

Today is June 10, 2021. 70 years ago today, June 10, 1951, was a brilliantly beautiful sunny Sunday. The Evangelical United Brethren Church in Dallas, Oregon was completely filled with people. The great south window was one of the most beautiful stained glass windows I have ever seen. The magnificent display of the many, many colors streamed through on the rays of the June sun. They formed a myriad of beauty as they were reflected on her beautiful satin white wedding dress. Marjorie Kliever walked down the aisle on her father's arm, and was presented to me by her mother and father. We turned and faced our pastors as they performed our wedding. That union, "for as long as you both shall live," 70 years ago today, was blessed with five children, and now 10 grand children and 14 great grandchildren. A break in that union came after 65 years, 3 months and 5 days, when my darling Margie went to her eternal home in heaven, where she awaits my arrival in God's timing. So, my friends and family, today is very, very special to me. I trust today's Devotional will be a blessing to you.

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

A Devotional prepared by Dr. Robert L. Morris

Posted on June 10, 2021

"Give unto the LORD, O you mighty ones, give unto the LORD glory and strength. Give unto the LORD the glory due His name; Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness." (Psalm 29:1-2)

The lengthening years in my life deepen the conviction that when all theological discussions have ended, theological debates concluded, and theological divisions resolved or remain unresolved, there is something beautiful about Christian holiness. It is the heart of our deepest needs. It stands in stark contrast to critical harshness, for it is the beauty of God, and the loveliness of Christ. Christian holiness is at the very core of our relationship with God.

On a beautiful, sunny Sunday afternoon in Dallas, Oregon, June 10, 1951, 70 years ago today, Marjorie Kliever and Robert Morris pledged their undying love to each other. That day began a journey in which the Lord demonstrated to me that the beauty of holiness may be seen clearly in a life fully devoted to God. For the 65 plus years that we lived together until Jesus called her to that eternal home, she was the most powerful evidence of the beauty of holiness I could possibly know. Today, I praise the Lord for the beauty of holiness! I am more convinced than ever of the truth that we are to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. May this Devotional help all of us to live in the Word and in prayer that the Holy Spirit will help us to live the beauty of holiness.

I believe this growing conviction in my heart and life is well founded. It compels me to say that unfortunately we sometimes notice some actions that pass for holiness, some things that are grim and grumbling, some that are sour and censoring, and some that are narrowly legalistic, some that are repressive, and some words that fall far short of holiness, must be ruled out, because all of that is nothing but counterfeit.

I want to draw our attention to the theme of King David's lovely song of praise in which he very early on calls us to "worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness." If indeed we are a "holiness" body, or that we are people who promote Scriptural holiness, and it is correct that we make that confession, then we need to have a Biblically clear understanding of what is meant by David's words. To do so, perhaps it will be helpful to note the following.

1. HOLINESS WITH BLEMISHES: Yes, there may be a confession of holiness, but at times it may also be stained with blemishes. Someone engaged me in a conversation with the concern that in wide areas of the church today, and particularly in what we understand to be "holiness" churches, so little is said or preached or felt concerning the great Biblical theme of holiness, of God's call to holiness, of God's mandate for holiness, of the means to holiness, of the source of holiness, of the doctrine or theology of holiness. I joined with that person in deploring this, but at the same time missed the quiet radiance of Jesus – the beauty of holiness. The person was gloomy, strained, negative, and almost argumentative.

A missionary who strenuously promoted the doctrine of holiness in its old-line formulation was observed by another person administering a severe beating to an African houseboy. The harshness, the ferocity, and the severity appalled the person looking on – it would appall me too! I have heard "holiness" evangelists denouncing what may well be perceived as "false doctrines" relating to the Word of God. Turning up the heat for a final eruption of indignation, one said: "If that man is not going to hell, there is no use to have a hell." Even if eternity proves the evangelist correct, and I suggest that will not happen, the question still needs to be asked: "Was Christian holiness...the beauty of holiness...the loveliness of Jesus commended to anyone by such judgmentalism?" In the 23rd chapter of Matthew one finds recorded the seven woes pronounced by our Lord Jesus. These were shattering austerities, but they flowed with tenderness in His voice because there was compassion and love in His heart. It is tragic that in too many instances negativity, harshness, judgmentalism become blemishes that remove the allure of the holy.

2. HOLINESS WITH BEAUTY. It is the prophet Isaiah who heard the Seraphim cry loudly: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory." (Isaiah 6:3; NKJV) This divine declaration is the absolute, undeniable, inerrant, unquestionable, final and ultimate standard by which any definition of "holiness" must be measured. Therefore, it is the Biblical standard of holiness against which we test our holiness. It establishes the focus of that to which the Holy Spirit is leading the fully surrendered heart and life. It is the objective result of why Jesus poured out His life on the cross. It is the provision of the cross, for "Jesus also, that He might sanctify (make holy) the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate." (Hebrews 13:12; NKJV) More than 30 times in the Greek New Testament one finds a word that is often translated "good," "goodness," or "well." The word *καλός*, - kalos - an adjective, may at times stand as a synonym for the word *ἀγαθός*, - agathos - another adjective that may be translated by the English word "good," or "goodness." The word *ἀγαθός* carries the sense of doing something that is "worthy," "upright," "correct." But the word *καλός*, expresses the ideas of "beauty," "soundness," "goodness," "healthiness." Holy living is beautiful living. Purity that is negative, legalistic, and denunciatory is like a lily that has begun to rot. It is ill smelling! The Apostle Paul rescues the "beauty of holiness" for us in his letter to the Galatian Churches: *Τὸ δὲ καλὸν ποιοῦντες μὴ ἐγκακῶμεν, καιρῷ γὰρ ἰδίῳ θερίσομεν μὴ ἐκλυόμενοι.* "And let us not grow weary in doing good, (note *καλός* used here) for in our own right time we will reap the harvest if we do not lose heart." (Galatians 6:9) (translation mine)

There are many characteristics of what we call "beauty," but some have been given a high rating in any definition. For one, truthfulness is a powerful and essential element in the thought of "beauty." Pretense and sham are beauty-spoilers. King David had a keen insight when he declared: "Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts." (Psalm 51:6)

In "beauty" there is also what one may call richness. It is the artistic plus. It is not the same as excess, for that comes under the heading of the extravagant. It is, rather, that which excels without being excessive. It is the radiance that attracts and is not repulsive. It is the magnet that focuses on and draws toward the overflowing glory of the indwelling Christ in one's life. It is not something to be pumped up. It is artesian, ever springing up from within the clean heart. I suggest that this beauty is the attractiveness that makes Christian holiness alluring. The

words to that little song we sang in Sunday School many years ago are still powerful: "Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me; all His wonderful passion and purity! O Thou Spirit divine, all my nature refine till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me." (Lyrics by Albert Orsborn in 1886, with music by Tom Jones in 1891) Oh! May it be true in each of our lives this very day!

3. HOLINESS WITH BALANCE. In a holiness church or denomination, preaching, teaching, presenting, declaring "Scriptural holiness" in its churches and institutions, without being hyper-critical, I feel I need to suggest that there may sometimes be a lack of presenting the finely tuned element of balance between the crisis experience of heart cleansing and the process of heart purity in life ... that is, "living holiness." If "the beauty of holiness" is to be authentic, and alluring, we must insist on the quality of proportion...the element of balance.

Surely Jesus must have felt the ugly imbalance of the Pharisees who went about punctiliously tithing little bits and pieces of "mint, anise, and cumin," while neglecting such plain, obvious responsibilities stated so clearly in the Scriptures: "to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with (their) God." (Micah 6:8) This magnificent quality of balance by which the "beauty of holiness" may be observed and perhaps even judged, appears with many lovely faces:

- a. The ability to disagree without being disagreeable;
- b. Maintaining an uncompromising witness for Jesus, while respecting the beliefs of others;
- c. The art of abstaining without pride in one's abstention or in censuring the beliefs of others;
- d. A discipline of high standards of belief in the Holy Scriptures, and the ministry of teaching without being involved in secondary or non-essential issues.

Blessed are the balanced - those who have learned that the process of true holiness in life can be reality only after having first experienced the decisive moment of sanctification subsequent to being born again. This is the cleansing of the heart of all sin. Then this decisive experience of heart cleansing can be maintained only through the process of the continual refining work of the Holy Spirit in one's life. The decisive experience of being sanctified wholly, or through and through, (1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24) deals with the sin issue. The heart is made pure, free from the destructive sin nature. Many limitations of the human nature obviously remain, but there is no Biblical mandate that people continue sinning! Rather, to the contrary, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made (us) free from the law of sin and death." (Romans 8:2) This then is maintained by growing in "the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ as the continuing experience of walking in obedience to the Word of God. It is enabled by the grace and empowering ministry of the Holy Spirit within us. This we usually designate as "spiritually maturing in holiness." The life of holiness is impossible without first the decisive, crisis experience of heart cleansing - entire sanctification. The crisis experience of heart cleansing (sanctified through and through) cannot be maintained without the continuing experience of walking in obedience to the Word of God, enabled by the grace and empowering ministry of the Holy Spirit within us.

A pastor was asked how he felt about leaving a church he had served for many years. His answer was: "There was a tear in one eye and a twinkle in the other!" If it had been all "tears" or all "twinkle" it would have been out of balance, and lacking the loveliness of Christ. What prevailed was not morbidity, but a wholesome balance. It was the balance of a man of God through whom shone "the beauty of holiness." What is the source of this "beauty?" It is from Jesus Christ. "Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me!" Finally then, the secret is twofold: a radical cleansing followed by a regular contemplation. David said: "Create in me a clean heart" - (Ps. 51:10) - something deeply decisive. Paul wrote: "We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into His likeness from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor. 3:18) - something progressively transfiguring." Neither without the other is enough. Together they produce "the alluring beauty of holiness."

Let's close this Devotional with the hymn written in 1878 by Edwin Hatch, and set to the music composed in 1894 by Robert Jackson.

BREATHE ON ME, BREATH OF GOD

1. Breathe on me, breath of God; fill me with life anew,
That I may love what Thou dost love, and do what Thou wouldst do.
2. Breathe on me, breath of God, until my heart is pure,
Until with Thee I will one will, to do and to endure.
3. Breathe on me, breath of God, till I am wholly Thine,
Until this earthly part of me glows with Thy fire divine.
4. Breathe on me, breath of God; so shall I never die,
But live with Thee the perfect life of Thine eternity.

In the course of my more than 70 years in ministering the Word of God, I recall some very meaningful highlights. One of them focuses on Portland First Evangelical United Brethren Church, where I was the Senior Pastor from 1964-1971. With her God-gifted outstanding voice, and flowing from a pure heart of love for Jesus, Maxine Senn, accompanied by our gifted organist, Bethel Unruh on the great pipe organ, sang the second verse of this great old hymn immediately before I preached, Sunday after Sunday ... something that continued for many months! I know of nothing that better prepared our congregation for the Word of God. What a glorious memory! "Breathe on me, breath of God, until my heart is pure, until with Thee I will one will, to do and to endure." Amen!