THE QUESTION

Did the early Christians think women may braid their hair (1 Peter 3:3–4)?

Asked by a THF member on June 13, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 7 numbered quotations · the 21 early Christian passages and 56 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/did-the-early-christians-think-women-may-braid-their-hair-1-peter-3-3-4

The short answer *Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words*

The early writers did not forbid simple care for the hair, but they warned against showy braiding and styling meant to draw the eye. Clement says a plain fastening is enough. Cyprian and Tertullian read Peter and Paul as real limits, and they place a woman's true beauty in a modest heart.

LIBRARY ONLY	This study was written only from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed at the back, with a link to read it.
HOW IT WAS MADE	Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.
SHARING WITH AN AI?	Every quotation here comes from The Historic Faith's library. If you paste this study into an AI, anything it adds beyond these pages comes from that AI, not from us.

IN THIS STUDY

1	Simple fastened hair is enough	2	6	Men are held to the same modesty	4
2	Cyprian treats Peter and Paul as real limits	2	7	True adornment is placed in the heart	4
3	Styling to attract the eye is the problem	3		What these passages don't tell us	5
4	Adorned heads can lose the heart's ornaments	3		The Sources: 21 early Christian passages and 56 Bible verses, with links	5
5	Curled and dyed hair is not needed	4			

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don't republish.

POINT 1 OF 7

Simple fastened hair is enough

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Clement of Alexandria does not tell women to neglect their hair. He says it is enough to care for it simply and fasten it with a plain pin. What he condemns is elaborate braiding with curls and twists, which he says is the style of loose women and actually spoils the hair.

1

> “It is enough for women to protect their hair and fasten it simply at the neck with a plain hairpin, caring for modest hair in a simple way for the sake of true beauty.”
>
> *later in the same passage*
>
> “For prostitute-like braiding of the hair, and arranging it in curls and twisted strands, only makes them look ugly.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Instructor* 3.11 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 6, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 7

Cyprian treats Peter and Paul as real limits

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Cyprian quotes both 1 Timothy 2:9-10 and 1 Peter 3:3-4 together. He says Paul sets a proper limit on clothing and ornaments, and that Peter agrees. He applies this most strongly to women dedicated as virgins, who have no excuse for adorning themselves.

2

> “In his own words, he sets a proper limit for your clothing and ornaments.”
>
> *later in the same passage*
>
> “Let women adorn themselves with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or expensive clothing, but as is fitting for women who profess chastity, with a good way of life."”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Treatises* (c. 248–258 AD) **Source 13, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

POINT 3 OF 7

Styling to attract the eye is the problem

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Tertullian separates dress, like gold and clothing, from what he calls ornament: care for the hair and skin meant to attract the eye. He warns against both, and reminds Christian women that they are judged by a different standard of humility and chastity.

3

"The second consists in care for the hair, the skin, and those parts of the body that attract the eye."

later in the same passage

"So even at this early point in our discussion, you may already look ahead and see what, out of all these things, is fitting for your discipline, handmaid of God, since you are judged by different standards than other women, namely, the standards of humility and chastity."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *On the Apparel of Women* 1.4 (c. 196–220 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 11, page 6 Read it in the library ›

POINT 4 OF 7

Adorned heads can lose the heart's ornaments

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Cyprian reads Isaiah's warning to the proud daughters of Zion, who were stripped of their hair styles and ornaments. He sees a lesson for Christian women: outward adornment can crowd out the inner beauty that God values.

4

"With their heads adorned, they earned dishonor and disgrace."

later in the same passage

"Adorned with gold, pearls, and necklaces, they have lost the ornaments of the heart and spirit."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Treatises* (c. 248–258 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 14, page 6 Read it in the library ›

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don't republish.

POINT 5 OF 7

Curled and dyed hair is not needed

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Commodianus scolds a Christian woman who copies worldly fashion with curled hair, makeup and dye. He says God sees the heart, and a wife should be approved by her good character rather than her looks.

5

"At the mirror you adorn yourself, with your curled hair turned back from your brow."

later in the same passage

"God is the overlooker, who dives into each heart. But these things are not necessary for modest women."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Commodianus,** *Writings* (c. 250–300 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 19, page 6 Read it in the library ›

POINT 6 OF 7

Men are held to the same modesty

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Tertullian says this is not only a rule for women. Men also have vain grooming habits, such as arranging the hair and dyeing gray hair. Once a person knows God, he says, the wish to attract others this way should be set aside.

6

"all these things are rejected as frivolous, as hostile to modesty. For where God is, there is modesty; there is sobriety, her assistant and ally."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *On the Apparel of Women* 2.8 (c. 196–220 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 12, page 6 Read it in the library ›

POINT 7 OF 7

True adornment is placed in the heart

Our note · compiled by machine learning · Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words

Lactantius, writing about how God made people, says God put our defense and our ornament inside us rather than on the body. This matches Peter's call to the hidden person of the heart.

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don't republish.

7 “He placed his defense and his ornament not outside him, but within; not in the body, but in the heart.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Lactantius,** *Divine Institutes* 4 (c. 290–320 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 21, page 7 **Read it in the library ›**

THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- These passages do not give a rule for every kind of braid; they target showy styles worn for display.
- Several writers speak most sharply to wealthy women or to consecrated virgins, so the strength of the rule may vary by case.
- A word-for-word match shows that a quotation really is in our text. It does not show that our reading of it is right, or who wrote each work.

WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

The Sources

The 21 early Christian passages and 56 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–21, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 22–43, in Bible order), then 34 more verses THF links to these passages, by reference. **Quote 1, page 2** beside a source shows where the study quotes it. Passages are in THF’s updated English unless marked “1885 English” (the Roberts–Donaldson translation, public domain). “… [continues online]” marks a passage the library gave only in part. **On paper?** At **thehistoricfaith.com**, Bible verses are in the **Audio Bible** and early Christian writings in the **Library** (search for the title).

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS *21 passages from 10 writers*

Justin Martyr, *c. 130–165 AD · sources 1–2*

1 *Second Apology* (on point 7) appeared to him as women: Vice, in a luxurious dress with a seductive expression enhanced by her adornments, and her eyes full of immediate tenderness, told Hercules that if he… [continues online] **read ›**

2 *On the Sole Government of God* (1885 English; on point 7) “thy adorning not in outward shows, But in an inward purity of heart… [continues online] **read ›**

Tatian, *c. 150–180 AD · source 3*

3 *Fragments of Tatian* 1 “are punished and corrected by the Word. He also said that women were punished because of their hair and ornaments by a power appointed over those things. He said that… [continues online] **read ›**

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

Irenaeus, *c. 175–202 AD · source 4*

4 *Against Heresies: Book IV* (on point 7) further showed that we should be adorned with works of righteousness after our calling, so the Spirit of God may rest upon us; for this is the wedding garment, as… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · sources 5–9*

5 *Instructor* 3.3 (on point 6) to comb himself and shave himself with a razor for the sake of fine appearance, to arrange his hair at the mirror, to shave his cheeks, pluck hairs out of… [continues online] **read ›**

6 *Instructor* 3.11 **Quote 1, page 2** “is enough for women to protect their hair and fasten it simply at the neck with a plain hairpin, caring for modest hair in a simple way for the sake… [continues online] **read ›**

7 *Instructor* 2.11 (on point 5) about love of ornament, dyeing wool, a variety of colors, fussiness about gems, delicate work in gold, and still more, artificial hair and curled arrangements? And furthermore, what should be… [continues online] **read ›**

8 *Instructor* 3.3 (on point 6) they are not healthy. Instead, turning toward pleasure, they become effeminate. They cut their hair in an unmanly and prostitute-like way, wear fine and see-through clothes, chew mastich… [continues online] **read ›**

9 *Instructor* 3.3 (1885 English; on point 6) “these, for the most part, plucking out the rest of their hair, only dress that on the head, all but binding their locks with fillets like women… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · sources 10–12*

10 *On the Apparel of Women* 2.13 (on point 7) which retard our hope. Let us cast away earthly ornaments if we desire heavenly ones. Do not love gold, in which one substance all the sins of the people of… [continues online] **read ›**

11 *On the Apparel of Women* 1.4 (1885 English) **Quote 3, page 3** “former is accounted (to consist) in gold, and silver, and gems, and garments… [continues online] **read ›**

12 *On the Apparel of Women* 2.8 **Quote 6, page 4** “moreover, shall we bring sobriety to bear on the discharge of the functions of modesty, unless seriousness in… [continues online] **read ›**

Cyprian, *c. 248–258 AD · sources 13–16*

13 *Treatises* **Quote 2, page 2** “but Paul answers your riches. In his own words, he sets a proper limit for your clothing and ornaments. He said, "Let women adorn themselves with modesty and self-control… [continues online] **read ›**

14 *Treatises* **Quote 4, page 3** “full of the Holy Spirit, cries out and rebukes the daughters of Zion. They were corrupted by gold, silver, and clothing. He rebukes them because they were rich in harmful… [continues online] **read ›**

15 *Treatises* (on point 4) “clothing, but not to think about the robe of Christ that she has lost; to receive expensive ornaments and finely made necklaces, but not to grieve over the loss of… [continues online] **read ›**

16 *Treatises* (on point 4) on a beast, and that woman was clothed in a purple and scarlet mantle, and was adorned with gold, precious stones, and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand… [continues online] **read ›**

Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · sources 17–18*

17 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 6) “or to brush it up together, or to let it spread out, or to puff it up, or by careful combing and braiding to make it curl and shine, since… [continues online] **read ›**

18 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 5) than death. Her hands are fetters." Ecclesiastes 7:26. And in another passage: "As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is beauty in a wicked woman… [continues online] **read ›**

Commodianus, *c. 250–300 AD · source 19*

19 *Writings* **Quote 5, page 4** “the evil one, O modest women of Christ. Show forth all your wealth in giving… [continues online] **read ›**

Archelaus, *c. 270–300 AD · source 20*

20 *Disputation with Manes* 1 (on point 7) “be placed the man who, although dressed only in dirty and worn-out clothing, hides no evil in his heart against his neighbor. For it is only the circumcision of… [continues online] **read ›**

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

Lactantius, *c. 290–320 AD · source 21*

21 *Divine Institutes* 4 (1885 English) **Quote 7, page 5** "therefore, there were evils which he might guard against, and which he might distinguish from good and useful things, wisdom was not necessary for him… [continues online] **read ›**

THE BIBLE *22 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

22 **Susanna 1:11** for they were ashamed to declare their desire—that they wanted to lie with her. **read ›**

23 **Acts 3:19** Therefore repent and turn back, so that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, **read ›**

24 **Acts 3:20** and he may send Jesus Christ, who was appointed for you beforehand, **read ›**

25 **Acts 3:21** whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things which God spoke of long ago through the mouth of all his holy prophets. **read ›**

26 **Acts 3:22** For Moses indeed said to the fathers, 'The Lord our God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brothers; him you shall hear in everything he speaks to you. **read ›**

27 **Acts 4:1** As they spoke to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came to them, **read ›**

28 **Acts 19:9** But when some were hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and separated the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. **read ›**

29 **Acts 24:9** The Jews also joined in the attack, affirming that these things were so. **read ›**

30 **Romans 8:18** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which will be revealed toward us. **read ›**

31 **Romans 9:19** You will say then to me, "Why does he still find fault? For who withstands his will?" **read ›**

32 **1 Corinthians 11:5** But every woman praying or prophesying with her head uncovered dishonors her head. For it is one and the same thing as if she were shaved. **read ›**

33 **1 Corinthians 11:6** For if a woman is not covered, let her hair also be cut off. But if it is shameful for a woman to have her hair cut off or be shaved, let her be covered. **read ›**

34 **1 Corinthians 11:15** But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her, because her hair is given as a covering. **read ›**

35 **Galatians 1:9** As we have said before, so I now say again: if anyone preaches to you a gospel other than what you received, let him be cursed. **read ›**

36 **Philippians 2:22** But you know his proven worth, that as a child serves a father, so he served with me in the gospel. **read ›**

37 **Colossians 1:11** strengthened with all power according to the might of his glory, for all endurance and patience with joy, **read ›**

38 **1 Timothy 2:9** Likewise, I desire that women adorn themselves in orderly clothing, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothing, **read ›**

39 **1 Timothy 2:10** but with good works, which is appropriate for women professing godliness. **read ›**

40 **Titus 2:5** to be sober-minded, pure, keepers of the home, good, subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God may not be blasphemed. **read ›**

41 **1 Peter 3:3** Let your adornment not be outward—the braiding of hair, the wearing of gold, or the putting on of clothes— **read ›**

42 **1 Peter 3:4** but the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a meek and quiet spirit, which is very precious before God. **read ›**

43 **1 Peter 3:5** For this is how in the past the holy women who hoped in God also adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands. **read ›**

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don't republish.

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *34 verses, by reference*

Partly machine-linked: related to the passages, not always quoted in them. Each reference links to the verse in our audio Bible.

Matthew 5:8 · 5:14 · 5:15 · 5:16 · 5:32 · 7:12 · 7:15 · 8:10 · 10:10 · 10:30 · 12:36 · 18:7 · 23:27

Mark 2:19 · 4:21 · 4:22 · 12:41

Luke 8:16 · 11:33 · 14:33 · 16:15

John 3:21 · 5:34

Romans 2:29 · 12:3 · 12:17

1 Corinthians 4:3 · 7:18 · 11:3

2 Corinthians 8:21 · 13:3 · 13:5

Philippians 4:5

Hebrews 4:15

Searched: Ante-Nicene Fathers volumes 1–9 and the Bible, including the Septuagint.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “Did the early Christians think women may braid their hair (1 Peter 3:3–4)?” on June 13, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

Library only. This study was written only from The Historic Faith’s library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed above, with a link to read it.

How it was made. Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith’s library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.

How to cite this study. The Historic Faith, “Did the early Christians think women may braid their hair (1 Peter 3:3–4)?” Early Church Questions, published November 9, 2026, https://thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/did-the-early-christians-think-women-may-braid-their-hair-1-peter-3-3-4. To cite one quotation, add its number and source, for example “quote 1, source 6.”

© 2026 The Historic Faith. Selection, arrangement and editing by THF; machine-compiled text and public-domain quotations are not claimed. For personal study; please don’t republish.

THEHISTORICFAITH.COM

THE END OF THIS STUDY