

## **The Beauty of Faith, the Ugliness of Sin**

‘Beauty is only skin-deep ... but it is skin-deep.’ A husband wrote, ‘My wife was grading a science test at home that she had given to her elementary school class and was reading some of the results to me. The subject was “The Human Body”, and the first question was: “Name one of the major functions of your skin”. One child wrote: “To keep people who look at you from throwing up”.’

That child has a great point! It illustrates a great spiritual reality as well. Imagine for a second that you are God. What does He see when He looks at you. What about before you came to faith in Lord Jesus? Can you imagine? If not, I can most definitely tell you. Consider this situation: ‘Finding one of her students making faces at others on the playground, a teacher stopped to gently reprove the child. Smiling sweetly, she said, “Son, when I was a child, I was told that if I made ugly faces, my face would freeze, and I would stay like that”. The boy looked up into her face, looked intently for a moment, and then replied, “Well, teacher, you can’t say you weren’t warned”.’ Yep. In our natural states, let’s face it, we’re all pretty ugly! Ah, some of us may have some physical beauty, but as we’ve already established, beauty is only skin deep. But when God looks at us, He sees far more than

our skin. He sees into us, inside us, down to the deepest reaches of our hearts. He knows far more about us than we do ourselves. What is impenetrable for us is an open book to Him. And, like that teacher on the playground, we, too, have all been warned. Sin makes us ugly. Indeed, we're ugly from the moment we were born, from the instant we were conceived. Yes, ugly ducklings we all are. Or were.

Now the fairy tale ugly duckling grew up to become a beautiful swan. Which itself is a metaphor of how we become beautiful. When we put on faith, as it were, all our ugliness is covered in the precious, priceless blood of Christ Jesus, and we suddenly become as beautiful in our Father's eyes as He is, always was, and always will be. But in the midst of our everyday living, we trip and fall. We mess up here and there. We fail to control our tongues and sin in words to others, even to ourselves. Who hasn't ever entertained a wicked thought in the "privacy" of our own minds? Though we didn't act on it, Heaven forbid!, just the thought itself was sin. And sin, by definition, is hideous. But repenting of it, changing out our minds, daily, as we do weekly here silently when we confess our sins, puts them under the blood of our Savior, and those sins are blotted out, as if they never were. Our perfect, pristine beauty is restored, which Adam and Eve lived in before they sinned.

The obvious way forward in life is to both minimize our sinning, and maximize our "beautification". The Bible has much to

say about how. We just read a passage that deals with it, as Peter exhorts us in II Peter 1:5-9: “So devote yourselves to lavishly supplementing your faith with goodness, and to goodness add understanding, and to understanding add the strength of self-control, and to self-control add patient endurance, and to patient endurance add godliness, and to godliness add mercy toward your brothers and sisters, and to mercy toward others add unending love. Since these virtues are already planted deep within, and you possess them in abundant supply, they will keep you from being inactive or fruitless in your pursuit of knowing Jesus Christ more intimately. But if anyone lacks these things, he is blind, constantly closing his eyes to the mysteries of our faith, and forgetting his innocence—for his past sins have been washed away.”

Peter explains how these virtues, these qualities, all stem from faith. Verse 9 again: “But if anyone lacks these things, he is blind, constantly closing his eyes to the mysteries of our faith, and forgetting his innocence—for his past sins have been washed away”. Note that “faith” here is not talking about religious belief, but about living in faith. People believe all sorts of stuff all the time, comparatively little of it truly affects their lives. But what does is patently obvious by how they behave. Do our lives reflect “real” faith? Does God see the beauty of faith when He looks at us, which is continuously? Seems, we have to be on our best behavior 24/7! We’re under constant divine surveillance! We’re either becoming more beautiful, or not. Sobering thought! It’s our

choice. But we can't do it on our own. It's an impossible situation. But if we ask for God's help, it's as close to us as right inside. Holy Spirit, the Helper, as He's called, the One Who walks beside us night and day, is ready and waiting to help if we but ask, and will keep us progressing on the righteous, faithful, beautiful path!

Now, if faith is beauty par excellence, then sin is ugliness, repulsiveness, hideousness, offensiveness, unsightliness, at its peak. Truly, sin totally disfigures who God created us to be. He created each and every one of us in His very Own image, but our inherited sin has renders us ugly, physically and spiritually. If that wasn't enough, the devil, the author of sin itself by "virtue" of him being the first to openly rebel against God his Creator. Apparently the most beautiful spiritual being God ever created, got it into his mind that his beauty was something that was his own. Sounds like pride. That was the sin found within him. So, if the beauty he once knew, bestowed on him by God, his Creator, could not be his, then he set about to destroy everything he can that is beautiful in all creation. It is one of his major focusses to make us ugly in God's eyes. he tries his best to disfigure us, making us deformed, diseased, and decrepit before our time. Everything that is beautiful in the world, that mankind has created under the guidance and inspiration of God, the devil tries to mangle, pervert, twist and deform. he wants to make the world as ugly a place as possible. How well do you think he's doing?

Let's take a brief look just at all the people around us. What

motivates them? How do they present themselves in public? What are they doing? Are they doing “beautiful” things? Saying “beautiful” things? Are their voices, their speech, pleasant, even beautiful? How are they attired? Beautifully, or something otherwise? Are they doing things that help others, in Godly ways? Or not. What do we see?

The headquarters of our AFLC denomination is in Plymouth, Minnesota. Plymouth is a suburb of Minneapolis, a mere 10 miles from downtown. It's just 23 miles from St. Paul, the capital of Minnesota. Where the governor of Minnesota, Tim Walz, lives. Minneapolis is also the city become infamous for the George Floyd riots not quite six years ago. What appeared to be a clear case of police brutality become murder, turned out to be a case of death by drug overdose. Nevertheless, based on lies, protests against supposed police brutality erupted across the country and the world in over 60 countries. Lawful police actions were spun into supposed illegal, cruel, tyrannical and out-of-control assaults on the innocent. Defund the police protests and riots resulted in massive destruction of property totaling \$1 to \$2 billion and at least 19 deaths in just the United States. Though ultimately over 14,000 arrests were made, it was literally an orgy of lawlessness, as public authorities in most liberal-leaning locations called the protests “peaceful” while buildings burned in the backgrounds, and dropped charges on over 90%. Minneapolis had an outsized influence, lawless influence on our country and much of the world.

Now, a sneaky, slimy kind of lawlessness is being exposed. Turns out that political corruption in Minneapolis-St. Paul is so deep and pervasive that what seems lawful and legal is but the thinnest veneer covering an entirely, controlling political edifice of stinking rot. The sin in government is unimaginable to decent folks who love the Savior. The multiple billions of fraud is shocking, and to think that that whole system came dangerously close to the White House and taking over Washington, D.C., which itself is cesspool of corruption. But the Twin Cities makes even D.C. look amateurish. Truly, God saved us from a fatal bullet.

While much of the Twin Cities is physically beautiful, lift the skin and the ugly rot of the reeking stench of political sin is nearly overpowering. That in the upper Midwest is literally a hub of sin where our very own denomination is headquartered, should cause us utmost shame. We must pray more and more for that city, and for St. Louis as well. But simultaneously not forgetting to answer the duty call to support by prayer what God is doing. Now is an emergency in Iran. 9-1-1 prayer calls are going up from Iranian Christians, and we must help answer them. As bad as Minneapolis-St. Paul is, the whole of Iran is bleeding; some estimates say over 30,000 people have so far been killed by their own government! Thank God we Americans have the Second Amendment! They are crying, pleading for help. And we must give it in any way we can. It's our duty as Christ's followers. Because it's our prayers that enable Lord Jesus to turn the ugly into beautiful!

