

# ***Spiritual Practices for Thriving Life***

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## **Hope to the End**

How does it change your view of God to know that He is ready and able to overthrow Satan now?

How have you been strengthened by moments of spiritual clarity despite persistent difficult circumstances?

In what ways might you live more boldly in God's image knowing Jesus' resurrection is the promise of the same for His followers?

**Revelation 20:1-4** – <sup>1</sup>Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. <sup>2</sup>He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, <sup>3</sup>and threw him into the pit, and locked and sealed it over him, so that he would deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be let out for a little while. <sup>4</sup>Then I saw thrones, and those seated on them were given authority to judge. I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

### **I) The End is Near...**

Satan is our tempter and accuser, using every form of deceit and life's circumstances to cause us to worship anything but God. We each fail the test. We find feeding our selfish desires less and less satisfying until we start to yearn for something we lost. God calls out, awakening us to long forgotten realities, and invites us to give up chasing lies. We either accept this offer, or we don't. Eventually, all who will accept it, have. When that occurs, God will not waste an instant before overthrowing Satan.

◆ **God is prepared:** The world's situation sometimes appears bleak. It is easy to doubt that God is really in control. If He is, maybe it's a

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closer contest than we would like to admit. Those perspectives ignore the ends God pursues. He is loving and patient, waiting for everyone who will choose Him and be saved, including future generations. When the time comes, God is prepared. At the appointed time, “I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain (Revelation 20:1).” God has the means to capture the devil and is eager to exert His power.

◆**True strength:** Restraint may be misunderstood as weakness. Satan would deceive us into thinking God is weak or uninterested in us—or irrelevant entirely. Those whose faith starts to waver expect some cosmic battle when God confronts Satan. That’s not what will happen. God has been restraining Himself until all those He loves are saved. When He comes in power, He is both prepared and able. He dispatches an angel who “seizes the dragon, the ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years (v2).” No battle, no fair fight, the devil is chained and bound for as long as God pleases. Creation has no power without the Creator.

## II) **Calm Before the Storm...**

God has always intervened in key moments of history. He knows just when His people need something to draw out their faith and restore hope. In the final moments, when the world has been as harsh as it can be, He will give respite to His chosen people. This macrocosm applies to each of our individual lives, too. If you believe but are wearying of wickedness, look to Him for miraculous peace. Not necessarily peace from your circumstances, but peace from the constant deceptions of the devil.

◆**Exiled:** Exile can be used to various effects. Here, God uses it to isolate His people from the source of lies. Once God’s angel has bound the serpent, he “threw him into the pit, and locked and sealed it over him... (v3).” God has shown He has always been prepared to deal with the devil, has the power to overwhelm him, and can seal him off from us at will. This parallels Jesus’ victory over Satan in rejecting his lies, refusing to serve Himself, His unwavering faith in His Father to resurrect Him. Jesus’ heart was sealed off from Satan. Here, Satan is sealed off from God’s chosen people. They are given the space to build their faith in God’s power and goodness.

◆**Open your eyes:** We must be careful in our expectations of what God has promised to do. Locking Satan up does not equate to peace and prosperity. It does suggest an atmosphere in which God’s truth is clear. As long as sin exists, God promises only to meet our needs as

we live out the belief that we can represent Him in the world. God locks Satan away “so that he would deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years were ended (v3).” Each of us at that time are accountable for our response to the Truth. Jesus responded to His knowledge that He is the Son of God by obeying His Father for the sake of humankind. He denied pleasures and accepted punishment because He would not reject the Truth of His nature. Through Jesus, we too can live up to our fullest potential.

## III) **The Truth Reigns...**

The purpose of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection is that we know the Truth. Some will embrace it and seek to live it out. Others will deny it, preferring a selfish path that denies absolute authority. God provides insight to both in the vision He has given about the end. To those who resist the Truth, He conveys a clear warning of the consequences. The liar and all his followers will be cast out forever (v10-15). To those who embrace Truth, hang on, it’s worth it.

◆**Benefits of endurance:** Those who prefer the selfish path would need to know an external benefit awaits them to endure. Fame, fortune, or power that is worth the cost. Some might even confuse those with the term glory. Those who embrace Truth understand the benefit of enduring evil is the actualization of our true being. Living as our true selves, the ones created in the image of God, is glory. Not the shallow imitation known as fame, but the self-awareness of being who we want to be in every way. We see “the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands (v4).” Like Jesus, we can resist every manipulation of Satan and be faithful as He is faithful.

◆**Reign in the truth:** Those who embrace Truth and live for the glory of God are judged worthy to reign with Jesus. They are worthy because of their faith that God has made it possible. It’s the acts of faith that God will do all He has promised, acts doomed to failure if God does not, that qualify us for authority. Having trusted that God would resurrect them too, the martyrs clung to faith through death. Then “they came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years (v4).” This is the promise of Jesus’ resurrection. We are capable of living in God’s image because of Jesus, and if we do, not even death can destroy us. Embrace life as a beloved creation, accept Jesus’ invitation to follow Him, and discover your unique potential to represent God in power and authority.