

1 Peter 1:17 – Part II

1Pe 1:17 (NKJV) And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay *here* in fear; ¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like silver or gold*, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

Now, we want to really get to the primary verb of the entire sentence which is the single Greek word for “**conduct yourselves**” – “*anastrepho*”. Once again, this is an aorist imperative verb and is in the passive voice. The passive voice is why the word “**yourselves**” is used in some of the translations. This is the emphasis of the sentence, even though that actual word is not in the Greek text. Whatever Peter is going to address in this sentence, it is all designed to provoke us relative to how we live, to how we conduct ourselves. The word is used eleven (11) times in the New Testament, but is translated eight (8) different ways. “**Conduct**” is a word that refers specifically to how a person lives – both in their lifestyle and in their character.¹ Peter’s obvious point is that all believers once lived their lives selfishly and like the rest of the world, but now they are to conduct themselves in a way that appropriately reflects the fact that they are living in fellowship with God.² Peter has already mentioned in v17 that God “**without partiality judges according to each one's work**”. God is impartial when He is evaluating and judging. He is never influenced or affected by the things that influence and affect us. He does not see someone’s outward appearance, social position, intelligence, wealth, color, family background, education, personal beauty, or anything else that may sway a man’s judgment. He never even sees those things. None of those things count with God when He is appraising or evaluating a person’s character and integrity.³ [1 Samuel 16:7](#) says,

1Sa 16:7 (NKJV) But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For *the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.*"

Therefore, God’s judgment is always a correct judgment, always a correct evaluation and assessment. The point is that if a believer is truly serious about invoking God to help them, then they need to be fully aware that God knows exactly how they are living. We may be able to fool and mislead other people, but we can never fool or mislead God. There has always been a couple of verses that have somewhat distressed me at times, and rightfully so. The first is [Mark 4:22](#) which says,

Mk 4:22 (NKJV) For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light.

Without doing a detailed study of that verse, it would be remiss on my part to overstate it, but it simply appears that parts of our life that are “**hidden**” will one day be “**revealed**”. Obviously, this most likely refers to both good things and bad things in a person’s life, and it does not actually give us a timeline or how these things may actually be revealed – whether here on the earth or in heaven in some way, or both. Then a verse that seems to go along with this concept, [Hebrews 12:1](#) says,

Heb 12:1 (NKJV) **Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,**

It appears that there are plenty of people in heavenly places who are actually able to see our life, to see how we are living, and to see what we are doing in secret that others may not see. It appears that the “**great cloud of witnesses**” becomes a serious motivation to “**lay aside**” those things that do not reflect Christ in our life. I have always believed from my study of Scripture that heaven is right here, very close to us in a spiritual dimension that we cannot see. It does not seem that there would be any value for it to be very far away. When Michael the arc angel fought with Satan, the battle was right above Daniel in the “**heavens**”, and not far away. Do you remember when Stephen was being stoned, and he simply looked up towards heaven and saw Jesus? [Acts 7:55-56](#) reads this way,

Ac 7:55 (NKJV) **But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God,⁵⁶ and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"**

Jesus and the Father were right there all the time, and I suspect that the “**great cloud of witnesses**” is watching as well and are not closed off in some distant sanctuary oblivious to all that is taking place on the earth. It seems rather that Stephen’s eyes were opened to see a spiritual dimension of reality which God has hidden from us in this present age, a dimension which nonetheless really does exist in our space/time universe. Within this sphere, Jesus now lives in his physical resurrection body, waiting even now for the time when He will return to earth.⁴ It simply is in another dimension that God has not allowed us to see or perceive with our natural senses, but nevertheless, it is there. Elisha saw Elijah going up into heaven. Isaiah saw the Lord on His throne. Ezekiel saw into the heavenly throne room. Nebuchadnezzar saw into heaven. Daniel saw into heaven. Stephen saw Jesus standing next to God the Father. Paul heard Jesus speaking from heaven. John saw into heaven. Jesus Himself said that heaven is near in [John 1:51](#).

Jn 1:51 (NKJV) **And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."**

It is my opinion (only that) that the “**great cloud of witnesses**” that has preceded us can actually see what we are doing and how we are living. That is a very sobering thought to say the least.

So, if a believer is going to be able to approach God effectively, then they must take into consideration how they are actually living. Once again, **what we are outwardly and what we do outwardly is not what God sees**. What God sees is the believer’s heart which often has a tendency to fool us and deceive us. [Jeremiah 17:9](#) says this about a man’s heart,

Jer 17:9 (NKJV) **"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"**

No wonder Peter encourages us to come to God with great reverence, respect, and honor. It should be obvious that those believers who have a deep and abiding reverence for God are the ones who live faithfully. I was wondering what we could do to somehow remind ourselves of the simple fact that we are to “**be holy**” and to “**conduct**” ourselves with great reverence for God. Obviously, there is no spiritual formula given for these kinds of things in the Scriptures, but somehow we have to constantly

keep reminding ourselves of what are God's expectations are for our life. God has called us with a holy calling, and that is not something that we can just take lightly. We represent Him and our life represents Him, so we want to make sure that our life is not dishonoring Him in any way. It seems that the best thing for us is to simply keep reminding ourselves of our holy calling. I think it would be a good thing for everyone to have a serious prayer journal that they maintain and constantly review. In that journal there should be a place that reminds us to pray for this area of our own life. It might be something simple like reminding ourselves to pray that today we are going to set our mind apart for God, set apart our heart for God, set apart our will for God, set apart our attitudes for God, set apart our resources for God, and simply set apart ourselves for His glory.

When Peter uses the words “**in fear**” at the end of v17, most all of the translations use that term. The AMP says “**with true reverence**”, the NIV and the NLT say “**in reverent fear**”, and the ISV says “**live reverently**”. [Hebrews 12:28](#) says,

Heb 12:28 (NKJV) Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

Some of the translations say “**with reverence and awe**”. We must hold God in high reverence. One day we each shall stand before God and give an account of our life and what we did and what we did not do. The rewards or lack thereof that we receive will be directly related to the quality of the spiritual life that we lived here on the earth. [Romans 14:12](#) which follows Paul's indication that “**we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ**” says,

Ro 14:12 (NKJV) So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

It would spiritually naïve to not take that encouragement seriously in our life. [2 Corinthians 5:10](#) says,

2Co 5:10 (NKJV) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Listen to what [1 Corinthians 3:12-15](#) says,

1Co 3:12 (NKJV) Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

The believer who receives no reward, or very little rewards, will still be saved, but God, “**who without partiality judges according to each one's work**” (v17), will separate the spiritually profitable aspects of our life from the wasted time, wasted opportunities, wasted resources, and simply a wasted life that never took God's divine work seriously. I am sure that because God is an impartial judge that He will expose the motives of men's hearts – good or bad, and we each will be rewarded accordingly. What Peter is simply saying is this – if we truly have a genuine and divine hope for heaven, it will stimulate and provoke us to a life of holiness on the earth.⁵

Before leaving v17, I want to address one related area relative to this idea of “**conduct**”. I am convinced that the more that a genuine believer walks with God that the more they learn about God. That should

really be a very self-evident truth to each of us. As we grow in the things of God, there are always new areas of spiritual truth that we learn about the Christian life – things that maybe we had heard, but not really absorbed spiritually. One of those life changing truths that becomes more and more self-evident as we grow spiritually is the simple truth that **there is a great difference between attempting to live for God vs. allowing God to live in and through us**. The first is virtually impossible and the second is absolutely essential.⁶ [Galatians 2:20](#) says it this way,

Gal 2:20 (NKJV) I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

We addressed this in [Galatians 4:19](#) relative to how Christ is “**formed**” in us. We simply live how he encourages us to live. We remain faithful to Him. We encourage and build people up. We help meet people’s needs. We pray for people. We express our love and appreciation for people. We simply do our part and rest in the fact that God will do His part. We do good to people, even when they may not do good to us. We find ways to strengthen their life when they mistreat us. We do not hold grudges and become bitter. We remain patient with people and refuse to let them make us angry. We submit ourselves to God and to His Word. We obey His Word at all costs. [1 Peter 2:20-23](#) will teach us these truths and we will not be able to escape them.

It is not so much that we are doing all of these things as much as it is our simply doing what we know Christ would do if He were taking our place. We simply allow Him to live His life through us. Everywhere that we go, we make every effort possible to simply let Christ live in us and through us. We should always speak kindly to people. The last thing that we want to do is to be grumpy around lost people or to always be complaining about how bad someone waited on our table at the restaurant. Being grumpy and complaining about everything can simply become a way of life and a bad habit that is very difficult to break. What God is looking for in our life is Christlikeness, living out our life as Christ would live out His life. We all know that none of this is as easy as I make it to sound. We all have our personal predispositions and preferences. We all have a certain type of personality and a certain kind of temperament. The problem is that generally those people who are not like us are the people that most likely irritate, aggravate, and exasperate us the most. This is exactly why so many young couples initially have problems in the early years of their marriage. It is because opposites attract. The problem with that is simple – we eventually get tired of someone who is completely different than we are, who has a completely different perspective than we do, and who approaches everything differently than we do. They are a pack rat and we do not want to keep anything we are not using. They want to save everything they make and we want to spend everything. We are a neat freak and they could care less about being neat. The list of differences is endless. So, what was attractive before marriage becomes a real source of irritation and conflict after the marriage starts to settle in.

Well, here is the spiritual problem related to [1 Peter 1:17](#) and the idea of conducting ourselves in a Christlike manner. The more that we try to live out the Christian life in our own strength, the more we fail. I am so prone to complaining, to griping, to becoming irritable, to being short with someone, to being selfish, to becoming judgmental of someone, or just giving up on a person. However, Christ is not like that, and every one of us who are saved are a living example of that reality. If Christ was as impatient and inconsiderate as we often are, no one would be saved – not one single person. We must

recognize that God uses “tools” to conform us to the image of Christ, and generally those tools are other people who are very different than we are and who think very differently than we think. If we do not recognize that simple spiritual reality, we will be a miserable failure in our Christian life. We will try to resolve all of the problems based on how we think and not on how God thinks. People that irritate us are generally divine messengers to help us see how un-Christlike we are in a particular area of our life. When they come into your life and when they irritate and frustrate you, please appreciate that God is using them to point out areas of your life that He wants to change so that He can live in you and through you.

ENDNOTES

¹ Vine, *anastrepho*, 104.

² Harris, *anastrepho*, ep.

³ Wuest, 1 Peter 1, 40-41.

⁴ Grudem, 1159-1160.

⁵ Swindoll, 158.

⁶ Cedar, 125.

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