THE QUESTION

What did the early church teach about braided hair?

Asked by a THF member on April 9, 2026 · published November 9, 2026, updated November 11, 2026 · 5 numbered quotations · the 16 early Christian passages and 34 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/what-did-the-early-church-teach-about-braided-hair

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

Early Christian writers warned women not to wear braided or elaborately styled hair as showy adornment, following the words of Paul and Peter. They tied this to modesty and chastity, and held virgins devoted to God to an even stricter standard. Clement still allowed simple hair care, so the target was styling for display, not keeping hair neat.

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	Clement allows simple care but rejects showy braids	2
2	Cyprian applies Paul's and Peter's warning	2
3	Cyprian holds consecrated virgins to a stricter standard	3
4	Tertullian calls fussy hairstyles a slavery	3
5	Commodianus links styled hair with vanity	4
	What these passages don't tell us	4
	The Sources: 16 early Christian passages and 34 Bible verses, with links	5

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

POINT 1 OF 5

Clement allows simple care but rejects showy braids

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

Clement of Alexandria (2nd century) says it is enough for women to fasten their hair simply with a plain pin. He then attacks prostitute-like braids, curls and twisted strands, saying they make women look ugly and damage the hair. He pictures women so worried about their braids that they fear touching their heads or ruining them in their sleep.

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. For prostitute-like braiding of the hair, and arranging it in curls and twisted strands, only makes them look ugly. It cuts the hair and pulls it out because of those deceptive braids. Because of this, they do not touch their head, since they are afraid of disturbing their hair. Even sleep comes with fear, lest without knowing it they ruin the shape of the braid.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Instructor* 3.11 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 2, page 5** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 5

Cyprian applies Paul's and Peter's warning

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

Cyprian (3rd century) answers a woman who points to her wealth. He quotes Paul (1 Timothy 2:9–10): women should adorn themselves with modesty, not with braided hair, gold, pearls or costly clothes, but with a good life. He adds Peter (1 Peter 3:3–4), who calls for the adornment of the heart. He treats these words as a real limit on dress.

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

2

“You call yourself wealthy and rich, 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, 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."”

later in the same passage

“Peter also agrees with these same teachings and says, "Let a woman's adornment not be outward, in clothing, or gold, or fine dress, but the adornment of the heart."”

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

Source 10, page 6 Read it in the library ›

POINT 3 OF 5

Cyprian holds consecrated virgins to a stricter standard

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

Cyprian says a virgin devoted to God should look like one, so that no one doubts it. Her clothing should not shame the goodness of her mind. He asks why she would go out adorned, with her hair arranged as if she had or wanted a husband, and tells her to fear pleasing others in this way.

3

“A virgin ought not only to be so, but also to be seen and believed to be so. No one, on seeing a virgin, should have any doubt whether she is one. Perfection should show itself equally in all things. Nor should the clothing of the body bring discredit on the good of the mind. Why should she go out adorned? Why with her hair arranged, as if she either had or were seeking a husband? Rather, if she is a virgin, let her fear to please in this way.”

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

Source 11, page 6 Read it in the library ›

POINT 4 OF 5

Tertullian calls fussy hairstyles a slavery

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

Tertullian (around AD 200) does not single out braids, but he asks what all the work of binding, loosing, curling and styling hair does for salvation. He notes that some want loose, flying hair, but not with good simplicity. He urges women to drive this slavery of ornament away, since the effort to look adorned is in vain.

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

4

"What help to salvation comes from all the effort spent arranging your hair? Why is your hair given no rest? At one moment it must be bound, at another loosed, then cared for, then thinned out. Some are anxious to force their hair into curls. Others want it to hang loose and flying, but not with good simplicity."

later in the same passage

"No, rather drive far away from your free head all this slavery of ornamentation. You work in vain to seem adorned."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *On the Apparel of Women* 2.7 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 8, page 5** Read it in the library ›

THF's updated English

POINT 5 OF 5

Commodianus links styled hair with vanity

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

The Latin poet Commodianus rebukes a Christian woman who adorns herself at the mirror with curled hair. He urges modest women to flee this kind of vain adornment, which he says suits women of the brothels, and to show their wealth by giving instead.

5

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

later in the same passage

"O good matrons, flee from the adornment of vanity. Such attire is fitting for women who haunt the brothels. Overcome the evil one, O modest women of Christ. Show forth all your wealth in giving."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Commodianus,** *Writings* (c. 250–300 AD) **Source 16, page 6** Read it in the library ›

THF's updated English

THE LIMITS

What these passages don't tell us

- These passages do not say whether a plain, practical braid counts as the simple hair care Clement allows.
- Tertullian and Commodianus criticize showy hairstyles in general and do not give a separate ruling on braids.
- These English passages do not show the original Greek or Latin words, so they cannot settle exactly which hairstyle each writer meant by the word translated braid.

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

- 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 16 early Christian passages and 34 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–16, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 17–34, in Bible order), then 16 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 *16 passages from 5 writers*

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · sources 1–5*

1 *Instructor* 2.11 (on point 1) a variety of colors, fussiness about gems, delicate work in gold, and still more, artificial hair and curled arrangements? And furthermore, what should be said about staining the eyes, plucking… [continues online] **read ›**

2 *Instructor* 3.11 **Quote 1, page 2** "hairpin, caring for modest hair in a simple way for the sake of true beauty. For prostitute-like braiding of the hair, and arranging it in curls and twisted strands… [continues online] **read ›**

3 *Instructor* 3.3 (on point 1) 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 ›**

4 *Instructor* 3.11 (on point 1) "hair added from other people must be completely rejected. It is a very sacrilegious thing for false hair to cover the head, shading the skull with dead locks. For on… [continues online] **read ›**

5 *Instructor* 3.3 (on point 1) 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 ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · sources 6–9*

6 *On the Apparel of Women* 1.4 (1885 English; on point 4) "that even from this early stage (of our discussion) you may look forward and see what, out of (all) these, is suitable, handmaid of God, to your discipline, inasmuch as… [continues online] **read ›**

7 *On the Apparel of Women* 2.1 (on point 4) salvation—and not the salvation of women only, but of men also—consists principally in showing modesty. For since, by the introduction into us of the Holy Spirit, we are… [continues online] **read ›**

8 *On the Apparel of Women* 2.7 **Quote 4, page 4** help to salvation comes from all the effort spent arranging your hair? Why is your hair given no rest? At one moment it must be bound, at another loosed, then… [continues online] **read ›**

9 *On the Apparel of Women* 2.8 (on point 4) the beard too sharply, plucking it out here and there, shaving around the mouth, arranging the hair, and disguising its grayness with dyes; removing all the first soft hair over… [continues online] **read ›**

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

Cyprian, *c. 248–258 AD · sources 10–13*

10 *Treatises* **Quote 2, page 3** “ornaments. He said, "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… [continues online] **read ›**

11 *Treatises* **Quote 3, page 3** “I still pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10). But continency and modesty do not consist only in purity of the flesh. They also… [continues online] **read ›**

12 *Treatises* (on point 2) 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 ›**

13 *Treatises* (on point 2) is changed into a lie by the deceitful dyes of cosmetics? Your Lord says, "You cannot make one hair white or black." Matthew 5:36 And yet, in order to… [continues online] **read ›**

Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · sources 14–15*

14 *Apostolic Constitutions* innocent. You are not guilty of the act itself, but you are guilty in this way: through your adornment, you led the woman to desire you. For you are the… [continues online] **read ›**

15 *Apostolic Constitutions* wants ornament, since all things which God has made are very good. But the lascivious additional adorning of what is already good is an affront to the bounty of the… [continues online] **read ›**

Commodianus, *c. 250–300 AD · source 16*

16 *Writings* **Quote 5, page 4** “pursue vanity with all the pomp of the devil. At the mirror you adorn yourself, with your curled hair turned back from your brow. And moreover, with evil purposes, you… [continues online] **read ›**

THE BIBLE *18 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

17 **Exodus 28:20** and the fourth row, a chrysolite, a beryl, and an onyx, set round with gold and bound in gold. Let them be according to their rows. **read ›**

18 **Exodus 28:22** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

19 **Exodus 39:15** On the oracle they made twisted tassels, braided work, of pure gold. (Septuagint Exodus 36:22 (Exodus 39:15 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

20 **Deuteronomy 22:12** You shall make twisted tassels for yourself on the four corners of the cloaks with which you clothe yourself. **read ›**

21 **Job 28:16** And it shall not be weighed against the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx and sapphire. **read ›**

22 **Job 28:18** Lofty things and gabis shall not be mentioned; but draw out wisdom above the innermost things. **read ›**

23 **Job 28:19** The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it; it shall not be weighed against pure gold. **read ›**

24 **Song of Solomon 7:5** Your head upon you is like Carmel, and the braid of your head like purple; a king is held captive in the galleries. (Septuagint Song of Solomon 7:6 (Song of Solomon 7:5 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

25 **Ezekiel 16:12** And I put a ring in your nose, and earrings in your ears, and a crown of boasting on your head. **read ›**

26 **Ezekiel 44:20** And they shall not shave their heads, and they shall not pluck out their hair; they shall surely cover their heads. **read ›**

27 **Matthew 13:46** who, having found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.” **read ›**

28 **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 ›**

29 **1 Corinthians 11:14** Or does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? **read ›**

30 **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 ›**

31 **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 ›**

32 **1 Timothy 2:10** but with good works, which is appropriate for women professing godliness. **read ›**

33 **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 ›**

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

34 **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 ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *16 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 5:48 · 6:27 · 10:30 · 12:36 · 18:7

1 Corinthians 3:16 · 6:19 · 11:2 · 11:3 · 15:50

2 Corinthians 13:5

Galatians 4:31 · 5:13

1 Thessalonians 4:13 · 5:23

1 John 2:27

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

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “What did the early church teach about braided hair?” on April 9, 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, “What did the early church teach about braided hair?” Early Church Questions, published November 9, 2026, https://thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/what-did-the-early-church-teach-about-braided-hair. To cite one quotation, add its number and source, for example “quote 1, source 2.”

© 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