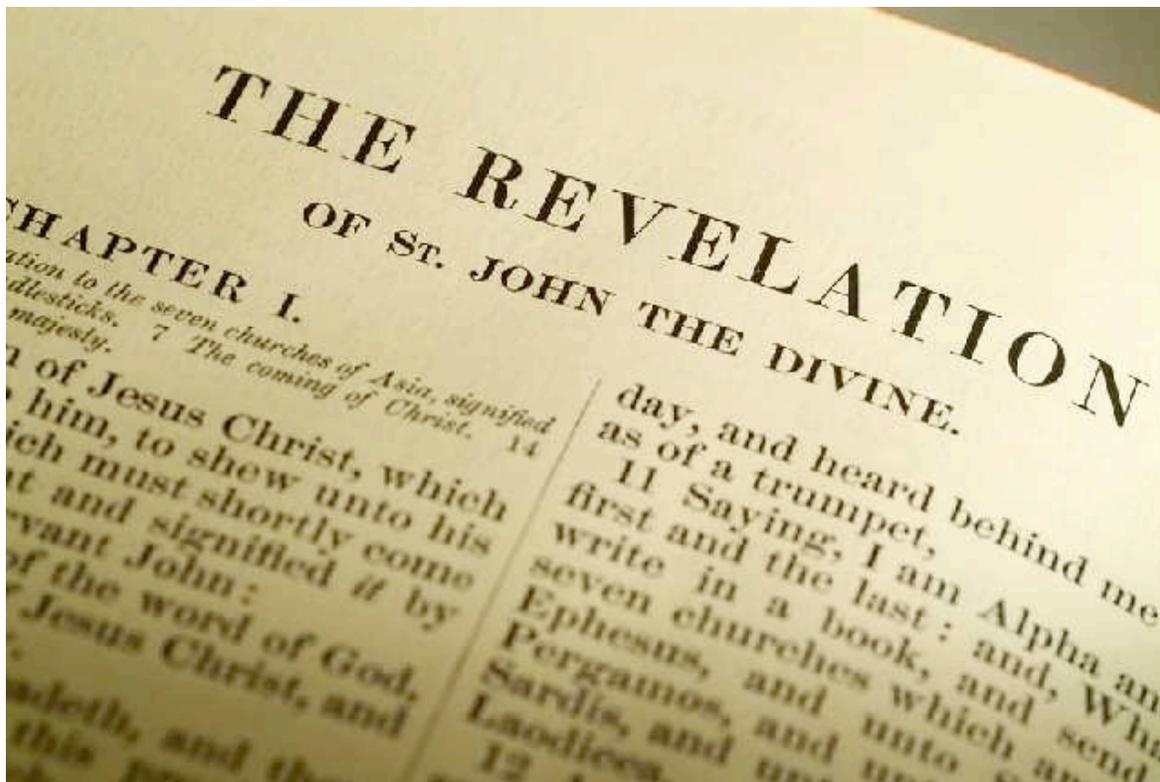


THEMES IN REVELATION: PATIENT ENDURANCE



A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

T. M. MOORE

The Fellowship of Ailbe

*Themes in Revelation:
Patient Endurance*

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Themes in Revelation: Patient Endurance

We come to the end of our study of the book of Revelation, Christ's token of engagement for His Bride-to-be. Revelation is a gem with seven facets, and during our last three studies in this series we've been looking at the primary themes that overlap and intertwine between all these facets, as John outlined them for us in Revelation 1.9.

We are citizens of the Kingdom of God and thus we are called to bear witness to this Good News and call others to repent and join us in a realm of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit where our King is making all things new.

At the same time, we live in a world wracked and corrupted by sin, and which we often find to be at odds with our Kingdom agenda. The world groans under the burden of sin, and at times, its miseries become ours as the enemies of the Lord turn against His loved ones to do them harm.

But we must not shrink back or try to avoid tribulation. Instead, in Jesus Christ we must patiently endure, looking to Him, holding fast our confession, and walking in the light as He is in the light.

The message of Jesus to the churches of Asia Minor in John's day is the message He sends to His Church today: Overcome!

We are happy to provide *Scriptorium* studies in PDF format at no charge. We hope you will find them helpful and encouraging as you press on in your journey toward spiritual maturity with the Lord.

Please visit our website, www.ailbe.org, to discover the many other resources available to serve your needs. The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Visit our website also to subscribe to our thrice-weekly devotional newsletter, *Crosfigell*, or our daily *Voices Together* devotional and prayer guide.

If you find these studies, or any of our other resources, helpful, we hope you will consider making a contribution to help support our work. You can do so by using the donate button at the website or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

We hope you find this study of Revelation a challenging and stretching experience of journeying more deeply into the Word of God. Thank you for joining us.

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1 The Overcomer

Week 13, Monday: Looking to Jesus

Jesus said, “I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16.33). He was about to face the greatest trial anyone could ever endure, and yet, as He said, He had already overcome it. In Christ we are overcomers as well (the word is the same as “conqueror”).

Three themes dominate the book of Revelation, as John suggests in Revelation 1.9: The Kingdom of God, tribulation in the world, and endurance we can know in Jesus, our Overcomer. We conclude our study of Revelation by considering the challenge and privilege of overcoming with Jesus.

Read Revelation 1

Meditate on the following passages from Revelation

1. Meditate on the vision of Christ in Revelation 1.10-20. How many different ways does this vision symbolize the *power* Jesus possesses to overcome? How far does that power reach? What does it affect?
2. In Revelation 1.17, compare John’s reaction to Jesus’ words. How should the overcoming power of Jesus affect us? How can we know Jesus’ overcoming power more consistently in our daily walk with the Lord?
3. Meditate on Psalms 47 and 93. What do these add to your vision of Christ exalted and having overcome the world?
4. Meditate on Psalms 93 and 110. How do these add to your vision of Christ exalted and having overcome the world?
5. Read Hebrews 1. Here the focus is on the absolute superiority of the exalted Christ. How does this add to your vision of Jesus exalted and overcoming the world?

My Reflection

How important is it that believers have in mind a vision of Christ exalted and overcoming the world? If you had such a clear and constant vision of Christ, how do you think this might affect your walk with Him?

The Glory of God

Christ in His glory commands fear from us. Why? But Christ in His glory counsels us not to be afraid. How can we hold these two affections in tension? Why is it important that we do so?

Glory to Glory

From the book of Revelation it’s clear that some vision of Christ exalted and having overcome the world is an important part of our faith in Him. Should some such vision be included in our presentation of the Gospel? Keeping at mind that when we’re sharing the Gospel we’re talking with people who do not yet know the Lord, nevertheless, how should we incorporate the “news” that Jesus is Lord?

Memorize

Our memory verse for this week is John 16.33. Write this verse on an index card, using your preferred translation of the Bible. Carry this with you throughout the week, and spend some time each day working to memorize this passage.

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Closing Prayer

The LORD said to my Lord,
“Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”
The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion.
Rule in the midst of Your enemies!
Your people *shall be* volunteers
In the day of Your power;
In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning,
You have the dew of Your youth.

Psalm 110.1-3

2 Conquering and to Conquer

Week 13, Tuesday: Following Jesus

Believers are companions and partners with the Apostles in the Kingdom, tribulation, and patient endurance which are in Jesus (Rev. 1.9). If we ever lose sight of this, or fail to keep these themes in mind, we will find it difficult to “overcome” with Jesus in our walk with and work for Him.

Jesus goes forth daily, conquering and to conquer. If we are following Him, we will be doing the same.

Read Revelation 6

Meditate on the following passages from Revelation

1. Compare Revelation 6.1, 2 with Psalm 45.1-6. Let’s try to understand all this martial imagery as best we can. First, conquering and to conquer requires that we keep in mind what Paul mentions in Ephesians 6.10-20. What does “conquering” or “overcoming” require of us in this respect?
2. Now let’s add into this vision Zechariah 9.9-17. Which aspects of Christ’s “overcoming” or “conquering” are suggested here? How do we, as Christ’s followers, factor into this?
3. Christ’s overcoming on earth is progressive, but not always even. The light of the Gospel waxes and wanes through the corridors of history. Nevertheless, meditate on 1 John 2.8 and Ephesians 5.6-11. Here is suggested yet another aspect of our “overcoming” or “conquering” with Jesus. How would you describe this?
4. Spiritual, evangelical, and moral conquering: This is what Jesus is about in the world. Meditate on Acts 17.1-9. How did people in the unbelieving world experience Christians as they “rode out” with Jesus “conquering and to conquer”? How does this compare with what we experience from our unbelieving neighbors today?
5. How would you counsel a new believer to prepare each day to “ride out” with Jesus for spiritual, evangelical, and moral “overcoming”? What should this new believer expect as he or she goes forth “conquering and to conquer”?

My Reflection

How is it evident that you ride forth with Jesus each day, conquering and to conquer?

The Glory of God

John says that the Light of Christ is advancing in the world against all the powers of darkness. What evidence can you see that this is true?

Glory to Glory

Complete the following: “The Light of Christ is advancing, and I am a child of that Light; therefore...”

Memorize

Let’s look more closely at our memory verse, John 16.33. Recite your memory verse aloud. Pray your vision of Jesus exalted and having overcome back to Him in words of praise and thanksgiving.

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Closing Prayer

Your throne, O God, *is* forever and ever;
A scepter of righteousness *is* the scepter of Your kingdom.

Psalm 45.6

3 Keeping House

Week 13, Wednesday: Overcoming in the Household of Faith

We need strong, healthy, growing churches to help us in our calling to overcome with Jesus. But even in John's day the churches were struggling. It's the same in our day as well. Churches in every age exist within the tribulation of the world, and a good bit of that sin, rebellion, and disobedience "washes over the decks" of churches, threatening to sink them.

Those who are called to overcome in Jesus will not sit idly by while this happens.

Read Revelation 2, 3

Meditate on the following passages from Revelation

1. In a single sentence, summarize, as best you can, the troubles facing the churches in Revelation 2 and 3. To what might we compare these in our day?
2. Jesus clearly is not pleased when His churches are being overcome by the world. Summarize the warnings Jesus makes to those believers and churches that fail to overcome in Him? What might that look like in our day?
3. At the same time, Jesus holds out glorious promises to those who do overcome. Summarize these, as we see them in Revelation 2 and 3. What might these look like in our day?
4. What would you look for as indicators that your church was beginning to *be* overcome by the world rather than to "ride forth" as an overcoming community with Jesus?
5. What is your role as a member of your local church in seeking to help your church be an overcoming church? What does the example of Jesus suggest about how to approach this challenge (Note: To whom did Jesus send these letters)? Are you prepared to take up this part of your calling to overcome?

My Reflection

What are the greatest obstacles standing in the way of your church becoming a more consistent overcomer?

The Glory of God

How would your church be different if it were consistently overcoming for Christ? What would you expect to be your church's impact on your community if it were more consistent in overcoming the world?

Glory to Glory

Talk with a pastor or church leader about your church's calling to be an overcoming congregation in your community. Share what you've been learning from Revelation about "overcoming" or "conquering" in the Kingdom, tribulation, and patient endurance for Christ. Ask what you can do to help your church become a consistently overcoming congregation.

Memorize

Recite your memory verse aloud: John 16.33. Share it with a Christian friend, and use this as an opportunity to share what you are learning about "conquering and to conquer" in Jesus.

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Closing Prayer

Bring back our captivity, O LORD,
As the streams in the South.
Those who sow in tears
Shall reap in joy.
He who continually goes forth weeping,
Bearing seed for sowing,
Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing,
Bringing his sheaves *with him*.

Psalm 126.4-6

4 Our Testimony

Week 13, Thursday: Know It, Proclaim It

Believers overcome the world by their testimony of faith in Jesus Christ (Rev. 12.17).

We should make sure we know this testimony well and are able to “hold fast” to it.

Read Revelation 12

Meditate on the following passages from Revelation

1. Spiritual forces of wickedness in high places are arrayed against us as we ride forth with Jesus each day, conquering and to conquer. Do you think these powers want you to share the Gospel with others? What are some ways they might try to obstruct or hinder you from “holding fast” to your testimony?
2. What is *your* testimony? A testimony is the evidence a witness produces when called upon in court. The witness testifies concerning the facts as he knows them. What are the facts about Jesus and you? What is your testimony of knowing Jesus?
3. You came to have this testimony because you heard the Good News of Jesus and His Kingdom. How would you explain that Good News – the Gospel – to someone else?
4. What do you think it means to “hold fast” to our testimony? Think of other uses of the term, “hold fast” or “hold on.” What do they suggest about “holding fast” to our testimony? How should believers help one another in holding fast to their testimony?
5. Read quickly through Psalm 18. Here is David’s testimony about his love for the Lord, how he came to know him, what God had done in and for and through him, and how he served the Lord (like we identify with Him) in overcoming the nations. Do you think praying your testimony back to the Lord might help you “hold fast” to it? Why or why not?

My Reflection

How do you deal with the temptations that seek to discourage you from holding fast to your testimony?

The Glory of God

Even when we hold fast to our testimony, this doesn’t mean everyone who hears us will believe (cf. Acts 17.32-34). But how is God glorified when we hold fast to our testimony?

Glory to Glory

Share your testimony with another Christian friend, and ask to hear your friend’s testimony as well. How can doing this from time to time help to strengthen us in holding fast to our testimony.

Memorize

Recite John 16.33. How is Jesus overcoming the world in you?

Closing Prayer

Write out your testimony as a brief prayer. Pray it to the Lord, and make a practice of doing so at least weekly.

5 Obedience

Week 13, Friday: Concerning the Law of God

Jesus said that when we receive the Spirit of God, we will *be* His witnesses (Acts 1.8) *Being* a witness is as important as holding fast to our testimony and giving a spoken witness. But we won't be much of a witness to Jesus unless our lives line up with His in important ways.

Read Revelation 14

Meditate on the following passages from Revelation

1. According to Revelation 14.12, who is practicing the patient endurance of Jesus? What are the commandments of God? Do you know them all, in order?
2. Meditate on Acts 1.8, Ezekiel 36.26 and 27, and 1 John 2.1-6. Complete the following: "Followers of Jesus have His Spirit within them, and they live..."
3. Meditate on Psalm 1. Who is described as living fruitfully for the Lord? Does that describe you? Meditate on Romans 7.12. Can believers expect to overcome without a growing understanding and consistent obedience to the Law of God? Explain.
4. Believers do not keep the Law of God in order to *be* saved. They keep the Law of God because they *are* saved. What's the difference?
5. Meditate on Romans 8.5-8. Obviously, we need the Spirit of God to enable us to overcome with patient endurance against the tribulations of this world. According to Paul, how would you describe the relationship between being filled with the Spirit and submitting to the Law of God?

My Reflection

In many respects, the term, "Law of God", stands for all the Scriptures. That includes the books of Moses and the commandments, statutes, and precepts he includes there to help us think about the way of life (Lev. 18.1-5). How would you describe your relationship to the Law of God – all of Scripture – at this stage in your walk with Him? Do you need to improve in your familiarity with and use of any particular parts of Scripture?

The Glory of God

Believers are not under Law; they are under grace. But because they are under grace, they must submit to God's Law. Explain these two ideas in your own words. Is God glorified when believers hold fast to the testimony of Jesus? Is He glorified when they keep His Law?

Glory to Glory

Meditate on Matthew 5.17-19. Was God glorified by Jesus fulfilling all His Law? What does Jesus recommend as the path toward greatness in His Kingdom? Should we expect walking such a path to help us overcome in the face of the tribulations of this world? Explain.

Memorize

Review John 16.33. Talk with a Christian friend about how the Law of God fits into our calling to be overcomers with Jesus.

Closing Prayer

My soul clings to the dust;
Revive me according to Your word.

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I have declared my ways, and You answered me;
Teach me Your statutes.
Make me understand the way of Your precepts;
So shall I meditate on Your wonderful works.
My soul melts from heaviness;
Strengthen me according to Your word.
Remove from me the way of lying,
And grant me Your law graciously.
I have chosen the way of truth;
Your judgments I have laid *before me*.
I cling to Your testimonies;
O LORD, do not put me to shame!
I will run the course of Your commandments,
For You shall enlarge my heart.

Psalm 119.25-32

6 Rest for the Overcomers

Week 13, Saturday: The Assurance of Things Hoped For

The writer of Hebrews says that faith is the “assurance of things hoped for” and the “evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11.1: my translation). Strong faith – faith that enables us to overcome in Jesus – depends on things hoped for, but unseen.

Can you see why the book of Revelation is so important for believers in every age?

Read Revelation 19

Meditate on the following passages from Revelation

1. Summarize all the “unseen things” revealed to John in the book of Revelation. To what extent, and in what particular ways, do these unseen things factor into your daily walk with and work for the Lord?
2. The greatest unseen thing is that which we “hope for” most of all, and which Revelation 19 introduces. Which parts of this chapter should give us hope? Why? How should that hope work down into our daily practice of faith?
3. If we really hope for what we see in Revelation 19, what “evidence” of that hope should be forthcoming in our lives? How can believers help one another to demonstrate such evidence?
4. How does the hope revealed in Revelation 19 – as well as in Revelation 21 and 22 – give us *assurance*? What is assurance? Of what are we assured? Why? How should that assurance affect our holding fast to our testimony and keeping the commandments of God?
5. It seems pretty clear that the “patient endurance” we have in Jesus depends in large part on (1) our vision of unseen things and (2) our living each day in the light of those. Explain.

My Reflection

Would you say that you have a “vision” of Christ exalted and returning in glory? What role does that vision play in your daily walk with and work for the Lord?

The Glory of God

Is God glorified when believers talk with one another about “unseen things”? Why or why not?

Glory to Glory

The glory of God which we see in our vision of unseen things gives us the assurance we need to live for Christ, so that the evidence of our faith redounds to the glory of God in every aspect of our daily lives. Meditate on 2 Corinthians 3.12-18. How does Paul explain this “glory to glory” process?

Memorize

Recite John 16.33. Share this verse and what you’ve learned from it with a fellow believer today.

Closing Prayer

Compose a brief prayer based on the unseen things of the book of Revelation. Begin praying that prayer daily.

7 In Christ

Week 12, Sunday: Our Resting-place, Now and Forever

Jesus has overcome the world. He goes forth every day conquering and to conquer. He is coming again to vanquish all His enemies and take us home to the new heaven and new earth, where there will be no more sorrow and no more tears, and where the righteousness, peace, and joy of the Kingdom of God will be our daily, uninterrupted experience.

And all that glorious rest and bounty is already ours!

Read Revelation 21 and 22

Meditate on the following passages from Revelation

1. John says that “in Christ” we are companions together in the Kingdom, tribulation, and patient endurance. What does it mean to be “in Christ”? Meditate on Ephesians 2.6 and Psalm 16.11. Are we “in Christ” now? In what ways?
2. “In Christ” there’s plenty of room for us to “stretch out” and grow (2 Pet. 3.18). What are some new directions for growth which you have come to consider as a result of these studies in Revelation?
3. Jesus Christ is the Light of His people – each believer and every church. He sheds His light in us, upon us, and through us to the world as a *refraction* of Himself. What’s the difference between saying Jesus *refracts* His light through us rather than *reflects* His life off us? How do you experience this?
4. How do the unseen things of Christ and His exaltation encourage you as one who is “in” Christ?
5. Meditate on Revelation 22.17. Why is this an important prayer? What does it say about believers for whom this prayer has little place in their prayers?

My Reflection

Paul wrote, “For me to live is Christ” (Phil. 1.21). In what ways do you want this to be more real in your own life?

The Glory of God

What have you learned about the glory of God from our studies in Revelation?

Glory to Glory

How would you explain the idea of “glory to glory” to one who was just beginning his life “in Christ”?

Memorize

Review John 16.33. Give thanks and praise to our overcoming and conquering King.

Closing Prayer

Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples!
Shout to God with the voice of triumph!
For the LORD Most High *is* awesome;
He is a great King over all the earth.
He will subdue the peoples under us,

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And the nations under our feet.
He will choose our inheritance for us,
The excellence of Jacob whom He loves. *Selah*
God has gone up with a shout,
The LORD with the sound of a trumpet.
Sing praises to God, sing praises!
Sing praises to our King, sing praises!
For God *is* the King of all the earth;
Sing praises with understanding.
God reigns over the nations;
God sits on His holy throne.
The princes of the people have gathered together,
The people of the God of Abraham.
For the shields of the earth *belong* to God;
He is greatly exalted.

Psalm 47.1-9

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Week 13: Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. In what ways does Revelation 1.9 provide a good outline for understanding this book?
2. How many different ways should we be following Christ as overcomers amid the tribulation of this world?
3. How would you describe the relationship between the unseen things of faith and our daily practice as followers of Jesus?
4. What are the most important lessons for you about “conquering and to conquer” in the book of Revelation?
5. How are you beginning to implement those lessons in your walk with and work for the Lord?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.