

March 2, 2008 by Steve Brandon



Christ-Like Wives: Seek Your Beauty

1 Peter 3:3-4

1. External Beauty (verse 3)

2. Internal Beauty (verse 4)

My text for this morning in 1 Peter 3:3-4. To place these verses in context, let's begin by considering the context of this passage.

1 Peter 3:1-6

In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any [of them] are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. 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. For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands. Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.

With these words, Peter is instructing wives how it is that they ought to conduct themselves in their marriage relationship, even when things are difficult. Peter addresses wives on relating to their husbands. Peter addresses wives on their dress and beauty and inner attitudes. Peter instructs them where to look for encouragement in these things.

We began looking at this portion of Scripture last week, when we looked at verses 1 and 2. Review is really quite simple, because my entire message can be wrapped up in one simple phrase: "wives, submit to your husbands." You can see Peter's exhortation there in verse 1, "In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands." Everything else in verses 1 and 2 modify this one command: wives are to be submissive to their own husbands. This is a blanket statement that extends to all wives, because this is the way that the Lord made marriage. When God ordained and instituted marriage, he ordained that the husband would be the head and the authority in the relationship. The woman was to be the helper, who would come alongside of him and line herself up under him.

When you have a wonderful marriage, the husband is loving his wife as Christ loved the church, and leading her with compassion and care. When you have a wonderful marriage, the wife is willingly submitting herself to her husband, as the church submits herself to Christ. But, in the case where the marriage is experiencing difficulty, there is no reason why a husband or wife can refuse to fulfill their roles. If a wife isn't fulfilling her call to submit to her husband, it doesn't give the husband any reason to abandon his role of loving and cherishing and nurturing his wife. And, if a husband isn't fulfilling his duty of lovingly leading his wife, it doesn't give her any reason to abandon her role of submission either.

In fact, since Peter is here addressing the wives, he is careful to point out the situation in which a husband isn't fulfilling his role in the marriage. He says, "so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives." With these words, Peter is saying "if you have a husband who has heard the gospel, but has not believed it, God's call upon your life is still the same as if he embraced it and believed it. Wives, you are still called to submit to him." Peter tells the wives to do this in such a way that husbands are drawn to the beauty of their wives' "chaste and respectful behavior" and, perhaps, come to believe the word.

After our service last week, I was talking with a couple in our congregation, Pat and Carol. In the course of our conversation, they were commenting about my message. They said that this was the case in their marriage. They were married young. Neither of them had grown up in church at all, so they didn't have much of a reference point for Christianity. But, Carol was converted to Christ when she was 21 years old. At first, she was like any new Christian, very excited about her faith. She wanted Pat to believe the gospel as well share in its joy with her. So, she began sharing the gospel with him often. Pat husband told me that he thought that she was nuts. He thought that she was simply going through a phase in her life, that she would eventually grow out of, but she didn't. Pat couldn't deny that something had happened to Carol. In fact, at one point in their marriage, they remember a conversation in which he told her, "You have changed, not in a bad way, but in a good way. But, you have changed." But, still, Pat didn't believe the gospel, despite the constant urgings of Carol. Carol told me that for the first two years of her new life in Christ, she was constantly urging Pat to come with her to church and the believe in Christ. But, then, she stopped talking and began focusing her attention upon living the gospel before her husband with chaste and respectful behavior. And, in the providence of God, that was the very thing that the Lord used to draw Pat to himself. Once Carol stopped talking, Pat started asking questions about Christianity. Eventually, two years later, Pat was converted as well. He will tell you that it was the silent faithfulness of his wife that led him to the Lord. This is exactly the situation in which Peter is exhorting the wives to be submissive to their husbands, and win them without a word.

And so, I exhort all of you wives, "Submit to Your Husbands."

This week, I have another exhortation for you wives, "Seek Your Beauty." God wants for you to be beautiful! Now, when I say, "Seek Your Beauty," I'm not talking about your external beauty. Rather, I'm talking about the internal beauty that God observes and views as precious. I

say this, because this is what Peter says in verses 3 and 4. "Don't place your value your external beauty. Rather, place your value upon your internal beauty," which is the message of verses 3 and 4.

In our day and age, women often go to great extremes to make themselves beautiful. Today, thin is in. In a quest to be skinny, many women have done some extreme things. Some have starved themselves, denying their bodies of it's needed nutrition. This problem is so great that we have a name for it: anorexia. Others have forced themselves to vomit after they have eaten. We have a name for this as well: bulimia. Others will have surgery to remove portions of their intestines to reduce the ability of their body to metabolize food--all in a quest to be thin and beautiful.

Today, youth is in. Many women seek out the plastic surgeon who is able to do wonders by removing wrinkles from their faces. Many women seek the surgeon to perform liposuction, removing the unwanted fat from specific parts of your body, particularly around the abdomen area with a tummy tuck. All in the name of beauty.

But, don't think that our society is unique, because it isn't. In many societies, women have gone to great lengths to reach their ideals of beauty. I read an article this week entitled, "The Price of Perfection," in which Robin Marantz Henig detailed many of the strange things that women have done down through the centuries in their quest for "beauty." Henig writes, ...

During the Renaissance, well-born European women plucked out hairs, one by one, from their natural hairline all the way back to the crowns of their heads, to give them the high, rounded foreheads thought beautiful at the time. ... In China, right up until World War II, upper-class girls had their feet bound, crippling them for life but ensuring the three- or four-inch long feet that were prized as exquisitely feminine. In Central Africa, the Mangbettu tightly wrapped the heads of female infants in pieces of giraffe hide, to attain the elongated cone-shaped heads that were taken to be a sign of beauty and intelligence. Among the Padaung people of Burma, the ideal of female beauty was a greatly elongated neck, preferably 15 inches or more. This was accomplished by fitting girls with a series of brass neck rings. At a very young age, girls began with five rings; by the time they were full grown, they were wearing as many as 24, piled one on top of another. [\[1\]](#)

In England in the 1600's bloodletting was encouraged as a way to lose weight, just let some blood out of your system. Twice a year was the suggestion. From the right arm in the spring and the left arm in the fall. In the 1930's "women actually swallowed tapeworms to lose weight."

Furthermore, to appear thin, "Women subjected themselves to wearing corsets for nearly 600 years." Though the people of the day realized that it was a dangerous practice to reduce a woman's waist down to the 18 inch ideal (because of cutting off blood supply and displacing internal organs), women continued to inflict this punishment upon themselves. Henig described this process, ...

No woman could tightlace herself alone, not only because the laces tied up in the back, but also because the woman's natural instinct for self-preservation would likely prevent her from applying the kind of pressure needed to attain that 18-inch ideal. Most required the assistance of their maids (tightlacing was mostly the madness of the upper classes), their mothers, or at the very least their bedposts. Sometimes the recalcitrant flesh fought back so mightily that it required two helpers, one to tighten the laces while the other held the subject in place with her foot.

In Solomon's day, it was fashionable to be light-skinned, as it communicated wealth. Fair skinned women demonstrated that they didn't need to go to work in the fields. Solomon's wife said, "Do not stare at me because I am black, for the sun has burned me. My mother's sons were angry with me; They make me caretaker of the vineyards, But I have not taken care of my own vineyard" (Song of Solomon 1:6). This was also true in the time of the Elizabethan age, when (to quote Henig again), ...

many women, in search of skin that looked like porcelain, whitened their faces using ceruse, a potentially lethal combination of vinegar and lead. Queen Elizabeth herself used ceruse so consistently that it ultimately ate pits into her skin, causing her to pile the paint on in thicker and thicker layers in hopes of camouflaging her growing imperfections. This, in turn, only led to more corrosion, and the Virgin Queen's face was ultimately so ravaged that she ordered all mirrors banned from the castle.

Henig also points out that "The ancient Egyptians, Romans, and Persians tried to make their eyes glitter by using drops of antimony sulphide. The drops often dried up the tear ducts, though, and eventually destroyed vision." And the women often became blind.

Through the ages, the size of a woman's bust took its ups and downs as well. In ancient Greece, in 14th century Europe, "the ideal torso was a flat torso." So, a women's breasts were hidden and tightly bound. This style reappeared in the 1920's in America. Brassiere companies guaranteed to "give you that boy-like flat appearance." Some women actually squeezed their chests as close as possible against the ribcage and held them there with tight elastic binding.

By the 1950's, "Dolly Parton-style curves were back. ... A well-rounded bosom was something to be proud of -- and something to be artfully created with some clever undergarments." Cosmetic surgeons learned how to surgically enhance a woman's upper torso. At first, it was only those in Hollywood who received the surgery, but by the time silicone implants had been taken off the market in 1992 due to long-term health risks, some two million American woman had undergone the procedure. Think about it. Two million women surgically enhancing their beauty at the risk of their own health to obtain the allusive "beauty."

All I can say is, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." What one culture regards as beautiful, another thinks to be ugly.

When I call you wives to "Seek Your Beauty," I'm not calling for you women to catch the eyes of men, who will turn their heads when they see

you walk down the street. Nor am I calling you to attract the eyes of other women, who will be envious of your good looks. But, I want for you to be beautiful in the eyes of God.

This is the essence of what Peter details for us in verses 3 and 4. How to be beautiful in God's eyes. This is how Peter exhorts. He says in verses 3 and 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."

Wives, when you think about your beauty, don't focus your heart upon your external appearance, but rather, let it be in the things of the heart that gets your attention, for it is the gentle and quiet spirit of a woman that God views as beautiful.

See, when God looks down upon the women of this congregation, He looks right past your jewelry and makeup and your hairstyle and the clothes that you are wearing. He looks into your spirit. "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). My exhortation to you women is to know that the LORD looks upon the heart, and so, work hard to cultivate in your inner person, the qualities of a "gentle and quiet spirit."

Let's look what Peter says about, ...

1. External Beauty (verse 3)

Verse 3 begins, "Your adornment must not be [merely] external." Or, more literally, "Your adornment must not be external." In other words, when you think about your beauty, Peter instructs you not to place your value upon the external things that you do to make yourself beautiful.

Peter gives three examples of what he is talking about. He says, it's not the braiding of hair that makes you beautiful in God's eyes. It's not the wearing of gold jewelry that makes you beautiful in God's eyes. It's not the putting on of dresses that makes you beautiful in God's eyes. (When we get to verse 4, we will see what it is that makes you beautiful in God's sight: the internal beauty of a quiet and gentle spirit). But, here in verse 3, Peter points out the external trappings of beauty where you aren't to set your hearts.

Now, some have used this verse to say that a woman should never braid her hair, and should never wear gold jewelry. But, that's clearly not what Peter means by these verses. He's not prohibiting the braiding of the hair. Nor is he prohibiting the wearing of gold jewelry. We know this because of the third term, "putting on dresses." Now, some translations have interpreted this phrase as implying that Peter is referring to expensive clothes (NIV), but there's no indication in the Greek text that Peter is merely talking about expensive clothes. Literally, Peter says, or "the putting on of clothes." If you say that the Bible prohibits the braiding of hair (or the wearing of gold jewelry) in this verse, then, to be consistent, you need to prohibit the wearing of clothes by women as well! And I'm sure that none of you hold to this position.

See, it's not so much these three things in particular that Peter is condemning. Rather, he is condemning your placing of value upon your external appearance, rather than focusing your value upon the spirit of your behavior. In Peter's day, the warning may have been against the focus on braided hair. In our day, the warning may well be against highlighting your hair or using flatirons to straighten your hair, or curling irons to curl your hair. In Peter's day, the warning may have been against the focus on your gold jewelry. In our day the warning may be against hoop earrings and gemstones. In Peter's day, the warning may have been against certain styles of the day. In our day the warning may be against making sure that your clothes are in with the latest style.

Now, it's not that any of these things are wrong, inherently. I don't want for you women to come in here next week looking frumpy. I appreciate the efforts that you make to be attractive. It's OK if you have your hair highlighted. It's OK if you use a flatiron or curling iron. It's OK if you are wearing hoop earrings and gemstones. It's OK if you are wearing the latest style in clothes. But, it's wrong if it's where you place your value. It's wrong if it consumes you. It's wrong if you are trying to impress. It's wrong if you are constantly looking to others for their approval. It's wrong if you are constantly wanting to make a good impression with your clothes. It's wrong if your mind is consumed by your external beauty.

Now, it's difficult to know exactly when you have crossed the line to focusing your attention more upon external beauty than upon internal beauty. But, you can attempt to weigh the balance by asking yourself a few questions. How much time do you spend upon your external beauty? How much time do you spend on your internal beauty? How much money do you spend on your external beauty? How much time do you spend on your internal beauty? What about your thoughts? Do you spend more time thinking about your internal beauty or your external beauty? Only you can answer these questions.

When considering your external beauty, the Apostle Paul gives an almost perfect parallel of our text in 1 Timothy 2:9-10, "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 is proper for women making a claim to godliness."

In giving this instruction to Timothy, Paul uses two very helpful words in describing how a woman should adorn herself: modestly and discreetly. In this way, Paul is encouraging the women to dress so as not to attract attention to themselves either to their bodies, nor to their clothes or hairstyle.

This is Peter's point as well. Do your hair and wear your jewelry and pick your clothes in such a way that you won't bring attention to yourself in any way. They ought not to bring attention to your clothes. They ought not to bring attention to your bodies. Please realize that you can also so neglect your external appearance that you will actually attract the attention of others by your dressing down.

Before we go on to think about where the beauty is found, I want to ask you a question. Do you know how the Bible speaks about physical beauty of a woman? We might expect that the Bible would speak a blessing to those who are beautiful. "Blessed are the beautiful, for they are loved by all." But, it's exactly the opposite.

Proverbs 31:30 sets the tone of the Scriptural teaching on this subject: "Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the

LORD, she shall be praised" (Prov. 31:30). You can see the internal distinction in this verse. Throughout the Proverbs, the beautiful, attractive woman is usually depicted as the adulteress: the one from whom Solomon's son is instructed to keep far away from her. Proverbs 6:25, "Do not desire her beauty in your heart, nor let her capture you with her eyelids." She is the one who seduces you, and charms you, and attempts to make you believe that time with her will lead you into happiness. But, in the end, it is destruction, "On account of a harlot one is reduced to a loaf of bread, and an adulteress hunts for the precious life" (Prov. 6:26).

Throughout the Old Testament, there aren't too many women who are said to be beautiful. But, those who are beautiful often are involved with many problems. Sarah's beauty wasn't a blessing to Abraham. It was a curse. It led him to lie to Pharaoh about her. Abraham told Sarah, "See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman; and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may live on account of you" (Gen. 12:11-12). Sarah's beauty brought trouble and temptation to Abraham, not only this time, but also toward Abimelech as well (Gen. 20).

When Jacob met Rachel, he immediately discerned that she was "beautiful of form and face" (Gen. 29:17). This should have brought great blessing, but it actually brought great difficulty, at least for Laban. Jacob agreed to serve Laban for seven years. When the time came for marriage, Laban tricked him by giving him Leah, the oldest instead. The trickery was caused by the beauty of Rachel.

It was said of Bathsheba, that she was very beautiful in appearance (2 Sam. 11:2). Her beauty helped to draw David into committing adultery, and then murder. One of David's daughters was Tamar. It was said of her in two different places in Scripture that she was beautiful (2 Sam. 13:1; 14:27). Amnon, her half-brother, loved her. He was "so frustrated because of his [half] sister Tamar that he made himself ill" (2 Sam. 13:2). Perhaps you know the story. He violated her. This took place because of her beauty.

Think about what the Bible says has come upon those who are beautiful. Lying, deceit, adultery, greed, incest are the result of external beauty. Don't think that external beauty is filled with blessings, because there are often curses that come as a result of it. And yet many women have sought after this beauty.

This is made worse when you realize that many women in America are pursuing an external beauty that is, quite frankly, impossible to achieve. Think about how difficult it is to obtain today. In previous generations, for a woman to be beautiful, she competed with those among her social circle in her city or village in which she lived. But now, with the world-wide distribution of media today, the standard of beauty has been elevated to the most beautiful women in the world. The photographs of the most beautiful women in the world are displayed all around our nation. At the checkout lines of most supermarkets, there is an entire rack of magazines with beautiful women on the cover. Inside are more pictures of beauty.

Furthermore, think about the pictures of these women. First of all, these models have devoted their lives to caring for their bodies. They have great financial incentives to eat right. They often have their own personal trainer, who will help keep their bodies in shape. Upon entering a photo shoot, the models had their hair done by professional hair stylists. They had their makeup applied by a professional. Their photographs were taken by a professional, who understands what sort of lighting and poses that would make the best sort of shots. After hundreds of photographs, the few that turned out the best are chosen. And, if there is any blemish in the picture, a graphical artist takes the picture and touches it up. [\[2\]](#)

Now, let me ask you, which of you women can attain to such a standard? It's impossible! And yet, many seek after it. It will lead to frustration.

Well, I have some good news for you this morning. You may not be able to attain to the world's standard of beauty, which is all external. But, God's standard of beauty is within the grasp of every woman in this room.

Let's consider my second point this morning, ...
2. Internal Beauty (verse 4)

In verse 4, Peter is quite clear what is beautiful to God. He says, "Let [your adornment] 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." When the Lord looks down from heaven upon all of you women, He doesn't place value upon your physical appearance. Instead, He looks beyond your external appearance into "the hidden person of the heart." He places value upon your spiritual appearance. That's the idea of Peter's last phrase, "which is precious in the sight of God."

When the woman came with an alabaster vial of perfume and broke it and poured it over the head of Jesus, the Scripture says that this perfume was "very costly" (Mark 14:3). This is the same word that Peter uses here in this verse. When a woman's spirit is gentle and quiet, the Lord considers her to be "very costly" in his eyes.

Should the Lord judge a beauty pageant, we just might be a bit surprised at the winner. Recently, I was given a bit of insight into the way that God looks upon women. As many of you know, our children are involved in a youth theatre program, called "Christian Youth Theatre." They have been enjoying the time that they have spent in this organization. At the conclusion of one of the shows, our family attended the "strike" party where the entire cast and crew joined together to remember the show where thankfulness was expressed and awards were given. At one point, one of the parents, who was in charge of the seating during the productions was talking about the other parents who had volunteered to help her. At one point, she mentioned a woman, who made a bit impact upon her. She said that this woman was particularly quick to pray about difficulties that presented themselves. When this woman pointed her out for all to see, I looked at this woman and quickly determined that she wasn't going to win any beauty contests. But, then I was thinking, "I wonder how God views this woman?" She was quick to pray. Obviously, she was very spiritually minded and dependent upon the Lord. And I thought to myself, "She very well could be the most beautiful woman in the room from God's perspective." Because, the Lord looks upon our internal beauty, rather than upon our external beauty. Let that sink in women!

Peter identifies for us two qualities in particular that the Lord values: meekness and gentleness. Peter identifies these qualities as the "inner person of the heart." Indeed, Peter is talking about the "gentle and quiet spirit" within a woman. But, we can see what's inside a woman's heart by the way that she talks and acts. So, although these are inner qualities of a woman, they are put on display for all around her to see.

Let's first spend a few moments thinking about these qualities.

This word translated, "gentle" is used to describe Jesus on several occasions. "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt. 11:29). Jesus was the gentle one into who's arms we can run. A gentle woman will be able to receive others and comfort them.

Matthew 21:5 uses this word to speak of Jesus, "Behold your King is coming to you, gentle, and mounted on a donkey." Jesus had great power at His disposal, and yet His entry into wasn't on the royal steed with a grand display of power. Rather, it was in humility upon a donkey. The gentle woman is the one who has great power at her disposal, but chooses the path of humility.

Gentleness is not weakness, rather, it denotes that your strength is under control. Gentleness is not shyness, rather, it is a calm that is able to comfort. Gentleness isn't passive, rather, it is an active sensitivity that handles people and situations with care. The Scriptures contain a great promise to the gentle, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5).

This word translated, "quiet," carries with it the idea of "peace." It is used in the Scripture to describe Christians. When Paul heard that there were undisciplined people doing no work, but acting like busybodies, he said, "Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread" (2 Thess. 3:12). In this instance, "quiet," means that you simply go about doing your business without great fanfare, applause or complaint.

In another place, the Apostle Paul urged us to pray "for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity" (1 Tim. 2:2). Again, we get the same idea. The "quiet" life is the peaceful life that we can lead in godliness. The "quiet" woman is the one who isn't bringing great attention to herself, but is going about her business in peace and godliness.

Quietness isn't idleness, rather, it is productive. Quietness isn't passive, rather, it actively seeks its work and does it. When you put these two words together, you get the picture of a woman who is calm, cool and collected, even when trouble is brewing.

The "gentle and quiet" woman isn't anxious or worried, stressed-out or frazzled. She isn't contentious or argumentative, boisterous or loud. She doesn't see the need to air her opinions. She isn't angry, letting others know about her feelings with harsh words and loud door slams and stomps of the feet. Rather, she is the kind, peaceful, loving, caring, encouraging woman. Even when all around her is chaotic. There is dinner to be prepared. There are children to be bathed. There are diapers to be changed. There is laundry to fold. There are beds to make. There are rooms to be mopped. There are bills to be paid. There are phone calls to be made. There are children to be disciplined. The gentle and quiet woman is calm and assuring through it all.

She's like the policeman who pulls a motorist over for speeding. There are flashing lights in his car. The driver is frazzled and worried. The policeman has been inconvenienced, needing to chase the driver down, get out of his car and assess the situation. And how does he do it? He says, "Excuse me, ma'am, may I see your driver's license?" Without raising his voice, without communicating that he is upset with you, he calmly explains how fast you were going and writes out a ticket for you to pay at the courthouse. That's a great picture of the "gentle and quiet" woman. [\[3\]](#)

Is that the sort of women that you want to be? Should we have the opportunity to go around the room this morning I would think that this is what you want for your life this morning. At this point, you may be asking yourself how? Again, would the truth be known you all struggle with being this sort of women, to one degree or another. Let me help you with some practical advice.

First and foremost, you need to realize that these things are the manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit, particularly, ... patience, gentleness and self-control. To exhibit these qualities, of course, you need to have the spirit of God in your life, so as to produce these qualities in you. This means, that you need to believe in Christ.

Perhaps the **next** most important thing is that you need to be diligent to nourish your heart and mind in God's word. The Spirit of God within you feeds on the word of God that you place within you. Do all that you can do to put the Scripture on your mind. Read it. Memorize it. Meditate upon it. Read books that help to teach and apply Biblical truths. Listen to preachers, who are faithful to God's word. A heart that is equipped in God's word is better able to exhibit these qualities.

My **third** recommendation is so pursue God with all of your life. In Romans 12:1, Paul exhorts, "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship." When you give your heart completely to God, your life will well reflect these qualities.

Fourth, be quick to hear. Yesterday, I attended a seminar at Kishwaukee Bible Church led by Frank Yonke. Several families of the church attended this event. The seminar was entitled, "War of Words: Trusting God with Every Word Out of Your Mouth" In that seminar, Frank stepped us through the book of James with some great counsel on how to discipline your tongue. James 1:19, "Be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger." That's a gentle and quiet spirit. When you focus your attention upon listening to others, your tendency will be toward gentleness and meekness.

Fifth, work hard to discipline your children. Recently, my wife was in the supermarket. She told me of how she observed a woman who was obviously very frustrated with her child because he was being disobedient. She was angry and yelling at her child. But, if your children are obedient, they won't tempt you in this way.

Finally, structure your life. Don't allow yourself to get too busy. Make choices to limit your activities. Get enough sleep. Plan ahead. Allow enough time to accomplish what you need to do. The pressures of life have a way of squeezing these qualities out of the life of any women.

As I close my message this morning, I want to encourage all of you wives with one word in the text that I have skipped up to this point. It's the word, "Imperishable." Peter says that a gentle and quiet spirit is an imperishable quality. That is, it will never perish. It will never fade away. Rather, it will endure.

Your physical appearance will fade away. To be sure, you may prolong your youthful beauty through, with moisturizing creams, cosmetic surgery, makeup, exercise, dying your hair. But, your beauty is fading. Your beauty is like the glory of the flower of grass. Grass is very beautiful in July, with its deep green tones. But, come October, the grass around your homes will be withered up and forgotten. So is your external beauty. It may be July in your life right now, but October is coming. Just ask any 80-year old woman. She has lived through the time of youthful beauty. But, she has experienced her beauty fade away. I'm sure that she could tell you how she watched it happen.

I have news for all of you women, should the Lord allow you to live long enough, you will someday look just like your grandmother. ^[4] Do you remember your grandmother? Perhaps you are young enough that your grandmother is still alive. Here's what I remember of my grandmother. She was very short, very round, with warts on her face and razor stubble on her chin. I particularly remember her razor stubble, because every time that she kissed me, I felt her chin chafe on my face.

Your outer beauty is fading away. But, the inner beauty of your heart may well continue past your 80's. It is "imperishable," and may well increase and become more prominent in your life as you age. Age has a way of bringing out your true person of the heart, for better or for worse.

Have you ever spent time in a nursing home and observed the women who are there? (It's difficult not to notice, because they are almost all women.) If you have spoken with the old women at the nursing home, you can pretty quickly tell which women there have a "gentle and quiet spirit" or not. There are certain older women, who speak with a tenderness and thankfulness and kindness, indicative of a "gentle and quiet spirit." But, there are others who are loud and are always looking out for their own ways. They are always complaining. They are always airing their feelings. (This is true of men as well).

My exhortation to you women here this morning is to be wise and seek to cultivate in your life the inner beauty that will never fade away. Seek to be "gentle" and "quiet." Because this is what God values as precious in your life. Put your mind on those things that will last forever.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on March 2, 2008 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] "The Price of Perfection," by Robin Marantz Henig, Civilization magazine, April 1996. A copy of this article can be found online here: http://www.nasw.org/users/robinhenig/price_of_perfection.htm. The remainder of the quotes in this section of the sermon are all from this article as well.

[2] These thoughts were shared by Carolyn Mahaney in a message entitled, True Beauty, preached at The Bible Church of Little Rock on 9/10/2005.

[3] This illustration was given in Teri Maxwell's excellent book, "Homeschooling with a Meek and Quiet Spirit," on page 78.

[4] These thoughts were shared by Carolyn Mahaney in a message entitled, True Beauty, preached at The Bible Church of Little Rock on 9/10/2005.