

Study 29: Revelation 14:12-20

12 This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus.

- God is not always going to deliver us from difficult situations, persecution and even martyrdom. Instead, He will bring us through those experiences by His power and grace.
- “This” in verse 12 refers to what was written immediately before this verse, and the topic is the beast and the turmoil surrounding people worshipping him as opposed to God. Jesus explained this to His disciples when He was here, and nothing has changed since then.
- Paul taught a great deal about the need to endure. You only need endurance when you are going through tough times. So if Jesus and Paul told us to endure, then hard times must be what they were warning us about.
- Let’s look at some endurance passages:

Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved (Matthew 24:12-13).

We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; (1 Corinthians 4:12)

We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life (2 Corinthians 1:8).

Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 2:3).

Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself (2 Timothy 2:10-13).

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father (Hebrews 12:7).

But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God (1 Peter 2:20).

13 Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them."

- Death is not the end for us as Christians. It is only the beginning. That is why we can lose this life, before there is another life to come! I wonder if that is why the psalmist wrote:

Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints (Psalm 116:15).

- When we die, we rest from our labors, but God doesn't forget any of our past labors for and in Him. I like to tell people that God has a big book and a sharp pencil and He writes everything down that we do. The image I have of this is found in the book of Esther. God may not seem to notice what we do, or be in a hurry to reward us, but He doesn't forget.

But Mordecai found out about the plot and told Queen Esther, who in turn reported it to the king, giving credit to Mordecai. And when the report was investigated and found to be true, the two officials were hanged on a gallows. All this was recorded in the book of the annals in the presence of the king (Esther 2:22-23).

That night the king could not sleep; so he ordered the book of the chronicles, the record of his reign, to be brought in and read to him. It was found recorded there that Mordecai had exposed Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway, who had conspired to assassinate King Xerxes. "What honor and recognition has Mordecai received for this?" the king asked. "Nothing has been done for him," his attendants answered. The king said, "Who is in the court?" Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the palace to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai on the gallows he had erected for him. His attendants answered, "Haman is standing in the court." "Bring him in," the king ordered. When Haman entered, the king asked him, "What should be done for the man the king delights to honor?" Now Haman thought to himself, "Who is there that the king would rather honor than me?" So he answered the king, "For the man the king delights to honor, have them bring a royal robe the king has worn and a horse the king has ridden, one with a royal crest placed on its head. Then let the robe and horse be entrusted to one of the king's most noble princes. Let them robe the man the king delights to honor, and lead him on the horse through the city streets, proclaiming before him, 'This is what is done for the man the king

delights to honor!" "Go at once," the king commanded Haman. "Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king's gate. Do not neglect anything you have recommended" (Esther 6:1-10).

- God will judge everyone according to their deeds. You can find rest and peace in that fact.

14 I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one "like a son of man" with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand.

15 Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, "Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe."

16 So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.

- Jesus is seated on the throne with a crown on His head. He is the King. He is holding a sharp sickle. A sickle was used to cut wheat and other tall grain at harvest time. He is obviously doing something here that represents the harvest of something that is mature.
- I think of the following parables and statements that Jesus made, telling us of this event described in these verses:

He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain-- first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come." (Mark 4:26-29)

"Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 13:47-50)

His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Luke 3:17)

Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' ""An enemy did this,' he replied. "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' ""No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'" (Matthew 13:24-30)

17 Another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle.

18 Still another angel, who had charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, "Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth's vine, because its grapes are ripe."

19 The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God's wrath.

- There will be a final judgment. All will be rewarded or punished according to their deeds. This was meant to encourage the churches that were receiving this letter from John. Some of them were going to lose their lives. They could be confident that God would preserve them and grant them their eternal reward as He had promised.
- Are you in tough times? Have you doubted or questioned God's love or His ability to reward you? Have you wondered whether everything you are going through is worth it? Well, I believe the early Church asked the same questions and their answer is your answer: Yes, it is worth it! God rewards those who diligently seek Him and who endure to the end.
- As bad as the righteous may have it now, the wicked will have it far worse for all eternity. The image of winemaking here is graphic and would have been relevant to all who initially received the letter.
- It seems that everyone will feel the sickle of God's judgment. The writer of Revelation encouraged the readers to be in the first harvest of the righteous. That exhortation applies to you and me as well.

20 They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses' bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia.

- The winepress was outside the city. That is always a sign of judgment and isolation. Jesus was crucified outside the protection of the city walls and the community that those walls contained and represented.
- These last few verses represent such a graphic image of judgment without ever explaining exactly what would happen in that judgment. These verses were meant to encourage the saved and inform them of the end that would come to all.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10).

For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)- if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment (2 Peter 2:4-9).

By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men (2 Peter 3:7).

- The end of the world, or at least my world, is a certainty. At that time, all will be judged. Praise the Lord that we are washed in the blood of the Lamb and will survive the judgment deeds of God not because of our deeds, but to be rewarded according to the good deeds that He prepared beforehand for us to do.