints." The only interpretation of its meaning that is sufficient is that of going over these facts again in order to make the simplest application of them.

I am His property. How shall I live as becomes that fact? By seeing to it that all this is His, that of what belongs to Him I am not robbing Him. God may be robbed in many ways. I am not going to deal with the more objectionable and flagrant ways of doing so. The awful possibility of prostituting some power of the life which belongs to God to base uses is admitted. There are other and subtler methods. Some trembling soul who wants to live as becomes a saint may, by taking some weakness in the life and endeavouring to make it strong without His strength, rob Him. You say, I am not worthy to offer myself to Him. But you are His already. But there is, this weakness, you say, this infirmity! Do not forget that a great many of the hymns we are singing in evangelistic meetings are for the saint as well as for the sinner: -

Just as I am - though tossed about

With many a conflict, many a doubt,

Fightings and fears within, without,

O Lamb of God, I come.

He wants you as you are. That is the glory of saint-ship as revealed here. Counsels of perfection, not in order that you may become a saint, but perfect counsels because you are a saint. To walk as becomes a saint is to recognize that every fibre of the physical life, every movement of the mental life, every power of complex personality is His, and to hand over to Him His property. That is the first law of walking as becomes a saint. The application is more personal and pertinent as we get further on.

Let us take the next. "We are His workmanship." We may learn as much by the disparity as by the similarity in the use of all figures. We speak of the potter and the clay, of the fact that the clay has to be plastic in the hand of the potter; but there is the disparity, and it is at the point of the disparity that our difficulty exists. The clay has no will or wish or desire of its own, but we have will and wish and desire. That disparity reveals the very crux of the condition of saint-ship. The true attitude is that of yielding the will, the wish, the desire, to the mastery and compulsion of God's will, God's wish, God's desire. To me the profoundest thing in life is submission to the will of God. It is the last thing. It is the rock foundation. It will be the final thing, the capstone with glory gleaming on it. To be in His will, willingly in His will, "as becometh saints." A man ought to speak in the presence of that thought with great tenderness and great delicacy. I do not know that I have learned it. I want to learn it, always to recognize the truth so sublimely sung by Tennyson. How glibly we sing it and recite it, yet what an infinitely beautiful unfolding of the Christian philosophy there is in it:

Our wills are ours, we know not how:

Our wills are ours, to make them Thine.

That is the highest function of will, to will to do His will, God's will, so that I am to say, "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on": so that I am to say, Where He wills, what He wills, how He wills, when He wills; whether London, America, China, India, or Heaven, does not matter; whether to preach or be silent, to do more or to do less, does not matter; what He wills! Oh, soul of mine, see the vision and pray for strength to answer it. There is no man or woman of us here, comrades in the Christian life, who does not know that that is life, the clay willingly answering the pressure of the Potter. Be in His will. At the front? Yes, if He puts you there, with no mock modesty. At the back? Yes, surely, if He puts you there, with no repining. In His will. "As becometh saints."

Finally, the home of. God. Have I any chamber in this habitation locked against Him. You and I must answer that alone. I hate confessions in crowds. I am not going to make any. Is there some compartment, some chamber in your life to which you never admit God? You have given Him right of way over three-quarters of the home, but there is a part locked away from Him. You do not want Him there. You are glad to be here this morning, for you are laying open to Him the sides of your nature where He is welcome, but there is half an hour tomorrow when you would rather not have Him with you or in you. That is not walking as becomes saint-ship. Have you ever noticed how many days it took them to carry out the things that defiled it when they were cleansing the temple in the olden days of Hezekiah? Make application of the spiritual meaning to yourselves. How many things there are in His temples that dishonour Him. How many rooms of these homes we will not have Him in because we are ashamed. Shall we not open all the doors this morning? Hand over the keys to Him? Yes, if He comes in He will change the setting of things in that room! But He will add to the beauty! He will sweep the pictures from the walls. But He will hang finer ones there. He will burn those books upon the shelves. But He will give you other literature and better! Give Him right of way - forgive the familiarity of it. Make God at home in your life! This is what He seeks.

"The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." "For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God." It is a great prophetic word. The principle applies to this moment. London is groaning. New York is groaning. Paris is groaning. Centres of light and fashion and beauty, all are groaning, believe me, this morning. All the things we can hear, and the things that defy our hearing but which are there, the sob, and sigh, and wail of oppressed humanity. What are they waiting for? For you to be a saint and to live as becomes a saint. For me to have done with small thinking about saint-ship. For us, the property of God, to be at the disposal of God, the workmanship of God to be yielded wholly to God, the home of God to allow Him to possess every chamber.

When He so possesses His own there will be the salt that is aseptic, purifying all the life of the city and the nation; there will be light set upon a hill, illuminating vast expanses, and making all the details of domestic life beautiful, as a lampstand in the home. The world is waiting to see the saints of God, and God is waiting for His own. May God help us His saints, to live "as becometh saints."