

Am I Allowing Myself to Be Worn Out?

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It's a joy to be together, here, in 2018, but the thought occurred to me, what if you took a survey of God's people back in 1968, fifty years ago, and asked them if we would still be here in 2018. I don't think you would get a single person who'd have said we'd be here in 2018. It would all have been wrapped up, all have been over by now and obviously it hasn't, and I think if we're honest with ourselves, we've got to say this has been a long, difficult, tiring ride for all of us. Things have happened that we did not expect, did not anticipate.

We could ask the question, how many of us are tired? Yes, as we get older we get tired, but in addition to that, tired of all of the struggle to remain faithful, struggle against persecution, struggle against opposition, and how many feel worn out—spent—as we walk down this path and continue this journey? Let's see that this was prophesied about 2,500 years ago. God knows exactly what He is doing. With that in mind let's go to Daniel 7 and see that God knew in these end days that this would indeed be the case. What is happening today, to all of us, is not surprising to God because He knew it was going happen, and He said so 2,500 years ago. Verse 3 of Daniel 7; if you have a marker you might want to place it there. We have a box of markers out at the information table and you're welcome to pick one up.

Daniel 7:3 *And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another.* (KJV)

Each was different. Verse 17.

17) *These great beasts, which are four, [it tells us, now, what they are] are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth.* (KJV)

We know that they are indeed four kings and four kingdoms that come from the sea, and we're going to see the sea is out of the peoples—the nations. Verse 4 is a lion, and we know that as the Chaldean Empire that was extant from roughly 625-539 B.C. Verse 5 is the bear, the Medo-Persian Empire, from roughly 558-330 B.C. (These are approximate dates.) In verse 6, the third was a leopard with four heads, which was Alexander the Great and the four divisions into which his kingdom was divided, and that began in 330 B.C. God prophesied all this and it tells us how great God is; God knows what He's doing. Then there is a fourth beast that is different from all the others—verse 7:

7) *After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast [this is different and Daniel expounds on this], dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and*

it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and [another difference] it had ten horns.

19) Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet;

23) Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom [those four beasts are four kingdoms and four kings] upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. (KJV)

We know that this fourth beast was the Roman Empire and it is traditionally dated from 27 B.C. to 476 A.D. One of the differences was it lasted far longer than the other beasts. Let me read verse 8 out of the New King James.

8) I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one [that's something to take note of], coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns [of the ten] were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words.

20) and the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn [meaning the little horn] which came up, before which three fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance was greater than his fellows.

24) The ten horns are ten kings Who shall arise from this kingdom. And another [referring to this little horn] shall rise after them; He shall be different from the first ones, And shall subdue three kings. (NKJV)

We know the ten horns are the ten resurrections of the Roman Empire and the little horn (this could be a whole sermon in itself, we won't get into it) we know is a counterfeit religious system. It's interesting it's called a little horn and a little fact that supports that is Vatican City is the smallest independent state in the world. It's only 108 acres—tiny little horn but it's powerful. It has dominated religion for almost 2,000 years. It controls, today, 1.3 billion Catholics. It influences heads of state and nations, and in the Middle Ages you couldn't move without the permission of the church. For thousands of years you couldn't do anything without the permission of the church. It subdued three of the ten kings and those were the pagans—Vandals, Heruli and Ostrogoths. The little horn continues to this day because when the Roman Empire fell, the little horn didn't. It stayed around and it's there to this day. Revelation 17 gives us some more information about this little horn; let's go there. We'll begin in verse 1. The Bible is so consistent—Daniel writing so many years ago and John writing hundreds of years later.

Revelation 17:1 *And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: (KJV)*

Some translations say harlot or prostitute. We know that this whore is this great counterfeit religious system. It's interesting, the Greek word *sits*, where it says it *sits on many waters*, means "dwells" or "resides". As I said before, it was intermixed with humanity, nations, kingdoms, and had great control, and even in certain areas in the world today has great control over the people.

15) *And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.* (KJV)

We see this false religious system dwells among the people and dwells among the nations. Let's go back to verse 2, referring to this religious system.

2) *With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.* (KJV)

The Greek word for "fornication"—you can check this out, it is Strong's #4203, and the Greek word is *porneuó* from whose root we get our modern word "pornography". It means *to act the harlot* but here's something interesting about the meaning of this word, it [also] means *to practice idolatry*. So this system works in concert with political leaders, military leaders, social leaders, for the purpose of practicing idolatry. We're told that the earth is drunk because of that, meaning the earth goes along with it—drinking the same brew, so to speak.

5) *And upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.* (KJV)

Called Mother of harlots, you could also say this system is the mother of those who practice idolatry—the genesis of it, the core of it, the foundation of it. We'll see in a minute there's a being behind all of this, as we know.

6) *And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints ...* (KJV)

The woman was not content to practice idolatry, the woman wanted to destroy the saints.

6 continued) *... and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.* (KJV)

This counterfeit religious system has persecuted and killed the saints down through the centuries and it didn't take a vacation, it didn't stop, the goal has not changed, it is still there, and the reason this fourth beast is different is because this religious system rides the last seven resurrections of the Roman Empire; the first three, as we said, were pagan and they had no part in it. Let's go back to Daniel 7:21 and tie it back together. This is in the context of persecuting and going after God's people.

Daniel 7:21 *I beheld, and the same horn [this little horn] made war with the saints, and prevailed against [overcame] them;*
22) *Until the Ancient of days came ... (KJV)*

This false religion makes war with the saints and it wins—overcame the saints. That's a temporary win, as we know, and we'll talk more about that. We see here that God has allowed this to happen—this didn't surprise God, God wasn't off on a vacation when this happened—and this system will persecute the saints, even kill the saints (until Christ returns) with God's knowledge and allowance because it's part of His plan.

Who is behind this false religious system, this little horn? Well, that could be a sermon in itself, but who is our adversary, who is the adversary of God's people? (We won't turn there, you can use it as a reference; you know it already, 1 Peter 5:8.) This adversary seeks God's people as a roaring lion, wants to devour them, gulp them down. Who is the accuser of the brethren? Revelation 12:10, and we know in the book of Job, Satan walked around accusing Job to God, over and over again. Satan is our adversary, Satan is the accuser who persecutes the brethren and has done so down through the millennia. This false religious system is not a system of man, it is a system of Satan. He is behind it, he provokes it, he pushes it. Now look at the beginning of verse 25, Daniel 7:25.

Daniel 7:25 *And he [referring to this religious leader] shall speak great words against the most High [you can't argue about who the Most High is—it's God Almighty—so this system speaks against, this leader speaks against the Most High], and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws ... (KJV)*

This false system Daniel is prophesying (God is telling us) does four things. It claims to speak instead of God, and we know the pope is God's mouthpiece on earth, in their view, and speaks instead of God, and we see here it really is against God because that system is totally against God; has not much that's allied with the truth. This system claims to speak for God or instead of God, it changes laws, it changes times, and it wears out the saints. This false system penetrated the first century Church and it perverted the first century Church. Remember when Paul said, the mystery of iniquity does already work; you can check 2 Thessalonians 2:7. Before Paul's death, it was already working, it was already penetrating the true church. Let's go to Jude, verse 4, and see that in his day it was happening. It's a fact of that day but it's also a warning for us today.

Jude 4 *For there are certain men crept in unawares ... [They crept into the Church and their motive—their agenda—was not apparent.]*
12) *These are spots in your feasts of charity [these attended the feasts but they were spots], when they feast with you [they were there], feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water ... (KJV)*

How can you have a cloud without water? That's a sermon in itself—a cloud without water—but that means it has the appearance of a cloud but there's no water in it. God's Spirit is symbolized by water so it looks like somebody who is converted, maybe occasionally acts like somebody who is converted, but there's no Spirit there.

12 continued) ... *carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth*, [maybe some of them have God's Spirit but it's withering, it's dying, it's wasting away, it's not exercised, and] *without fruit* [there are some who have no fruit of God's Spirit], *twice dead* [physical death, spiritual death], *plucked up by the roots* [those are unconverted, those are tares];

16) *These are murmurers, complainers* [have you heard of murmurers and complainers recently—people aren't happy, just grumble, grumble, grumble, that's happened in God's Church], *walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.* (KJV)

We would call that today, playing politics, or a gutter reference would be sucking up.

17) *But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;*

18) *How that they told you there should be mockers* [notice the time setting] *in the last time* [mockers of God, mockers of God's people], *who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.* (KJV)

Meaning they walk after their agenda, their personal agenda rather than what God wants, God's agenda. That's something we all have to be careful about as God's people. We have to make sure our agenda, our desires, our goals are in harmony with God's. None of us wants to be at cross purposes with God—that's a recipe for disaster; we do not want that. We see here that they have ungodly agendas or lusts.

19) *These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.* (KJV)

Yet they are part of the church, meaning they are not part of the Body of Christ but they attend with the assembly.

We know from 100 A.D. to 300 A.D. this system changed laws and times. We know Passover was changed to Easter and sunrise service came along with that package. Sabbath was changed to Sunday, instituted Christmas, instituted Halloween and all that that went along. They changed times, they changed laws, until only a remnant remained faithful and they were run out of every city, they were persecuted, they were fleeing for their lives for centuries because of this system. This same false religious system penetrated the modern-day Church. For those of you who were members of the Worldwide Church of God, laws and times were also changed. I witnessed it, I was there, many of you witnessed it. I can remember at ministerial conferences, refreshing

programs, sitting in the audience with my jaw in my lap as things were said. Theological degrees were pursued from this institutes false religious system, the cross was adopted as a religious symbol, you would never think you would see that in God's Church. The trinity was adopted to explain God and Christ, it was said (and I was there) that the Sabbath was no longer a sign of God's people, and they did away with tithing until the income went down so fast ((laughs)), so quick, that all of a sudden, it was if they thought, we better rethink this, and so tithing came back in a few months later. They said that keeping the law was not necessary for salvation and ultimately changed Passover to Easter, ultimately changed Sabbath to Sunday, and then the final straw that broke the camel's back for many was they removed God's name entirely from the church. That happened in our lifetime, that's in our memory.

When God says this is going to happen and it was written 2,500 years ago, you have to think that God knows what He's talking about. God has a plan, He sees the beginning and the end, and He has a road map for all of us and He has allowed this. Did this system change times and laws in the modern-day Church—you bet it did. This is all old news, this was twenty, twenty-five years ago. But what's happening today? There are those who would de-emphasize God the Father, who would remove God from direct involvement with His people, put Him off in kind of a God-emeritus status and not have Him intimately involved. There are those who want their Sabbath-keeping group to become "Christ-centered"—diminishing, even denying the Most High God, and when you think about that, that should just shake people to their boots, it should cause our knees to knock to think of denying and diminishing the Most High God.

What Satan is doing, what he's done since Daniel and even before that, obviously, [from] the time Babylon started, Satan is provoking God's people to worship anything but God—anything but God. Yet we're God's people; how can that be—and yet some people want to do that. Satan has a strategy to get to those who remain faithful. Satan is not stupid, he is not weak, Satan doesn't take vacations, he doesn't take days off, he doesn't sleep. To think, okay, I passed this test so now I'm home free, that isn't the way Satan works because you pass this test and another one is coming. It's like the waves of the sea, there's always another one coming because we are all physical and we're in a war, and Satan wants to destroy us.

Remember the parable of the sheepfold? Satan wants to kill, steal and destroy, and that's aimed at all of us. If he fails in one area, he'll try in another area. He's a good tactician, he will not hit us where we're strong, he will hit us where we're weakest—he's very smart that way, smarter than us. We read Daniel 7:25 earlier; let's read it again. I want to emphasize one thing.

Daniel 7:25 *And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints ... (KJV)*

That is a strategy of Satan—to wear out the saints. The Aramaic word for "wear out", Strong's #1080—spelled "belaw" in our alphabet—means *to afflict*, but there's a critical

nuance to the meaning of that word because it is used only in a mental sense. Not to afflict physically but to afflict mentally. To afflict and wear out God's people mentally. So that can happen regardless of our age. Yes, as we get older we are more tired, have less stamina and all of that but this is talking a *mental* wearing-out and that can happen to anybody at any age. Satan doesn't give the young people a pass on this just because they might be healthier or have more physical stamina. The fact is he wants to wear us all out mentally. So the question is (this is the title of the sermon):

Am I Allowing Myself to Be Worn Out?

As we go through this, just think about it because this is a life-and-death question we need to answer; there are consequences if we allow ourselves to be worn out at this critical end time. What we're going to do is answer three questions in the remainder of the time. The first one—and those who get on me for having numbers and outlines and all, you're going to get it because that's just the way my brain works, I apologize in advance—I get a lot of flack for it. First point, first question:

1. How are the saints worn out, what is the strategy, how does it work?

The first one, if you like to outline, point A:

1A. People who are worn out become tired of fighting.

That's critical to a Christian—if we're worn out we become tired of fighting. What happens when somebody gets tired? We've all been there; when we lose a night's sleep, if we're honest with ourselves, most of us get crabby, don't we?

I remember a time when I used to teach the Y.O.U Bible studies and there was a young, twelve-year-old, spunky girl, who grew up on a farm, and we were going through the potluck line and she dropped her fork on the floor, then she tried to pour some water and spilled it all over the table, then she got a glob of potatoes and put it on her plate but spilled some of it off to the side, and I said with a smile on my face, having a little trouble with our hand-eye coordination here, are we? Turned out I found out later, she didn't get any sleep the night before and she leveled this gaze towards me and said, back off, Rick! ((laughs)) We get crabby when we get tired!

When we are tired, it's harder to have patience—when we're tired it's harder to have focus. When we're worn out it's harder to focus on what needs to be done, our mind kind of gets scrambled and we go in circles, and of course Satan likes that, he wants that. When we're tired, it's harder to study, pray, fast—meaningfully—not just go through the motions, but meaningfully. Most importantly, when we're worn out, when we're tired we get tired of fighting the flesh. We get tired of resisting the flesh, we get tired of resisting Satan. Let me give you a good analogy. A man I respect a great deal was Vince Lombardi—he was the legendary coach (he's dead now) of the Green Bay Packers in the NFL. He won five NFL championships in seven years—never been

repeated. He was a brilliant coach and he took a team that was a nobody and turned them into champions in a couple of years. One way he did it was through his preseason training camps—they were absolutely notorious because they were tougher than any marine boot camp. Some of his football players were ex marines and they were quoted as saying his training camps (before the season started) were tougher by a large amount than any marine boot camp.

The fact is, his teams were in better condition—better shape—before the season started than all the other teams they played. He emphasized the first quarter and the fourth quarter—how you start the game and how you finish the game, especially how you finish the game in the fourth quarter. Because his teams were in such good shape, in the fourth quarter when the opponent was tired and ready to just get off the field, his team was hitting harder, tackling harder, fighting harder, than the other teams. They were actually in the fourth quarter, playing harder and hitting harder than they were at the beginning of the game—that's the way they were trained and they were in such good condition. He had a very famous statement—he said, "Fatigue makes cowards of us all."

When we're tired it's easy to back off. When we're tired it's easy to quit. When we're tired it's easy not to do what needs to be done. When we're tired and Satan knows this, if he can wear us out, we can begin to compromise spiritually because we're tired, we're worn out. Just as the opposing teams wouldn't block or tackle as hard toward the end of the game, Lombardi's team did—we don't want to be like that, we don't want to give up toward the end of the game.

We're tempted in many cases when we're tired to let up on meaningful prayer, let up on diligent, serious Bible study—I'm not talking flipping pages with your eyelids half down, we've all done that. Regular fasting, not as involved with the brethren—you see it becomes easy to slack off making religion, our religion, our number-one priority. We can make it a priority when we're tired but not *the* priority and that's exactly what Satan wants us to do. It's important but it's not. (As James was talking about—why are we here, who do you put first, what's the goal?) It should be *the* priority, not *a* priority.

We have to remember that wearing out takes time—it takes months, it takes years to wear out. But Satan is patient, he knows, he sees the long view too, and if he doesn't succeed here, he will try something else, and he works and he works and he works on us. I use the example of the frog placed in cold water a while back—it's a famous psychological experiment where you place a frog in cold water in a pan and you turn the heat up, but you turn the heat up so gradually it's below the frog's ability to sense the increase in heat and you do that gradually over time, and the frog will literally stay in the pan and boil to death. That's been scientifically documented numerous times—the frog makes no effort to escape. Why?—because the change occurred so slowly, it was not recognized. Satan can do the same thing with each one of us. Over time, he wants to wear us out so we give up or we slack off.

Remember Christ said (we won't turn there) in Luke 9:62, no man looking back is fit for the Kingdom of God. We can't look back, can't slack off, we have to go forward stronger than ever. We cannot allow ourselves to become tired of our calling. Remember God called us by name, by individual and that in itself just blows my mind—I get goosebumps sometimes when I think about that. That of all the people on the face of the earth, God came down to each one of us and said, I want you, by name I am calling you because I have a plan and a purpose for you, and of all the people on the earth to do that with the likes of us, it is *scary* awesome, as they say. The fact is, since that happened, we should have constant joy because of that fact.

Here at the Feast we get a chance to display that joy. Yes, maybe we're jet-lagged, maybe we're tired, maybe we didn't sleep well last night but the fact is we're here because of that calling, and we should express the joy of that calling amongst each other for the entirety of the Feast because we're all together—we're all of like purpose. What a joy it is to be with like-minded brethren. We cannot give up the fight. Let's go to 2 Timothy 4:7. Paul realized this is a war we're in. Toward the end of his life he recognized that he had been in a fight, and he says what we read here in 2 Timothy 4:7, and hopefully all of us can say this when our day comes.

2 Timothy 4:7 *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: (KJV)*

We see that this first point is what Satan wants to do: In wearing us out is he wants us to get tired of fighting—against Satan, against our own flesh.

The second thing, point B, is:

1B. People who are worn out become disillusioned.

When you get tired, it's easy to become disillusioned. There are people in God's Church today who are disillusioned with God or disillusioned with the Church because they feel that God has let them down, or the Church has let them down because of all the splintering, and the fighting, and the rock throwing, and sometimes you're sitting here and watching ICBM's going over your head between various groups, and somehow people think, this is bumming me out because there's all this stuff going on, and God is allowing it to happen and why doesn't He step in, or why doesn't the Church shape up or something like that.

Look what's happened over the last twenty-five-plus years—records that I've seen, anyway—there were about 160,000 attending regularly in the Worldwide Church of God and over 100,000 disappeared—they're gone, not to be seen. Only God knows how many of those were actually converted. We have to ask the question, who is the author of disillusionment? Who is the author of negativity? Let's go to John 8:44; Christ is speaking here to the scribes and Pharisees and Christ is not holding back. They

thought that God was smiling on them and Christ had a different message for them or a different reality—the true reality.

John 8:44 [Christ saying to the scribes and Pharisees] *Ye are of your father the devil [the scribes and Pharisees didn't want to hear that] and the lusts of your father ye will do [you're doing, you're performing the lusts of the devil under a religious guise]. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. (KJV)*

He is a liar, he is the father of all lies, the originator of all lies, and we know in the Garden of Eden what he did—he caused Eve and Adam to become disillusioned with God. Satan says, don't believe Him, He's not telling you the whole truth; you can be just like Him if you eat this fruit; don't listen to what He said. Eve had some disillusionment in her mind toward God—so God didn't really mean what He said or He's really not the being that I think He is. We know the rest of that story. Satan is the author of disillusionment with God and he's the author of negativity, and the point is we can't allow ourselves to become disillusioned with God, not in these days, not at any time, in any way. Yes, human beings are going to disappoint us, human beings make mistakes, there are tares, there are clouds without water and all of that, and human beings are going to disappoint us but that has nothing to do with who God is. What a human being does doesn't change God and God knows what human beings are capable of and He works with that.

He's allowing God's people to face the test of being worn out—it's a test. People who are worn out and disillusioned tend to become negative. What Satan wants is for us to wallow in negative thinking, negative emotions, and all of that, particularly here at the Feast. He doesn't want us to enjoy the blessings of the Feast and we can practice not becoming negative, not yielding to disillusionment every day here at the Feast by focusing, again, as James said, on why are we here, what's the point? Who are we here to worship, Who are we here to honor, Who do we want to please, Whose face do we want to shine upon us? If it's not God then we're in the wrong place. With all our being, our purpose—every day I wake up and say, God, I don't want to do what I want to do, I want to do what you want me to do, because if I do that then you're going to be happy with me and I want my Daddy to be happy with me. I don't want Him upset with me, I don't want to disappoint my Father. So here at the Feast let's focus on what we have, and let's focus on the blessings God has given us and the joy of being together with like-minded brethren.

The second question we want to answer is:

2. Why is God allowing this to happen in the first place?

Why would God, through Daniel, prophesy that this system is going to wear out the saints and this system is going to persecute the saints and overcome the saints—why

would God do that? Why would God allow this false system to change times and laws and attempt to wear us all out? Why does this happen? The answer is simple: God wants to find out what we're made of. He simply wants to know what we're made of. Are we made of His Spirit, are we made of human nature or are we made of satanic spirit—what are we made of when the rubber meets the road, what are we really made of, what's inside us—that's what He wants to find out. Will we get tired and quit at the end? How will we handle these attempts to wear us out? Will we become disillusioned and go back from where we came—I know people that have gone back to Judaism, Catholicism—would we do that? God wants to know. Will we successfully resist Satan's effort? Let's go to Proverbs 24:10—I never want God to say this about me and I know you don't want God to say this about you. The day of adversity is upon us and God is watching to see how we handle it.

Proverbs 24:10 *If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small. (KJV)*

I don't want to stand before God and have God say, Rick, you don't have much strength—you didn't have much resistance, you caved in. I don't think any of us wants God to say that about us at the end of the day. God did the same with Abraham. Remember God told Abraham, I finally gave you this son but now I want you to take him up to the mountain and sacrifice him to Me. Three days' journey—Abraham had time to think about that and that was by design. So God was listening, God was watching, God was looking at his heart. What was going through his head during those three days—was he thinking, how could God do this?—I mean, He performed a miracle to give me this son in the first place, why on earth would a loving God want me to go and kill my son?—those kind of thoughts. So God was watching Abraham and looking into his heart to see what this man would do. Let's see what he did in Genesis 22:11; we'll read verses 11 and 12. Abraham got the wood, built the fire, pulled out the knife. His son was obedient and allowed himself to be tied up; his son was younger, and he could have run away but he didn't.

Genesis 22:11 *And the angel of the LORD [the angel of God Almighty] called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. 12) And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. (KJV)*

The fact for God to say, “now I know” means now I know *but before I didn't know*. This was a test—for you to show Me what you're made of, Abraham, and now I know what you're made of—and He took him right to the edge. Boy, what a trial—what a trial! Our judgment is now, Abraham's judgement was right then, right at that moment. Let's go to 1 Peter 4:17, a familiar scripture.

1 Peter 4:17 *For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: [He's talking then and obviously if it came then, it's in spades for us now] and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*

18) *And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?* (KJV)

Righteous scarcely be saved—that should be an impetus for us to become righteous as Christ is righteous, to become righteous as the Father is righteous, in every way. Yet, in the past, if we're honest with ourselves, I think some people say (and we've seen it in the Bible), if I slip a little here or I slip a little there ... I've had a man tell me, I can allow a certain number of sins—God understands. He understands alright, He really does. We are in hard times and there are hard times ahead. Let's go to Matthew 10:34; Christ is speaking. This is the reality of the times we live in.

Matthew 10:34 *Think not that I am come to send peace on earth:* (KJV)

Christ is saying, we're not going to sit around in a circle and hold hands and sing "Kumbaya"—this isn't the way it works.

34 continued) ... *I came not to send peace, but a sword.*

35) *For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.*

36) *And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.* (KJV)

If we are the spiritual household of God, this is referring to our spiritual brothers and sisters in the Church—enemies in the Church. My wife and I were talking about that the other day; we have been treated far worse by people in the Church than by people outside the Church. That is a testament to this scripture.

37) *He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*

38) *And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.*

39) *He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.* (KJV)

God, as He did with Abraham, is testing us—who do we love most? The self? Our little circle of friends? Our little local congregation? Or do we love God first—who do we love first? Let's go to John 16:1, Christ is speaking, again talking on the same subject. It appears this subject is a thread throughout Christ's life on this earth. He's talking to the disciples.

John 16:1 *These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.* (KJV)

Don't get your tail in a knot over this.

2) *They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.* (KJV)

That's pretty serious stuff.

3) *And these things will they do unto you, because [why?—this is so important] they have not known the Father, nor me [Christ says]. (KJV)*

They kill people thinking they are serving God because they don't even know who God is. There are people in God's Church who do not know who God is. Some here, sitting in this very room, have been put out of their former group. Some have been forced to resign because of situations like this, because they sought to know God and Christ better and they paid a heavy price for it and are paying a heavy price for it. Let's go to Mark 13:12 and see more of Christ's words on this subject. People get all bent out of shape—why can't everybody get along? Well, you can't, if you have people like this in your midst.

Mark 13:12 *Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.*

13) *And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. (KJV)*

This word *betray* is interesting; we won't turn there, but in Matthew 20:18, it's the same word that Christ used when He said, the Son of Man shall be betrayed under the chief priests and the scribes and they will condemn Him to death. Same kind of betrayal. The attempt to wear out the saints, that God is allowing, that Satan is provoking, is a test for all of us. Let's go to 2 Timothy 2:3; here's an admonition from Paul to Timothy but it also applies to us today.

2 Timothy 2:3 [Paul says] *Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. (KJV)*

Remember we're fighting a war, and he says, as a good soldier does, you have to endure hardness. The Greek word for *endure hardness*—it's one word but translated two in English—means "endure affliction" or "suffer trouble". So expect it, God says, because it's a test to see who you are going to put first in your life.

If we put God first, I can guarantee you (because I've experienced it, I'm sure all of you experienced it) when you put God first, no matter how bad the road ahead looks, if you put God first you're like a little kid that holds his hand up—you see little kids do that, they reach up to their Mom and Dad, and Dad or Mom reaches the hand down and they grab the hand and they walk them through a dangerous situation. When we put God first, God grabs us by the hand and leads us through this minefield that exists today in our life. If we take His hand, who can harm us? Think about that. If we're walking hand in hand with God, who can harm us?

The third and last point:

Am I Allowing Myself to Be Worn Out?
Rick Railston
Recorded on September 24, 2018

3. What can we do to avoid being worn out?

What steps can we take to help ourselves out? The first thing we can do (point A, if you like to outline):

3A. We should simplify our lives.

Satan wants to get our lives so complicated we don't have time for God. We don't have time to study, pray—life is just a blur, running from one place to the other. If our life is overly complicated we can ignore the basics, we can drift from God—there are outside activities, there are hobbies, and today it's the TV, the computer, the smart phone and the Internet. You see people out of their minds just doing this all day long [he pantomimes texting on a device]. And every minute we do that could be a minute with our nose in the Bible or on our knees in prayer. All of these compete with putting God first. Let's go to 2 Corinthians 1:12; I'll read this out of the New King James.

2 Corinthians 1:12 *For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God ... (NKJV)*

The Greek word for *simplicity* means “singleness”. What Paul is saying here is I want you to have a laser-like focus of putting God first—no distractions, no smart phones, no computers, no video games, no TV, no movies—I want you to focus on putting God first; a laser-like focus. Eliminate things that are not essential. A good challenge would be, turn off the TV set for a week and see what happens. At the end of the week, you might be smarter ((laughs)), I'm just kidding. Turn off the TV set and maybe a little more prayer results, maybe a little more study results, maybe there are fewer distractions or temptations to have wrong thoughts allied with whatever is on the screen. Or drastically limit time on smart phones, particularly for our children. Don't let that go on for hour after hour after hour because every minute is a lost minute putting God first. Satan wants our lives so busy and so complicated that our religious life gets crowded out, and as we get closer to the end we just cannot do that. We need to simplify our lives.

3B. We have to put God first in every facet of our life.

We need to make our religion our number-one priority: Seek first the Kingdom of God—that's not an idle statement. Seek first the Kingdom of God. We need to clearly know God. Let's go to John 17:3. I read over this verse, I'm ashamed to say, for decades. I'm ashamed of it. A few years ago I read it as though I read it for the first time—it's like I never read it before. Talks about life eternal, and if life eternal is there our antenna should go up, and we should say, it's time to focus here.

John 17:3 *And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. (KJV)*

Could this be at the end of the age, as we get closer to the end, that God is saying, okay, it's time for you to know Me a little better, and I'm going to remove a layer of blindness if you will pay attention, if you will study. I will remove a layer of blindness, and I will reveal a new depth about Myself, about My Son, about our relationship, about our roles, about our activities as recorded in the Bible—if you will have it, I will reveal it. If you want to slam the book shut and hold on to whatever you had before, you have to answer to Me for that. But as we get closer to the end I want you to know Me better. That's because God loves us. Think about that—God loves us so much that He wants us, as we get closer to the end, to know Him better. We need to put God first in everything—it's the very first commandment. That was talked about in the sermonette, you shall have no other gods, nothing before Me. We need to honor God as supreme and Christ as the one who gave His life for us. They are both God. But we have to put God first in everything.

3C. We need to renew our zeal for God, Christ, and God's Word.

As we pursue a deeper understanding of God and Christ, you know what the common result is? I can't tell you the number of phone calls, emails, that I've received from people who say, it's like I'm studying anew. It's like I'm more excited than when I first came in the Church. I spend more time studying than I did when I first came in the Church. I'm seeing things about God and Christ I have never seen before. The Bible is just opened up to Me and when I pray I know Who I am praying to and I have a vision in my mind of Who I'm praying to. When I sing songs, as we do, I'm watching those words. We can all memorize them and we're sitting there and you know, you can be thinking about the football game tomorrow while you're singing a song, but people say, no, when I'm singing the songs now, I'm looking at Most High God, Almighty God, and it rings true to me and I know Who I'm singing to.

The common result is a new zeal for God and Christ and a new zeal for God's Word. Zeal is the perfect antidote for tiredness when you think about it. When you're tired, but something comes along that's exciting, the tiredness goes away, it just melts; we've all been there done that. You just get up, you have new energy and you go forward. Zeal is the perfect antidote for tiredness. Look at Revelation 3:19, talking to Laodicea. Yes, we're right here, this is the era—we don't have to be Laodicean but we're certainly in the Laodicean Era. Christ is saying to us today,

Revelation 3:19 *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: [I allow pressures to come on you and I allow Satan to try to wear you out, but, He says] be zealous therefore, and repent. (KJV)*

It's interesting, the root word for *zealous* is "to have warmth"—to be on fire. When you're on fire, you're not tired. When you get a pep talk in the huddle in a football game, and you go out and all of a sudden all the fatigue goes away, you just plow into the guy across from you, you don't care. Being zealous is a perfect antidote to being tired.

Today, it's a radical idea to seek new understanding about God. It just amazes me people will throw rocks at you because you want to understand more about God; it's as though there's something wrong with you. Why do you want to do that? Let's just keep things the way they are, let's just have calm waters here, and we don't need to understand anything more about God, we already have it all. It is a radical idea among some to seek a new understanding about God, *and* to seek corrections for our previous misbeliefs.

Let me pose a question to you: Which is worse, allowing heresy to enter the Church or to hold on to heresy that already is in the Church? What's the difference? There's no difference—heresy is heresy, right? What we need to do is look to God and if we're wrong, we're wrong—admit it, and if we're right and we prove it, we hold on to that for all we are worth. I watched a movie a number of years ago with Jim Carrey, that zany, comic guy—he's absolutely crazy. In one of the movies, he says (I'm quoting him now) *Hold on to your lug nuts, mama, it's time for an overhaul!* ((laughs)) In some ways that kind of epitomizes this time we're in. New understandings, deeper understandings. God is doing just that—our zeal for what He is doing should be apparent at this Feast, among all of us, in our discussions, in our talks, in our joy—to know that God loves us and He's revealing new aspects of Himself.

Okay, let's close. God allows Satan to attempt to wear us out as a trial—as a test. He attempts it. We don't have to let it to happen but He is allowing Satan to try. That allows God to see—will we give in to fatigue? Will we allow ourselves to be worn out? Will we give in to the provocations of Satan? Will we become discouraged and depressed and all of that, or will we use the power of God through His Spirit to do His will and to do what pleases Him?

We don't want persecution and opposition and Satan to derail us and start a spiritual slide—rather, what God is doing in some ways leads to a second conversion, a deeper conversion, because we know God better, we know Christ better. We can't let Satan and his system wear us out, we just can't do that. We can't allow ourselves to become cynical or negative, or put God second in our lives or slowly drift away. We have seen, God warned us in scripture, that Satan is attempting to wear us out and we need to realize that God wants us to make it. Look at what He says; let's go to Luke 12:32. I know you know these scriptures but let's put them in context with these end days, with Satan's effort to get us derailed, Satan's effort to wear us out.

Luke 12:32 [Christ says] *Fear not, little flock* [and indeed we are a little flock]; *for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.* (KJV)

He has given us the power to do that, to overcome. The power to overcome our mental tiredness, our weariness—look at 1 John 4:4. This is something we have to hang on to at all times.

1 John 4:4 *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them:* [how?]

because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world [which refers to Satan]. (KJV)

We can't be worn out if we allow God—who has all power—to live in us, work in us and energize us. It's our responsibility to exercise His Spirit and to fight against mental fatigue. Let's go to 1 Peter 3:11, two more scriptures; we're going to wind up back in Daniel 7 and see the end of the story, but before we do that, I'll read this out of the New King James. We're being tested now.

1 Peter 3:11 *Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it.*

12) *For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."*

13) *And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?*

14) *But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled."* (NKJV)

What reassurance! Let's close by seeing how it all ends. Let's go back to Daniel 7 and this time we're going to start in verse 27.

Daniel 7:27 *And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.*

18) *But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever. (KJV)*

Here at the Feast, let's celebrate this coming reality and let's fight the good fight, knowing we can conquer Satan, we can conquer tiredness and weariness. Let's understand that and exercise God's Holy Spirit.