

## THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

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"Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness"  
(Psalm 29:2).

Sin is represented in the Bible as a thing of mortal heinousness. In its inner condition, it is likened unto a cage of unclean birds; while in its outer manifestations, it is spoken of as leprosy, with all of its loathsome and unmolified sores. In fact, it is so repulsive to the divine sense of moral propriety that Christ is disposed to cast it away from His presence, in His final disposition of it, as the scavengers of the city of Jerusalem took the filth of the city and cast it into the valley of Hinnom, which was used by the Master as a figure of hell. On the other hand, the principle of holiness is a thing of moral beauty in His sight; so much so, that He is represented as receiving to Himself those who possess it as a bridegroom would receive a well-adorned and beautiful bride. When describing a thing of beauty, it is common to portray its distinctive features.

(1) The beauty of holiness is seen in its power. There is always something majestic and admirable about power in its natural manifestations. We are filled with awe as we stand on Table Rock and behold the wonderful power of Niagara Falls. We gaze with admiration at the mighty roll of the ocean waves and the awful sweep of the passing storm. There is great beauty in the act of divine power that suddenly redeems the profligate, cleanse the soul from the darkest moral defilement and then preserves from moral relapse. In these respects we are witnessing just as great exhibitions of divine power as were manifested in the case of Daniel in the lions' den, or the Hebrew children in the fiery furnace.

(2) Holiness is beautiful in its unity. Friction in the operation of machinery is always annoying to the ear of an expert machinist. When we see complicated mechanism operating smoothly and in perfect harmony, it becomes a thing of mechanical beauty. The beauty of holiness is seen in its enabling people of all degrees of light, different talents, temperaments, and constitutionalities, to live and work together, so lubricated with holy oil that there is no moral friction. It was this beauty that attracted David's attention and caused him to exclaim, "Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." To "dwell together" means more than to call on the brethren once in a while.

(3) Holiness is beautiful in its ardent love. Love, with its devotion—be it in bird, beast, or man; be it found in a humble cottage, or in the stately, gorgeously furnished palace—is beautiful to behold and has received the expressed adoration of poets of all ages. Holiness is called "perfect love" because it eliminates from the soul all of the unlovely and the unloving traits. Those who possess it, from the standpoint of heaven, are the most beautiful people in all the world.

(4) Holiness is beautiful in its ability to give happiness and contentment, amid all the vicissitudes of a life of conflict and disappointment. What could be more beautiful than Daniel, calm and composed in the lions' den; or Paul and Silas, singing in jail, with their lacerated backs and their feet bound in the stocks? How beautiful, also Madame Guyon, so happy in the Roman Bastille that she declared that the stones in the wall of her cell looked to her like jewels. Consider such a beautiful scene as John Bunyan, in Bedford jail, calmly writing "Pilgrim's Progress."

(5) The beauty of holiness is an inner one. Human beauty is only skin deep, is easily marred, and soon fades away. The beauty of a holy life radiates from a heart made whiter than snow. It is the outbreathing of soul health. It is written, "The King's daughter is all glorious within," but this inner beauty so affects her outer life that "Her clothing is of wrought gold." Peter called it, "The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." This outer beauty is but the wondrous unfolding of the "Christ in you" who is, in point of moral beauty, "the Lily of the valley" and the "Rose of Sharon." When we have "Christ formed within," there will be no need of frequent visits to the world's beauty shop to receive religious painting, church membership, penciling, or moral cosmetics to improve our moral condition.

(6) The beauty of holiness is an inherited beauty. Human beauty is often a family distinction which has been entailed upon its fortunate possessors by their parents or past ancestors. This is so concerning moral beauty; for it is one of the distinctive attributes of the "household of faith" and the "family of the living God." God Himself is the Father of the household and family. Our Elder Brother, "the only begotten of the Father," is said to be "The brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person. Because of this, 'He is altogether lovely.'" David said "The beauty of the Lord our God is upon us;" and we are to be "confirmed to the image of His Son." Hence, the divine beauty is transferred to the children. In nature, we often notice breaks in the family resemblance. Not so, however, with those who are of the divine family; for, notwithstanding they are "a great number that no man can number," this distinctive family beauty will be the great mark of recognition sought by the Lord, when He comes to claim His own, for we read, "But we know, that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him."

(7) The beauty of holiness is distinguished from all other beauty, in that it is unfading and ever-increasing. All other beauty—be it found in botany, geology, astronomy, art, or the human form—is subject to change and decay. How soon is personal beauty gone, in spite of all the expediences used to retain it! Touched by the ravishing hand of time, the once beautiful, luxurious hair becomes thin and faded; the bright eyes become dim; the well-rounded and beautiful face becomes wasted and wrinkled; the erect and shapely form stooped; and, at last, all ends in the nauseousness of death and the mildew of the grave. But the beauty of holiness is ever maintained by a moral principle called life. It is continually revived and refreshed by the water of life, everflowing into the soul, from the fountain of life.

If a beautiful lady could find a fountain of perpetual life, and could drink continually of its water, she would be able to ever retain the freshness of her beauty. The saints have found the fountain of eternal life, and while, by faith, they drink of its water, all the attributes of holy beauty will be in evidence. No frequent beholding themselves in the mirror of divine truth will ever reveal to them any of the wrinkles and blemishes of sin—the signs of moral waste and retrogression.

(8) Natural beauty seems to be a matter of taste, more or less controlled by custom and environment. The Indian thinks he is beautiful, when he is adorned with a profusion of feathers and has his face painted. Heathen women seem to think that it adds to their beauty to have their hair daubed with mud, and their ankles and arms

loaded down with iron rings, and a ring in their nose. In this country the votaries of fashion are sacrificing their health, their God-given sense of propriety, and much of their character, in carrying out their idea of beauty. Hence, what seems to be beautiful to some, to others appears absurd and ridiculous.

Divine beauty is also a matter of holy taste. God and all of the inhabitants of heaven, and the saints on earth, look upon holiness as an element of moral beauty. On the other hand, there are millions—and many of them are church members—who see no beauty in it whatever. The Prophet Isaiah, clothed with prophetic vision, looked down the ages and saw the coming Christ, Judging from the standpoint of sinful men, he said, "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him." This is due to a perverted moral vision. The grace of God changes this perversion, and you may as well try to separate perfume from the rose, heat from fire, or weight from lead, as to attempt to separate a love for God from a love for His character, with all of its perennial beauty.

(9) In conclusion, we note that natural beauty may be improved. For instance, the ill-shaped nose or ear may be greatly improved and the skin may be made more beautiful by certain expediences.

Just so, the outer lives of even holy people may be often greatly improved by the correction of certain errors and infirmities. These deformities do not pertain to the inner beauty of the soul, but to the things that have a tendency to bedim its moral beauty, in their open lives. This improvement is called "perfect holiness" and belongs to a state of maturity, rather than heart purity. We are reminded that the modern sewing machine has been relieved of much that was formerly bungling in its appearance, without improving the stitch; so "perfecting holiness" adds to the beauty of the outer life, after the heart has been cleansed from all sin. I once saw a salesman arrange his stock of sample shoes in a sales-room. He adjusted them to mirrors, set in beautiful frames, and decorated the tables with a profusion of tissue paper. These things did not, in any sense, improve the make of the shoes or the quality of the leather; but it did give them a better appearance. Just so, there are many whose hearts are washed whiter than snow, who have great need of moral tissue paper to give their holiness a better outer appearance and better circulation.—The Can. Free Methodist.

When Chrysostom appeared before the Roman emperor, charged with being a Christian, the emperor threatened him with banishment if he would not renounce Christ. Chrysostom replied: "Thou canst not banish me, for the whole world is my Father's kingdom." "Then I will take away thy life," said the emperor. "But thou canst not," was the reply, "for my life is hid with Christ in God." "I will take away thy treasures." "Thou canst not, for my treasure is in heaven, where my heart is." "Then I will drive thee away from man, is." "Then I will drive thee away from man, thou canst not," again said Chrysostom, "for I have one Friend from whom thou canst never separate me. I defy thee, thou canst do me no harm."

Love and hate must come to birth;  
Christ and not Cain must rule the earth!  
—Markham