

LIVING UP TO GOD'S STANDARDS

1 Peter 1:14-25

Standards—what are they? you have probably noticed a little slip of paper in a product you purchase that reads, “Inspected by such and such.” Most manufacturers have standards for their products. As the product comes off the production line it is inspected. If it meets the standard it is approved for packaging and distribution for sale. If it does not, it is put aside. Schools have standards for grades—students must demonstrate a certain level of achievement in order to qualify for promotion to the next grade or for graduation. Society has certain standards for behavior. Even though we may wonder about some of those standards today, it is still considered inappropriate to punch someone in the nose if they disagree with you. And what about standards for the Christian life? If you have been a Christian for a long time, you have probably noticed a shift in those. For instance some years ago “good” Christians did not go to movies or dances, drink or smoke. Today those standards have changed and we find some Christians who do engage in those behaviors. The standards of cultural Christianity have changed, but do you think God’s standards have changed? Let us take a look at what the Apostle Peter had to say about some of those standards.

1Peter 1:14,15 NLT:

14 So you must live as God’s obedient children. do not slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You did not know any better then.

15 But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy.

More often than not children inherit the behavioral patterns of their parents. God is holy. Therefore, as His children, we should live holy lives. we have “*inherited the divine nature*” (2 Peter 1:4) and ought to reveal that nature in godly living.

Peter reminded his readers of what they were before they trusted Christ. They had been disobedient children (Ephesians 2:1-3), but now they were to be obedient children. They had been living to satisfy their own wants and desires just as all unbelievers do. True salvation always results in obedience. Jesus Himself said, “*If you love Me, you will keep My commandments*” (John 14:15). In fact, He felt so strongly that we show our love for Him through our obedience to Him that He said it at least three times in John chapter 14. When we truly love Christ, we will obey Him.

The root cause of such behavior is a lack of knowledge of the Gospel message. And the reason for this lack of knowledge is **foolishness and pride**. Such a mindset usually leads a person to satisfy the desires of the flesh and live a selfish, self-destructive lifestyle (Ephesians 4:17ff). Since we were born with a fallen nature, it was natural for us to live sinful lives.

We would still be living in that prison if it were not for the grace of God. He called us out of that and to Himself. In Mark 1:16-20 NLT we read:

16 One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a

living.

17 Jesus called out to them, “Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!”

18 And they left their nets at once and followed him.

19 A little farther up the shore Jesus saw Zebedee’s sons, James and John, in a boat repairing their nets.

20 He called them at once, and they also followed him, leaving their father, Zebedee, in the boat with the hired men.

These men responded by faith to Jesus’ call, and their faith completely changed their lives. we are called to be holy in 1 Peter 1:15. we are called “*out of darkness into His marvelous light*” in 1 Peter 2:9. we are called to suffer and follow Christ’s example of meekness in 1 Peter 2:21. In the midst of persecution we are called “*to inherit a blessing*” in 1 Peter 3:9. Best of all, we are called to “*His eternal glory*” in 1 Peter 5:10. God called us before we called on Him for salvation and it is all because of His grace.¹

But God’s call involves responsibility and not just privilege. He has chosen us in Christ according to Ephesians 1:4: “*that we should be holy and without blame before Him.*” God has called us to Himself, and because He is holy; we should strive to be like Him. Peter quoted from the Old Testament Law to back up what he was saying.²

God’s holiness is an essential part of His nature. John writes: “*God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all*” (1 John 1:5). Any holiness that we demonstrate in the way we live our lives is the result of the Holy Spirit working in us combined with our willingness to submit our will to His. We are to steer clear of anything which is immoral, or that even appears to be sinful (2 Corinthians 6:14—7:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:22). We are to conduct ourselves as ambassadors of the King in a foreign land. We are to demonstrate to people what our King is like by being like Him in everything we say and do so that whatever we do reflects the holiness of God. Even such ordinary activities as eating and drinking can be done to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). If something cannot be done to the glory of God, it is a good sign that we shouldn’t do it. Would that be a great test to run by everything we consider doing, thinking, or saying? “Would this (thought or activity) glorify God?”

1 Peter 1:16 NLT:

16 For the Scriptures say, “You must be holy because I am holy.”

“*It is written*” is the way this verse begins in the NAS translation. These three little words have all the power of God behind them. Jesus used the Word of God to defeat Satan, and so can you. We should remember how Jesus used the Word of God to keep from giving into temptation. We should simply copy Jesus’ behavior as described in Matthew 4:1–11 NLT:

1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

2 And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.

¹ 1 John 4:19; Romans 5:8.

² Lev. 11:44–45; 19:2; 20:7, 26.

- 3 Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.”
- 4 But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’”
- 5 Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple,
- 6 and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: ‘He shall give His angels charge over you,’ and, In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.’ ”
- 7 Jesus said to him, “It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God.’ ”
- 8 Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.
- 9 And he said to Him, “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.”
- 10 Then Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.’ ”
- 11 Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

The Word of God can also light our way in a dark world as we are told in Psalm 119:105 NLT: “Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path,” and 2 Peter 1:19:

19 Because of that experience, we have even greater confidence in the message proclaimed by the prophets. You must pay close attention to what they wrote, for their words are like a lamp shining in a dark place—until the Day dawns, and Christ the Morning Star shines in your hearts.

In Matthew 4:4 Jesus said: “The Scriptures say, ‘People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” Those who love God’s Word, study it, and seek to obey it will experience God’s guidance and blessing. Psalm 1:1-3 NLT:

*1 Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers.
2 But they delight in the law of the Lord, meditating on it day and night.
3 They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do.*

The Word of God given to us in the Bible is God’s way of communicating with us. When we read the Bible, God speaks to us. So you **cannot** know what God expects of you if you do not have a thorough working knowledge of the Bible. Every part of our being should be controlled by the Word of God.

If we really want to obey God, we will study the Bible every day, and take those principles and apply them to our lives. God remains the same and His spiritual principles never change. We do not study the Bible just to get a lot of head knowledge about what is in it. We study the Bible in

order to get to know God better and allow Him to change our lives.

1 Peter 1:17 NLT:

17 And remember that the heavenly Father to whom you pray has no favorites. He will judge or reward you according to what you do. So you must live in reverent fear of him during your time as “foreigners in the land.”

We better realize sooner rather than later that God takes sin very seriously. He will not allow anyone who is stained with sin into Heaven. God will not compromise with sin. Because of His mercy and grace He is willing to forgive the sins of those who confess and accept Jesus' death on the cross as payment for their sins, and for those who do that He opens the door wide to Heaven. But while we are still living on this earth we can expect God to be a loving disciplinarian who will not allow His children to enjoy sin.

What is this judgment that Peter refers to in verse 17? It is the judgment of a believer's works. It has nothing to do with obtaining salvation. Salvation comes as a gift from God when one accepts Christ's death as payment for their sins (Ephesians 2:8-10). However one's salvation should then motivate them to do good works. This is an area where Satan has deceived many, by causing teaching that leaves out the faith in Christ part and emphasizes the good works part. How often do you hear someone say, "I'm a good person. I do good things. So I'll go to heaven." Or, "I think my good deeds outweigh my bad ones, I'll make it past the pearly gates." They have been deceived by taking one part of Scripture and not looking at the total doctrine, the one that says specifically we are saved by faith in Christ alone. But after we are saved, we will demonstrate our faith by our good works.

Listen to James' words as he writes in James 2:18-26 NLT:

18 Now someone may argue, "Some people have faith; others have good deeds." But I say, "How can you show me your faith if you do not have good deeds? I will show you my faith by my good deeds."

19 You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror.

20 How foolish! cannot you see that faith without good deeds is useless?

21 do not you remember that our ancestor Abraham was shown to be right with God by his actions when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?

22 You see, his faith and his actions worked together. His actions made his faith complete.

23 And so it happened just as the Scriptures say: "Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith." He was even called the friend of God.

24 So you see, we are shown to be right with God by what we do, not by faith alone.

25 Rahab the prostitute is another example. She was shown to be right with God by her actions when she hid those messengers and sent them safely away by a different road.

26 Just as the body is dead without breath, so also faith is dead without good works.

Paul wrote on this subject as well in his letter to Titus in Titus 2:7,14 NLT:

*7 And you yourself must be an example to them by doing good works of every kind. Let everything you do reflect the integrity and seriousness of your teaching.
14 He (Jesus)³ gave his life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us his very own people, totally committed to doing good deeds.*

Then in Titus 3:8,14 NLT:

*8 This is a trustworthy saying, and I want you to insist on these teachings so that all who trust in God will devote themselves to doing good.
14 Our people must learn to do good by meeting the urgent needs of others; then they will not be unproductive.*

Do you get the idea? When we trusted Christ, God forgave our sins and declared us righteous in His Son.⁴ Our sins have already been judged on the cross (1 Peter 2:24), and therefore they cannot be held against us (Hebrews 10:10–18). But when the Jesus returns, there will be a time of judgment called “*the Judgment Seat of Christ*.”⁵ Each of us will give an account of our works and each will receive an appropriate reward. This is a judgment where the Father is dealing with the children He loves dearly. The Greek word in verse 17 which is translated *judge* carries the meaning “*to judge in order to find something good*.”⁶ God will search our motives for what we have done as Christians. He’ll X-RAY our hearts. But God’s purpose in doing so is to glorify Himself in our lives and ministries. Then this wonderful promise in 1 Corinthians 4:5 NLT:

*5 So do not make judgments about anyone ahead of time—before the Lord returns. For he will bring **our** darkest secrets to light and will reveal **our** private motives. Then God will give to each one whatever praise is due.*

If one of His children disobeys, God must chasten them (Hebrews 12:1–13). But when His child obeys and serves Him in love, He keeps a record of that and prepares an appropriate reward.

In view of the fact that the Father lovingly disciplines His children today, and will judge their works in the future, we ought to develop a healthy fear of God. This is not the kind of fear some have of God because they believe he is always looking to hit them with a 2 x 4 in harsh

³ Parentheses added.

⁴ Rom. 5:1–10; 8:1–4; Col. 2:13.

⁵ Rom. 14:10–12; 2 Cor. 5:9–10.

⁶ Vincent, Marvin Richardson: *Word Studies in the New Testament*. Bellingham, WA: 2002, S. 1:637- 638.

judgment. But rather it is the loving reverence of a child before his father. It is not fear of judgment but rather it is the kind of fear a child would have of disappointing a parent. John tells us in 1 John 4:18 NLT:

*18 Such love **has no fear**, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love.*

It is “godly fear” that we are speaking of according to 2 Corinthians 7:1 NLT:

1 Because we have these promises, dear friends, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that can defile our body or spirit. And let us work toward complete holiness because we fear God.

Now let us go back to our passage in Peter.

1 Peter 1:18-21 NLT:

18 For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And the ransom he paid was not mere gold or silver.

19 It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God.

20 God chose him as your ransom long before the world began, but he has now revealed him to you in these last days.

21 Through Christ you have come to trust in God. And you have placed your faith and hope in God because he raised Christ from the dead and gave him great glory.

This is why we should live holy lives and do good things. Here Peter is reminding people of what Christ did so that they might have salvation. This is the primary reason we take part in the Lord’s Supper. We do this to remember what He did for us until He comes again.

In the first-century Roman Empire there were probably somewhere around 60 million slaves. Many of these slaves became Christians and joined local assemblies of the church. So Peter used language they could relate to. A slave could buy his own freedom if he could get hold of enough money or if he could convince his master to sell him to someone who would pay the price and set him free.⁷ Redemption was considered a precious gift back then. It is still a precious gift today. For those of us who have been redeemed by Christ’s substitutionary payment on the cross, we must not forget that we were once slaves to sin. Not only were we slaves to sin, but we were also living a life of emptiness according to verse 18. These people thought they were living rich, full lives when in truth they were really empty and miserable. Unsaved people today are living in a state of denial and emptiness and they do not realize how meaningless a life is without Jesus Christ. How sad. In fact it is more than sad, it is catastrophic if they die in that state because of where they will spend eternity.

Peter not only reminded them of what they were, but he also reminded them of what Christ did.

⁷ Op Cit., Wiersbe, 1 Pe 1:18.

He shed His precious blood to purchase us out of slavery to sin and set us free forever. To redeem means “*to set free by paying a price.*” A slave could be freed with the payment of money, but no amount of money can set a lost sinner free. Only the blood of Jesus Christ is a sufficient price for that.

Peter was a witness to Christ’s sufferings (1 Peter 5:1) and mentions His sacrificial death often in this letter.⁸ In calling Christ “*a Lamb,*” Peter was reminding his readers of an Old Testament teaching that was important in the early church, and that ought to be important to us today. It is the **doctrine of substitution** (an innocent victim giving his/her life for the guilty party). This concept of sacrifice begins in Genesis 22:1, when God substituted a ram to die for Isaac.⁹ A Passover lamb was slain for each Jewish household in Exodus 12. Messiah was presented as an innocent Lamb in Isaiah 53. Isaac asked the question, “*where is the lamb for the burnt offering?*” in Genesis 22:7; and John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and said, “*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*” in John 1:29. In Heaven, the redeemed and the angels sing, “*Worthy is the Lamb!*” as we read in Revelation 5:11–14.

Peter made it clear that Christ’s death was planned by God before the foundation of the world (Acts 2:23). It is true from an earthly perspective that Jesus was brutally tortured and murdered. But it was God’s plan all along for Jesus to die so that sinful mankind could be reconciled to God. Listen to the words of Jesus Himself in John 10:17–18 NLT:

*17 “The Father loves me because I sacrifice my life so I may take it back again.
18 No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. For this is what my Father has commanded.”*

Jesus laid down His life for sinners in the greatest act of love ever demonstrated. But as that served as Good News, the equally Good News was that He was raised from the dead. Now, anyone who believes Jesus’ death and resurrection was on their behalf will be saved for eternity. When we think about the sacrifice Christ made for us we should be moved to live good and holy lives so that He will be glorified. Frances Ridley Havergal, as a young woman, saw a picture of the crucified Christ with this caption under it: “*I did this for thee. What hast thou done for Me?*” She was moved to sit down and write a poem, but was dissatisfied with it and threw it into the fireplace. Somehow the paper did not burn. Her father discovered it and at his suggestion she had it published.¹⁰

*“I gave My life for thee,
My precious blood I shed;
That thou might ransomed be,
And quickened from the dead.*

⁸ 1 Peter 2:21ff; 3:18; 4:1, 13; 5:1.

⁹ Karleen, Paul S.: *The Handbook to Bible Study : With a Guide to the Scofield Study System.* New York : Oxford University Press, 1987.

¹⁰ Op Cit, Wiersbe, 1 Pe 1:13.

*I gave, I gave, My life for thee,
What hast thou given for Me?”¹¹*

You might want to give some thought to how you would answer that question. We must not ever forget the great price paid for our salvation: the “*lifeblood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb.*” God has been planning our salvation from before the dawn of time (Ephesians 1:1–6).¹²

1 Peter 1:22 NLT:

22 You were cleansed from your sins when you obeyed the truth, so now you must show sincere love to each other as brothers and sisters. Love each other deeply with all your heart.

As trials refine faith, so obedience to God’s Word refines character. A person who has purified themselves by living according to God’s Word has found the joy that comes by living a life of obedience. Part of that new obedient personality should make itself evident in the way a person treats his/her fellow believers. A purified life allows one to sincerely love those who share the same faith. All unkind thoughts and feelings regarding one’s fellow believers must be removed. This kind of love (*agapēsate*, from *agapē*) can only come from a changed heart, from one whose motives are pure, and who seeks to give more than he/she takes. Such love meets other people at the point of their need.

Peter used two different words for love: *philadelphia*, which is “*brotherly love,*” and *agape*, which is *godlike sacrificial love.* It is important that we share both kinds of love. We share brotherly love because we are brothers and sisters in Christ and we are therefore family because we have the same Father. We share *agape* love because we belong to God and therefore can overlook differences.¹³

By nature, all of us are selfish; so it took a miracle of God to give us this kind of love. Let us go back for just a moment and look at Romans 5:1-5 NLT:

*1 Therefore, since we have been made right in God’s sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.
2 Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God’s glory.*

*3 We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance.
4 And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation.*

¹¹ Tan, Paul Lee: *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: A Treasury of Illustrations, Anecdotes, Facts and Quotations for Pastors, Teachers and Christian Workers.* Garland TX : Bible Communications, 1996, c1979.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ OP Cit., Wiersbe, 1 Pe 1:22.

5 And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

Because we obeyed God through the power of the Holy Spirit He placed within us, God poured His love into our hearts. Love for other believers is evidence that we truly have been born of God. Let us read together 1 John 4:7-21 NLT:

7 Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God.

8 But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

9 God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him.

10 This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

11 Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other.

12 No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.

13 And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us.

14 Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

15 All who confess that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God.

16 We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.

17 And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.

18 Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love.

19 We love each other because he loved us first.

20 If someone says, “I love God,” but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is a liar; for if we do not love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see?

21 And he has given us this command: Those who love God must also love their Christian brothers and sisters.

Now we are “obedient children” (1 Peter 1:14) who no longer want to live in the selfish desires of the old life.

It is not a pretty situation when people pretend that they love each other because the evidence of such behavior is pretty obvious. We do not know about you but we generally can spot this kind of phoniness a mile off.

David speaking of his enemy in Psalm 55:21 says, "*His words are as smooth as butter, but in his heart is war. His words are as soothing as lotion, but underneath are daggers.*" There is an attitude at work in the world today that encourages people to manipulate others in order to get what they want. If our love is sincere and from a pure heart, we could never use people for our own advantage. The love that believers share with each other and with a lost world, to be sincere, must be generated by the Spirit of God. Believers love with a pure heart. Our motive for loving is not to take but to give.

Love is something we have to work at. Christian love is not a feeling; it is a matter of the will. We show love to others when we treat them the same way God treats us. God forgives us, so we forgive others. God is kind to us, so we are kind to others. When we read 1 John 4:17 a few minutes ago, we heard, "*we live like Jesus here in this world.*" Do we? Especially in the area of showing love? Christian love involves our actions and sometimes gets very practical. Perhaps you have heard the story about the elderly Mrs. Diamond, who was seriously ill? Several women were visiting her one day. After a while, they rose to leave and told her, "*Esther, we will keep you in our prayers.*"

"*Just wash the dishes in the kitchen,*" the ailing woman said, "*I can do my own praying.*"

The Word of God and the Spirit of God will help us to generate this kind of love. It is impossible to love God's Word and hate a fellow believer. The Spirit of God produces the "*fruit of the Spirit*" in our lives, and the first of these is love (Galatians 5:22-23). If we are filled with the Word of God (Col. 3:16ff) and the Spirit of God (Ephesians 5:18ff), we will make evident the love of God in our daily lives.¹⁴

1 Peter 1:23-25 NLT:

23 For you have been born again, but not to a life that will quickly end. Your new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living word of God.

24 As the Scriptures say, "People are like grass; their beauty is like a flower in the field. The grass withers and the flower fades.

25 But the word of the Lord remains forever." And that word is the Good News that was preached to you.

The only way to enter God's spiritual family is by a spiritual birth through faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:1-16). Just as there are two parents in physical birth, so there are two parents in spiritual birth: the Spirit of God (John 3:5-6) and the Word of God (1 Peter 1:23). The new birth gives to us a new nature (2 Peter 1:4) as well as a new and living hope (1 Peter 1:3).

Our first birth was a birth of "*flesh,*" and the flesh is corruptible. Whatever is born of flesh is destined to die and decay. This explains why mankind cannot hold civilization together: it is all based on human flesh and is destined to fall apart. Like the beautiful flowers of spring, mankind's works look successful for a time, but then they start to decay and die. All the way

¹⁴ Op Cit., Wiersbe, 1 Pe 1:22.

from the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11, to “*Babylon the Great*” in Revelation 17–18, mankind’s great attempts at unity are destined to fail. If we try to build unity in the church on the basis of our first birth, we will fail; but if we build unity on the basis of the new birth, it will succeed. Each believer has the same Holy Spirit dwelling within them (Romans 8:9). We call on the same Father (1 Peter 1:17) and share His divine nature. We trust the same Word, and that Word will never decay or disappear. We have trusted the same Gospel and have been born of the same Spirit.¹⁵

Unredeemed human life will fade like a fallen flower, but God’s Word is everlasting, as are all who put their trust in it. As lifetime members of God’s kingdom we should love each other with a genuine and sincere love.¹⁶ This is God’s standard for us.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Willmington, *H. L.: Willmington's Bible Handbook*. Wheaton, Ill. : Tyndale House Publishers, 1997, S. 769.