

Alignment – Ordering Your Life With God
Align With The Already While You Wait On The Not Yet
2 Peter 3:11-18

Introduction: Today marks the beginning of the week when our country celebrates the signing of the Declaration of Independence—the official statement that told England we were no longer under the rule of the Crown but instead, our own nation that elected and governed itself. It certainly didn't form a perfect nation, but there is no doubt it founded what has become the greatest, most powerful nation on the planet. In all of our flaws, America's wealth, security, opportunity, and, most importantly, freedom are still greater than any other place on earth. So, it's fitting that one of the traditions we have developed to celebrate our nation's founding is a massive audacious fireworks show!

What officially began with fiery skirmishes in 1775 became a fiery declaration in 1776 that led to a full-scale fiery war with England that lasted until 1783. But the fire didn't stop there. Four generations later, a fiery and awful civil war erupted that finally ceased as a war of armies and transitioned to a war of ideas and principles. That ideological war lasted for generations. It was a war to determine if, indeed, America would be a nation where the principles by which our country was founded would genuinely and freely apply to all its citizens. As our nation went through the fire of wrestling with who could have the right to vote or even drink from a public water fountain of their choice, it also had to defend its ability to exist as a sovereign nation working these things out! Throughout the 20th century, various totalitarian governments violently attempted to capture every corner of the world. Then, as we launched into the 21st century, Islamic terrorists rose to new heights in their attempts to subjugate humanity under Sharia law. However, as we wrestled internally with what freedom truly looks like as a nation, we stood together and successfully defended ourselves against every threat that sought to subjugate our sovereignty and deny us the right to have that struggle. It is a colorful history with all kinds of fiery drama that has created a “more perfect union” for each passing generation.

Therefore, each 4th of July, tens of millions of Americans will gather in towns and cities nationwide to watch fiery things explode in the sky in all kinds of shapes and sizes to celebrate this fiery history that has forged something more significant for each new generation. Each time we hear the unmistakable low-end boom of a shell being launched from the ground, our eyes turn to the sky with anticipation to see what kind of explosion will follow—what color will it be, what shape will it take, how big will it be, and how many stages will develop! But as the show goes on, a different kind of anticipation builds. Everyone who has ever seen a good fireworks show knows how it's supposed to end! It's called the “grand finale.” It's a culmination of everything you've already seen, with some other special stuff that sends everybody home looking forward to seeing it again next year! A truly great grand finale is filled with so many booms, bangs, and massive flashing lights in the sky that it electrifies our adrenaline and causes us to stand on our feet, cheering with excitement!

Now, today, we finish our study of Second Peter, and it's a climactic, powerful finish as well—a grand finale! Peter doesn't finish his letter as Paul, the scholar, finishes most of his,

with various quick hit instructions and comments concerning specific people known to the particular church the letter was initially sent to. But instead, as a passionate and fiery preacher, Peter finishes with a grand finale that brings together all he's talked about in the letter as a final challenge weighted with words that if they become the very last words he ever spoke or wrote, would capture the veracity and value of the message he's been preaching. Peter knows his days of shepherding the flock of God to the Jesus He loves are coming to an end (2 Peter 1:14). Therefore, it's no surprise that this already passionate preacher has so much urgency in his words and tone throughout his letter. It is also no surprise that he then ends it in a way that if he never got to say or write anything else, he would know he gave the most essential parts of all that is important, the most significant emphasis he could give it.

Like every great grand finale, Peter brings a little something new to show as he pulls together all he said about aligning ourselves with the Gospel and thus refusing to be aligned with false teachers and their false version of the Gospel, as well as the scoffers who make no attempt at even considering themselves to be followers of Christ and as such, mock the very idea of the Gospel and the promise of Christ's return contained in it. Listen to the powerful finale of Peter's second letter,

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! 13 But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. 14 Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. 15 And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, 16 as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. 17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. 18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

In this powerful finale of Peter's letter, he gives us three instructions on how to wait for the ultimate grand finale—the return of Christ!

Proposition: 2 Peter 3:11-18 gives us three instructions on how to wait for the ultimate grand finale—the second coming of Christ.

The first instruction on how we should wait for the second coming of Christ is that we need to,

(1) Live in a way that matches what and who is coming. (3:11-14)

- A. 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! 13 But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. 14 Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.**
- B.** So, Peter says that what we are waiting for is a total replacement of what is. Therefore, don't waste any of your life conforming to what's going to be destroyed, but instead, live your life leaning into what's coming! Sin will be eviscerated, and righteousness will shine; therefore, live in that which will shine rather than what will be destroyed!
- C.** To live a holy life is to literally live a separated life, not in the sense of not living in community with those who don't know Christ, but living a life separated from the reality of what life is all about in a sin sick and cursed world, which is actually death. Instead, live God's life that is entirely not of this world but will be when He returns!
- D.** To live godly is to live as God, the one who is coming to do away with the ruler of this world that He placed over it as a consequence of sin.
- E.** To hasten does not imply we can somehow speed up the day of His coming. We have nothing to do with when God will return. To hasten means, "trans. *to set a-going, to urge on, ... Homer, etc.:—also, to seek eagerly, strive after, Theognis; promote zealously, to press or urge on, Sophocles.*"¹ So to hasten the coming of Christ means to long for it, to promote it, longing for His world more than this world, and cheer God to come on with it! It's why Paul wrote, "Maranatha" (1 Corinthians 16:22b), which means Come, Lord Jesus!
- F.** The things that will be destroyed at Christ's coming are not the earth and sky but the reality they currently live in. The King, and the Kingdom of that King, that God condemned the world to live under because of Adam's sin, will be no more.
- G.** In the Book of Revelation, John describes this same coming reality when he wrote,
- H. 1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne**

¹ Liddell, H. G. (1996). In [A lexicon: Abridged from Liddell and Scott's Greek-English lexicon](#) (p. 740). Logos Research Systems, Inc.

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." 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." (Revelation 21:3-5)

- I. Christ is in the process of making all things new now in His people, but when He returns, He will finish making everything new not only in us but in all things! Christ will totally remove the reality this world exists in now; a world and everything in it that exists condemned to be separated from God and His life and thus under the rule of sin and Satan. When He returns, He will totally eliminate this sinful reality in every way so that not a single remnant of it will exist anywhere in the Universe.
- J. Therefore, long for what's coming so much that you live for it now! **"be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace."** (2 Peter 2:14b)

The second instruction on how we should wait for the second coming of Christ is,

(2) Don't let the reality of what and who has yet to come be your excuse to live as if they aren't. (3:15-17)

- A. As a child, the rebellion I witnessed from some of my classmates when our teacher left the classroom was totally illogical. The truth was clear; the longer she was gone, the closer we were getting to her return, and thus, the more motivated we ought to be to make sure we were doing what she said to do and not doing what she said not to do! Now, I'm not being arrogant, just truthful when I say I was one of those kids who may have occasionally forgotten to fear my teacher, but I was quickly brought back to doing so by the part of my brain that knew my teacher wouldn't hesitate to call my parents and tell them, and I had no doubt what would happen then! So, I can honestly say I never got caught up in the irrational behavior of some of my classmates when the teacher left the classroom. Some of them acted like complete fools because the longer she stayed gone, the more they concluded she was going to stay gone; the teacher, the one whose very livelihood and status in society depended on not leaving us to ourselves, they assumed the longer she stayed gone, the more likely it would be that she would stay gone, rather than the obvious reality that the longer she stayed gone, the more likely it was she was getting ready to come back!
- B. In the same way, Peter says don't be stupid! The longer Jesus is gone doesn't point us to a reality that He is delayed in His return but that He is closer to it! Peter writes,

- C. 15 And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, 16 as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. 17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.**
- D.** As a quick side note, when mentioning the letters of Paul, it can't be missed that Peter already acknowledged them as Scriptures. In verse 16, he said they twist up Paul's writing just "as they do the other Scriptures." By saying "the other Scriptures," he is necessarily including the writings of Paul, such as the book of Galatians, as divinely inspired, infallible, and inerrant works of God.
- E.** Specifically, however, the primary purpose of Peter referring to Paul's writings was to address how they were misused. False teachers were twisting the straightforward clarity Paul's letters brought to the fact that what Christ accomplished in His death and resurrection completely fulfilled and replaced the Mosaic Law with the New Covenant. It was so hard for Jews to get their head around this previously prophesied reality, just as it sadly and ironically is still hard for many Christians today. For most Christians, letting go of religion is a frightful ask because, at the end of the day, their confidence before the Lord is attached to their obedience to rules and traditions instead of the work of Christ! People fear letting go of religion so much that many prefer to totally twist the Gospel and use it as a way to improve on the Mosaic Covenant with new symbols and rituals rather than honestly believe what is glaringly obvious in every book in the New Testament, so obvious that when the believers in Galatia started doing it, Paul said,
- F. 1 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. 2 Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? (Galatians 3:1-3)**
- G.** The fact of the matter is that the New Testament makes the Old Testament prophecies of the New Covenant abundantly clear. That is, Christ totally divorced us from the Mosaic Law and completely replaced it not with new and better symbols and rituals for the Mosaic Law but rather with an entirely different kind of covenant! The Mosaic Law was never God's plan; it was just a temporary arrangement because of the faithless sin of the Jews to not trust and follow God into the Promised Land (Galatians 3:19)!
- H.** And this is where the false teachers Peter refers to swoop in. These false teachers, unlike the ones who teach that the Gospel simply makes new symbols

and rituals to put in the old system, instead say because the old system has been replaced, we are no longer under any law, as in we are free to do whatever we want! To that, Paul says you must be crazy to think Christ died so that we could live in sin (Romans 6:1-2)! However, that's precisely what the false teachers Peter is addressing are doing, and they are even tossing in the apparent delay in Christ's return as more reason to live in sin!

- I. So, Peter tells us not to be fooled and to count the patience of the Lord, who is giving the world the opportunity to repent and believe in Him as an opportunity to rebel! When Peter wrote this, he most certainly recalled the day Jesus said this,

- J. **42 Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. 43 But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. 45 "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? 46 Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. 47 Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. 48 But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed,' 49 and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, 50 the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know 51 and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 24:42-51)**

- K. So, understand that when life is submitted to that which isn't God, we are living as if the one who is God isn't coming. When we live submitted to the wants of our flesh, whether those wants are for sex, power, prestige, or money, then we are living as if He's not coming back. When we live selfish lives that refuse to love others as He loves us, we live as if He's not coming back. When we live greedy lives that hoard the things of this world for our own glory and benefit, we live as if He's not coming back. Whenever we live as if the corrupted desires of our sinful flesh and the corrupted offerings of a corrupted world are the best things for us, then we are living like the foolish kids in class who thought the longer the teacher was gone, the more likely it was she wasn't coming back!

- L. This takes us to Peter's third and final instruction.

The third instruction on how we should wait for the second coming of Christ is that we need to,

- (3) **Focus on abounding in what and who you've been given while waiting for what and who is to come! (3:18)**

- A.** Have you ever had to wait on something amazing, but while you waited, you were also given something super cool and constructive to do, but because you were so focused on what you were waiting for, you couldn't enjoy what you were given? It's like a parent of a child so longing for the adult relationship they will have with them one day that they can't enjoy the unique beauty of the fleeting moments of their relationship with their child now. The irony is that your eyes were so focused on the good things you looked forward to that you couldn't enjoy the good things you already had!
- B.** When it comes to the return of Christ, we certainly should look forward to and even long for it big time; Peter even said to hasten for it, but not at the expense of thoroughly enjoying what Christ has already given us! What we have been given in Christ is not a cheap, useless toy to distract us, but it is literally the beginning of what's coming! It's part of the future whole! But, because the Kingdom of God is both already and not yet, the final verse of 2 Peter is not to stand waiting on what's not yet but to embrace what God has given us already! Peter concludes his letter with this,
- C. 18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.**
- D.** To grow obviously means to increase, but Peter is very specific in how he speaks of this increase. He says we are to increase "in" the grace and knowledge of our Christ, meaning our increase is to take place and be defined by the grace and knowledge of Christ. Thus, the outcome of our increase, that is, the product of our growth, should be a fruit of that which we are growing in, and in this case, that's not sin or anything else of this world, but rather the grace and knowledge of Christ.
- E.** Specifically, to grow in Christ's grace means to grow in our experience of all Christ has given us through His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension! For instance, here are four quick examples of what God has graciously given us while we wait for His return:
- 1.** He has given us the Holy Spirit! Therefore, instead of growing in your allegiance or reliance on religion, grow in being led by Him!

Note: 7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. (John 16:7)
 - 2.** He has given us the gift of freedom over the power of sin, meaning we can grow in that grace and not give power to that which has no power over us!

Note: 13 Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. (Romans 6:13)

3. We've been given the gift of confidence, so the fear of anything in the world, including death itself, can have no place in those who grow in His grace!
 - a. **"32 Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. (Luke 12:32)**
 - b. **15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" (Romans 8:15)**
 4. He has given us confidence that we belong to Him forever, not because of our effort to cling to Him but because of the gift of Him clinging to us.
 - a. **28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one." (John 10:28-29)**
 - b. **13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:13-14)**
 5. Grow IN His GRACE; that is the GIFTS HE purchased for us with HIS death! Let your life be consumed with all the implications of these gifts to the extent they define how you think and act; let these gifts be what you grow in so that you grow in Him!
- F.** However, Peter also said to grow in the "knowledge" of Christ! In other words, you can't have one without the other. You can't grow in knowledge without simultaneously growing in His grace, but you also can't grow in grace without increasing in the knowledge of Him. They are two sides of the same coin; thus, you can't have the coin if you don't have both sides because it's just one coin.
- G.** Growing in the knowledge of Christ is obviously only done by increasing our understanding of the Bible and the Gospel it's about. But let me take this a little further.
1. First, the KNOWLEDGE of Christ has nothing whatsoever to do with knowing when He's coming. Numerous False Teachers have become popular teachers

by convincing people they figured out the secret message in the Bible of when Jesus is coming back. I need everybody to understand, as enticing as that may be, that Jesus HIMSELF SAID the knowledge of His return has NOT BEEN revealed to the angels nor even HIM! It's literally NOT in the BIBLE. It's not that the Holy Spirit hasn't opened your eyes to see it in the Bible; it's that it isn't there, and therefore, anybody who says it's there has either deceived themselves or been deceived. If the ETERNAL Son of God said only the Father knows, that is the one called the LOGOS of God, that is the very WORD of God, doesn't know, then FYI, there is literally nothing in the manifested WORD of GOD called the BIBLE that tells us—nothing! We only know what must happen before His return, of which many scholars believe everything but the Gospel getting to every ethnic group on the planet has already happened. We also know what the condition of this world will be like when He returns. A terrible tribulation will have killed off much of the church, so much so that the voice of the Gospel will only exist in a remnant small enough that the reality of this world will be like it was in the days of Noah when the people mocked the idea of the authority of God and His judgment (Matthew 24:36-51). But that reality could be a reality for a day or a millennium because Jesus promised the knowledge of when He will return had yet to even be revealed to Him. So, unless you're prepared to say you know more about the Bible than Jesus himself, you must accept the fact that any prediction of His return is false teaching.

2. Building on that, growing in the knowledge of Christ is not an effort to figure out secret codes that reveal hidden truths within the Bible that are impossible to know until you figure out the secret codes. If you study the Bible like it's a text for an Indiana Jones movie, you are inventing your own Bible. The Bible was NOT written as a contest to see who can figure out the secrets; it was not written to reward people who discover a code that unlocks hidden truth, but rather it was written to reveal who God is, who we are, how we can know Him and live in HIS life. Ultimately, then, it was written to reveal the person and work of Christ.
3. Not every detail and prophecy is specifically about Christ (i.e., the prophecies in Daniel that are clearly about the fall of the Persian Empire to the Greeks), but everything takes us to Christ (i.e., the Greek influence on the world led to realities that eventually helped advance the Gospel around the world, the most significant being the prominence of the Greek language!). The point being, the Bible wasn't written as a puzzle to put together or a riddle to solve, but as a straightforward textbook to help us understand Jesus. Therefore, if you will commit your life to studying it for what it is and not what you want it to be, then you will increase as a person in the knowledge of who it's about—Christ!
4. And listen, you can't grow in the experience of knowing Him if you don't grow in the knowledge of Him. This is why Jesus said,

- a. **4 But he answered, "It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4)**
- b. **28 But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" (Luke 11:28)**
- c. **31 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31-32)**

Now, there are many places we could land this plane for a challenge, but I want to land it where Peter lands it. Did you notice we haven't talked about the last two sentences in verse 18 yet? Peter wrote,

To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

This is Peter's way of dropping the mic and walking off the stage at the end of his letter. He's saying Jesus is coming back in all His glory to finish what He started and reign forever, and as such, all the glory goes to Him now for what He has given us and in the future for what He is bringing and doing! Peter's grand finale is that Christ is coming back; therefore, we have every reason to hold fast, press forward, and live for Him alone because Jesus is where all the glory is! Jesus is where all the life is! Jesus is where everything is worth it, and thus, Jesus is worthy of it all! But are you living like it?

Challenge: Is your life a testimony that Jesus is worth it?

Is the glory that is and will only ever be Christ, worth you loving the unlovable, enduring the unendurable, laboring in what you don't have the strength to labor in, giving up what you don't have the desire to give up, forgiving what you don't want to forgive, and restoring what you don't want to restore?

Is the glory that is and will only ever be Christ worth you trusting Him enough, so much so, that you are willing to give up the opportunity for glory in this world to have the glory that's not of this world?

Getting to where the rubber hits the road, can you be satisfied with His glory so much that the glory of the pursuit of sin can never be what you experience in the growth of His glory?

Is He worthy of your life? The answer is abundantly yes whether you are living like it or not, or whether your mindset is engaged with that truth or not. The question is not associated with the fact of it, but the practicality of it in what you are striving for with the effort of your life. If I'm going to climb a mountain, I don't want to climb one whose peak is a volcanic explosion that consumes me and all my efforts. I want to climb one that rewards me with the view of the glory of God's creation, which makes the pain of the climb so worth

it that I would do it all over again! If the effort of your life is to walk with Him, then you are walking with the one who has all the glory. He's already given some of it to us to abound in now, but what's coming is unimaginable! So, lean in, press forward, and run the race ... He's worthy of it!