

2 Peter 3:14-18

Hope in the Fight

Looking Forward



People who are forward-thinking people are people who usually are prosperous. They foresee the the future benefits of their present day habits/actions, or they foresee the consequences of their present day habits/actions upon their future. This ability to look ahead and see and respond to what is in ***the road up ahead***, so to speak, provides them with the innate ability to ***get ahead*** and stay ahead!



On the other hand, people that live in perpetual poverty are almost invariably more impulsive people. They live in the moment, which isn't a bad thing, but the problem is that often they don't look forward to what effect their actions today will have upon their life in the future. *This past year, we saw thousands of people in the inner cities, rioting, and many thousand of them were taking advantage of the situation to break into local businesses en masse and loot them of everything that was of value! They were thinking that they can steal all kinds of stuff during those days - that law enforcement would be overwhelmed and therefore they would suffer no repercussions for theft and vandalism! But, of course, they are not thinking about the fact that their mayhem and theft will close that neighborhood business immediately, and that they will not have these stores in their neighborhood any longer! That means they instead of having to travel a couple of blocks, or a half mile, or even a couple of miles to make a purchase of something they need – now they will have to range much farther out, 4,5,10 miles out, to make purchases for their needs – and it will be this way ***for years to come***! If they have cars, they will have to buy more gas to get there. If they have bicycles, they will have have to peddle for miles before finding a functioning department store, or fast-food place, or restaurant! If they don't have a bicycle, they will have to spend money to ride a bus, and if they don't have money for a bus, they will have to walk! In the meantime, their neighborhoods have gone from just looking run-down, to looking ***much*** worse than just run down – burned out, empty boarded up buildings that make the neighborhood look like a war zone! And they have to live in that environment for years – probably as much as a decade before entrepreneur-type people will dare risk investing their life savings in starting a business in that inner city area again. So, those people had a great day of looting and pillaging, of criminality without incarceration, that they will have to pay for now for the next 2,000 days or more! They were not thinking forward and their impulsive live-for-today, criminal behavior has sunk they further into poverty!

On the opposite end of the spectrum, a forward thinking person refrains from fulfilling their impulses because they know “the law of consequences – cause and effect” and give that law its full value for regulating their behavior! If they live and conduct themselves with restraint, and do mostly those things which are beneficial for the future, it is **because** they have intelligently calculated the cost of their behavior and chosen their preferred outcome! They will almost certainly enrich themselves because of their restraint, which will make life less pleasurable in the present, but easier and more pleasurable in the future! For instance, they will accumulate wealth because the money they could spend now – well,.. they don’t. They save it - perhaps invest it, put it in an emergency fund, or even in retirement funds. If those in perpetual poverty had that money they would almost certainly spend much of it frivolously/impulsively – until it was gone, and they are in need again!



Just a word to fathers here – since it is our day. If a father loves his family and desires to become a good father, he must be a forward-looking father! He has to look to the future and pay attention to what is potentially up ahead for himself and for his family. He then decides to go forward with a certain behaviors/impulses in the home, or to hold back on them. So if he desires an ultimate outcome of friendship with the child when he or she becomes an adult, he must be a friend to the child now! He must dream for that child’s potential and love them with approval and acceptance! But the good father must also play their part as disciplinarian because it is their God-given responsibility! For instance, if a child is misbehaving, it **feels** better in the moment to let it go unaddressed. No one WANTS to discipline their child unless they are very angry or frustrated with them. It seems better at the time to avoid the noise, the extra aggravation! But a forward-seeing father sees the problem of an undisciplined child in the future – that few people will be able to be around that child – indeed around their family - because that child’s naughtiness is unchecked and their behavior so grating upon everyone’s nerves! So for a parent **not to** step forward and take the necessary steps to swiftly and summarily put an end to their child’s bad behavior is misbehavior by the parents!

Then there is consistency. For a father to be inconsistent, to strictly discipline a certain behavior in a certain way on one occasion and to discipline the same behavior in another way on another occasion is also misbehavior on that parent's part! It will leave the child confused! It will lead them to continue to "test" their parent with the same bad behavior to see if they can get the lesser of the two types of discipline! So it becomes a very ineffective way to change a child's behavior, and that behavior continues to be a grueling point of contention in that family! Consistency is so hard, yet a forward-seeing father foresees the benefits of consistency to the child, to the family, to himself, and even to God! When a child knows a loving but firm, consistent parental authority from the earliest age, they are much more inclined to be drawn into the loving authority of Jesus Christ!



Christianity too is for forward looking people! I'm talking about our future in Christ! It says in **vs 14** – **"...since you are looking forward to this"**. What exactly is the **"this"** that we are to be looking forward to? **Vs. 12** talks about **"the Day of God"** (in the original language it reads **God Day**, or **God's Day**) – which I have explained is when God is drawing this sordid, always cruel and forever corrupt history of our fallen human civilization to a close! In doing so, the Sovereign Creator will bring a terrible judgment down upon the earth, where He is judging, condemning, and destroying the whole earth – nations, people, animate and even **inanimate** objects! But it is part of a bigger cleansing by fire - the solar system, the Milky Way galaxy, and **the entire universe** will be destroyed in a vast, all-inclusive, cataclysmic meltdown! It is **ALL** tainted, corrupted, and has been made offensive to God by human rebellion! **This** is the all-consuming effect that Adam's sin in Eden **has had**, continues to have, and **will yet have** on all creation!

The only reason the universe was not rolled up into a ball by God long ago and cast into His waste basket, is the reason Peter has revealed here in **chapter 3, vs. 9** – because ***“He does not want anyone to perish, but for everyone to come to repentance”***! He is still populating His heaven with those who believe on and receive His Son, Jesus Christ, as their Savior and Ultimate Leader – their sins dealt with and eradicated from their record – and their alignment with the heart of God un-defile-able because they have been placed ***“in Christ”***! In Christ they and are completely identified with His heroism, His perfection, and His unshakeable position in God the Father!



Now, if you ask me – if left right there – the end of this creation seems like a very strange thing for Christ-followers to look forward to! Except,.. there is the promise of what follows – a new creation of God *that melds heaven and earth together* – a creation in which God and His heaven move in with us, so to speak! The ***new*** earth becomes God’s headquarters! ***That*** explains the Christian position in which we look forward to the end! The end means a new beginning for a much better world, a much, much better version of humanity, and a global union with our Creator! The earth is waiting for this purification, and then the new creation! This creation ***“groans”*** as it waits for the saints of God to rule and reign with Christ, and for the Creator to make this globe His home and for the God of Peace to assert Himself and bring peace, justice, truth, and kindness on this earth! **[Rom. 8:19-23]** So that is what we look forward to – our eternal home with God!

“So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this (there it is again – ***‘looking forward’***), ***make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with Him.*** So, back to the premise that I began this thought with - Christ-followers are necessarily, by definition, forward-looking people.

Having one eye on the future alters our behavior! We KNOW that there are rewards and punishments in God's future! If we are truly God's sons and daughters, we think about that **[1 Cor. 3:12]**! *When my mother threatened me with the wooden spoon if my behavior didn't get better, she gave me alternative futures! Or she said "Behave and you will have a good day. Misbehave any more and your father will make this a day for you to remember! And **that** made an impression on me! She only had to follow through on her threat with my dad a time or two, and my father's discipline had me totally convinced that next time I would listen to my mom and become better behaved when she warned me!



Peter is warning us here to take God seriously. He too has alternative futures for us! *"Follow Jesus, become more and more like Him, and you will have a bright future!"*. As the Master said to the faithful servant, ***"You have been faithful in a few things, so I will put you in charge of many things. Come share your Master's happiness!"*** But to the slacker servant who does nothing, He says ***"throw that worthless servant outside into the darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth"***. The weeping and gnashing of teeth are signs of great regret and frustration at having missed out on the greatest opportunity of all! God's names His alternative futures for us. There is no surprise here! They are very real and very extreme! But He says *"choose to let my Son and my Holy Spirit alter your values, your priorities, your choices, your judgments, your attitudes, your impulses. Become more and more like Jesus, serve Him well, and you will enter your Master's happiness both here and in your eternal life in the new heaven and earth!"*