



## Incorruptible Beauty

By Lucy Wall

*This poem was inspired by 1 Peter 3:3-5 which reads:*

*"Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God."*

*These verses have always stood out to me and have raised several questions in my heart over the years. I think it's an easily agreeable concept when Peter talks about placing more value on the inner character of a woman than what she looks like on the outside but I think the challenge for me comes when he talks about women having a "gentle and quiet spirit."*

*What's interesting is I've discovered over time that I'm not alone in my quandaries and it would seem that some other women find these verses quite hard to relate to as well. At times I've heard ladies comment on this section, frequently with an air of confusion and sometimes slight unease. I remember once hearing a lady say:*

*"We're encouraged to have a "gentle and quiet spirit" but what does that even mean?"*

*Of course we have to take these words into context and we can see from the verses just before that Peter is addressing married women. He's encouraging them to conduct themselves in a certain manner in order to be a godly witness to a non-believing or unruly husband. Even within this framework though I think these words are still quite thought-provoking and it made me really wonder, what is it about this Scripture that makes it so challenging to embrace? Not for every woman of course but it does seem to stand out to quite a few!*

*I began to pray about it and ask the Lord for guidance and wisdom, knowing it was important for me to have a biblical understanding about the meaning expressed in this verse. After all, God's Word is perfect. It's the same yesterday, today and forever and the truths within are just as applicable to us today as they were to the people when they were first written.*

*I then found myself thinking about the contrast Peter makes between outer and inner beauty. When we think of "beauty" it's so easy to instantly think of the outer appearance. Often as people we spend ample time working on what we look like on the outside but if we're honest with ourselves, would we find that we pour the same levels of energy into what the inner person looks like? Most people would admit to consulting a mirror every day to ensure that the "outer person" is up to scratch but do we consult our Bibles just as often to make sure the "inner person" is looking good?*

*This inspired me to start writing the first few verses of my poem and as I continued to write I realised that it wasn't just with the focus of being a married woman but also as a Christian woman living in a very anti-Christian world. Before long I felt the Lord ministering to my heart and it's this open and honest process that I share through my poem "Incorruptible Beauty."*

Mirror mirror on the wall, tell me what you see.  
In silence you reflect the form my Maker gave to me.  
The image that I know so well and tend to every day  
Submits to subtle change as time ticks steadily away.

You watch me with indifference as I comb and style my hair.  
You never give opinions on the jewellery that I wear  
And though you've never commented on how my clothes have changed,  
I find I must consult you as each outfit is arranged.

You show me with such honesty the lines my face accrues;  
At times the truths that you reveal aren't always what I'd choose!  
But you are always faithful to display what needs attention.  
I find I'm rather grateful for your timely intervention!



But mirror mirror on the wall, sometimes I may hide  
What's really going on deep down and what I feel inside.  
The image I present to you will show no hint of strife  
Though maybe you might catch a glimpse of pressures in my life.

But mirror mirror don't you see although you play your part,  
You don't reveal my spirit or condition of my heart.  
You needn't get upset for though reflection is your goal,  
You can't expose or replicate the colour of my soul.

The picture you provide can go no deeper than my skin.  
You don't possess authority to show me what's within.  
So though your eyes are limited and only see so far  
You really needn't fuss or fret, it's just the way things are.

For if your eyes *could* see my soul I'd think it quite absurd!  
To view my *true* reflection I must look within God's Word.  
It's here I learn my Maker sees the heart He made by hand,  
Whose eyes cannot be fooled and where no trickery can stand.

Although this thought is daunting and a challenge to embrace  
It's also liberating for I'm covered by His grace.  
To stand before my Father and consult His thoughts above  
I know the truths that *He* reveals are driven by His love.

So though I face some ugly traits that beg for circumvention  
I find I'm rather grateful for *His* timely intervention!  
He gently shows me where my heart might need a nip or tuck  
And with each revelation deepest habits come unstuck.

And so instead of worrying about my double chin  
The flaws I need to focus on are those that lie within!  
So as I delve within His Word they're dealt with one by one  
And all the time He's moulding me to look more like His Son.

To look like Him in *character* is such a worthy aim!  
To have my life reflect His soul and honour Jesus' name.  
Oh but what a challenge of the very highest grade!  
A mission quite impossible if not for Jesus' aid.

He sends the Holy Spirit who instructs me every day,  
Who teaches me in simple truth and guides me in His way.  
Who shows me God's great love for me in spite of every flaw!  
Who helps me understand His Word and fills my heart with awe.

Awe for such a masterpiece! A perfect work of art!  
Inspired Holy Scriptures that speak straight into my heart.  
I've found there is no other book that makes my spirit soar,  
Such power that can build me up yet cut me to the core!



It isn't just my sinful flesh that wars within this vessel,  
God's Word can be so challenging and cause my soul to wrestle!  
For every page reveals to me the heart of the Divine  
And so *my* heart is scrutinised to make sure it's in line.

So when it comes to Peter and his words in chapter three,  
I find that his description is quite curious to me.  
I read about some qualities that bring my God delight  
"A gentle, quiet spirit" is what's precious in His sight.

These interesting adjectives stand out upon the page.  
These words don't seem to tally with this modern day and age.  
A message much more popular is "stand out from the crowd!"  
"Make sure your voice is always heard, be brassy, bold and loud!"

"Be unapologetic in how brazen you might be.  
Declare "Because I'm worth it!" Make it clear for all to see!"  
Of course this stance is secular and not what I would choose.  
This certainly does not reflect my feelings, thoughts or views.

And yet I find I'm searching for the meaning that's asserted,  
Does Peter mean that women can't be fun and extroverted?  
What if she's outgoing and expressive in her ways?  
Will she be displeasing to her Saviour all her days?

Will natural vivacity be looked upon as "sin?"  
Are these words to "silence" us and box all women in?  
This thought is not affirming for the female self esteem;  
I question if these words are as restrictive as they seem.

To subjugate all women would be quite an implication.  
Merely the suggestion leads to insubordination!  
So either I'm mistaken or I just don't understand,  
This concept and the God I *know* do not go hand in hand.

For Jesus doesn't box us in or make us all the same.  
He blesses us with different traits to glorify His name.  
Variety is what reveals the skill of our Creator.  
He's Saviour of our souls and women's greatest Liberator.

So keeping this in mind I lift these verses up in prayer  
And ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the meaning there.  
I firstly question "gentle" and the qualities it brings,  
I wonder what I'd look like if I *don't* apply these things?

The opposite of "gentle" is described as rough or rude,  
A character that's uncontrolled, unfriendly, coarse and crude.  
It's also disagreeable, uncivil and severe,  
It's merciless and unrefined and grating to the ear.





It's violent and it's hateful where no self control may rule.  
It's known for being impolite and callous, harsh and cruel.  
To read this unappealing list it really does appall;  
These aren't the kind of traits I want to see in me at all!

The opposite of "quiet" is described as being loud,  
A character that's thunderous and vulgar, brash and proud.  
It's forceful and it's mouthy with a blaring quality.  
Oh God forbid my friends should find these attributes in me!

These negative descriptions don't reflect my God Divine  
And I don't look for these in those with whom I spend *my* time.  
So if I don't appreciate these traits when found in others  
Then why should I inflict these on my sisters and my brothers?

A spirit that *is* "gentle" is courteous and calm  
With tender hearted ways which can be soothing like a balm.  
It's temper is controlled when faced with heated opposition,  
It's genial and loving with a kindly disposition.

It's pleasant and considerate, refined and affable,  
Compassionate and disciplined and also merciful.  
This lovely, warm description speaks of traits I'd like to show,  
It's also fair to note it sounds just like a *Man* I know.

A spirit that is "quiet" would be cool and undisturbed.  
Described as unassuming, discreet and unperturbed.  
It's modest and it's stable, it's collected and serene.  
It's still and unobtrusive, avoiding the obscene.

A quiet spirit gives no trouble willingly to any.  
The traits I find desirable within *this* list are many!  
This explanation pulls me in with every definition,  
The fact I want to *know* this person asks for recognition.

Suddenly the adjectives I thought were unappealing  
Speak to me directly and provoke a different feeling.  
I know that my initial thoughts are truly sacrificed  
For all of the above are things I see displayed in Christ!

The toughest *Man* in history whose *strength* endured the Cross  
Displayed the *gentlest* traits this world has ever come across!  
The God whose power formed the Earth and all the Heavenly host  
Lived the kind of life I'd like to emulate the most.

And so to look at Peter's words it's very clear to see,  
A "gentle, quiet spirit" is what I wish to be!  
No longer do I struggle to apply these to myself  
For Jesus doesn't ask for things He didn't do Himself.



He set the best example of humility and love,  
Always coinciding with His Father's will above.  
He sought the undesirable, embraced the ostracised  
Yet always spoke in love and truth and never compromised.

He demonstrated perfectly His grace and self control  
Yet boldly spoke to hypocrites and pierced their very soul!  
The God who could rebuke the waves and rein a demon in  
Humbly knelt to wash the feet of those who followed Him!

His life so full of paradox and stunning contradiction;  
With *power over all* He came to *serve* with such conviction!  
He shattered preconceptions as the humble, servant King.  
It's clear His words have been profound whatever year they're in!

Christ's influence on Earth cannot be said to be a myst'ry  
When this gentle, quiet Spirit, changed the course of hist'ry!  
His Gospel message saw the start of women's liberation,  
Cutting through the culture to proclaim emancipation!

The prejudice that women faced, His teachings would dispel.  
His passion for equality led Him to a well.  
Ignoring "current" views and seeking those of poor renown,  
His disregard for gender turned opinions upside down!

The God who revolutionised the outlook of mankind  
Left *all* discrimination and unfairness far behind.  
So studying these Scriptures there's a truth I must recall;  
Christ died for men *and* women and He paid the price for all!

Repressing womankind is clearly not the Bible's aim,  
The picture is for all who want to glorify God's name.  
The Holy Scriptures show us how to live in one accord,  
We'd *all* do well to follow in the footsteps of our Lord!

To contradict *our* times and have Him reign within our heart  
That really *is* a statement and will set our lives apart!  
To truly make a mark in life and go against the grain,  
I'll use my voice to boldly boast in only Jesus' name!

So Peter's words of guidance have a meaning I now see;  
The most appealing ornaments are proof of Christ in me.  
This beauty isn't made of gold or hanging from a chain,  
It isn't set in silver with a posh designer name.

It's not a row of diamonds on a polished platinum ring,  
This beauty shines the brightest when my soul reflects my King.  
So though the lines of youthful splendour gently fade away,  
Let's pray our *inner* beauty may grow brighter every day.



So Holy Bible in my hands, tell me what you see.  
With power you reflect the soul my Maker gave to me.  
May beauty incorruptible gain the greatest prize.  
In Heaven we can shine because we're worth it in *His* eyes!

**Proverbs 31:30**

*"Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised."*

**1 Timothy 4:7-8**

*"But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself towards godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come."*

**2 Corinthians 4:16**

*"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day."*

**Ephesians 5:25-28**

*"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself."*

**Isaiah 40:8**

*The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God stands forever."*

**Psalms 119:60**

*"The entirety of Your Word is truth, And every one of Your righteous judgements endures forever."*

**2 Peter 1:19-20**

*"And so we have the prophetic Word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."*