

Rev 21:1-5
“A Promise to Live By”

In my message dated Sept. 1 I stated that I desperately want to believe there is nothing I am not willing to face and there is nothing I am not willing to give up for Jesus for I believe this is the requirement of discipleship. Last Sunday our message provided us with what I believe to be the way we can meet the requirement of discipleship. I argued that Paul, by three consistent choices, shows us how to see every life experience, good, bad or indifferent through the lens of the gospel. Following that message, I wrestled with how Paul attained such resilient faith in Christ. Was Paul unlike any other disciple? Was he in some way given a measure of faith that none of us should expect to have? Was he an anomaly and thus we should not look to him as an example to follow? If this is case then we certainly cannot look to emulate Christ, the Godman, the perfect one, the ultimate example. No, Paul was not special in that we cannot reach, attain or be given the measure of faith he possessed. We can grow in faith and live by faith just as Paul did. I do not presume know if you are or aren't living by Paul's example. But if you desire to, it will take an absolute belief in the word of God, the gospel of Jesus the Christ. I am convinced we falter in our faith because we falter in our trust in the God's word. Unwavering devotion to God, to Christ boils down to choice and choice is always determined by what one believes. Paul had an unwavering belief in the word of God and his choices reflect that. I am thoroughly convinced that the truths revealed in our text Paul believed. Paul could not have possessed such conviction and devotion to Christ if Paul, though not having read, did not have in mind the truths that Revelation 21:1-5 makes known. If John 3:16 is the

summary of the gospel, then Rev 21:1-5 is the summary of the promises we have received through faith in God's Son, Jesus. This text in my opinion articulates the "prize" as Paul puts it in 1 Cor 9 and Phil 3. With this said, I want to share three critical truths I see here that have the power to literally transform life for us now just as it did for the Apostle Paul then.

First truth. What we see now is not all that there is or ever will be.

V1-3 "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 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." If all that there is or ever will be is what we see now then we have every reason to doubt, every reason to chase after our individual passions, every reason to grieve, every reason to be without hope. Thank God scripture reveals otherwise and in doing so redefines life for us now. Giving us something to pursue and truly live for just as it did for Paul. And that something is the kingdom of God as revealed by the Gospel of Jesus the Christ. Because we believe this we do as Christ commands. We deny ourselves and pick up our cross and follow him, just as Paul did.

1 Cor 2:9-10 "⁹ But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him" —¹⁰ these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God."

John 14:2-3 "² In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go

and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”

Mark 1:14-15 “¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵ and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

Second truth. The pain, the loss, and the suffering we experience in this life is temporary. V4 “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.” God will rid his people of all that which pains them. None of the old world will follow them into the new world. This new world will be pain free. But in this world, we will cry. In this world we will experience pain, loss, and even suffering because of sin. But never believe that God does not see our tears. That God does not know our pain. He promises personally to wipe away every tear from our eyes. And if we allow ourselves to believe that Paul did not cry, that he did not know pain, loss and suffering the way that we know pain, loss and suffering we make Paul out to be more than what he is, a man, a human, a disciple of Jesus the Christ. And we will deceive ourselves in believing his measure of faith is attainable by no one. The pain, the loss, the suffering of this life is temporary. Paul believed this and we must too.

2 Cor 4:13-18 NLT “¹³ But we continue to preach because we have the same kind of faith the psalmist had when he said, “I believed in God, so I spoke.” ¹⁴ We know that God, who raised the Lord Jesus, will also raise us with Jesus and present us to himself together with you. ¹⁵ All of this is for your benefit. And as God’s grace reaches more and more people, there will be great thanksgiving, and God will receive more

and more glory. ¹⁶ That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. ¹⁷ For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! ¹⁸ So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

Third and final truth. God, unlike man, does not lie. V5 “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.” God does not say one thing and do another. God is not a man that he would lie. Resist saying to yourself when I see it then I will believe it when it comes to God, to Jesus the Christ. If it is written, you can take it to the bank. It will happen just as God says it will happen. Does not matter how utterly out of this world it may seem or sound. Don't let earthly authorities that have failed you compel you to doubt the promises of God.

Hebrews 11:1-2 “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ² For by it the people of old received their commendation.”

Church, we too by faith will receive our commendation. All those who stake their life in Jesus the Christ receive this promise. A promise to live by. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**