

Women's Bible Study

May 11th, 2022

1Peter 3:3-4

In our last study, we looked at the importance of our behavior through our conversation and actions. Now, we look at the heart – the center from which our behavior stems.

1Peter 3:3-4 And let not your adornment be [merely] external--braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but [let it be] the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.

First, we need to appreciate the culture in which these words were written. Most of us do not wear braids or have bangles of gold covering our arms and ankles. And while it used to be that women wore dresses all the time, this is not the expectation today.

"This was a warning against the extravagant fashions in hair-dressing and decoration with costly jewels, prevailing among the Greeks and Romans at that period; also a reminder that the true adornment is from within", Teacher's Commentary.



"Plaiting the hair, and variously folding it about the head, was the most ancient and most simple mode of disposing of this chief ornament of the female head. It was practised anciently in every part of the east, and is so to the present day in India, in China, and also in Barbary. It was also prevalent among the Greeks and Romans, as ancient gems, busts, and statues, still remaining, sufficiently declare. We have a remarkable instance of the plaiting of the hair in a statue of Agrippina, wife of Germanicus, an exact representation of which may be seen in a work of Andre Lens, entitled Le Costume de Peuple de l' Antiquite", Adam Clarke's Commentary.

Often, thin plates of gold, pearls, and small pieces of jewelry were incorporated into the braids or plaits. *"There is a remarkable passage in Plutarch, Conjugalia Praecept., c. xxvi., ... "An ornament, as Crates said, is that which adorns. The proper ornament of a woman is that which becomes her best. This is neither gold, nor pearls, nor scarlet; but those things which are an evident proof of gravity, regularity, and modesty." The wife of Phocion, a celebrated Athenian general, receiving a visit from a lady who was elegantly adorned with gold and jewels, and her hair with pearls, took occasion to call the attention of her guest to the elegance and costliness of her dress, remarking at the same time, "My ornament is my husband, now for the twentieth year general of the Athenians." Plut., in vit. Phoc. How few Christian women act this part! Women are in general at as much pains and cost in their dress, as if by it they were to be recommended both to God and man. It is, however, in every case, the argument either of a shallow mind, or of a vain and corrupted heart", (late 1800's).*

The comments above may seem a bit strong, but the principal is that we can spend an enormous amount of time on our looks all the while neglecting the beauty of our heart. In the culture at the time the Apostle Peter was writing, the outside appearance had become the picture of value and importance, thus the need for his warning. We can see this in past history as well as present day examples.

In the above quote it says, 'my ornament is my husband'. It is nice to read that looks were not the ultimate value however, as much as I love my husband, I would argue to say, *"my ornament is Christ"*. He alone is whom I represent, whom I live for, and whom I desire to please in all things. The

concern then was the value placed on outside adornment rather than the inside heart. The call was to remember no matter how beautiful the outside appeared the inside was infinitely more important.

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Are you more concerned of how you look to others or how you represent Christ to others?

Is it wrong then to look nice – Of course not! One commentary suggests looking around you. The colors of the sky, the flowers, etc. Notice the variation in the animals and colors and plumage of birds. God has made all His creation beautiful. He has painted amazing colors into the sunsets and mountainsides. He has made each individual person unique and in His image. Consider however the adornment of lips. What good are beautifully tinted lips if the words coming out of them do not bless? Or beautifully made-up eyes if what is sought to be seen is harmful?

Take a moment and consider your last week. Compare the time spent on your outside appearance and the attention spent on your inside growth. Your internal soul is of greater value than your external show. *“But the allusion here is to the excessive care which then prevailed, and especially to their setting the heart on such ornaments rather than on the adorning which is internal. It may not be easy to fix the exact limit of propriety about the method of arranging the hair, or about any other ornament; but those whose hearts are right, generally have little difficulty on the subject. Every ornament of the body, however beautiful, is soon to be laid aside; the adorning of the soul will endure for ever”*, Albert Barnes' NT Commentary.

Consider what will last. It is obvious to me that my outside appearance is aging. When we are in our twenties and thirties it is difficult to imagine we will ever get old or have wrinkly or sagging skin. Well, if you are not into spending exorbitant amounts of money on face lifts and 'miracle' products, avoidance of your outside deterioration is impossible. The hope is that as your outside matures – this sounds nicer than getting old – your inside is maturing as well. And when your soul matures, it becomes increasingly beautiful! We want to be dazzling on the inside for Christ!

2Corinthians 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

Is your inside shining for Christ?

What distinguishes you, what do you seek most?

1Timothy 2:9-10 Likewise, [I want] women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments; but rather by means of good works, as befits women making a claim to godliness.

This is not a call to wear turtle necks and skirts down to the floor! It is a call to be certain you are adorned with those things that bring glory to God. You have probably heard the expression, 'it's not what it seems to be'. We use this when something we expected – usually because of its outside appearance – does not live up to its promise. These words can be applied to many scenarios. Perhaps you have been house hunting at one point and are excited to see the inside of that well-kept adorable home. The expectation is the outside will be an example of what you find inside, only to be disappointed at the extreme disarray and unkempt interior. How often have you thought or said, 'well, it looks legitimate', and found out otherwise? I am certain many of you have purchased an item that was packaged and promoted well only to open that package and see it was not at all what you expected. What additional examples can you think of?

We should not ignore our appearance; it is something to consider. Cleanliness, and presenting oneself as approachable, are a plus in building relationships and sharing the Gospel. For example, it

would be a tragedy to have the opportunity to share truth with someone yet the whole while I am explaining the Gospel, they are fixated on the broccoli stuck in my teeth, or the cleavage spilling out of my shirt – you get the picture! I will not get very far if I approach someone while looking like a wild, scary person!

By all means, take the time to make yourself presentable. But let's not make our appearance our focus; the outside cannot be a cover for the true beauty of our heart. The attention needs to be on God rather than ourselves.

One commentary says the Apostle here speaks not of forbidding a type of dress and adorning but the *"pride and vanity, affectation and ostentation, in wearing them. ... God will have the hidden man of your heart adorned with grace, and delights more to see that, than your bodies adorned with precious jewels and costly apparel"*, Burkitt.

What is referred to above is the flaunting of oneself for attention and to gain importance and attract admiration. Consider this thought, the outside will eventually perish; only the inside person of the heart will remain. If we are led to extravagance in anything, let it be in our pursuit of Christ. Seeking His truths can never be in excess.

Are you neglecting the inward care of your heart for your outward appearance?

1Peter 3:4 but [let it be] the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.

My looks are greatly improved with makeup! In fact, as I get older, the change when I wear make-up becomes more drastic. I don't 'do my face' every day but I like to 'put my face on' when I have plans outside my home. There are those times when I must decide to forfeit my looks in lieu of getting somewhere on time. This is not because of great holiness though; it is because I did not plan my time well! But, when a decision does need to be made and I only have so much time before I must leave my house, am I willing to spend it in the word rather than myself? Take a moment to consider your busy schedule. How often have you said you did not have time to pray, or read, or study the Truth? Yet, you found time to accomplish other things. For myself, I constantly need to check my priorities and often rearrange them so that I am giving God my best and not neglecting the study of His Word to me. This question came to mind – am I padded well with God's truths or am I flimsily clad? If I am padded well, the world will have little affect; however if my covering is superficial, the slightest breeze or change will leave me exposed.

Contrary to outside adornment which will decay, let's concentrate on the immortal part of our being, our soul which will last forever. We are to clothe our inside with humility and meekness, and with piety and prudence, in order to esteem God. The best ornaments are those of the heart which draw others into the knowledge and understanding of God. We must consider where our true affections are placed. If we are saved, we have been made new to live in righteousness according to God's word to glorify His name. This means we no longer serve sin but serve God.

The *hidden person of the heart* is my soul – that which only God can touch. The soul is incorruptible which is in contrast to the gold jewelry and garments spoken of in the preceding verse. The inner man referenced in the following scriptures also speak of 'the inward self'.

Romans 7:22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,

Ephesians 3:16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man;

God is more concerned about the heart of man than the outside appearance of man.

1Samuel 16:7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God [sees] not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but **the LORD looks at the heart.**"

1Chronicles 28:9 "As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind; for **the LORD searches all hearts**, and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever.

Psalms 51:6 Behold, **Thou dost desire truth in the innermost being**, and in the hidden part Thou wilt make me know wisdom.

The regenerated heart is to have the *imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit*. Think of inward holiness.

The Greek term used for man (hidden person in NAS) in 1Peter 3:4 is derived, according to the best etymologists, from the words meaning, turning the face upward, (*taken from Adam Clarke's Commentary*). This same commentary explains a gentle and quiet spirit, "*a mind that will not give provocation to others, nor receive irritation by the provocation of others. Meekness [gentleness] will prevent the first; quietness will guard against the last*". In other words, a heart of gentleness will not easily anger others and a quiet heart will not easily become angered. This explanation makes me think of someone whose eyes are focused on Jesus. When we try to see all things in light of the forgiveness of sin and promise of heaven we have from God, our response to circumstances and people is an extension of the mercy and grace we ourselves have received.

Let's look at the meanings of a gentle and quiet spirit.

Gentle, *praus*, means mild, humble, meek. Quiet, *hesuchios*, means keeping one's seat, still – undisturbed, peaceable. This word is also associated with the definition of being immovable, settled, and steadfast. According to one commentary, the use of the word spirit, *pneuma*, in this verse is "unlike any other use in the N.T." (*Bigg, Robertson's NT Word Pictures*). It means the rational soul, or mental disposition. Think of the word temper, not in having a quick temper of anger, but rather having a disposition of gentleness and quietness.

As I consider the definitions above, a picture of someone with a humble, settled conviction of God is formed. There is no need for this person to act harshly or cause an uproar. Instead they are able to maintain a calmness in their spirit through all circumstances because they are certain of their value in Christ and His work in their life and others. They display a humbleness towards God and a peacefulness towards others. When we are settled in Christ, there are no threats, no 'flying off the handle', no anguished verbal outbursts, or unpredictable behaviors. There is no sense of giving up or quitting when circumstances become difficult. Rather there is a quiet resolve to continue forward in His strength for His purpose. Do you know of someone who you and others 'tip-toe' around because you do not want to 'set them off'? This is the opposite of a gentle and quiet spirit.

"Of a calm temper; a contented mind; a heart free from passion, pride, envy, and irritability; a soul not subject to the agitations and vexations of those who live for fashion, and who seek to be distinguished for external adorning. The connexion here shows that the apostle refers to this, not only as that which would be of great price in the sight of God, but as that which would tend to secure the affection of their husbands, and win them to embrace the true religion", (1Peter 3:1-2), Albert Barnes' NT Commentary. This same reference goes on to describe these qualities as a kind temper, gentle words, placid brow, modest and patient spirit, a heart that is calm in trouble, affectionate and pure, freedom from irritability, fretfulness, and impatience.

Jesus had a gentle and humble heart. His eyes were focused on His Father's purpose.

Matthew 11:29 "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for **I am gentle and humble in heart**; and YOU SHALL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.

Do you create trouble? Are you calm in the midst of disturbances caused by others? Are you careful and peaceable in your words?

Matthew 5:5 "Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Ephesians 4:1-2 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love,

Colossians 3:12 And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;

Our desire is to please God. Developing the qualities of a gentle and quiet spirit '*is precious in the sight of God*'.

Precious, from *poluteles*, means extremely expensive: costly, very precious, of great price. This same word is used in the account of the woman who anointed Jesus' head with 'very costly' oil.

Mark 14:3 And while He was in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper, and reclining [at the table,] there came a woman with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume of pure nard; [and] she broke the vial and poured it over His head.

She brought all she had to Jesus. Her show of care was so extravagant to those around that they called her actions a waste of money. However, she knew the truth and offered everything. Jesus did not care about the monetary value, he cared about her heart.

Our physical body is decaying. All that is in this world will perish. What will be left is the yielded heart of sinners humbly receiving God's grace. It is in God's sight that we are to be pleasing, not in the vanities of the world, nor the commendations of men.