

Text: II Timothy 4:16-18

Title: “The Kingdom’s Fulfillment” Pt.2

Today I’m concluding this series of messages on the Kingdom of God. In Jesus’ famous Sermon on the Mount He taught His disciples, then and now, how to pray.

Matthew 6:9-10 - “This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

When we pray that prayer with sincerity we can be sure our prayer will be answered because it is the will of God for His Kingdom to come. So why do we pray? It aligns us with the will and purposes of our King. With my thoughts, words and actions I will either be part of expanding the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Satan. There’s no third kingdom. And in the end the Kingdom of God will be the only Kingdom left standing. The Bible teaches us that after Christ returns and the last battle against evil on this earth is fought the kingdoms of this world will be dissolved and the kingdom of darkness will be destroyed. Then God will make a new heaven and a new earth and establish His eternal Kingdom. The Bible tells us that the universe is groaning under the curse of our sin. Even the most pristine parts of our planet and the universe have been somehow touched by the consequences of the Fall. And God will make everything new, including our bodies. And in our new resurrection bodies we will inhabit our new eternal home, God’s heavenly kingdom.

And the promise of that future is what gives us strength for today. Let’s open our Bibles today to II Timothy 4:16. Paul has come to the end of his life. He’s in prison in Rome for his faithfulness to the Kingdom of God and the Gospel. He will soon be executed, but he’s filled with hope. **Read II Timothy 4:16-18.**

Even when you are doing the will of God you will have heartaches and disappointments. Paul is alone in Rome. There were no people who came to stand with him in his trial. But he’s not bitter. He says in v.16, “May it not be held against them.” All through life people will disappoint us, but our spirits can be free to forgive and release them and pray for them.

So Paul was alone, and yet he wasn’t alone. He says in v.17, “The Lord stood at my side and gave me strength...” It’s really special when you have such a relationship with the Lord that when you have no human support of any kind, God is enough for you. When all the props are knocked out from under your life, He is

the one who keeps you standing in strength. “Strength” is the same word Paul uses in Philippians 4:13 ... “I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.”

And notice that this support and strength is given, not to make him comfortable, but to make him faithful. Paul said v.17, “God gave me strength so I could be faithful to proclaim the Gospel. The Lord delivered me from the lion’s mouth of persecution, not to make my life easy but so that I might continue to live for His Kingdom.”

And here is what keeps him living courageously and sacrificially for the Gospel and the Kingdom of God:

2 Timothy 4:18 - The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

What is it that strengthens me to be courageous in my witness for Christ? How can I go on living day by day to expand the Kingdom of God? How can I keep seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness? It is the very promise of the presence and the protection of God now, and the assurance that one day I will see and fully experience the King and His Kingdom in a way that I can only imagine. Christ delivers us *from* the penalty of our sin and *through* the trials of this life and *to* the glories of His heavenly kingdom.

The Apostle Peter assured his flock that though they were going through great trials and those trials may take their life, they have this assurance:

2 Peter 1:11 - and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The assurance of our eternal home in the Kingdom of God gives us courage to live as Christ called us to live. It gives us the faith to be able to sacrifice for the sake of the Kingdom knowing that we’re really not losing anything in the long run.

ILLUSTRATION –Suppose you’re flying in a helicopter and someone in your group falls out. They don’t have a parachute strapped on and obviously this is bad. Now if you don’t have a parachute either, you will not be inclined to jump out and try to help them. It wouldn’t do any good, would it? There would two people dying instead of one. However, if you have your parachute on, you might just attempt a daring rescue ... the kind where you free fall, and catch up with the other

person, grab hold of them and pull the cord, and you both float to the ground safely. You see, you have that kind of courage and make that kind of sacrifice because you know that you're not going to perish. And we can live courageously and sacrificially in this world, we can lay down our lives for our King, because we know that in the end we get it all back and more.

Now let's turn to Revelation 21. I want you to see what's so great about this eternal, heavenly Kingdom that is the home of God and will be the home of believers one day. Why is the promise of this future so overwhelming that it enables us to live courageously and sacrificially for the Kingdom today? Let me give you just a little taste. John, in the Revelation God gave him saw this...

Revelation 21:1 - Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.

The book of Revelation revolves around the vision God gave an apostle named John about how God will ultimately cause His Kingdom to come and His will to be perfectly done on earth as it is in heaven. John reveals the day when believers of all the ages will be resurrected with new bodies. Then there is what is called the Great Tribulation when God sends great suffering upon the earth to judge His enemies. Then there's the Millennium, the 1000 year reign of Christ on the earth. We're told about the Great White Throne Judgment where every person who has ever lived stands before the King of the Universe to give an account of their life. And with this the curtain of time and history closes. And in Revelation 21-22 we read what Jesus showed John about what the eternal, heavenly Kingdom of God ... our home forever.

1. OUR FOREVER HOME IS TOTALLY NEW.

Revelation 21:1 - Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.

Everything about it is new. It is not the first heaven and earth (what we inhabit now) that is renovated. It is something entirely new. The unstoppable purpose of God for creation and for his people will not be finished until all things are made new and the glory of the Lord fills everything. What we think about as the eternal heaven is actually the recreation of this earth and the entire universe. Remember when Jesus was resurrected people could still recognize Him, but His body took on an entirely different dimension. The same will be true for our bodies and every part of God's creation.

Now if there's going to be a new heaven and a new earth, what's going to happen to the universe as we know it today. Well that Bible tells us that as well.

2 Peter 3:10 - But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

2 Peter 3:13 - But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

ILLUSTRATION – Maybe you saw pictures of the devastation caused by the fires in California earlier this year. Everything was left in charred ruins. That's what this whole universe will be like before God performs the most spectacular miracle since He first created the heavens and the earth. The first earth passes away, and Jesus says...

Revelation 21:5 - "I am making everything new!"

One of the most amazing things about all this is that we enjoy it for eternity, and it never gets old. What a cool thing about heaven, a relief from the boredom of this life. Many people are so bored with life. They dread getting up each day because everything is just about the same as it has always been. So what's to keep heaven from being that same way after the first, say, 100 years? Here's the deal. There is no sense of time in heaven, because we're talking about eternity here, so time doesn't pass. We live in the present forever ... no past to regret ... no future to fear. Heaven is new all the time. One of the silliest questions one could ask in heaven is "What's new?" Uh ... everything! So our forever home is totally new.

2. OUR FOREVER HOME IS A HOLY CITY.

Revelation 21:2 - I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

Jesus shows John the next thing ... the new Jerusalem. There's the new heaven and the new earth, and coming down out of heaven is a new city ... the new Jerusalem. And it is this city that is to be our eternal home ... not a cloud somewhere over the rainbow. We're all citizens of one city. Now there are some features about this city.

FIRST, it's a "holy city." When the Bible talks about something that is "holy" it means that it is set apart for a holy God and His holy purposes. That means that there is no sin in this city. Most of us are city dwellers, and it's hard to imagine a city that isn't plagued with crime and corruption. In our forever home everything functions according to the will of God.

And this holy city is "the new Jerusalem." Jerusalem was the seat of God's earthly Kingdom in the OT and it will figure prominently in the eternal reign of God in the new heaven and the new earth.

SECOND, it is "from God, prepared..." God prepared it. Remember what Jesus said in John 14? He told His disciples that He would go and prepare a place for them and then return to take them to that prepared place.

THIRD, it is prepared "as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband."

ILLUSTRATION – Now most all of us have been to weddings. And it is one of the most glorious moments in the wedding, particularly here in our church, when those double doors open and there appears a beautifully dressed bride for her husband. And the groom hasn't ever seen his bride like this before. And the closer she gets the bigger his eyes get. She's gorgeous.

The Bible describes the church as the Bride of Christ. And now we see that the Holy City where we will dwell forever is also likened to a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. You see, heaven is the final installment of our salvation. We have been saved (our redemption), we are being saved and made holy (our sanctification) and we shall be saved (our glorification).

So our forever home is a new, and it is a holy city, but here's the best part of about heaven:

3. IN OUR FOREVER HOME GOD IS NEAR.

Revelation 21:3 - And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God."

The word "dwelling" is the word that means "tabernacle" or "tent." Here's how it literally reads: "Now the tent of God is with men, and he will tent with them." Remember how God made His presence known to His people in the wilderness in

the OT. He dwelled in the tabernacle. Then when they came into the Promised Land, God dwelled in the Temple. In both of those structures, God's presence was at a distance, behind a curtain.

In the NT we see that God took on a human body. God made His dwelling among us in the body of His Son Jesus. But then Christ went away into heaven and He sent His Holy Spirit to come dwell in us permanently. But in heaven, His presence is realized like no other time since Adam and Eve walked with God in the Garden of Eden.

How amazing is that? It's what we long for now, isn't it? We hunger and thirst for God, but because life is the way it is sometimes we feel God's presence and sometimes we don't. Imagine the day when we will experience and enjoy the full on presence of God in our forever home.

Revelation 21:4 - He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

ILLUSTRATION –God will wipe away every tear ... He will do that personally. Remember your mom or your dad wiping the tears from your face when you were little. Or there's a husband wiping the tears from the face of his wife. That's something that happens where there is intimacy.

What causes tears? Disappointments, pain, hurts, heartaches. God knows when His children cry. We may step into heaven with tears on our cheeks, but they'll be the last ones. Why?

"No more death..." – Just think about how death looms over every part of our human experience. There will be no more funerals. And because there is no more death ...

"No more ... mourning" – Just stop to think about the cumulative grief and sorrow from the ages of human existence. No more!

"No more ... crying" - Can you imagine existence like that ... no sorrows, no burdens, no depression, no disappointments, no discouragements.

People ask all the time, "Will I remember anything from this life ... my failures, my sins, the things that others did to me, or that I did to others? Either we won't

remember it at all or we'll remember it, but it won't hurt to remember it like it does now.

“No more ... pain” – There's perfect health, so there's no physical pain in our bodies. There's no more relational pain. Because there's no sin, there's no sinning against others, which is what causes the relational pain in our lives. Stop to think about how much of our lives each day are consumed with relational pain ... either the pain that is caused by others, or the pain that we cause others. None of that will be in heaven.

Listen, “have great day” will be the silliest thing you can say to someone in heaven. Every day will be a great day.

Revelation 21:5 - He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

And it's the assurance of all of this that allows us to live courageously and sacrificially for the Kingdom of God. We know no matter what we give up ... we never lose.