

True Beauty in the Eyes of God

- I. What true beauty is
- II. What true beauty does
- III. Where true beauty comes from

3 Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, ²when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. ³Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. ⁴Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. ⁵For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, ⁶like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

⁷Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

⁸Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. ⁹Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

I expect that you have heard the statement, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." In other words, what one person thinks looks good, someone else might say is a piece of junk. One person sees that old house as a perfect fixer upper. Another one sees it as a terrible money pit. When my grandson brings me his finger painting, I say, "Hudson, it's beautiful," while anyone else would say, "What is that mess?" And my favorite old gray shirt with a torn collar and the holes in the sleeves...well, someone has tried to throw it in the rag bag on multiple occasions. Yes, beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

But that's not just true with inanimate objects. It's also true when it comes to people. Granted it's true that some people are unquestionably good looking. And some people, well...aren't. But if that second person was your grandfather who used to sit you on his lap and read you stories and teach you about life and never said a bad word and loved you and loved

your momma, tell me, in your eyes, which of those two men would have been more beautiful to you? Yes, the second one. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

But you realize, sometimes sin messes with our vision. Sin leads us to be attracted to things that God says aren't so beautiful and leads us to disdain things that are. Today, we want to let God correct our vision and show us what true beauty looks like. Today, we turn our attention to what we might call:

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The word of God that we have before us is part of a larger section of scripture in which the apostle Peter is encouraging Christians to, in effect, let their light shine—even when the world does appreciate it. Peter introduces this section by saying, *Live such good lives among the pagans that though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. (1 Peter 2:18)*. In other words, even though unbelievers may initially object to the godly behavior of Christians, in the end, they may grow to appreciate what we are doing, and ultimately give God credit for it.

From that opening statement, Peter goes on to give some examples of things that Christians are to do, things which the world would probably say are dumb, or offensive, or outright wrong. He says, for example, “Christians, *submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority*. In other words, “Christians, obey the government. Respect your teachers. Honor the parents God has given you, even when it's not the popular thing to do.” Peter offers similar advice to slaves (today we might say employees). Peter writes, *Slaves, in reverent fear of God submit yourselves to your masters, not to only those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh*. Again, the world might say, “That's crazy! To show respect to people who are mistreating you? To allow yourself to suffer unjustly? Why would you do that?” As Christians, our answer is, “Because that's what Jesus did for us first.” As Jesus entrusted himself into his father's hands, so we entrust our lives into God's hands.

And finally, Peter goes on to address one more place to let our light shine, even in a pagan world. And that's inside our homes, or more specifically, inside of marriage. And this is where Peter takes up the concept of what true beauty in the eyes of God is. He starts by explaining what beauty should not be built on. How does St Paul put it here in our text? *Your*

beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles or the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. In other words, it's a sin to wear gold in church. And the more godly you are, the more shabby your clothes should be. No, Peter is not saying that it's wrong to look nice. He's saying that true beauty should not be defined by what we look like on the outside. How did he put it? *Your beauty should not come from outward adornment.* Rather, Peter says, *it should be that of your inner self.* Right? What's on the inside. Who you are, more than what you look like. Or to put it another way, Peter's not talking about cosmetics. He's talking about character. And what character does God find especially beautiful? Peter tells us that it's *the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit.* Think about that a minute. Gentle. Not harsh, not brash, not domineering, not "It's my way or the highway". And also quiet. That is, peaceful, unassuming. Not loud, not "I need to be heard. Let's take it up a few decibels." That kind of beauty, Peter says, is unfading. It never grows old; never goes out of style. In fact, it grows better with age.

Maybe you know someone who has been around awhile, has more than a few miles on the old body, and yet, still has that kind of unfading inner beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit. I know that on this Mother's Day weekend, I can't help but think about my mom. She was a woman of inner beauty. It's not that my mom wasn't attractive. She was. Still is. But her real beauty is not on the outside. It's on the inside. It's what Peter calls a gentle and quiet spirit. I can't remember a time that my mom raised her voice at me. (Except maybe the time I brought in the dead skunk and laid it on the kitchen table.) The way my mom handled the raising of four very active boys and did it in a spirit of gentleness and godliness, well I think, in God's eyes, that was beautiful. Or as Peter says here in our text, it is something *which is of great worth in God's sight.* And I'll bet you know people who have displayed that same kind of inner beauty.

But now that we've kind of defined what true beauty is in God's eyes, let's move on to consider not only I. What true beauty is, but also II. What true beauty does. Here in our text, Peter points to some of the women in the Old Testament, who as an expression of their faith in God, put their inner beauty into action in their lives. Peter writes, *This is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves.* In other words, how did these believing women let their true beauty show in their lives? Peter tells us. *They submitted themselves to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord.* Do you understand what Peter is saying? He's saying that one of the ways that Christian women

adorn themselves (we'll talk about Christian men in a minute)—one of the ways that Christian women adorn themselves, one of the ways that they let their true beauty in God's eyes show in their lives is by acknowledging that within a marriage, a woman is not the boss.

In fact, neither is the husband. But by God's design, the husband is the “head” of the marriage. God has placed the husband in a position of authority. What does scripture say? Ephesians 5:23. *The husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church.* And what does that mean? It means that just as God put his Son in a position of authority to meet the needs of his bride, the church, so God puts husbands in a position of authority to meet the physical, spiritual, and emotional needs of their bride. And it's that selfless service, that Christ-like love, on the part of husbands, that allows Christian wives to say to their husbands, the same thing that Sarah once said to her husband, in fact that what every Christian says to Christ, namely, “I'm okay with you being my Lord.” That's what Peter means when he says that *Sarah...obeyed Abraham called him her lord.*

But now, someone might say, “Well, that formula works great if your husband is someone who loves and models Christ. But what if he's an unbeliever? Will Christian wife still submit to her husband if he doesn't believe what the Bible says? Yes, she will. And why is that? What possible good could come from a Christian wife showing humility and respect toward her non-Christian husband? Well, St Peter answers that question with these words, *Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.* Did you catch Peter's drift? He's saying that in so many ways, actions speak louder than words. When a Christian woman displays true beauty, when she carries out her God-given roles with gentleness and respect, when she doesn't try to badger or control, nag or dismiss her husband, when she simply, quietly lets her light shine, that's what may have the greatest impact on her unbelieving spouse or even the spouse who's not as spiritually mature or as he could or should be.

But of course, that doesn't just apply to how Christian wives to treat their husbands, but also, the other way around. What does Peter say? *Husbands, in the same way, be considerate as you live with your wives and treat them with respect.* Man, Peter really hits the nail on the head, doesn't he? So often, what wives want from their husbands is not a fatter wallet. They're not looking for someone to fix their problems or make their decisions for them. They want someone

to just be considerate. To think about other people's needs. Other people's feelings. Wives want husbands who treat them with respect, who care about them and see them as gifted children of God that they are. In a sense, that's what makes husbands truly beautiful in the eyes of their wives. I hate to break it to you, guys, but it's not your jawline, your hairline, your waistline, or even your credit line that makes you so attractive to your wives. (Okay, maybe once upon a time, but that's not what keeps them attracted to you.) No, why they find you beautiful is not what's on the outside, It's what's on the inside. It's what's in here. It's what's in your heart. And ladies, the same thing is true for you. True beauty for both men and women is not on the outside. It's on the inside.

Which brings us to one last question. What if, when I look in the mirror, I don't see someone who's beautiful? I don't mean physically attractive on the outside, I mean, what if I don't see someone who is morally attractive on the inside? What if the things that I've thought and said and done are really ugly? What if I've not been considerate of my wife? What if you've disrespected your husband? What if your inner spirit is anything but gentle and quiet? Now what? Now, how do you look to God? Ugly, right?

Actually, no. Why not? One reason. Jesus. Even though, by nature, we're all terribly ugly. We're hideous. Still, what did Jesus do? Again, Ephesians chapter 5. *Christ loved the church* (who is the church? It's you and me. So reread that and insert "you" for "her") *and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.*

My friends, do you know what people who are without stain, or wrinkle, or any other blemish look like? They look beautiful. That's what you look like to God. Because of what Jesus has done for you, you are beautiful in God's eyes. And that, my friends, is where true beauty—I mean, true inner beauty—comes from. It comes from God. God looks at you and sees Jesus. He says, "For Jesus' sake you are holy, you are righteous, you are beautiful." Do you realize what that means? It means I can look around today and see some really beautiful people. In fact, so can you. Look around you. You'll see people who are married and people who aren't. People with children and people without. But all of them, in God's eyes, are beautiful. Christians, God has given you true beauty in Christ. Believe it. And then, let people see it! For Jesus' sake. Amen.