

Personal Beauty

by J.R. Miller

True personal beauty consists in the life, the soul that looks out through windows, and is cultivated through the development of Christian life and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:7, Psalm 51:10, Matthew 5:8, Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 2:10, Philippians 1:6, Colossians 3:10, 1 Peter 3:3-4

Topics: "Inner Transformation", "True Beauty"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes that the desire for beauty is natural and that true beauty is rooted in holiness and the soul's character rather than mere physical appearance. He explains that while sin has marred human beauty, Christ's redemptive work aims to restore both the soul and the body to their original perfection. Miller asserts that personal beauty is cultivated through inner spiritual growth, which manifests outwardly, and that love and kindness are essential to achieving true beauty. He encourages believers to focus on the heart's purity and the cultivation of virtues, as these will ultimately reflect in their outward appearance. The sermon concludes with the hope that even those who feel physically unattractive can find beauty through Christ's transformative power.

Transcript

The desire to be beautiful, is natural and right. Holiness is beauty. The human form, when it first came from the Creator's hands, was perfect in loveliness. It was the embodiment of all that is noble, graceful, winning, impressive and charming. We cannot doubt that God made a perfect body as the temple and home of a perfect soul, that bore his own image. He who made all things beautiful, certainly gave the highest loveliness to his masterpiece.

But sin has marred the grace of the human form. Perfect physical beauty is not found in anyone. There are fragments of the shattered splendor found--one feature in one, and another in another--by which we have hints of what the original was. The artists have tried to reproduce the first perfect beauty--by gathering from many forms, these fragments of loveliness and combining them all in one, which they call the ideal human beauty. They point to certain remains of ancient Greek sculpture as presenting, as nearly as human skill can do it, the restored beauty of creation.

How far we may have succeeded in achieving its aim we know not. We cannot tell whether the Apollo Belvidere is or is not a restored Adam, or whether the Venus de Medici fairly represents the beauty of Eve. This is not our inquiry at this time. But we know that all Christian life, is a growth toward perfect beauty.

Christ came to restore ruined nature, to its lost loveliness. This is true not only of the spiritual life--but also of the physical form. We are to wear the spotless image of our Lord in the future world. Perhaps we do not always realize the full meaning of this truth, as it is declared in the Scriptures. It is explicitly and positively taught, that Christ will change our vile bodies--and fashion them like unto his own glorified body. This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

This is not the place for speculations as to the nature or material of the resurrection body, and it may only be said further that the plain, clear teachings of inspiration, are that all blemishes and infirmities are to be left in the grave. There will be no deformities in the new body. There will be no sin and no disease. All the work of sin--is to be undone by redemption, and hence the body will be restored to its original perfectness. Thus the development of Christian life, is toward perfect beauty, and the desire to be beautiful in form and feature, unless perverted, is a proper and holy desire.

"What, then, is true personal beauty?" Answering the question from a Christian point of view, we know that it does not consist in mere physical charms, in proportion, grace, figure, complexion--but in the life--the soul that looks out through windows.

"What is beauty? Not the show

Of graceful limbs and features. No;

These are but flowers

That have their dated hours

To breathe their momentary sweets, then go.

'Tis the stainless soul within

That outshines the fairest skin."

It is a well-known and universally-accepted principle, that the soul gives to the body its form; and that the life writes its whole history in the features of the face. A beautiful character, will transfigure the countenance. You look into it, and you read refinement, purity, delicacy, peace, love. In like manner, an evil character hangs its curtains at all the windows, and you see at a glance selfishness, cunning, lust, deceit, falsehood, malignity, coarseness, unrest. So all spiritual culture is toward beauty, for as the heart becomes filled with the holy graces of the Spirit--they make themselves manifest in the transforming of the features.

It was sin which shattered the original splendor of the human form. All blemishes, disfigurements and deformities have been produced by violations of divine laws, by over-indulgence of passions and appetites, and by diseases and infirmities resulting therefrom. Hence all true searching for beauty, must be along the path on which it was lost. Those who would recover and retain loveliness of form and feature--must seek to have the divine laws written upon their hearts, and assimilated in their lives.

The observance of the physical laws of our being, is of vital importance. These are inexorable. There is no forgiveness for their violation. A large part of the misery and wretchedness of this world, comes from the disregard of these precepts. The beauty as well as the comfort and happiness of men and women, would be immeasurably advanced if all could be brought to obey, strictly and invariably, the simple laws of

physical life.

Then still more essential is the observance of moral, and spiritual precepts. The soul informs its own dwelling. There is no beauty in the idiot's face. The most perfect features have scant loveliness, when there is a vacant mind behind them. Selfishness wipes out the soft and tender lines, and leaves the cheeks faded and cold. Baseness degrades the majesty of the countenance, and takes the kingly glory from the eyes. Greed petrifies the features. Anger, nourished and cherished, writes itself upon the visage. Impurity of soul and life, robs the expression of the bloom of innocence, and hangs its telltale marks all about the face. It is utterly vain to hope to be beautiful--with bad tempers, groveling tastes or base passions ruling in the heart. The face may still wreath itself with smiles. The greatest pains may still be taken to nourish and retain the bloom and freshness of innocence. But it is in vain. A discrowned soul cannot long preserve in its palace, the splendors and glories of its days of power and majesty. The inner life writes every line of its history on the features, where the practiced eye can read its every word.

So, also, beauty of soul exhibits itself in the expression. Kindness wreathes the face with gentleness. Holy thoughts refine the countenance. Grand purposes, noble resolves, high aspirations, clothe the form and features with dignity and power. Sincerity and truth transfigure even the homeliest looks.

Those who would cultivate personal beauty, must look to their inner life. As the dweller's taste and refinement always manifest themselves in the adornment of his home--so goodness and moral beauty in a soul will always exhibit themselves in look and manner and bearing.

Hence there is no beautifier of the person--like the Holy Spirit dwelling in a lowly heart. The plainest features are often made to shine in almost supernatural loveliness, when struck through with the warmth and tenderness of indwelling love. The most beautiful people in the world--are truly benevolent people--their hearts full of sympathy and kindness, and their lives devoted to labors of love for the good of the human race. The sweetest faces I ever saw, were those of dear old Christian mothers. All their life through they have kept their hearts at peace. They have never resisted, never defended their rights, never struggled against circumstances. They have quietly submitted to the will of God, and his calm and holy peace has filled their souls and ruled their lives. This blessed peace, indwelling, has made their faces almost transparent, radiant with the radiance of heaven and lowly beyond any picture on this earth.

Old age writes no lines of decay, and leaves no marks of wasting or fading upon them. The sweetness and freshness of youth, linger through all the chill winter of years, like those tender plants and flowers that creep out in springtime from under melting snows unharmed and fragrant. An anxious and fretful disposition, simply reverses all this.

Love is the fulfilling of the law--not selfish love--but the love that goes out in self-denial, in sympathy, in kindness, in continual thought and effort and sacrifice for others. Such love builds beauty for its home, just as the chaste and delicate flower by its own nature fashions for itself a form of exquisite shape and hue. "The angels are beautiful because they are good, and God is beauty because he is love." Men and women grow lovely, even in outward feature--just in the degree in which they become filled with the love of God.

Not, then, to the outside must our care be given--but to the culture of the heart! A beautiful soul--will transform the most repulsive external features. On the other hand, a bad heart will break through natural loveliness, spoiling its delicacy and beauty. When God took from a devoted mother, a precious and her only child, she, to occupy her heart and hands in some way about her vanished treasure, filled the first days with painting a picture of her child. Love wrought very skillfully, and under her brush the very features

of the sweet child-life came out in the picture. The picture was laid carefully away for a few days, and when she sought it again the eyes were dimmed and the face marred with strange and ugly blotches. Patiently she wrought it over a second time, and the beauty was restored. Again it was laid away, and again the ugly blotches appeared. The fault was in the paper on which picture was painted. There were chemicals lurking in it which affected the delicate colors.

The analogy holds in human lives. We may adorn the face and features as we will. By art and skill and care--we may try to keep the complexion fair, the skin fresh and soft and the whole countenance beautiful; but if there are within us, selfish hearts, groveling dispositions, uncontrolled appetites, they will work out through the surface-beauty, and will blotch and spoil it all!

The true culture of personal beauty--is not external; it is heart-work. It is not the hot sun, the high winds, or any climatic accidents, that steal from cheeks their truest loveliness. I see ladies taking the most wonderful care to keep their complexions soft and white. They shield themselves scrupulously from wind and sun. If we were all to give as much thought and pains to keep the bloom of our heart's purity untarnished, and the warmth and sweetness of our heart's life unwasted--our faces would soon shine with the luster of angelic beauty!

There are some who can never hope to be physically beautiful in face and form, in this world. Their visages are in some way marred. Accident or disease has left them disfigured. Or the sins of past generations have visited them in the shape of some physical deformity that dooms them to live in a ruined soul-house all their days. But even to such, Christ brings the possibility of the rarest beauty. The deformed Christian will walk erect in beautiful womanhood or majestic manhood, on the shores of immortality! The face once scarred by the flames--will appear in unblemished loveliness in the new home. Wrinkled old-age will get back all the freshness of childhood.

Christ is able to take the basest fragment of humanity--and make it all glorious and divine. As the summer takes the barest tree from the clasp of winter, covers it with garments of green and steepes it in fragrance--so the Lord Jesus can take the most ill-formed, the ugliest and most unsightly character, and clothe it in the garments of grace and love!

A piece of canvas is of a trifling value. You can buy it for a few pennies. You would scarcely think it worth picking up, if you saw it lying in the street. But an artist takes it and draws a few lines and figures on it, and then with his brush touches in certain colors--and the canvas is sold for hundreds of dollars! Just so, does Christ take up a ruined, worthless human life which has no beauty, no attractiveness--but is repulsive, blotched and stained by sin. Then the fingers of his love--add touches of beauty, painting the divine image upon it, and it becomes precious, glorious, immortal!

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