

# OpenTheo

## 1 Peter 1:13 - 1:17



### 1 Peter - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg provides a commentary on 1 Peter 1:13-17, in which he notes that salvation will be revealed at the end of the world when Jesus comes. Although trials are not usually something to rejoice about, Christians are called to rejoice despite them, knowing that their faith will be refined in the process. Christians are encouraged to trust and believe, even when they cannot see God, and to rejoice inexpressibly through times of trial. Despite persecution, believers are called to leap for joy as there will be a great reward in heaven.

## Transcript

We're looking at 1 Peter 1.13 as we begin this session. And Peter says, Because it is written, Now, we're not going to read the rest of the chapter quite yet. We probably won't get to it in this session.

But I wanted to get to sort of the end of a run-on set of thoughts. Verse 13 begins with the word, Therefore, and of course that means that it's springing forth from what was said in the earlier verses. The verses immediately earlier were about the subject of salvation.

In verses 3 through 5, He gave a long run-on sentence, which ramped up to his mentioning in the end of verse 5, And having mentioned our salvation in verse 5, He makes two branches of side discussion on the subject of salvation. Verses 6 through 9 is one of those branches. And he says, In verse 6 and 7, He specifically says that we rejoice even though we're in trials.

In various trials, he said, And of course, the impurities float to the top because gold is heavier than almost every mineral that might be mixed with it in the ore. So when you liquefy the whole mass, the gold is heavier, it goes to the bottom. The imperfections come to the top where they can easily be scooped off.

And that's, you know, the easiest way to separate gold from the other stuff that's in the rocks with it. Just melt it down. And so Peter says that's kind of how we are perfected and how we are tested.

It's by the trials that are like fire that refine us and test what we're made of. And in the end, we end up more like gold than anything else pure. I mentioned that in Job 23.10, Job said, when he was going through trials, he said, And so Peter uses that imagery as well.

By the way, there's a lot of times in the Old Testament, especially in Proverbs, but elsewhere, too, where this imagery of refining silver or refining gold through a furnace is used as a metaphor for God refining us and making us better people, too. This is how trials are viewed by Old Testament writers and by Peter as well. So even though we are in trials, which are not the kind of thing people usually rejoice about, we rejoice nonetheless, not in the trial so much as in our salvation.

He's mentioned the salvation in verse 5. And in verse 6, he says, In what? In your salvation. The fact that we have salvation is the occasion of our rejoicing despite trials, but also despite something else. In verses 8 and 9, he says, And he says, So we have a great joy or rejoicing, even though we don't see him.

Well, how can you rejoice in something you can't see? Well, when we were studying Hebrews 11, verse 1, it said, Faith is the substance of things hoped for. Well, he's talking about that hoped-for salvation at the end time. He said we're hoping for that, and faith in that we believe.

Now, that's faith, and that gives a substance to it that actually makes it a reality to us. And therefore, despite the fact that we're in trials, and despite the fact also that we can't even see the person we're trusting in, because we do trust him, because we do believe, we rejoice with joy inexpressible. And by the way, when we were going over those verses, I didn't comment on that expression, joy inexpressible.

In King James, it says joy unspeakable, but it's the same thought. Joy is a Christian trait. Paul said that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, and some other things, too.

But joy is one of the things really emphasized in the New Testament about being a Christian. The book of Philippians is entirely about joy. And in fact, again and again, throughout the book of Philippians, Paul says rejoice, rejoice, rejoice in the Lord.

Again, I say rejoice. And many times in the scripture, we read about rejoicing. Even Jesus, when he said, gave the beatitudes, blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are the meek, blessed are the merciful, blessed are the so forth, the pure in heart.

Blessed means happy. And he said, even blessed are you when men persecute you. For my sake, he says, leap for joy when that happens, because great is your reward, he said, in heaven.

So, in other words, Christianity is a life of joy. But it doesn't always look like it, because there's suffering, there's persecution. However, there is a joy, even if it's not always bubbling up to the surface.

If a person really believes what the Bible says about believers, then you can't help but have that inward stable happiness that kind of is unshakable. Peter said it's inexpressible. Most people have no trouble expressing their joy.

They smile, they laugh, they celebrate. And Christians do those things too. But there's times when we're not smiling or laughing or celebrating, but we still have that joy that's not outwardly expressed.

And Christianity is supposed to be a life of joy. And I remember my older son, when he lived with me, he was old enough to not live with me, but he still lived with me. But he'd always ask me, are you happy? And I thought, I'm not sure why you asked that question.

I've always thought of myself as happy, but apparently he wasn't so sure if I was happy. But I thought, well, I know I'm happy. I mean, I'm not protesting that I'm happy when I'm really not.

But most of them, I thought, most of them, I said, well, I've never really thought much about it. I don't really think about whether I'm happy or not. But the truth of the matter is I'm very content.

I'm very happy. But it must not have been always. I'm not very bubbly, I guess.

I'm not extremely showy about my happiness, right? But it's a joy unspeakable. It's a joy inexpressible. You don't always express it.

It's not a surface emotion. It's a deeper emotion than that. It's a stable contentment and, you know, peace about your circumstances.

And, you know, you're just happy about the things that you know are true in your life that God has said. And it's not always expressed, not outwardly, though it often is, of course. And the Bible talks in the book of Acts about how there was great rejoicing in the churches a lot of the time.

So Peter says we have this rejoicing in our salvation despite the fact that we're in trials and despite the fact that we have to believe things we don't see. And then the second branch off in talking about salvation was in verses 10 through 12, where he simply said this salvation was not some new innovation. It's something the prophets told about.

He means in the Old Testament. Hundreds of years earlier, the prophets in the Old Testament had predicted this, he says. Although they didn't fully understand what it was they were predicting, they predicted it.

And God, when they asked God for more information, he said it's really not for you to know. It's kind of a mystery. Paul talked a lot about the gospel being a mystery that was hidden in the Old Testament times.

It was mentioned but not expounded. It was not clear to the prophets what it was they were talking about. And Paul says, well, I mean, Peter here says these are things, in verse 12, at the end of verse 12, these are things which the angels desire to look into.

And Paul says the same thing in Ephesians. Remember I've mentioned there's a lot of parallels between Ephesians and 1 Peter. This is one of them.

In Ephesians chapter 3, Paul is talking again about the church and what God has done in saving his people. And he says, I'll read verse 8 through 10. To me who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

That's Ephesians 3, 8 and 9 now. And to make all people see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of ages has been hidden in God, who created all things through Jesus Christ. Now, see, Peter had said that this was something the Old Testament prophets didn't know about.

It was hidden. To the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be known by the church or through the church to the principalities and powers in heavenly places according to the eternal purpose, which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. What God has accomplished in our salvation is his eternal purpose.

From eternity, he's always had this purpose to bring about what he's brought about here. It was hidden in times past, but it's revealed now, he said. The mystery has been revealed.

And it says that in verse 10, he says that it might be made known by the church, or it means through the church, through what God is doing through the church. It might be made known to the principalities and powers, which in Ephesians is a term that Paul uses about four or five times, I think, in referring to the angelic beings, both good and bad. Essentially, the good angels and the bad angels are called principalities and powers.

It's a category of angelic beings. And so Paul says that the wisdom of God is being manifest to the angelic beings through what he's doing in the people of God by Christ. And Peter says the angels desire to look into this.

The angels have curiosity about this, too, which is, again, an echo of what Paul said in Ephesians. And it's all of that that he says before verse 13, where he says, therefore, because that is true, because we have this salvation, because it is the fulfillment of God's eternal purposes, therefore, he says this very strange expression, gird up the loins of your mind. Your mind has loins.

Loins, of course, are the lower back part of your back. Does your mind have a body with that kind of a portion that are loins? Obviously not. It's a figure of speech that to the Jewish mind, or the Gentile mind probably, because these were mostly Gentiles he was

writing to, it spoke of being prepared to work.

When a person would go out to work in the fields, people wore in those days garments that had skirts that go down at least to their knees, if not further. These would get in the way if you're kneeling and moving a lot out in the fields and stuff like that. So they would actually pull up the skirts and tie them kind of in a knot behind their back, and this is called girding up their loins.

It was sort of like we'd say rolling up your sleeves. Preparing for work is what it really means. To gird up your loins means to prepare to work, and it is essentially in that culture almost exactly the same thought as when we say roll up your sleeves.

It's get the extra clothing out of the way so that you have freedom to move and you're ready to work now without encumbrance. So to gird up the loins of your mind means to have a mentality that's ready for action, really. That's essentially what it means.

Be ready to do something. Be ready to do what's your assignment, to do your work. Have a mental attitude of one who's rolled up his sleeves and ready to go to work.

Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is being brought to you. Actually, it says in the New King James and the King James that is to be brought to you as if it's future, but in the Greek it actually says that is being brought to you. If you look that up in the Greek text, it's a different tense of the verb.

He doesn't say the grace that is to be brought to you, but the grace that is being brought to you as if it's currently coming to you. You're receiving grace. Now, Peter opened his epistle, the last lines of verse 2. He said, grace to you and peace be multiplied.

Grace and peace aren't just things that you receive one time. It's something that can be increased in your life. In fact, the last line of 2 Peter, 2 Peter 3.18 says, but grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

That's the end of his second epistle. He says that. So grace to Peter is something you can grow in or something that can be multiplied to you, something that you can increase in.

Grace is not something that we just receive, you know, a rubber stamp pardon when we accept Christ. And then suddenly, you know, we don't need grace anymore. Grace is that which sustains us every moment.

Grace is that which is sufficient for you. God said to Paul, when Paul said, please take away this thorn in my flesh. Jesus said, my grace is enough for you.

My grace will help you handle it. God's grace enables us. Now, Peter talks about the grace that is being brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The revelation of Jesus Christ is sometimes, in Paul anyway, a technical term for the second coming, but not necessarily in Peter. It's not necessarily that Paul and Peter would use ambiguous expressions in exactly the same way. They might, but it's possible that Peter means that as God reveals himself to you more, with the increased revelation of Christ that you receive as you grow and learn and get to know God better, the increased revelation brings grace, more grace to you.

Now, the reason I say that is if you look over at 2 Peter 1, which is just a few pages over, 2 Peter 1 to Peter says, grace and peace be multiplied to you. Again, this multiplication of grace and of peace to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. Now, that is, as you receive knowledge of God, grace and peace is multiplied.

As I mentioned, the very last verse in the same epistle, 2 Peter 3.18 says, but grow in grace and in the knowledge of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. Knowing God apparently is something that brings grace from God. The more knowledge we grow in, the more grace we grow in.

The more knowledge is multiplied, the more the grace is multiplied. This is how Peter talks about grace. So, as God reveals himself to us more, the revelation of Jesus Christ brings more grace to us.

It is being brought to us through the revelation of Jesus Christ. Now, I wouldn't be certain that this is how Peter means it. The way it reads in the version we're reading says, the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ, that can certainly be understood to mean when Jesus comes back at the revelation of Jesus Christ at the end, there is to be a certain new degree of grace that we receive when he gets here.

But since Peter actually is using the present tense, it makes me wonder if he is speaking here more as he speaks in 2 Peter. Of an increased knowledge of God brings increased grace into our life. Now, you might say, what's increased grace look like? Well, you no doubt would know what I mean if I said someone is a very gracious or graceful person.

It means that they have the same quality of grace in their attitude toward people that God has toward us. We count on his grace toward us. But we not only receive his grace, but we become conduits of his grace.

We receive it and extend it. We are to extend grace. That's why Jesus said, if you don't forgive others, God won't forgive you.

It's like God's forgiving you. You're supposed to extend that to others. If you block that off, you cork that off.

There won't be any more coming in the back. We're supposed to be conduits of God's mercy and grace to other people. We receive grace so that we can extend grace.

The world needs grace, needs to know the grace of God. And so grace has to keep coming to us as we continue to extend it to others. And so we are to be graceful.

In John chapter 1, there's a very important passage that I think speaks on this subject. The opening chapter of the Gospel of John, I want to read 14 and 16. Now, the reason I'm leaving 15 out is 15 is a parenthesis about John the Baptist.

John 1, 15 is a parenthesis about John the Baptist. And there are two such parentheses in chapter 1 of John. We won't worry about them right now.

We'll just read the flow of thought absent the parenthesis. So we read from verse 14 and then verse 16 immediately. John 1, 14.

And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Verse 16. And of his fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.

Or some say grace upon grace, one wave of grace after another. You see, it says that Christ was full of grace and truth. And of his fullness we have received, so we're full of grace and truth as well.

That's the idea. Jesus was full of grace. He was a gracious person.

You know, it says when he spoke to his hometown in Nazareth in Luke chapter 4, it says the people marveled at the words of grace that came out of his mouth. Well, what are you going to get? Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. He's full of grace.

Of course he has words of grace. And Paul says in Colossians 2 to the Christians, let your words be with grace, seasoned with salt. Or in Ephesians he says, let no corrupt communication come out of your mouth, that only such is able to minister grace to the hearers.

Jesus was full of grace, and what he was full of, we've received that fullness too. Of his fullness we've all received, even grace upon grace is how some of the translations say it in John 1, 16. So grace is not just something we receive in the sense of some kind of a pardon.

It's in addition to the pardon, it's something of God's own nature. And that's what Peter says in 2 Peter chapter 1. I don't want to steal too much thunder from our study of 2 Peter, but in 2 Peter chapter 1 verse 4, Peter says, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature. That Christians are partakers of God's own nature.

Partaking is a word that is used usually of eating food, when you take food into you to nourish you. So figuratively speaking, spiritually we take in to us, and it becomes

resident in us, God's own nature, which is grace. Grace and truth.

Jesus was full of grace and truth. We're to be full of grace and truth. So Peter in his epistles is frequently talking about multiplying grace to us, growing in grace, grace coming to us continually and so forth.

And that's what the phrase in the Greek actually means in verse 13 of 1 Peter 1. That we're supposed to hope fully to the end for this grace that is being brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Every time you get a new revelation about Christ, each time God shows you more of himself. Now you might say, what's that? What's a revelation from God? Remember when Jesus said to the disciples, who do you say I am? And Peter said, you're the Messiah, you're the son of the living God.

Jesus said, blessed are you Simon. He said, flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my father in heaven. That is, God the father revealed to Peter that Jesus is the Messiah.

And this is what the New Testament seems to teach, that some people may be persuaded by argumentation that Jesus is the Messiah, but that's not really what God's holding out for. God wants everyone to get the revelation inwardly that Jesus is the Messiah. This is a revelation from God.

Blessed are you Simon, because you have received this revelation from my father, not from men, Jesus said. And as we get to know God better, it is normative for him to be revealing his character more and more to us. And as we see more of his character, we imbibe more of his character.

And more and more, we become more gracious. You know, when you first become a Christian, especially if you're kind of immature and kind of religious, it's probable, and this may not always be the case, but many times new Christians get very legalistic and very judgmental. They give up their fun, they give up all their sinful habits, and they're still kind of upset about that.

And they kind of are resentful that not everyone has given up theirs. You know, if I've got to give up mine, by golly, everybody else ought to give up theirs too. They wouldn't say it like that, but that's actually the way many people feel when they become religious.

They say, that's not, I'm sure how the Pharisees were. When you become very religious and legalistic, it makes you judgmental and critical of other people and so forth. But as you grow into maturity, assuming you continue to do so as a Christian, more of that legalism falls off all the time.

And eventually, you become more like Christ. Christ wasn't judgmental like that. Sure, he criticized the Pharisees.

It's interesting, many people think of Jesus as one who went out and scolded sinners. But



actually, if you read the Gospels, Jesus never scolded ordinary sinners. You know, the rip-off tax collectors that everyone hated, the prostitutes, you know, just the people who were the scoundrels in the society.

You never read of Jesus confronting them and scolding them. But he scolded the religious people. He scolded the Pharisees.

Every highly critical remark Jesus made about anyone was about, frankly, about Pharisees, or sometimes even his own disciples, but mostly the Pharisees. It was the religious people that Jesus had a quarrel with. Of course, he didn't agree with the sinful lifestyles of the sinners either.

But his graciousness actually attracted them to him. The sinners actually invited him over to their parties, and he'd eat with them. He got criticized for that by the religious folks, but he was a friend of the sinners.

Now, he couldn't have been like most religious people are and been that popular with the sinful crowd. He was gracious to people. He was exhibiting God's grace in his life.

As you become an older Christian, you become more like that and less like the Pharisees, I think. You grow in grace. You become more graceful, more full of grace and truth.

And that's what Peter frequently makes reference to, this increase of graciousness or just grace in the character and in the personality. Verse 14, the sentence continues, As obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts as in your ignorance. Now, you were ignorant of Christ before, and therefore you didn't have much of anything to conform yourself to other than just your desires.

The word lusts, of course we think of lusts only as really, we usually think of it principally in a sexual way, sexual lust. But the word lust in the Greek just means desire, strong desire. What someone craves.

Now, obviously, since a lot of people crave sex, it is still often the case that lust refers to sexual desire, but it's not always that. Any personal desire is a lust. In fact, even good desire for good things is.

In Luke, Jesus, when he gathered with his disciples at the final Passover, he said, With great desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you. Same Greek word. With great lust I have lusted to have this Passover.

That wasn't a bad thing. Lust is not itself bad. It's just that most of the time, when we read about lust in the Bible, it is talking about lusting for something that isn't good.

Craving or desiring what is evil. Bodily desires in particular, whether it's sex or food or other things, cravings, addictions, or whatever. Those desires are very often, of course,

sinful in their object.

Now, when he says, You used to, before you were a Christian, when you were ignorant of the gospel, you used to fashion your life or mold your life according to the dictates of your own desires. These were not, for the most part, good desires. In many cases, you were desiring all those things that aren't good for you and aren't holy things.

But you didn't have a higher standard by which to conform yourself. What's interesting is notice he is indicating that your life is being conformed to something. Your life isn't static.

You don't just reach maturity and nothing changes until the day you die. You keep changing one way or the other. You are still reshaping your life.

When you make decisions, decisions turn into habits. If you make a consistent decision according to some particular standard, whether it's your desire or some other standard, it becomes a habit and habit becomes character and character becomes destiny. Obviously, our lives are always under construction.

They are always being molded. Paul says in Romans 12, I beseech you therefore by the mercies of God that you do not conform yourself to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. Conforming yourself to something is inevitable.

You can conform yourself to Christ or you can conform yourself to something other than Christ. If you don't know Christ, it will be something else than him. Most likely, your desires.

What else are you going to go buy? What do you want? You go buy what you want. When you become a Christian, of course, you lay down your self-will and your self-rule and you decide, okay, what I want isn't really all that important. What God wants is important.

I now want to conform my life to what God says. That's why he says as obedient children, not conforming yourself to your former lusts or your former desires, your ignorance. When you're ignorant, you did nothing but conform your life to whatever your fleeting desires dictated.

Or maybe not fleeting desires. Maybe you have some dominant desires to get married or to get rich or to acquire some particular status or whatever. Not all of these are, strictly speaking, evil desires.

Although, if they are your dominant desire, instead of doing the will of God, they're not good. But look over at Romans 6, verses 16 and 17. Romans 6, verses 16 and 17.

Paul said, Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin to death or of obedience to

righteousness. Now, Paul says there's two options here. You can become a slave of sin or a slave of righteousness through obedience.

You can conform your life to your own desires and become in a rut so that you can't even get out of it. You become a slave to your habits and to your passions or whatever it is that you're a slave to. Or you can, by obedience to God, become a slave of righteousness.

That means it's more your nature to go the way of righteousness than sinfulness. And he says in verse 17, But God be thanked, this is Romans 6, 17, God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, these Christian readers, they used to be, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. Or the King James says, which was delivered to you.

It doesn't much matter. It's the same thought in general. That form of doctrine.

Now, the word doctrine you might think of as theological concepts. Actually, doctrine just means teachings. Doctrine is just an old English word that means teachings.

These Christians had obeyed the form of teachings that was given to them. Now, I think that our churches do things differently than the early church did because the teachings we want to get under the belt of our new converts are theological things. We want to make sure they hold to the theological distinctives of our denomination.

So we want to talk to them about justification by faith, about the Trinity, the deity of Christ, whatever the distinctives are of our group, the pre-trib rapture, whatever the group believes. We want to get those concepts, those theological opinions nailed down in those people's lives. In the early church, they didn't teach those things so much to the early believers.

We know that Jesus said in Matthew 28, 21 or Matthew 28, 20, I guess. Jesus said, you make disciples by teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. In other words, what the teaching was that was given to these Christians wasn't so much about abstractions and theological concepts as much as what are you supposed to do? What did Jesus command you to do? Love your neighbor, love your enemy, humble yourself before God, forgive people.

In other words, it was practical instruction to observe everything Jesus commanded. So the teaching that was given in discipleship was to teach them to observe everything Jesus commanded. And that's the teaching Paul gave to people.

So these people are said to have conformed their lives or been obedient to that form of teaching to which they were delivered or which was delivered to them, either one. That is the teachings of Christ, how you should live your life. These people had obeyed them.

That's why the word obedience is used. He didn't say you believed those doctrines we taught you. He says you obeyed that form of teaching that you received.

Well, obeying teaching means that the teaching was teaching something you should do, not just something you're supposed to have an opinion about. Now the word form there in Romans 6, you might think, wait, I thought we're in Peter. We are.

In Romans 6, 17, where he says that form of teaching, the word form is that word tupos or type in the Greek. Remember, we've talked about the word type on occasion. When we're in Hebrews, talked about types of Christ, types and shadows, things that foreshadow something.

But actually the word tupos, type, means a pattern. If you were here when we were talking about Hebrews, remember I mentioned like a jello mold. A jello mold is a pattern.

You pour molten jello into it. When it hardens, you can remove the mold and the jello stays that shape. The function of a jello mold was what was meant in the Greek, although they didn't have jello yet, I don't think.

I don't know how long jello has been with us, but I don't think they had it back then in the Roman Empire. But it was that idea. You pour concrete into a framework, and when the concrete is hardened, you remove the framework.

The mold determines the shape of whatever is going to be permanent. You make the mold first, then you put that which is not yet permanent in it, and it takes the shape of the mold. And as it hardens, it keeps that shape.

That's what the word tupos meant, a mold, a pattern like that. Now, notice what Paul says in Romans 6, 17, because it has to do with what Peter said in the verse that we branched off from to get here. Paul said that you were slaves of sin.

You used to sin without being able to stop. You were a slave to it, like an addict. But he says that changed when you what? When you obeyed from the heart that pattern of teaching that you received.

The pattern of teaching, what's that? What Jesus said to do. That sets a pattern for your life. You obeyed it.

It's like you poured in the concrete wet by your obedience. And then God will honor that. The concrete hardens, and eventually you can kick away the pattern.

In other words, character molding begins by seeing what Jesus commanded you to do, and you deciding to obey that. And your obedience to that reshapes your life. Eventually your life is really that shape now.

You don't need to have the rules anymore, because you will keep them without the rules.

You are inwardly transformed. The law is written on your heart.

You don't need the law imposed from without. It starts out with teaching about how to behave. Your response to it can be either obedient or disobedient.

If you obey consistently, your life takes on that shape. And eventually the mold of teaching is not needed anymore. Because of what you really have become more or less permanently.

And so when Peter says, do not conform your life to the wrong mold, to the wrong shape. He says, when you were ignorant of God, you conformed your life according to your lusts. What else? If you don't have Jesus or if you don't have the Lord, you just do what you think best and what you think you'll enjoy most.

And that habit shapes your character, shapes what you are inwardly. But Peter says, don't do that. But be like obedient children.

See, Paul said, you have obeyed from the heart that form of teaching. As obedient children, Peter says, not conforming yourself as you did before. But obviously conforming yourself to some other standard.

What is that standard? He says it in the next verse. So we'll take verse 14 again and run up on verse 15 because it's one sentence. Verse 14, as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts as in your ignorance.

But as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct. Because it is written, be holy for I am holy. That's a quotation from Leviticus 11:44 and it's repeated elsewhere in the Old Testament.

God said, be holy for I'm holy. So I'm the mold here. God says, my holiness is the mold you need to conform to.

You need to become like God. Not like God in the sense of prerogative, not like you're ordering people around like God has the right to do. Some people play God that way, but that's not what we're talking about.

We're talking about God's character. To be gracious as he is gracious. To be humble as he is humble.

To be loving as he is loving. To be self-controlled as he is. To be patient as he is.

To have his characteristics. That's what God has in mind to bring up children to look like him someday. So we have this mold which defines the shape we're supposed to become.

What is that mold? It's God's own holiness, God's own character. And Peter says, now stop molding your life according to the patterns you had before you knew about God.

You now know about God.

And as he who has called you is holy, you be holy. Like he is holy. That's what he says.

Now holy is a word that obviously needs some definition or description. Because what does holy even mean? Of course when we think of holiness of behavior, unfortunately there are churches who throughout their entire history as a denomination have called themselves holiness churches. And they seem to define holiness as being not very worldly.

And not very worldly means they don't wear modern clothing. And they don't wear anything that makes them look attractive. If you look attractive, that's worldly.

So the women in these churches wear their long, frumpy clothes. They don't want anyone to think they're attractive. They don't wear any makeup or jewelry and things like that.

And they call that being holy. They add to that they can't watch TV or can't go to movies or can't dance and can't do a whole bunch of things. Can't drink certainly, God forbid.

Or smoke or do anything like that that's worldly. Worldliness is in their minds the opposite of holiness. Well, no doubt worldliness is the opposite of holiness.

But worldliness is not defined by these external things primarily. I'm not saying that external behavior has no relevance to holiness. It does.

But unfortunately when people define holiness in terms of what you don't do. The world does this, but we don't do that. Suddenly holiness is a negative.

It's, well, we used to do this, but we can't do that anymore. We're holy now. We can't go to a movie.

Sorry, I'm holy. I used to go to movies. I can't go to movies.

I'm holy now. I don't do that. Holiness means I don't do stuff.

But being God-like, God is not characterized by the things he doesn't do. He's characterized by what he is and what he does. Being holy means more or less just being like God is.

Now, if people think God's grumpy and, you know, he'd be shocked by someone smoking a cigarette, then I guess they'll think that that's what holiness is. They're grumpy and they're shocked by people smoking cigarettes. I don't think God's shocked by very much.

I certainly don't think he's shocked by smoking or drinking or movies or dancing. Now, there may be, in fact, times when that's not the right thing for someone to do. But that's

not what defines holiness.

The word holy in its first meaning does not refer to how you behave at all. The word holy is applied in the Bible to things that don't behave in any way at all. Like the tabernacle is a building.

It was holy. How did it behave? It didn't behave at all. Buildings don't do anything.

The furniture in the tabernacle, that was holy furniture. The spoons and the forks and the lamps and the tables, they were holy. Well, obviously, when you say those things are holy, we're not talking about how they behave because such things don't behave at all.

In fact, the priests in the Old Testament were all holy, but they often misbehaved. In fact, through most of Israel's history, the priests were very corrupt, yet they were holy. How could they be holy and be corrupt? Because holy, in its first instance of definition, does not refer to behavior at all.

Holy means set apart for God. The tabernacle is a building set apart for God. It couldn't be used for bingo and for sock hops and things like that.

It was not used for ordinary purposes. It wasn't just a general-purpose community access building. It was something set aside for special purposes for God.

The priests were holy in that they were set apart for God. They couldn't just go off and say, I don't want to be a priest. I think I want to become a realtor or I want to become a plumber.

That wasn't available to the priests. They were set apart by God for himself. They didn't always behave like it, but even if they didn't behave like it, they were simply violating their status.

They were set aside as holy by God. They couldn't change that. That was God's decision.

They could behave like they weren't set aside for God, but they were set aside because being holy or being set aside by God for himself is an objective phenomenon. The Bible teaches that when you become a Christian, you become part of God's movement, part of God's priesthood, part of God's Christ body. You are not like you were before.

You are not at your own charges quite in the same way. You are now set aside for the will of God. Before you were a Christian, maybe you didn't care about the will of God.

Maybe you never gave it a thought. Now that you're a Christian, you're set aside to do something that God made you to do. This isn't more restrictive than a life that's not holy.

In fact, it's more fulfilling because all that God wants to set aside for you to do is what he made you to do. What he made you to do has got to be the most fulfilling thing to do.

When you're living your life without knowledge of God, you're doing what you think is best for you, but most people who do that end up kind of shipwrecked in one way or another.

Their lives, their relationships, their finances often, their health. After 70, 80 years of living, if they haven't been doing the will of God, many times people have ruined their lives. But that's because they're doing with their lives what God didn't intend for them, didn't design them for that.

They're not following the manufacturer's instructions for the machine or for the spiritual aspect. And so doing the will of God is not restrictive. Doing the will of God is finding your niche, finding what God designed you to do and say, wow, now I'm finally doing what I was made to do.

But when you become a follower of Christ, you are, by that act, becoming set aside for specially to do what God made you to do as opposed to just whatever you want to do. Whatever you thought might be fun. Now, that doesn't mean you don't have any fun because there's no reason to believe that God designed you to have no fun.

It says in 1 Timothy 6 that God freely gives us all things to enjoy. God made us to enjoy life. That doesn't mean that all forms of fun are equally legitimate, but certainly it means that life is supposed to be enjoyable in God.

And it is. The point here is, though, that when God says, be holy as I am, God is saying, live your life as one consciously set apart for me so that when you get up in the morning, it's not just like you just figure out what would I like to do today, but more like what do I suppose God would like for me to do today? What is it that God made me for? What did he make this day for? I want to do God's will today. And that's just the mentality of someone who says, okay, I've been set apart for God.

Now, notice here, though, that while I said, and I said correctly, that the word holy does not primarily refer to behavior, but primarily to a status of being set apart in a different category from ordinary things. Yet there is behavior that is consistent with and behavior that is not consistent with that. If you've been set aside for God, it's not consistent to behave as if you're just here to go out and follow your lusts all the time, but rather to determine what is it that God wants me to do.

And when Peter talks about being holy, he says in verse 15, be holy in all your conduct. So, although in the scriptures, Old and New Testament, holiness is first and foremost that you're set aside for God, there's also the conduct that makes sense in light of it. If I, for example, make it my goal just to get rich and live luxuriously and make everyone else envious of me because that's what my ego and my cravings want to do, well, it's not very likely that that's what God made me to do.



There must be something more meaningful than that that God had in mind in making me. So, it's not consistent for me just to pursue my own agendas. If I now belong to God, remember Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6, I think it's verse 20 or 21, Paul said, you're not your own.

You've been bought with a price. God has purchased you with the blood of Jesus. You've been purchased, you're owned.

God owns you. Of course, he owned you rightfully anyway before that because he made you. It's amazing to me how many people live their lives as if they own themselves.

I wonder, well, how did they come to own themselves? I know how they came to own their house or their car or their clothes. They bought them. You didn't buy yourself.

You didn't create yourself. If you build a fence, that's your fence because you built it, but you didn't build yourself. You were built and made by God and you didn't create yourself or buy yourself.

So, you don't own yourself. And that being so means the only sensible thing, the only sensible conduct, is to behave as one who really is owned by God, which is, of course, the fact. Peter is only asking us to live consistently with reality.

And this is where I think many Christians really fail because they're drawn to their old agendas and their old habits, some of which would not be really in conformity with what God would want them to do. They want to be Christians because I guess they want to go to heaven and not go to hell. Maybe the whole motivation on their part, I don't know.

But they're still drawn to other things and they live an inconsistent life. On one hand, they want to have one foot in God's kingdom and the other foot they want to have in the world to do the things they want to do. And it's the most dissatisfying way to live that can be.

Either... Jesus said to the church of Laodicea, I wish you were hot or cold, not lukewarm. I mean, be all in or be all out, but to have one foot in each place, that's the most miserable of all lives. A person who has no conscience toward God and doesn't care about pleasing God, but just wants to please himself, well, they can go out and enjoy themselves and their conscience they can ignore.

But if there's part of them that wants to do the will of God and they know what they're not doing, then they can't even enjoy their sin. They can go out and sin, but they won't enjoy it anymore because they've got just enough religion in them to spoil them for it. On the other hand, if a person's all in with God, that's a very satisfying life.

But if you're mindful of God and still trying to hang on to stuff that's sinful, you can't enjoy God because you're not going to have that kind of relationship and fellowship with

God if you're trying to hang on to part of your own agenda and saying, God, I'm with you, I'm with you here, just let me bring this along here with me. God says, no, either you're all in or you're all out. Not half in and half out.

And I think the most satisfying life is to be all in with God. The second most satisfying life is to be all out. But the worst of all possibilities is to be partly in and partly out.

And Peter is only saying, listen, you are set aside for God, that's who you are. Now, live like it. That's the only way you can be fulfilled and not conflicted all the time.

And so bring your conduct, he says, into conformity with the reality. You are God's, that is, you belong to God, therefore act like it. And he said in verse 17, and if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your sojourning here in fear, knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things like silver and gold from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but you were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ.

This is a whole you've been bought with a price thing. You were redeemed, purchased with the blood of Jesus. You're not your own.

You were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. Well, we certainly won't get past this verse tonight. So let me just make a few observations here.

Some of which have come up in connection with other books we've studied. So there'll be a little repetition. I'll try to minimize that.

But we do have to look at these things as they appear and consider how they fit into Peter's argument here. He says, you call God your father. Well, then you claim to know something about God that others don't know.

You claim to be in a relationship with God that others aren't in. You're one of the children of God, are you? Okay, well, then he says, you know then about God that he judges all people impartially according to their behavior. Impartially means that he doesn't have favorites that he gives a pass to while he's judging someone else who's not one of his favorites with a stricter judgment.

God doesn't have a double standard. This is something that really was a mistake the Jews were making in the Old Testament which Paul and Peter and others, Peter and they were both Jews themselves and they had to learn the hard way that God doesn't show partiality to the Jews over the Gentiles. God doesn't have favorites where he's going to send the Gentiles to hell because of all their sins.

But the Jews, they can do those same sins and they get by. No, God doesn't have that kind of partial. He judges everyone according to the works they do.

This is what Paul says in Romans chapter 2. In fact, I think Peter may be deliberately echoing this section of Romans 2 because in Romans 2.6, notice it says about God, he will render to each one according to his deeds. That's what Peter said, we know. But he goes on, Paul in Romans 2.6 says, God will render to each one according to his deeds and he gives examples, eternal life to those who by patient continuance and doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality.

But to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness, it'll be indignation and wrath for them and tribulation and anguish on every soul of man who does evil to the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good to the Jew first and also for the Greek. What he's saying is when God judges, he's not going to say, okay, the Jews, you go into the righteous category and all the Gentiles somewhere else, I'm going to judge the Gentiles by a harder standard. He says, no, everyone who's wicked, they're going to get the same punishment whether they're Jew or Greek.

Everyone who's righteous, going to get the same reward whether they're Jew or Greek. God doesn't show favoritism to the Jews if they're not any better than the Greeks. In other words, he judges not according to who your ancestors are or even what religion you claim to be, but he judges by your behavior.

It's interesting that every passage in the Bible that talks about the judgment suggests that God's going to judge according to works. Now, Christians believe, I believe, and all Christians I know believe that we're saved by faith, not by works. So why is the judgment of works? Peter said God judges everyone according to his works.

Paul, we just read in Romans 2, said God's going to judge everyone according to his works. Jesus said it in the parable of the sheep and the goats. He's going to judge the sheep and the goats by their works.

Elsewhere, Jesus talked about how the Son of Man will come and reward every man according to his works in Matthew 16, 28 or 29, somewhere like that, 27 maybe. And Revelation chapter 20, the books were opened and every man was judged by his works and the things written in the books. All the biblical writers said that God's going to judge by works, and yet they say we're saved by faith.

If we're saved by faith, why aren't we judged by our faith or lack thereof? I think the reason is because lots of people say they have faith and think they have faith. But James said faith without works is dead. If you say you have faith, but you don't have behavior that lines up with what you say you believe, then your faith isn't any kind of faith of value.

Now, it is a safe thing for God to judge according to works. He'll easily discern then who had faith and who did not. If works are not even brought into consideration, then

everyone will say, hey, God, I believed in you.

And you'll say, hmm, now what do I do? I didn't recognize you, but you say you believed in me. What am I going to think now? How do I judge you? You say you believe. How do I know if you believed or not? Well, it's very easy.

If you believe, you act like it. If you don't believe, you act like you don't believe. Any faith that doesn't produce works, it's a dead faith.

It's not going to work for you. So faith always will produce works. And that's just another way of saying your actions will show what you really believe, what your real convictions are.

Faith is your convictions. Your works are your actions. It's just a way of saying your actions are the truest guide of where your convictions are.

And God's going to judge you, of course. You're saved by your convictions, but your works, your actions, will show what your convictions were. And you can say you had faith until the cows come home, but if your convictions are inconsistent with that, I mean, if your works, God's not going to be impressed.

He's not going to be convinced by your protestations of loyalty. Where was that loyalty when you were behaving like this? And so Peter says that God judges without partiality. Now, he's talking to Christians.

He's basically saying, you are a Christian. You think you're going to get a pass? You think you can go out and do those things that heathen aren't allowed to do, but you're going to get away with it? Uh-uh. He says, if you call God your father, you know that God impartially judges everyone according to his works.

And of course, what he's been arguing is you need to live like you belong to God. Be holy in your conduct. Be obedient children.

Obviously, he's talking about behavior here. The Christian has obligations to obey God. Now, I want to say this because this confuses some people.

They say, but wait a minute. I sin and I'm a Christian. I'm not perfect.

Nobody's perfect. I don't know a perfect Christian. I'm certainly not one.

So how can I be judged by my works and not be scared about that? Well, Peter says, good call. Be fearful. He said at the end of verse 17, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear, the fear of God.

However, we need to remember that works. Repentance is one of those actions, too, that God takes into consideration. That is, if you are weak, you want to follow God, but you're

weak and you stumble and you do the wrong thing.

Well, that's one of your works. That's one of your actions. But if you then repent and say, God, be merciful to me.

That's an action, too, and that trumps the other one. God is merciful to those who humble themselves before him. Twice in the New Testament, once in the Old Testament, it says God gives grace to the humble but resists the proud.

If a person is sinning but not repenting, well, that's not going to be a good record. But if when we do sin, it's not really what we preferred to do. After all, we were trying to obey God, but we're just weak.

We're not normal. I mean, we are normal, but we're not normally holy. We're not normal like God is.

We don't measure up to his norm. And because we fail, we have to repent. But if we do repent, God says, cool, you repented.

That's swept away, expunged from your record. So it's not as if we have to pile up good works to outnumber our bad works. We have to be afraid.

Oh, no, I sinned, I think, in the last few hours. If God came today, I'd go to hell because he's going to judge me according to my works. No, if your heart is the Lord's, once you know you've sinned, you're sorry, you repent.

It says in 1 John 1, 9, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness. In 1 John 2, 1, it says, my little children, I write these things to you so that you don't sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous, and he's the propitiation for our sins.

In 1 John 1, 7, it says, the blood of Jesus Christ, God some cleanses us from all sin. So, our works are important, but we must remember that even when our works are deficient, if we are truly repentant, that is also one of the works that's taken into consideration on the judgment. I believe that once you repent genuinely of your past sins, those sins never come up again in the judgment because Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11, if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged by God.

So, when you repent, you are judging your own behaviors. And God, I'm making a judgment about my behavior. That was not good, what I did.

I'm against that. I condemn that behavior. It's not what I approve of.

That is bringing myself to judgment. And Paul said, if you judge yourself, you won't be judged by God. If anything that we have truly repented of before God is gone, it will never come up again in the judgment.

But, of course, the assumption throughout the New Testament is that Christians are people who want to do the right thing. We sometimes fall because of weakness, but we didn't want to do bad things. We want to do right things, but we're schmucks.

We're weak. We have sin in our nature that gets the better of us sometimes, just like anybody else. We're not really that much better than other people, but we should be better than we used to be.

There can be sinners who sin less than we do, but we should be sinning less than we used to. Christ is supposed to be improving us, and He does. As we receive more grace, we conform more to His image, but it's as we are obedient children, deliberately conforming ourselves to God's standard of holiness and recognizing that He is going to judge.

Now, he says at the end of verse 17, you can conduct yourselves, past the time of your sojourning here, sojourning is your visiting here on this planet, the time you're visiting here, conduct it in fear. Now, didn't I say that Christianity is supposed to be a joyful life, and now we're supposed to spend our life in fear? How can you have fear and joy at the same time? Well, the fear of God is a very common phenomenon in Scripture. In the Old Testament, often spoken of, but in the New also.

Jesus even said it. Jesus said, don't fear those who can kill your body and can do no more, but do fear Him who can, after your body is dead, He can cast you into Gehenna. So the idea is the fear of God, even Peter, this is one of the few New Testament passages that mention the fear of God, but it's mentioned in Revelation, it's mentioned in Paul.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5, knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. Although the writers of Scripture talk about how joyful we are and how free we are, there's also this thing in the background called the fear of God. That is normal and right, but what is it? How can you be a joyful person and still be having the fear of God? Well, I believe that the fear of God is like the fear of anything that is powerful and deadly to be in a wrong relationship with.

There's nothing deadly about God if you're not in a wrong relationship with Him, but if you're in a wrong relationship with Him, that can be hurtful. It certainly is. It's like being in a wrong relationship with a freight train.

Are you afraid of trains? I'm not, but I would be if my car was stalled on the tracks and I couldn't get the doors open and the train was coming. I'd be very scared. I'm not really afraid of trains, but in the wrong relationship with them, that's a pretty scary concept.

And that's really what the fear of God is. The fear of God is you know what it would be like to be in a wrong relationship with God, and that's terrifying to think about. So you

don't.

I'm not going to park my car on a railroad track. And you know why? Because I'm afraid of trains in that particular connection. If I'm parked off the track, the train goes by.

It's awesome. I like trains. They're cool.

I love to go to a train yard and look at trains. They're really neat, big, awesome things, but if you're on the track, not so much. Traffic is the same way.

I'm not afraid of traffic. I'm not afraid to get on the freeway as long as I'm going essentially the same speed and direction as the rest of the traffic. In a right relationship with traffic, there's nothing to fear.

In a wrong relationship, there's a lot to fear. And that's why you stay in the right relationship with the traffic, because you know how dangerous it is otherwise. That's what the fear of God is like.

It's like the fear of traffic. I don't live my life in the fear of traffic, except in so far as in the back of my mind, I know that if I get out of my... if I, you know, swerve into another lane and hit another car, I'm not in the right relationship with the other cars. That's disastrous.

And that's scary. Because it's scary, I'm careful I don't do it. And because I don't do it, it's not scary.

It's interesting. It's like the fear of God is not scary if it leads you to do the right thing, to seek a right relationship with Him. But when you contemplate those who are not in a right relationship, Paul says, knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men to become Christians because we know they're not in a right relationship, and that's scary.

And we should live in that fear of God too. Although, if it leads us to behave, we won't be feeling fearful. And I haven't feared God in the sense of being afraid and, you know, terrified of God in my adult life that I can remember.

Because in my adult life, although I've certainly been imperfect, and I have sinned far too many times, I know that I'm maintaining my relationship with God. If I sin, I repent. I try not to sin, but if I do, I repent, and I maintain a relationship with Him.

Just like you maintain a relationship with anyone else you live with and want to keep on good terms with. You might do something that offends them, but you try to make amends because you want to keep the relationship right, and that's only sensible. That's wise.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, the Bible says. A person who doesn't have the good sense to be afraid of that which can smash them like a bug in an instant

isn't a very wise person. But, of course, if that person says, oh, because God is like a freight train, I'm going to stay out of His way, I'm going to stay off the tracks, I'm going to stay in alignment with Him, not an obstacle to what He's doing.

So passing the time of your life in fear, it doesn't mean you walk around paranoid of God as if you just think He hates you, and the first time you step out of line, He's going to want to smash you. Some people do think that way, and their religion is awful. Who would want a religion like that? But a relationship with God where you say, I want to be in a good relationship with God because that's the only way that is safe.

Anything else, I shiver at the thought, you know, of being an enemy of God on the Day of Judgment. But I don't have to worry about it because I'm not His enemy. I'm choosing a way of life that's intended to be agreeable with Him.

It says in Proverbs, So if you have the fear of the Lord and you depart from evil, then nothing to be afraid of. It's when people lack the fear of God and they just live in a way that's on a collision course with God and they're oblivious to it that they lack the good sense to fear the danger they're in. I'm not afraid of the Grand Canyon as long as I stay behind the rail.

If I thought about, you know, stepping out on the edge on my tiptoes or something, I'd be really flirting with disaster. Frankly, it'd terrify me. But it doesn't terrify me to see something that big and awesome if I'm in a safe place with relationship to it.

But it's still a scary thing even just to contemplate falling down that thing. And so this is what the fear of God is. And Peter says, that's what you're supposed to be living with all the time.

In Proverbs it says, be in the fear of the Lord all the day long. But it doesn't mean be afraid. Just let the knowledge of how awful it would be to be on a wrong relationship with God, let that motivate you to stay on his good side.

It's not that hard. It's not like he's peevish and hard to please. He's easy to please if you just want to.

It's just not enough people really care to please God. They want to please themselves. And that's what Peter's arguing against here.

If you continue in a habitual pleasing of yourself all the time, you're molding your life a certain way. Your life will take that shape. Thus concrete will harden and you may not ever be able to change even if it's a bad shape.

So conform your life not according to your passing lusts and desires, but according to the mold of God's holiness and of obedience to his commands. It's really actually, when people haven't done that, it probably sounds really cramping on their style, but I can't



imagine a life to be more enjoyable not doing that. I mean, to me, obeying God and seeking to be in the middle of his will is just the most relaxed and enjoyable of all lives that I could imagine, frankly.

And I believe that's how God made it to me, that we'd find greatest fulfillment in being like him, being conformed to his likeness and in a right relationship with him. And the worst of all possible situations, being in the wrong relationship with him.