

**Articles and Sermons :: Worn Out Saints by Steve Gallagher**

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I think most believers would agree that the Antichrist is alive at this very hour. Somewhere on our planet—probably in the European Commonwealth—he is living out his selfish existence; becoming increasingly swollen with pride; flattering and manipulating others into helping him fulfill the insatiable ambitions of his monstrous ego.

Of course, Satan is “the spirit of antichrist,” and the human stooge he will possess and use to accomplish his purpose is of little importance. It is the devil himself who is orchestrating world events in the attempt to expel God’s presence, God’s authority and God’s people from this planet. It goes without saying that his claims to earth and all his lofty schemes are but a figment of his bloated and delusionary imagination. Yet, we should never lose sight of the fact that the worldwide devastation he will cause will make the holocaust seem tame in comparison.

As end time believers, it is of vital importance that we be aware of his intentions toward the Church. The problem we face when considering the last days is that it is a little like trying to put together a 10,000 piece puzzle. The beginning of the “end of the age” (“it will be like the days of Noah...”) and its culmination (Satan thrown into the lake of fire) are comparable to the straight-edged pieces that are fairly easy to find and piece together. The more difficult task is making sense out of the mass of biblical statements that can be understood in various ways or sometimes don’t even seem to fit together at all!

One of those 10,000 pieces that can help clarify the puzzle a little is an obscure statement found in Daniel 7. It says that the Antichrist “will wear down the saints.” This primarily refers to his persecution of believers during the Tribulation Period, but we should also consider this as part of Satan’s overall strategy regarding Christians during the entirety of the last days.

Satan is persecuting believers in different parts of the world, but, at least at this point, he is using different methods to “wear down the saints” in the West.

One of the pieces of the puzzle that fits nicely with Daniel’s statement is in Luke 17:26-33 where Jesus compared the Christian culture of the last days to human life during the times in which Noah and Lot lived. When He referred to the “eating, drinking, buying, selling and building” going on before His return, He wasn’t referring to the incredible wickedness of their day but to a prevailing concern with the temporal things of earth life.

Let’s return to Daniel’s phrase which seems to provide an important piece to the puzzle of Satan’s intentions for the Church. The word “wear out” (Heb. *bāḥlāḥ*) is used in various ways in the Old Testament. On the practical side, Moses used the term to remind the Israelites that during their long sojourn in the wilderness, their clothing did not “wear out” (Deuteronomy 8:4) And when David recounted that terrible period of being backslidden in the arms of Bathsheba, he said that “when I kept silent about my sin, my body “wasted away (*bāḥlāḥ*).” (Psalm 32:3) That statement shows how the word can be used in a spiritual sense.

But it is something that Job said regarding the wicked of his day that really caught my attention. He said, “They spend (*bāḥlāḥ*) their days in prosperity, and suddenly they go down to Sheol.” (Job 21:13) If I could rephrase it, perhaps I could say that these people were wearing themselves out with prosperity and then, before they knew it, found themselves on their deathbed. The truth is that our time and energy are expendable commodities. Spending one’s life on worldly pursuits is not only unsatisfying but it will also wear out those who do it.

“I am absolutely convinced that meaninglessness does not come from being weary of pain,” said Ravi Zacharias. “Meaninglessness comes from being weary of pleasure. And that’s why we are bankrupt of meaning in a land of so much.” I believe that the weariness of life that living for pleasure brings is one of the primary reasons the Church has lost her power. Perhaps that is why Jesus warned end time believers to “remember Lot’s wife.” (Luke 17:32) As He scanned the distant horizon of the end times Church, perhaps He was seeing that the world had stolen the hearts of His people just as it did Lot’s wife.

The next statement Jesus made in that passage is a maxim He used on various occasions but seems to be especially relevant to end time Christians: “Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.” It can and should be taken as a warning, but it is also the way through these “perilous times.”

The word "lose" (Greek apollumi) used in both phrases of Jesus' statement literally means "to destroy." It seems fairly clear that the first phrase is describing someone who is living for the temporal pleasures of this world: entertainment, amusements, possessions and so on. They may be attending church on Sunday but the truth is that they are destroying their lives with Satan's worldly and carnal allurements.

But what does it mean to destroy one's life in a positive sense? I believe it is the sacrifice involved in the life of a genuine believer.

A consecrated Christian lives a disciplined and separated life. He limits his involvement in the things of the world. He sacrifices the pleasures he could enjoy for the sake of his life in God.

A committed Christian goes to bed early so he can spend quality time in prayer and Bible study. He sacrifices his evenings of frivolity for the sake of his life in God.

A loving Christian is involved in helping other people. He visits the elderly in convalescent hospitals, teaches kids in Sunday school, mows the yard of a disabled neighbor and so on. He sacrifices his time for the sake of his life in God.

If I could put it in the words of Jesus: the genuine believer uses up, consumes, destroys his life in this world by living it for Christ.

Satan is wearing out the saints by leading them down a path of selfishness and carnality. Each of us must decide for ourselves which path we will take. Will we destroy our lives with pleasure or will we destroy our lives with godliness?

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