

## Incorruptible Beauty vs. Cosmetics

Hello Pastor, I greatly enjoyed your sermon on John 7 and appreciate many of the points you brought up. I did want to comment on the subject of 1 Peter 3 and modesty in biblical doctrine. I don't think a reading of 1 Peter 3, or the similar passage in 1 Timothy 2, which recognizes the Christian should not use makeup or jewelry, is "extreme" in any way. I think it is a natural and right understanding. I would not claim that any possible instance of adornment is sinful, but considering what both of those passages teach, and considering the motivation is generally vanity, insecurity, and cultural pressure, it seems contrary to modesty for a Christian to practice these things. I would consider it rooted in sin the vast majority of the time.

Together these two passages teach regarding the woman (and there is a general application for the man as well) that beauty is to be found in INNER adornment, in a gentle and quiet spirit, and in good works done in earnest. That is the source of the woman's beauty. Clearly, it is also rooted in her submission, as the teaching on inner beauty in both passages is connected to her meek submission, either to her husband or to the Church. Her appearance and apparel is to be modest. It reflects her modest heart. The two passages also tell us where her beauty is NOT found, which is in outer adornment, shiny jewelry, hair styles, etc. We could all add to that list if we wanted.

Now if a woman feels the need to paint her face, hang shiny things from her appendages, dye her hair, paint her nails, and go through various other "beauty" rituals, how is that finding beauty in the inner person? It clearly is seeking desperately to find it, day in and day out, in the outer person. This is contrary to Scripture. It is also a form of bondage that women learn from a young age, one that takes advantage of their natural weakness for vanity, and which they often will practice daily for the rest of their lives. If a Christian needs to sit in front of a mirror daily and "paint" their face up, they are seeking the outer kind of beauty. This is not the kind taught in Scripture.

Moreover, remember that her beauty is to represent something: her gentleness, quietness, and submission. This is very beautiful, a deep spiritual expression that a godly woman will portray powerfully as she walks in holiness. Her beauty is almost sacramental of what she represents: the Church, and a redeemed people, humbly coming to the Lord for her deliverance. Trying to cover that up with paint, or with shiny things, or change it with plastic surgery only takes away from that inner beauty. It doesn't add anything. That's because those vanity rituals do not convey submission, holiness, or meekness. They generally convey showiness, glamour, sensuality, or sexuality. None of those things are what the woman is being taught to convey in Scripture. Only her inner person revealed modestly can convey that gentle submission.

I would no more use makeup on a woman's face than I would use a can of spray paint. I mean that. God made women beautiful and He did not make any mistakes. It is an act of vandalism to her to do those things to her face and body. I sometimes post pictures of my wife online, dressed modestly, and people frequently comment that she is beautiful. Sometimes I reply: that's with no makeup, jewelry, hair dye, or silicon. It's just God's hand in creation and the Holy Spirit acting in her. A woman doesn't need more than that, and it drags her down spiritually to be in regular bondage to societally pressured rituals, and external beauty ideals. I truly pity women who do those things every day, as I do the little girls who learn to envy it and desire to practice it when they get older. That's not beauty. The inner heart is beauty. If you want to see the beauty in a woman's face, use good lighting. Not makeup.

In America, the average woman who uses makeup daily will spend several hundred thousand dollars on it in her lifetime. That's to say nothing of the money spend on jewelry, hair dye, nail polish, plastic surgery, lip injections, boob jobs, or butt reshaping. In razors alone, even if she uses the cheap ones, it will cost her several thousand dollars in her life. I think anyone in bondage privately knows that they are, and really wants to break free. I think if women knew what beauty Christ has for them, in the Holy Spirit, and as they grow in godliness and in submission, they would see how shallow and ungodly these practices are. When the Bible teaches – let your adornment be of the inner person of the heart -- it REALLY means that. The Christian really is to express the inner person, and eschew outward adornment, even if we can imagine some special exceptions.

That is one reason why we can say that an older woman is truly beautiful despite her age. That's why I don't plan to turn on to makeup when my wife gets old. The beauty of the heart will still be there, and will only be greater, as a woman has grown in holiness. All the rest will grow old, but that will be the same. I believe that's why the passage calls her beauty "incorruptible," because it is of the spirit, and the spirit is incorruptible. Our resurrection bodies will be incorruptible. The regular Christian involvement in vanity rituals is in great conflict with that truth. The Christian needs to nurture what will last.

Not only do the two passages on modesty make such rituals clash with the Christian walk, but the principle of natural law taught in Scripture also rules out some of those practices, and makes others seem oddball at best. Natural law, as explained in Romans 1 and present in creation in Genesis 1 and 2, demands we respect the way we were made and how we were carefully designed. Practices such as body alteration, especially actual surgery, is an attack on natural law almost as severe as transsexualism. And isn't that one of our main objections to transsexualism? Even lesser alterations such as dying the hair and removing the hair are a rejection of God's hand in creating us.

If we sat back from our cultural standards for a while, and really looked at it, we'd see how downright weird and unnatural much of it is. It's not less absurd than the old-time practices of wearing corsets, or foot-binding in the East. I mean if a male member of your congregation told

you he has to paint his face every morning, you'd probably think he had issues, and perhaps try to counsel him. Yet because this culture promotes that women should do such practices, we begin to think of it as normal. Yet intrinsically there is nothing normal about wearing a mask over your face each day, or needing to go through a medical procedure just to feel good about your body! We need to see this for what it is, which is often a form of self-rejection, as well as a rejection of God's hand in making us. We tell God there is something wrong with how he made us. If you could imagine a white man so insecure about his race he dyed his skin black, or a black man so insecure he dyed his skin white, you'd see basically what I'm saying here. It is self-rejection and a rejection of God's created order. We need to accept how we are made, and know God is sovereign in it.

For all these reasons and more, I tell you that Christian involvement with jewelry, cosmetics, and similar practices is wrong. I don't have to prove that it is evil in every last instance to say that, but I believe I have shown it goes against teachings to express modesty, and to communicate the inner beauty, and not the outward adornment. It is rooted most often in vanity and insecurity. It also goes boldly against the fact that the woman is to express her gentle, quiet, and submissive character through her modest appearance, something which makeup and jewelry typically do not aim to do. Some of the practices are furthermore against natural law, and in conflict with teachings of humility and simplicity. If the heart is modest, the outward appearance will be also. If it goes against these principles and locks Christians into cultural bondage, it's wrong for us to do, even if there may be exceptions.

Lastly, the life of the Christian runs against the grain of the world. The life of the Christian is conformed to Christ and not the current culture, whatever and wherever it may be. Our ways are not the world's ways. The Christian by his nature is counter-cultural. Modesty and a rejection of popular vanity rituals are simply one small part of that. It is very difficult to imagine the modest and set-apart Christian woman sitting before the mirror every morning, saying – Mirror Mirror on the wall, who's the most modest of them all? – while applying a layer of paint to her face, and teasing up her hair into an unnatural style, in a color not her own. It's just not what the Christian woman is concerned about if she is living her faith. What the godly Christian wife does in the morning has little to do with outward adornment. She rises early. She reads her Bible and prays. She kisses her husband goodbye as he leaves for work, and cares for the children and the needs of the home. She prepares food for her household, and perhaps makes handmade garments for them. She is busy with the concerns of the kingdom, and making the home reflect the glorious presence of Christ. Her long hair is simply the hair that God gave her, and her attire modest and feminine. Her gentle face has been shaped only by the hand of God. If Christian women knew the goodness and simplicity of modesty, they would never want anything else. It is the goodness and simplicity of the Christian heart.

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