

Living In The Light of Christ's Coming

2 Peter 3:11-18

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Years ago, I heard the statement I've never forgotten, I love it. It says, "Heaven, for the Christian, is not just a future destination but is also a present motivation." I love that. Heaven is not just a future destination, and it is that we will go to heaven as believers, that's certain, but it's also a present—now—motivation. We should be motivated by an eternal perspective.

I want you to look at 2 Peter 3:11. It says, "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness." So, "Seeing then that all these things,"—the created world, everything we see—"shall be dissolved,"—he asks the question—"what manner of persons ought ye to be in all"—holiness and godly living. That's the theme of this section: how shall we then live in light of His coming?

Peter has given us four admonitions—he gave us two last time we were together and two tonight. As I said, I'm going to back up and we'll read them all. So, how we should live in light of His coming. If you're outlining 2 Peter 3, go back with me to verse 1, and I promise I won't tarry on them. You say, "Oh, no. We'll be here all night." We're going to just skim over this. But I want to outline it again. How shall we then live in light of His coming? The first thing we want to do is: ". . . beloved . . . be mindful." That was the theme of verses 1-7.

There are four 'beloveds' in this text, in this chapter. The first is, ". . . beloved . . . be mindful," verses 1-7. Let's read it. Peter says, "This second epistle, beloved,"—there it is—"I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: 2 That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: 3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." Peter says, verse 5, "For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: 6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:"—he's talking about Genesis 6-9, the Flood of Noah—"But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word"—this is going to tie in with our text tonight—"are kept in store, reserved unto fire." So, first it was a flood, next it will be fire. God did judge the antediluvian world by flood, and then our future is going to be fire and the destruction of the whole heavens and earth. So, ". . . reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

Peter says, verse 2, ". . . be mindful of the"—truth of God's—"words;" and be mindful, verse 3, ". . . that . . . in the last days scoffers," will come. Here's the second "beloved," it's in verses 8-10, "But, beloved, be not ignorant." So, ". . . beloved . . . be mindful; . . . beloved, be not ignorant." Let's read verses 8-10. He says, "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-

ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” Now, remember, that’s going to tie in with our text tonight. Verse 10, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”

In this second “beloved,” we have, “. . . be not ignorant.” Be not ignorant of these three things: God is eternal, verse 8, “. . . that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day;” and, verse 9, that God is merciful, “. . . not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;” and that God is faithful, verse 10, “But the day of the Lord will come,”—not might come, but will come; and it—“will come as a thief in the night.”

In our text now, beginning in verse 11, we actually get two more: be diligent and beware. In verses 11-14, “. . . beloved, be diligent.” Let’s read it, “Seeing then that all these things”—now this is why I wanted to go back and read the earlier verses. “These things” are described in verse 10, “. . . the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” So, without skipping a beat, verse 11, “Seeing then that all these things,”—what things? The things described in verse 10—“shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation”—or manner of living—“and godliness. 12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat,” again, there’s that destruction of the universe by fire.

Verse 13, “Nevertheless we, according to his promise,”—I love that—“look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. 14 Wherefore, beloved,”—this is the application—“seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent”—so there’s the ‘beloved, be diligent’—“that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.”

So, “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be,” that’s a great question. And, do you know what the answer is? Not a materialist - right? - if everything we see, the whole universe, the whole cosmos, heaven and earth is going to be destroyed by fire. Believe me, there’s a lot of fire out there to destroy the earth. All you need is just a bunch of supernovas and God releasing His grip on the atoms in the universe, the whole cosmos would just blow up in one big giant fireball. This is going to be God’s big bang. Did you hear about the Big Bang Theory? It hasn’t happened yet—it’s future. There’s going to be a big bang, and God’s going to be the one that sets the whole universe on fire, and then there’s going to be a new heaven and a new earth. So, that which he describes in verse 10, seeing in light of that, we are not to be materialists. If you’re living for what you can see, the Bible says, “. . . for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

Ask yourself what you’re living for tonight. Are you living for the temporal, the physical, the mundane? It’s all going to burn. If you get a brand new car, just remind yourself when it gets scratched in the parking lot at Stater Bros or Costco or wherever you go, it’s all going to burn, right? “Yeah, but I want it to look nice when it burns.” We get so hung up on material things. It

is all going to burn. We don't want to be living for the things of this world or living for this earth, we want to be living for heaven. We want to be so heavenly-minded that we are truly earthly good.

In verse 10, Peter describes the burning and destruction. Now, when does this take place? This takes place, there in verse 10, the heavens and earth dissolved, when Jesus after the end of the Millennium destroys the earth, and then there will be, Revelation 21, “. . . a new heaven and a new earth.” This is the eternal state.

I believe it works like this: we're going to see the rapture happen first, that the Church, the body of Christ, will “. . . be caught up . . . to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord;” “. . . and the dead in Christ shall rise first,”—we just spent a couple weeks on the rapture. “Then we which are alive and remain”—are what? harpáz Ùy66 Vv‡@ up . . . to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

Then, there'll be seven years of tribulation on earth, the last three-and-a-half Great Tribulation, God's wrath being poured out. That's when the Second Coming takes place, at the end of the seven-year tribulation. Then, there will be the binding of Satan for one thousand years, that's known as the Kingdom Age or we use the term Millennium, meaning one thousand. So, for one thousand years Christ will reign on earth. This is the fulfillment of what is known as the Davidic Covenant. God promised David in the Old Testament that through his seed the lineage of the Messiah would sit on his throne, and it would be an eternal Kingdom. Even though it's a thousand years, it's connected to the eternal state in that it flows into the new heaven and the new earth, which at the end of the Millennium, there'll be the destruction by fire of heaven and earth, and John says in Revelation 21, “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth.” That's the eternal state where we will be forever and forever with the Lord.

This all kind of ties together with what Peter is saying here. Peter asks in verse 11, how shall we then live? Not as materialists. Two ways are described to live in the text. I want you to see them there. First, is that we should live holy and godly lives. Look at verse 11. He says that we should live “. . . in all holy conversation and godliness.” My King James Bible has “conversation” and today we use that word for our speech, but in the old English of the King James Bible, it meant the way you live, it meant your life. So, we're to be holy in the way that we live.

What does it mean to be holy? The word is *hágios* in the Greek, and it means set apart and sanctified unto God. So, we are to be holy, which means set apart unto God. The minute you get saved there's a positional holiness or sanctification—God sets you apart in Christ, and His righteousness is imputed to you, and you stand righteous before God. But then, it starts the process of being sanctified and becoming more like Christ and being more holy. You'll never be perfect in this life until you see Jesus face to face and you no longer have a sinful nature, you have a new body. But we are being changed into His image by the Spirit of God. This is growing in holiness.

So, you're positionally holy. As a believer, your goal is to practically be holy. It's bringing up your practice to your position. Positionally, you're holy. You want to bring up your practice to your position by being filled with the Spirit, by walking in the Spirit, by reading the Word of God, feeding on the Word of God, growing—we're going to see—in grace and knowledge of God. So, we're to be set apart. This has to do with our actions. It's living for the glory of God in living a holy life.

Then, "godliness" in verse 11. They're two different things here. Holiness is our actions; godliness is our attitude. Godliness is Godlikeness. So, again, it's growing in our sanctification, but it's what motivates us, and I believe that that's what's called the fear of the Lord, which the Scriptures say is the beginning of wisdom. So, our actions, holy; our attitudes, godly. It's living for God's glory and honor. A person that is godly is a person that loves God with all their heart, soul, strength, and mind, and desires to please God and glorify God in all they do. That's the attitude that leads to holy living.

We'll get it in Titus 2:11-13 this Sunday morning. Paul says to Titus, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, 12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; 13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." So, how shall we then live? Holy. If you believe Jesus is coming back again, you're not going to be wanting to live an unholy life, you want to live a holy life and a godly life, a desire to live for the Lord and living by the fear of the Lord.

The second way is to live in expectation. How shall we then live? In expectation. Look at verses 12-14. Peter says, "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" The key there is "looking for." Notice again, verse 13, "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth,"—so what are you looking for?—"wherein dwelleth righteousness." Then, look again in verse 14, "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things" So verse 12, "looking for;" verse 13, "look for;" and verse 14, "look for." What are you looking for?

The word "looking for" has the idea of living in expectation. It portrays an attitude of expectancy. It means that we should have a heavenly mind. I love Colossians where it says, "Set your affection," that word translated in Colossians "affection" literally means our minds. Do you know your mind matters? Where your mind goes matters? What your mind thinks about matters? So, our minds are to be set on things above—heaven—not on things of the earth. You sometimes hear people say, "Well, they're so heavenly-minded, they're no earthly good." That's not real heavenly-mindedness. A person that's truly heavenly-minded is going to be earthly good; and I believe that those who live most for the world to come will do most for God in this world here. It's because we're not heavenly-minded that we're carnal, and we're earthbound, and we're materialistic, and we're missing out on being motivated by our future hope of heaven.

Write down 1 John 2:15-17 where John says, “Love not the world,”—the word is *kósmos*, the evil world system—“neither the things that are in the world”—it describes what not to love—“ . . . the lust of the flesh,”—which is your passions—“and the lust of the eyes,”—which are your possessions—“and the pride of life,”—which is your position, so don’t lust after these things of the world. Jesus said, “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”

Remember years ago there was a bumper sticker that became popular that said, “He who dies with the most toys wins.” Do you remember that? That’s just flat out stupid. He who dies with the most toys wins? Are you going to be bragging in hell about all your toys that you left on earth? I mean, just look at everything you possess, you’re going to leave it some day, or it’s going to be destroyed some day; so we need to be living with expectation that the Lord is coming again soon. We should be motivated by heaven. We should be looking for and living for the eternal state.

Again, verse 13, Peter says, “ . . . his promise.” Jesus said, “I go to prepare a place . . . And I go and prepare a place . . . I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” So, verse 13, “ . . . we . . . look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” As I said earlier, this is recorded in Revelation 21, “ . . . a new heaven and a new earth.”

Verse 14, “Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent,”—so, if we’re looking and ready, we’re diligent—“that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.” Are you ready for heaven? It’s sad that we are forgiven, we’re on our way to heaven, but all we do is think about earth. We should be more motivated by eternal values.

Here’s the second “beloved” of our text tonight. It’s in verses 15-18, that is, “ . . . beloved . . . beware.” So, “ . . . beloved . . . be diligent,” the Lord’s coming soon. Look for Him. And, secondly, “ . . . beloved . . . beware,” verses 15-18. Let’s read it. He says, “And account”—or consider—“that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;”—he’s making a fabulous reference there to Paul’s letters in the New Testament—“As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood,”—so, if you’ve ever read Paul’s epistles and thought, scratching your head, I’m not sure what he’s talking about. Welcome to the club. Even Peter said some of the things that Paul writes about are hard to understand. “ . . . which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest”—or twist or contort—“as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.”

There are three areas that we need to be vigilant or beware. Write them down. First, don’t lose your evangelistic zeal. Be careful that as you’re waiting for the Lord to come back, and He’s “ . . . longsuffering . . . not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,” and you wonder, where is the Lord? Why hasn’t He returned? Remember that it means salvation to those who aren’t saved. You know, if you go home tonight and say, “Lord, please come. Lord, please come,” are your neighbors ready to go? Is your husband ready to go? Is

your wife ready to go? Are your kids ready to go? Are your family and friends ready to go? Have they been born again? Don't lose your evangelistic zeal.

I love it in Philippians where Paul says, "I want to go to heaven, but it's better for you that I stay here. I'm willing to give up heaven to stay here to help you out." So, we're going to get there sooner or later, but we are here now and Jesus said that we should " . . . work . . . while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." There's going to be a day when we can no longer evangelize or reach out to others, so don't lose your evangelistic zeal. The reality is the belief that we are going to heaven, and that Jesus is coming again should motivate us to evangelism—to telling others about Jesus and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. Jesus will keep His promise 2 Peter 3:4, that the scoffers say He promised and has not come, but He's longsuffering. Remember verse 9, He is " . . . not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." The Lord's patience gives people time to be saved.

Some of you are here tonight that if the Lord would've come three years ago you wouldn't have been ready. If the Lord would've come a year ago, some of you are here tonight, you wouldn't have been ready. I was praying for the Lord to come a year ago, you guys would've missed out. You should be glad God didn't answer my prayers. Let's not lose our evangelistic zeal.

Going to heaven doesn't mean let everyone else go to hell. It means let's reach out to them so that they won't be lost, so they won't have to be here. Think about those that you love that aren't saved, and think about them being here for the tribulation, that time of God's wrath being poured upon the world—a terrible, terrible time. We need to tell our families and our friends how to be saved, explain who Jesus is, explain His death on the cross, explain that we can't save ourselves by our good works. Quote to them Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast." And, memorize John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him"—and what it means to believe is to trust in Him and rely on Him—"should not perish, but have everlasting life." You don't have to be a theologian. You can say, "I was blind, now I see. This is what Jesus has done in my life," and share the good news because He is coming back. And, as I said, there will be a time " . . . when no man can work."

I want to make mention of verse 16 where Peter refers to the twisting of Scriptures by those who just don't understand Paul. He says, verse 15, " . . . Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you." Paul, more than any other apostle and New Testament author, delineates and explains and systematically lays out how God saves sinners. Do you know that that's really the whole book of Romans? Every Christian should outline and master the book of Romans. You don't need to understand every verse in Romans, but understand the layout of the book. It's really got Paul's theological last will and testament. Everything Paul knew theologically, he poured into that one book, the book of Romans. Paul wrote about " . . . things hard to be understood," but he also clearly wrote about how we are to be saved. It's in Romans, he said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it"—that is, the gospel—"is the power of God unto salvation . . . to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." So, read Paul.

Learn the gospel. Be able to communicate the gospel.

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul says, this is the gospel, “. . . how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day.” That’s the simple gospel. Jesus died for you, He rose for you. If you believe and trust in Him, your sins can be forgiven, and you can be saved.

Notice Peter mentions Paul’s writings, verse 16, they’re hard to understand. He said, “. . . which they that are unlearned and unstable”—these are false teachers, these are probably unbelievers, they twist them. This is still happening today. There are the Scripture twisters, they twist the Scriptures. They “wrest” them out of their context and pour their meaning or ideas into the text. That’s what’s called eisegesis, by the way. Theologians use that term, it means reading into the text. Exegesis, where we get our word “expository preaching” means to take it out of the text. Do you know what a text means? The text means what the original author meant it to mean. That’s what it means. Whatever Paul meant by what he said, that’s what the Bible means. So, you want to get to the original author’s meaning. It’s called the authorial intent, not imposing your ideas on it.

I hear a lot of preaching where they read a verse, they don’t take it’s context, they don’t look at the grammar, they don’t look at what’s going on in the text, and they just pour their own meaning into the text because it’s maybe something that’s practical or something that’s helpful, something that’s popular, and it’s palatable, it’s ear-tickling, and people want to hear that rather than in fidelity to the meaning of the text.

So, they twisted Paul’s letters, verse 16, and did that “. . . unto their own destruction.” Notice the little phrase at the end of verse 16, this is just a footnote, he uses the expression “other scriptures.” There are some who feel that Paul the apostle is in conflict with Jesus or that Paul is in conflict with James, or that Paul is in conflict with the Old Testament. Here is a clear reference to support that Paul’s letters are Scripture. The New Testament epistles of Paul the apostle are Scripture. I love and thank God for those Pauline epistles. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God,” but there are Scriptures that are more valuable, more profitable, and more beneficial than others. If I was stranded or marooned on a desert island somewhere, and I could only have the book of Numbers or Leviticus or the book of Romans, I’d take the book of Romans. Is it more inspired? No, it’s equally inspired, but it’s more important for us today, and I think it’s important to master the writings of Paul.

But, this supports, verse 16, the idea that Paul’s epistles are Scriptures. Peter ties them together with other Scriptures, and they twist them “. . . unto their own destruction.” Anyone who twists the Scriptures to make them say what they want them to say, out of context, and misapplies them, is doing so for their own and “. . . unto their own destruction.”

Now, notice, secondly, under “beloved, beware,” not only don’t lose your evangelistic zeal, but don’t be carried away by false teaching, verse 17. He says, “Ye therefore, beloved,”—Peter loved that term ‘beloved’—“seeing ye know these things before, beware.” That word “beware”

means be on guard, keep a watchful eye open. It's a military term, and it means to keep watch at a post. Keep your eyes wide open. If you're a soldier guarding a gate, you don't want to be sleeping, you want to be wide awake, staying alert.

Notice it also says, that you should not only beware, “. . . beloved . . . beware,”—or be on guard, but you should not be dragged away, verse 17, “. . . lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked.” So, you need to be aware and on guard, you need to be careful you're not dragged away. This is not referring to a believer losing their salvation, but it is a reference to a believer being drawn away from the true teaching of the Word of God and it leading to their fall and their destruction, not eternally but just damaging their Christian life. Notice also, verse 17, you will “. . . fall from your own steadfastness.” So, you are being dragged away or pulled away, and you will “. . . fall from your own steadfastness”—or steadfast position.

Now, how do we stay standing fast in our steadfast position? The answer is in verse 18, don't lose your spiritual balance. So, beloved, beware, don't lose your evangelistic zeal; secondly, don't be carried away by false teaching; and thirdly, don't lose your spiritual balance. So many times Christians get imbalanced. They go from one tangent to another tangent, one extreme to another. In Ephesians it says they are “. . . tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.” They're always under the influence of the last person they talked to. They don't have a solid foundation in the Word of God.

Look at the end of verse 17, don't “. . . fall from your own steadfastness.” This is how we don't fall away from our steadfastness, verse 18, “But grow in the grace,”—I love that—“and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.” We must keep on growing. You know, if you've been born again, Peter says, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” You want to feed on God's Word so that you can grow. Keep on growing. If you're not growing, you're backsliding. If you're not going forward, you're going backwards.

We used to say it's like riding a bicycle up a hill. If you're pedaling up a hill on a bike, and you stop pedaling, you go backwards, right? Or, if you're climbing a pole, you stop, you slide back down. So, you need to grow. The Bible tells us that we need to, “. . . work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” It doesn't mean we work to be saved or we work to keep ourselves saved, but it means that we work to grow in sanctification and holiness and godliness and likeness to Jesus Christ. It's all about Jesus.

How do we grow in grace? By reading God's Word, by experiencing Christ in His Word, by learning about Jesus in His Word, by yielding to the Holy Spirit, and we grow in grace. So, we are saved by grace, and we are sanctified by grace. We grow by grace. It's not just grace to be saved and get to heaven, it is grace every day to get you more holy and like Jesus Christ. That's “Amazing Grace” that John Newton sang about. So, grow in grace and in knowledge. How do we grow in knowledge? Again, by the Word of God. There is nothing more important than for your spiritual growth than for you to read the Bible, study the Bible, and apply the Bible, “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only,” learning the Word of God.

You're to be commended, you're in church tonight; but it's not enough just to sit in on a Bible study on Wednesday night. You ought to get up in the morning and read the Bible, and you read it before you go to bed, read it at lunch break. Carry a Bible with you, feeding on the Word of God. It's the knowledge of Jesus Christ. It's the most important knowledge a person can have. Every Christian should study the knowledge of Christ—who is Christ. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." We must learn who Jesus is. We must be sure of what the Bible teaches about Jesus Christ.

Now, three things to remember in light of this whole chapter, and by the way, notice Peter closes in verse 18, "To him be glory both now and for ever." So, if we're growing in grace looking for heaven, we'll be bringing glory to God. These are the three things I would wrap up with: 1) Jesus is coming again, clean up, 1 John 3:3, "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Clean up. 2) Look up. Don't live for this world. Lift your eyes. Someone said, "When the outlook is bad, try the uplook." I love that. "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth"—because—" . . . your life is hid with Christ in God." 3) Speak up. Tell others the gospel of Jesus Christ. So, clean up, look up, speak up. Jesus Christ is coming again. Amen?