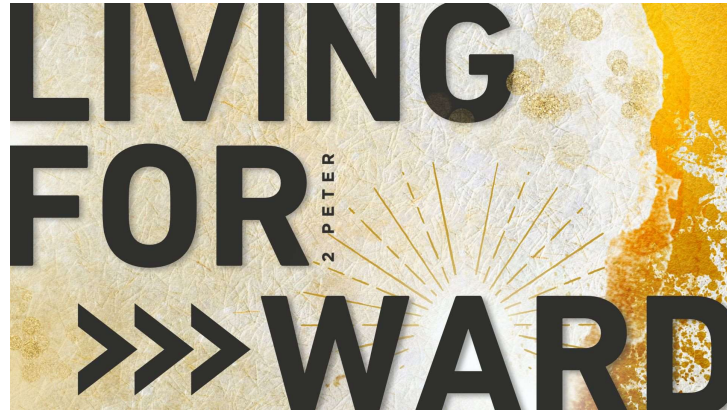


The Best is Yet to Come



Bro. Kory Cunningham

2nd Peter 3:10–13

I want you to imagine that it's almost your 16th birthday and your dad calls you out to the driveway and he says, "Hey honey, I've got a present for you," and he gives you this car. You see it and immediately you know what it is...this is Dad's favorite car, a 1967 Mustang. You've heard about its glory because he got it new when he was a kid and it was great; you've seen the pictures, you've heard the stories. But it's been in Dad's garage for a while now, and you had no idea Dad was going to tell you, "Hey honey, I'm going to give you my baby; this is going to be your first car!" Uh...you really don't know how to react because you want to be happy, you want to be excited and you know that it did have a glory but the glory is not really there anymore. So you say, "Wow, okay, um, does it run?" Dad says, "Oh well, it doesn't right now but I can get her going. It's going to run!" So, you're trying to act excited but you're thinking about how you have to drive to school and people will see you in this...it's rusted, things are probably going to fall off, and it's probably going to not crank half of the time. So you try to be excited and give him thanks, but in your heart you're not really excited about this gift. You're looking at the car and thinking all these things but then your Dad says, "I'm fixing to go on a trip and I'll be gone a while, but when I get back, I'm going to restore this car and it's going to look like this," and he shows you a picture of a newly

restored, classic 1967 Mustang. Now how are you feeling? Feeling a little better, right? All of a sudden, you are excited, you are happy; you're hugging Dad, you're giving big kisses. Dad says, "Let me tell you about it. It's a little rusted now, but when I restore it, it's not going to be like it was. I'm putting a fully electric motor in it, 600 horsepower. It's going to be repainted and the whole interior's going to be redone. Everything is going to be changed into something even better than it was.

So now, you've got this picture of not what the car was, not what the car is, but what the car is going to be. You're excited and you're also really ready for dad to hurry up and get back! You're going to be counting down the days wondering when you can get this car. You would probably sit in that rusted car every day with the picture of the restored car up on the dashboard just waiting for dad to get home and start. That is the picture I want you to have as we walk through this text because what we're going to see that the best is actually yet to come. See, for some of us, our default position is Jesus died on a cross to save me from my sins so that I'll go to Heaven when I die and that's kind of the full story, that's the whole thing, that's your salvation, that's the end of it. You're not sure what it's going to be like but you're going to go to Heaven one day and you're just sort of waiting for this moment when you are going to Heaven. I love what NT Wright says. He says, "Heaven is great but it's not the end of the world." There's actually more coming; Heaven is not our final destination. It's going to be really important that we don't just have this belief and hope that when we die we're going to Heaven and that's just it. That's only part of the story. When we die, we will be with the Lord but that is not the end. We are with the Lord waiting for Him to return, and when He returns, He's going to restore all things back to how they were, except even better. So now, let's think about the car. See, what we're going to see is this earth, this life right now, is sort of like that rusty beat up car. We remember it's glory—we can read Genesis 1 and 2 and we remember a life without sin, walking in His presence—everything was good. But as we sit in this 'car,' as we live in this world, in this life, our hope is not that one day God's just going to take us away and we're going to float around. No, our hope is that God is going to restore the 'car,' that God is going to remake, renew, this earth so that we are going to walk where our feet

walk now for all of eternity but it's going to be a perfect paradise, even better than it was. And as we get a picture of the future and we realize the future is connected to right now, the two aren't completely disconnected, what I hope it will help you to do is to love the gifts right now, that you would love the life has given you right now, that you would walk on this earth right now in the presence of God, but you wouldn't love it ultimately. Do you know what you would really want? For Dad to come back home. And you can't wait for Dad to come back home because you're ready for the car to be restored. You're ready for all things to be how they once were but even better. See, some of us are not anxiously awaiting Christ's return because we really believe right now is the best it's going to be, and then someday we're going to go somewhere and we're going to float around. We're really not sure what that's going to be like. Well, I want you to see this morning that the best is yet to come and it should cause you to long for Christ to come back. When we get the new Earth, that's even better than the earth we're on. So let's look at the scriptures and read what Peter is going to tell us about the end. I want that picture of the old car—how it once was, how it is now, and how it's going to be—to be an image in your mind as you think through this text.

Scripture

"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to His promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."

So as we walk through this text, we're going to do it a little different. We're actually going to ask three questions and we're going to try and answer those three questions. Number one, what does it mean that the old will pass away? So Peter says when Christ comes the old will pass away; it'll

burn up, it'll be dissolved. So our question is does that mean God is going to annihilate everything we know now? Is it just He blows it all up? What does it mean that it passes away? Or is God refining it, renewing it, and restoring it? So we're going to ask, what is the fire actually doing that causes the heavens and the earth to pass away? Number two is what's the new 'car' like; in other words, what is this new heaven and new earth like? What is this new existence going to be and why should we long for that? The last question is what should we do as those who are stuck in the middle? We're in between the passing away and the coming of this new heaven and a new earth, so what should we, who are stuck in the middle of those two things, do? How do we live in a place that's passing away but also a place that is yet to come?

So let's tackle the first one, what does it mean that the old will pass away? That's the language that Peter uses. Now, he's already said the coming of the day will be like a thief and we've talked about that doesn't mean it's secret, it means it's unannounced, it's unexpected—Christ is just going to come back and it's going to be the end. We've talked about God's delay is not because He's slow but because He's good. He's waiting for people to repent. I got to talk to two people this week who realized that because of judgment they're in trouble because they have not repented. I got an opportunity to get to share the gospel with them and the news of Christ coming back rattled them because they realized they were not ready. So we're working through them getting ready so when Christ comes back they would know confidently. Maybe that's you this morning. We've been talking about Christ returning and you are not sure that you're in Christ. Well, He hasn't returned because He's waiting for sinners to repent. Maybe that delay is for you to repent and believe in the gospel. So He's not slow, He's good.

In this verse, we see this “and then.” Christ is coming like a thief, “and then...” The return of Christ is going to happen, judgment is going to come, Peter says “and then...” in other words, we're at that day. It's not when it's coming or how it's coming, it's here, Christ has come back. What is going to happen when He returns? Peter says first of all the old is going to pass away. I mean just look at it, “...*and then* the heavens will pass

away with a roar." Tom Shriner says that idea of a roar is like a crackling and roaring fire. This blaze, you're going to hear this roar because judgment has fallen on the heavens and on the earth. And "the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed." So, what does it mean that they're going to pass away? What does it mean that they're going to dissolve, that things are going to be burned up and things are going to be exposed? What exactly does that mean? There are two thoughts. The first one is that God is going to blow up the first and make something brand new. In other words, what this is talking about is annihilation of the planet. God's just going to take us up, He's going to totally blow what is here now, the heavens and the earth are going to be done away with, and then God is going to make new heavens and a new earth. He's going to make something brand new and there's no continuity between this earth and the earth to come. So that's one way that Peter could be saying this. The second is not a total annihilation but a restoration—a fire that melts and dissolves like gold melts and dissolves, and the impurities are raked away so that what's good, pure gold, is left.

So the question is, does God annihilate the earth or does He restore it through fire? Is this like a Death Star event or is this like a forest fire event? That's our question. If you're a Star Wars fan, do you remember the Death Star moment? Princess Leia is on the bridge and you have the big cannon headed to Alderaan, and she's protesting, "Please don't, please don't." They're like, "No, we're going to do it." And all of a sudden, the laser hits Alderaan, and what happens? The entire planet is obliterated. Everything got annihilated. Alderaan is no longer on the map. It is completely done away with. So, is that what Peter's saying is going to happen to planet Earth and the heavens when God takes us up, as we talked about last week, and we watch the fireworks? What are the fireworks? Is it God obliterating, annihilating the planet so that it's no longer in existence, no longer on the map? Or is this burning and dissolving more like a forest fire?

I remember in 2016, we were going to Gatlinburg for a family vacation. We rented a cabin, had some hikes, it was going to be great. We got ready to

go, and in November, a fire broke out in the Smoky Mountains. It was on the news, just all sorts of acreage destroyed, some of Gatlinburg destroyed, cabins destroyed. The person called us and said, "You can't go on your vacation because the cabin is no longer here." So we had to cancel the vacation and it was so disheartening because I love the Smokies. We actually got to go there a little while after the fire and I saw the devastation, trees charred, everything destroyed. But then four years later in 2020, we planned another family vacation and we got to actually go, we got to get a cabin, and we did some hiking and we hit a trail that we didn't really even know where the trail was going to go. We were just walking along and everything was fine, but then all of a sudden we walk through this gap and we walk into just death and destruction. We walked from perfect forest, everything's great, to just charred trees falling down. We realized we just crossed over to where that great fire had been. Our kids were asking, "What happened here, did somebody bomb this place?" So we told our kid about this fire and we got to explain about the trip four years earlier getting canceled and why. We saw trees down, and charred and burned, but do you know what we also saw? We saw these little saplings that were green and tender. We saw this grassy moss that was growing on everything. We saw that beauty was coming from the ashes. Life was springing from death. That's what fire does to forests. Fires don't annihilate, fires don't destroy by annihilation; they destroy and they reconstruct, they rehabilitate.

So the question for us is which one is Peter talking about? Is it Alderaan...boom, game over? Or, is it a forest fire where all that is cursed in this world will go in a blazing flame, and from that, beauty will come from the ashes, that God will restore and resurrect the earth like He will resurrect our bodies? I'm going to argue for the second. I don't think God's plan for the planet is to destroy it and it's annihilated. I think God's plan for the planet is to restore and redeem it. I'm going to give you some scripture to explain why that is, and then we're going to talk about why that actually matters a lot in how you think about the world. Acts 3:19–23. Now, the reason I chose this is because it is Peter who is explaining to some people the gospel and the second coming of Christ. Here's what Peter says, "Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, 20

that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you..." So remember, Christ has died, He was buried, He rose again, and He is in Heaven right now and Peter is giving a message to the people still here on earth. He's saying get ready, you need to repent because the time of refreshing is coming. I think the refreshing is this refining of sin that's going to be eradicated and you don't want to be caught in your sin in that moment. You want to be in Christ because you don't want to go in judgment in your sin. You want to be found in the Lord so repent from your sins. Then notice what he says in verse 21, [Jesus] "whom Heaven must receive until the time for restoring all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets long ago." So two words that we've pointed out, there's refreshing and there's restoring. So he is saying you need to repent because Christ is in Heaven and He's getting ready to come back, and when He comes back, there's a restoring and a refreshing of all things. Now to me, that doesn't sound like God is going to annihilate the planet. That doesn't sound like it's a boom and everything is over. It sounds like when Christ comes back there's going to be a refreshing, a restoring, a taking what is now and making it like it once was, but even better. So I think there's going to be continuity between this earth and that earth. That God is going to restore it through fire not destroy it through fire.

Another text we'll go to is Romans 8:19–23. Here's what Paul writes about the creation. He says, "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God." So creation is eager for the second coming. It seems odd that creation would be eager if they knew when Christ comes back it's game over for creation, it gets obliterated. That would be a weird thing to be eager for, your extermination. But creation is eager for this event. Why? Verses 20–21 says, "For the creation was subject to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God." Creation is waiting how? In hope, it's eager in hope. And what is it hopeful for? That it will be set free from bondage and corruption. That's what creation is waiting for, it's longing for. It's not longing for its destruction in a sense that it's no longer going to be; it's waiting for its destruction in that it's going to be set free

from bondage and decay. Notice how this connects to us, verses 22–23, “For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption and sons, the redemption of our bodies.” Creation has been groaning and longing like a woman getting ready to give birth. It's been groaning; it's waiting for this moment that it's going to be set free. Paul connects creation to the way we are longing, the way we are groaning for our own bodies to be set free and redeemed through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, so Paul is linking these two. When Christ comes back, there is a resurrection of your body. Like if you've lost a family member and you've put them in the ground, guess what? That's not the end of them. When Christ comes back, they're going to break free from the grave. There's going to be a resurrection of their body. Their body will meet their soul, and they will live in a resurrected body forevermore in a new kingdom.

But guess what? That's also not the end story of the world. When Christ comes back, the world itself will go through a resurrection. It will go from a death to life. There will be a redemption that is connected to our bodies, so when Christ comes back, we are resurrected but also the planet we live on will be resurrected to new life free from sin. The creation is actually waiting for this moment. John Piper puts it like this, “What happens to our bodies and what happens to the creation go together. And what happens to our bodies is not annihilation but redemption...Our bodies will be redeemed, restored, made new, not thrown away. And so it is with the heavens and the earth.” Our bodies are not annihilated, our bodies are not thrown away; our bodies actually matter and God has a plan for your body. He's going to restore, redeem, and resurrect your body. The gospel is not Christ died for your sins so that your soul will go to Heaven one day and then that's the end. That's not the end. When you die as a Christian, you will be with the Lord, but you're waiting for Him to return so that you'll be reconnected with your body, you'll be reconciled back to God, and you'll live in a resurrected universe where the earth will experience that same resurrection that your body does and you'll live with God here forevermore. So the two go together.

I love what Charles Spurgeon says about fire. He says, "Fire changes form, but does not obliterate substance. The world, so far as we know, will not cease to be. It will pass through the purifying flame, and then, perhaps, the soft and gentle breath of Almighty love will blow upon it and cool it rapidly. The divine hand will shape it as it cools into a paradise more fair than what bloomed upon the banks of the Tigris." That's a reference to Genesis. Spurgeon is saying fire doesn't obliterate; fire restores, and I think that's exactly what Peter is trying to say about the planet.

So this dissolving, this burning is not to obliterate it. How do I know that? Because when it does, it will expose the works that are in the world. There's an exposing, not obliterating, so the fire is not for annihilation but it's a fire that is for restoration. After God with His flames and with His fury and with His wrath and with His judgment, He breaks the curse and He makes all things new. What I've argued is that's not a throwing away and making something brand new, that's a taking what's broken and fixing it, redeeming it, restoring so that it is presented as new, and we can see that even when we're talking about our own salvation. Think about 2nd Corinthians 5:17. We see the same language. Here's what Paul says about our salvation, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old is passed away; behold, the new has come." So concerning your salvation, when you believed in Christ the old passed away and the new has come. Now, does that mean when you became a believer your old self, the sinner you were, was annihilated, obliterated, no longer exists? No, you're still you...same body, same person. But the old pattern, the old ways are going away, and there is a new you that has replaced it. There is a new you that is in continuity with the old you, but it's new. So speaking of our salvation, it's the same language that Peter's using for creation. The old has passed away and there is new that's coming. It's not obliterating the one and makes something new, but it's a restoration that is coming through this refining fire that God is going to do on the earth.

And notice as we see this fire, there's something that's exposed. Here's what we see, "...and the earth and the works that are done on them will be exposed." Why is there fire? Why is there melting? Why is there dissolving? Last Sunday when we talked about us being pulled out and then we see

the fireworks show, it's like that's in some ways sad. I don't want to see all that I love, all that I like, and all that I do just be burned up. The idea of like total destruction, I don't want that, I'm not sure I'm going to watch. And then you realize what the fireworks are pointed at—they're pointed at the works of this earth that are against God which are being exposed in His judgment. In other words, it's the curse. The curse is being broken at the return of Christ. All the things that break God's heart are being dealt with, all the things that cause havoc in our lives, all the things that we open up on our news app...it's all going to be exposed.

So we see there's no hiding, everything is going to be brought to light and there's going to be proper justice. That's one of the things we deal with is so much, the injustice that happens all around. People do things and they don't get what they deserve. They get away with things, horrific things that happen all over a planet and it seems like there's no justice; it seems like there's no righteousness that happens. And God is saying when Christ comes back, there's no hiding, there's no running; all things will be brought to light and justice will be served. It will be done at the return of Christ. He will deal with the sin that has wrecked the planet. I don't know about you but I think that's really good news because there's a lot of things broken and wrecked about this planet and I can't wait for the fire to just push it away.

Think about sickness like cancer, a thing that has ravished us and wrecked us because we live in a broken world where our sin brought on death. Sin and sickness has spread but Jesus came to conquer sickness in His new kingdom, but it's not conquered yet. Some of you're going through cancer, some of you have sat beside the beds of loved ones and you've seen them being taken from cancer. Can you imagine the moment we see Christ comes back and He goes to war on cancer and completely eradicates it? We will need no more cancer wards, no more hospitals for cancer research because it's all done away with. The curse is rolled up and thrown out and that's good news. Alzheimer, and ALS, and Covid, all these things that affect us will all be dealt with and they will all be moved out. Not just sickness, but human trafficking, violence, abuse, pride, envy, all these things that are right now wrecking our planet are going to be done away

with. They're going to be dealt with because Christ is not coming to obliterate this place, He's coming to renew it and restore it. All things are going to be exposed, and He's going to go to work on the curse and defeat it.

That's good news to me because I'm in that 'car' and it's rusty, it doesn't work. We're on this planet, it's broken, most of your days are just brokenness, and people are wronging you. It's all a mix of emotion and it's hard and it's heavy, and we're in this car and we're thinking this is the best it's going to be. Peter wants to give us a little picture on the dashboard because this isn't the best it's going to be, the best is yet to come. Christ is going to restore all things and it's going to be you living on this planet where righteousness dwells and it's going to be perfect forever. That's what's coming. So don't just love the car—like it but love what's coming. Love the restoring of all things and don't let your hope be that you're going to die and go to Heaven one day and kind of float around. No, you're going to die one day, and yes, you'll be with the Lord, but guess what? He is coming back and you're going to be renewed and resurrected to live on this planet forevermore with Him. That is what I really believe—the places your feet are walking today are the places your feet will walk forever—the same place, same soil, same ground. So when I think about the fire, the places I know, like where I grew up or my home, I don't want to see it all go, and that's not the image of the new kingdom. It's not the world gets blown up; it's the world gets fixed and restored. Our feet are going to walk on the same place but it's going to be a place rid of sin and death and destruction. That's why Peter says repent because the day of restoring is going to come, so don't be found in sin because sin is going to be dealt with. Be found in Christ where righteousness will dwell forever.

So what does it mean that there's going to be a passing away? I think the passing away is all of the former corruption, brokenness, and sinfulness that we find. The course of this world Paul talks about that we all once followed, it's going to be all done away with through fire. It's going to be like gold that has been refined and made pure, pure gold that's going to be the new heavens and the new earth, restored and remade in the ways they

always were meant to be. So that's the passing away, not annihilation but restoration.

So if that's the case, then what about the new? What are the new heavens and the new earth going to be like? Well the new will come. This is our second question answered. 2nd Peter 3:13 says, "But according to His promise, we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." Not only does the old pass away, but we get something new in its place, something renewed. What are the new heavens and the new earth going to be like? It's going to be a place where righteousness dwells. Right now, we live in a world where sin dwells. Sin rules, death rules. We're going to live in a new earth where righteousness dwells. The very characteristics of God are going to be what fills this new earth. When you open up your news app, it's going to be good news all the time. Can you imagine that? Just open up your news app when you home, you know what it is—bad news all the time. That's the car we live in. It's broken, it's rusted, it doesn't work, right? One day you are going to open your news app and it's going to be good news all of the time forevermore. That's where we're going, a place where righteousness dwells forever. It's a new Heaven and a new earth. It's what Isaiah prophesied about Isaiah 65:17, "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things will not be remembered or come into mind." There's a newness that's coming, Isaiah says. But not only Isaiah prophesied. See, Peter knew about it, Isaiah prophesied about it, but John got to actually see it. So I want to give you a picture of the car so we can put it in our dashboard and look at it this week.

Notice what this new heaven and earth are going to be like. Revelation 21:1–2 says, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away (we've talked about that the former corruptions, they're gone) and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." So notice when you get to this new place, when Christ comes back, we're not going to go to Heaven; Heaven is going to come down to us. Heaven, the people of God, the very city of Jerusalem, that's people, that's you and me—we are going to come down

to the earth as the bride of Christ. There's going to be a marriage of Heaven and earth and we are going to then live on the earth with Christ forevermore.

Verse 3, "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." What are the former things? It's the curse. The curse is gone. All that sin has wrecked in your life and my life and our loved one's life; it's all going to pass away when Christ comes back. Notice where the dwelling place of man is going to be—God's going to bring His people from Heaven down to the earth and God is going to be on earth with us. This is going to be our home forevermore, a new earth.

Verse 5, "And He who was seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.' Also He said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." 6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. 7 The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be His God and He will be my son. 8 But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death." God says I'm making all things new; it's going to be a new place where righteousness dwells. That's where that list of things that are against God will not be there. They will be away from the presence of the Lord. Why? Because the new earth will be a place with only righteousness. There will be no sin, there will be no curse; it will be a place of righteousness forevermore...only the things that God loves and none of the things that break His heart. That's going to be a place that is brand new.

So that's this picture that we're in the car—it's rusty, it's worn out. We feel the curse all the time all around us. But I want you to look at the car that's broken and have an affection for it because it once had glory. When dad drove it, it had glory. You've seen pictures but now you're in it, it's broken,

and it's not quite how it should be. But you have a picture of when dad's coming back, here's what it's going to be, so your affection is not just for how it is now, but for it how it's going to be. This car is going to be new paint job, new interior; it's going to be so much better. So you don't scrap the car, you don't hate the car, but you don't want the car to stay the same. You want your dad to come back. That's how Christians should feel about this life. We don't despise it, we don't hate it, but we realize it is not ultimate. I am waiting for the return of Christ and I can't wait for Him to come back because it's actually going to be better. If you believe that, you will actually want Him to come back. But I'm not sure that all of us believe the new renewed earth is going to be better than the one we have right now. Because our vision is we're going to die and go to Heaven and we're not sure where that's going to be and we'd rather just have here a lot longer. If we really knew what the new earth is going to be like, we would long for it now.

So, what do we do as people who are stuck in the middle right now? In other words, how do we live our life if the old is passing and the new is coming? Verse 11, "Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, 12 waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!" So if you know that this world is in its brokenness and it's passing away, and righteousness is around the horizon, righteousness is what's coming, then how should you live your life right now? Like if you're in the car and you know this car is not how it's going to be but the new car's coming, how should you live your life? He says it's very easy—you should live your life in holiness and godliness. In other words, you should live right now as though what's coming is most important. That's the point of the series, Living Forward, not living now but living forward. You're in the car, you're enjoying the car, but you want Jesus to come back because you want the car to become what it's going to be, and in this, you should live right now for how eternity's going to be, and that is righteous. You're living holy, you're living for God not away from God, you're doing the things you know Christ would do because you love Him and you want Him. So you're actually practicing holiness and godliness in your own life. You're

pursuing those things, you are doing those things, and you are loving those things.

Not only are you pursuing holiness and righteousness, but Peter says you are waiting and hastening the return of Christ. You're waiting and hastening Christ to return. Now, what does it mean to wait and hasten, because those two things are kind of different. If you're waiting for something, then you're also hurrying it up. If you're hurrying it up, you're not really waiting. But Peter says no, the two are actually true. What you're doing is waiting for and hastening the day of the Lord. What is this? How do we do this? How do we wait and hurry at the same time? What exactly are we supposed to do? Are we supposed to wait or we're supposed to hurry? He says both—wait and hurry, hasten the return of the Lord.

I'll try to give you like an illustration that might help, at least in my brain, put this together. I remember the first concert I ever went to; I was a little kid. The band comes out, plays, and after the last song the band goes out but everybody stayed. I remember just thinking why are we still here, they left, we're supposed to leave too, but everybody stayed. I didn't really know what was going on, but then I began to hear everybody chanting and they began to clap and stomp their feet. Then they began to chant a little louder and a little louder and I'm like, "What are we doing? Why are we still waiting here?" Why were we waiting and chanting? Why were we waiting and yelling? All of a sudden, you know what happened, right? The band came back out and played three more songs. I totally thought the thing was over. They clearly left, they clearly wanted us to go home, but everybody stayed and somehow our staying and our waiting hastened them to actually want to come back. See, I didn't know how an encore worked. Nobody told me about it. But in that moment, our waiting actually caused the band to want to come back out. See, if we had all just left and went home, the band wouldn't have come back out. And as we waited, we didn't just wait and have popcorn—no, everybody chanted, everybody yelled, everybody clapped, and everybody stomped. Somehow, our waiting caused them to know we were waiting on them, we were anticipating them. We wanted them to come back and our waiting actually hastened them to come.

Peter says as we live our lives in holiness and godliness, do you know what it does? As we wait properly, meaning anticipating, wanting. Like, you're in the car looking at the picture. Like, texting Dad, "Can you come back, because rust is cool but that paint job's better. This doesn't run...can you make this new?" You're texting Dad, you're calling Dad because maybe it just might hasten Dad to come back a little bit sooner because he knows how much you want him to come because you can't wait for him to restore the car.

In some ways, our living for godliness and holiness promotes and hastens the coming of Christ. I know you're thinking...*Hold on, God's sovereign; what do you mean?* I know all of that, but the Bible says that our waiting hastens the return of Christ. So yes, God is sovereign but we are responsible. God has picked a day, but He's also ordained us to be really excited about the return of Christ, it's also going to hasten that day to come. So do you know what we do? We actually become the people who want Christ to come back, because we like the car but we know it's not what we were meant for. We know it's not the end and we don't pretend like it is. Yeah, we live and we enjoy, but we do the things that Christ has told us to do because we know the picture, we know the end. We're holy, we're godly, and we're living out the great commission. Do you remember what Peter said earlier? The reason God hasn't come back (He's not slow, He's good) is He's waiting for people to repent. Do you know what people need to do? Repent. Do you know what you need to do? Tell people to repent. It's a real easy way to actually wait and hasten. Don't just stand in the crowd but actually chant, actually cheer so the band will want to come back. Be involved in the great commission, be involved in living a holy life, making His kingdom come on earth like it is in Heaven, and hasten the day of the return of Christ because ultimately you want Him to come back.

So, how do we live in the middle of the old is passing and the newest coming? One of the things we do is we know that right now matters, but right now doesn't matter most and ultimately—Christ is coming back and we ultimately have our hope in the future. This week is election week, so what does it mean that we're living in the middle of this? Well, for one, elections matter. You should go vote, you should care about who's in

office. Politics matter, but do you know what? They don't matter, ultimately. They're not going to fix our broken world, ultimately. So we vote, but we have a hope in I'm still going to sit in the same car no matter who's in office. It's still going to be rusty, it's still going to be broken—it might drive a little better, but it's still going to be broken and rusty. Do you know what I need? I need a king to return and restore the car. That's what we're longing for. That's what we're wanting. We pursue justice, we pursue peace; we pray for peace...but do you know what we're asking? King of peace come back, because until you do this car will always be rusty and broken. So Jesus, come back and restore this place so that where my feet are can be in that place they're going to be forever, because I actually want the restored car better than the car I'm in.

But if we're honest, some of us don't really believe that. We honestly think right now is the best and we're glad we're going to die and go to Heaven not Hell, and in reality, we hope we live here forever. If that's your view, you're in a car and you have no idea what's coming. So I want you to put the picture on the dash and I want you to remember what this car was is way better than it is now; it was perfect, and we dwelt with God perfectly. This car is not what it's going to be forever; this car is going to be restored. This world is going to be a place where we dwell with God forever. See, the cross is not just we go to Heaven when we die. The cross is when Christ comes back He restores all things to Himself through the cross, and He makes new heavens and a new earth where we dwell with God forever. See, if we believe that then we will actually want Christ to return, and our wanting and our longing might just hasten His return. We have to be the people who really believe the best is yet to come.