

Health of Spirit

by G. Campbell Morgan

G. Campbell Morgan's sermon emphasizes the connection between holiness and spiritual health, highlighting the believer's journey towards perfection through God's work and personal obedience.

Scripture: Philippians 3:7

Topics: "Spiritual Health", "Holiness"

Description

G. Campbell Morgan emphasizes that holiness equates to spiritual health, derived from the Anglo-Saxon word meaning whole and complete. He reflects on the Apostle Paul's journey, illustrating that true holiness is not about perfection but about a continuous pursuit of spiritual growth and maturity. Morgan explains that while believers are called to be perfect in their spiritual health, they must recognize that true perfection will only be achieved in the presence of Christ. He stresses the importance of surrendering to God, renouncing sin, and allowing God to work within us to achieve this state of holiness. Ultimately, the sermon calls for a commitment to obedience and faith in God's transformative power.

Transcript

Holiness is simply another word for health, both being derived from the old Anglo-Saxon word halig, meaning whole and complete. It would be perfectly correct to speak of a holy body and a healthy spirit, but we have come to speak of bodily holiness as health, and of spiritual health as holiness. Holiness is not maturity, it is not finality; it is rather a condition for growth into maturity and unto finality.

In the third chapter of Philippians we have a brief autobiographical sketch of the apostle Paul. He first makes mention of the old life in which he formerly had confidence, and in which he still might have confidence, did he continue to measure things by the standards of the flesh. Then he goes on to declare that the things that had been gain to him, he counted loss for Christ. Notice he says:

"Howbeit what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. Yea, verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

In the past, on the way to Damascus, he counted loss, the things in which he had prided himself, in that moment when he surrendered himself, absolutely, with all his hopes, and aspirations, and prejudices-everything- to Christ, and said, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Now, over thirty years later he writes that he still counts all things but loss. He has not abandoned the position which he took up so long ago, and it is because he is in the same position that he is still in the place of blessing and power. Yet he is not

satisfied.

What more is he seeking? For answer to this question let us look at two statements which follow. First, "Not that I have already obtained or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be, that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus." Then, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye are otherwise minded, even this shall God reveal unto you." In these two statements we find the word "perfect" so used as to suggest a contradiction. In the first he declares he is not perfect. In the second he claims to be perfect. These words "perfect" in the original are not identical. The first statement may be read: "Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected." And the second: "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect." The difference between being perfected and being perfect is the difference between maturity of Christian life and holiness, the difference between the condition that is a present possibility and the condition which can never be attained until the Lord shall come and fashion anew the body of humiliation, and conform it to the body of His glory. I shall be perfected when I see Him as He is; my whole nature, even this body shall then be transformed into perfect likeness to Himself. I never can be perfected here, but I can be perfect in the sense of whole, healthy, holy.

The apostle uses the figure of a race to illustrate the Christian life, and what he says I think may be paraphrased in this way: "I am not yet perfected, I am not yet crowned; that for which my Lord apprehended me, was not this place of temptation and conflict, but the brightness of the joyful day when He will present me--whom He found so low down-- in the very presence of God, faultless as He Himself is faultless. That is the goal of my running, and the crowning point to which I have not yet attained; but let us, therefore, as many as be perfect--as many of us as are running the race in the strength and energy of the Holy Spirit, with every weight and sin laid aside, and with the very joy and love of God possessing us." We can be perfect thus. It is the difference between the crown upon the brow, and the passionate attitude of life which has the crown hi view, and forgetting all that is behind, presses toward it with full and complete purpose of life.

That condition of life is the condition of health of spirit before God, it is the condition of perfection in the present moment, and it is a condition which ought to mark every child of God from the moment of conversion.

The blossom upon the tree is perfect, beautifully perfect, but it is not perfected. It is not consummated; it is not mature. It needs the ministry of sun, and shower, and atmosphere, to ripen it into perfection. Not until the fires of autumn have acted on it, and it stands in all the glory of perfect fruit, will it be perfected.

Put a child of six months by the side of a man of forty; what a difference! They are both perfect, but the man is perfected with the perfection of maturity, while the child is not.

In order to the realization of this perfection of health it is first necessary to remember that holiness is the work of God in the life of the believer. To emphasize this let us take three or four passages of Scripture.

Philippians ii. 12, 13: "So, then, my beloved, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure."

"It is GOD." I am to work out what God works in, and I can never work out any more than God works in. It is only when we see this that we come into the place of health and blessing.

I. Thessalonians v. 23, 24: "And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you, Who will also do it." " Who will also do it." It is not we who must preserve blameless these three great departments of our being; it is GOD Who alone is equal to this, and all we have to do is to fall back upon Him and realize that it is His work.

Hebrews xiii. 20, 21: "Now the God of peace, Who brought again from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep, with the blood of the eternal covenant, even our Lord Jesus, make you perfect in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to Whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen." Notice that the power that is to sanctify is the power that brought again the Lord Jesus from among the dead. The one impossible thing in all the ages was the resurrection of a man from the dead, but the whole fabric of Christianity rests upon the accomplishment of that very thing, and the stupendous power that brought Him from the dead is the power that is to bring about my sanctification and my perfection. It is dependent not upon my poor feeble attempts, but upon the force of God Who brought from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jude 24, 25: "Now unto Him that is able to guard you from stumbling and to et you before the presence of His glory without blemish in exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord be glory, majesty, dominion, and power before all time, and now, and forever more. Amen." The true rendering is, "keep you from stumbling," not only from falling down. And what else? "To present you not only blameless, but faultless, before the presence of His glory." There is the perfect and the perfected. We are perfect because He keeps us from stumbling; we shall be perfected because He will present us faultless before the presence of His glory. The forgiveness of my sins at the cross depends upon Him, the power that heals and keeps me whole depends upon Him, my sanctification hour by hour depends upon Him, my final presentation before the presence of His glory depends upon Him. Just in proportion as we see that HE is to do this, in that proportion do we come into the place of blessing.

But while it is His work, the responsibility rests on me, that I be in the place in which God can do that work, that I am in the attitude to which He will respond with His power.

That attitude is declared in II Corinthians vi. 17, 18:

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

That is the attitude of separation and renunciation. God does not call us to renounce the great underlying principle of sin, for we cannot. God cleanses from that. But He does call us to the renunciation of sin as something which we commit of our own free will.

There are three phases of such sin:

First, " Sin is lawlessness." This definition of sin is perhaps the profoundest of all, including as it does both the underlying principle, and the outwardly expressed activity. I am using it now, however, only in the sense of wilful action. (I John iii. 4.) Every one believes that. It is the simple, every-day definition of sin. In other words, sin is wrongdoing.

Second, "To him, therefore, that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." (James iv. 17.) Sin is neglecting to do right. A great many heartily agree with the correctness of the first definition, but not with the second. A great many are prepared to admit that sin is wrongdoing, but have not learned that the omission of anything, no matter how simple, which is due to our Christian profession, is sin.

Third, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Romans xiv. 23.) This definition goes deeper still. If there comes into my life as a Christian a question as to whether some action is right or wrong, and I continue it, while yet doubtful concerning it, I am sinning, because my action is "not of faith."

Scores of young believers, if they could only see and believe that, would be saved from asking many questions. They ask:

"Is it right for me to go here or there, to do this or that?"

Now, the fact that the question arises proves that, at least for the present, it is wrong. The moment you are doubtful about a certain course of action your solemn duty is to cease that action. In the doing of that doubtful thing there is actual sin against God. There may be something which has been perfectly legitimate for you thus far, but suddenly, in your own communion, in the midst of a piece of service for God, that thing appears in such new light as to cause you to say:

"I wonder if that is right?"

The moment the doubt is suggested, the only course open is to cease from doing that thing. In process of time you may be able to go back to it, because the doubt may be removed, but you cannot afford to let anything about which there is a suspicion of doubt stand between you and your personal communion with God. The moment you begin to do it you are in the region of sin.

We are called upon to-day, so far as our will is concerned, to say: "Lord, we will put away actual wrongdoing out of our lives. We will come into the place of quick and ready obedience; to Thy will, when Thou shalt make it known, anywhere, in our houses, in our habits, in our inward life, there shall be no resistance. We will cease doing anything about which we are doubtful."

And yet again. There is not only to be separation and renunciation, but there is to be the surrender of my whole being to God. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." (Romans xii. 1.)

No one word seems to convey all that is meant by surrender. "Consecration" is a blessed word, but people seem to have an idea that consecration means coming every now and then, to give ourselves up to God anew. We cannot reconsecrate and reconsecrate, though we may repeatedly call to mind the perpetual fact of our consecration. The word that helps me more than any other as marking my attitude toward God is the word "abandonment." It is a mighty word filled with weakness. It indicates my falling back upon God.

"But what about consequences?"

I have nothing to do with consequences.

"But God may take me clean out of the place where I am."

I have nothing to do with that. Whether it is in China, India, America, England, or heaven, I do not care. That is surrender, that is abandonment, if I know anything about it. "Lord, do with me as Thou wilt, in all

the relations of my life, in all the avenues of my being, everywhere and at all times." "Present yourselves a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

Now by God's grace renounce sin, cut a clear line of separation between the old life and the new, so far as actual wrong is concerned, so far as the will is concerned. You cannot give up your wrongdoing unless you get the energy of God, but you cannot get the energy of God until you are willing to give up your wrongdoing. As long as you are clinging to sin, or neglecting what you ought to do, or doing doubtful things, you will not get God's blessing. Let the sin go, and cast yourself upon God.

And then what?

Believe. Abandon and believe--I do not know which comes first. They go together.

Some may say, "We will abandon, but we cannot trust."

Then you do not abandon. There is no value in standing on the edge of a sheet of ice and saying that it bears, while you will not go on it. Out on it, man! Believe and abandon yourself to Him in one great act. O my brother, longing as you are for holiness, will you quit your sin, and fall back upon God?

You cannot live the blessed life by your own effort, but you can if HE lives it in you by His own overwhelming grace. He has taught me that I nothing can, but HE all things can.

What a small thing will keep men and women from this blessed life! In 1895 I went to Douglas, on the Isle of Man, and in one of my afternoon meetings there came to me a young lady who said that all the joy had gone out of her life four years ago.

"Praise God," I said.

"What about?" said she.

"That you know when it went; because if you know when it went, you know how it went."

She said: "I do not think I do."

"Yes, you do; you are very definite about the time; now go back four years and tell me what happened."

She hung her head for a while, and I knew that something had happened.

"What was it?"

She replied: "I disagreed with my oldest friend. We were both Christians, and I wanted to tell her that I was wrong, but I did not, and she has gone away from the country."

"Well," I said, "it is at least evident that you know the reason of your failure."

"What am I to do?" she asked.

"Write to her and tell her that you were wrong; that is what the Master wanted you to do then."

"I cannot do that."

"You will never get back to the joy until you do."

She came all through that series of meetings and fought against God. She had all the knowledge of the blessed life that had come to her from her past experience, and yet was in darkness because she would not go back to the point of disobedience and be obedient.

The next year I went back to Douglas, and my first meeting was a meeting for workers. One of the first persons I spoke to was that young woman. The first thing I said to her was:

"You have sent that letter?"

She said, "Yes," and every line on her face convinced me that the joy had returned. She said: "I wrote it last night! I have been fighting God for twelve months about that letter, and all last week as I looked forward to this mission, I have been in hell, and at last I said, 'O God, I cannot bear this any longer, I will give in.' I wrote that letter and sealed it and carried it at midnight and dropped it in the letter-box, and as that letter went into the box, heaven came back into my heart."

Of course it did.

What is the little thing that is keeping heaven and God out of your heart, and all these blessings away from your soul? It is He that brings the cleansing and the light, but you must be obedient. I beseech you, attend to that upon which He has put His hand. Separate. Renounce sin. Step out upon God, and the healing and the blessing will come.

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