

The Wearing Out of the Saints

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Today we are going to start with a big question. Are you tired? I think most of us would say, yes, we are just kind of tired. Do you feel, at times, completely worn out, and sometimes that life can be more of a burden than a joy? Given what is going on in the world and the turmoil in our country today—Covid and all of that—many people would say that.

Many in God's church feel this way and the fact is, this phenomenon of feeling tired and worn out, was prophesied a long time ago. Today, we are going to look at the prophecies regarding this and see what lessons we can learn from them. This is going to be a long introduction to set the stage, but hopefully you will hang in there with me. We are going to have a long introduction and then get into the meat of the sermon.

In Daniel 7; Daniel had a dream and this is a parallel dream to the great image in Chapter 2.

Daniel 7:1 *In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream [for our benefit], and told the sum of the matters.*

2) *Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea.*

3) *And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another.*

4) *The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings:*

5) *...another beast, a second, like to a bear ...*

6) *... After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard ...*

7) *After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, 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 it had ten horns. (KJV)*

Today, we are not going to dwell on the identity of these beasts, that is not the point. We know this is a series of ruling governments down through the centuries, so let's go to verse 15.

15) *I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. (KJV)*

If we were in Daniel's place and had these visions, I think we would be troubled too; he didn't know what to make of it.

16) *I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So, he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things.*

17) *These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth.*

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

This is looking down the road, setting the time frame—the end time—that we are in right now. We see these four kings or kingdoms, arise from the earth. It's a progressive prophecy; these kingdoms arise over the centuries down through to the present age. They are called beasts. The truth of human government is that they are all like beasts.

Ronald Reagan was one of my favorite Presidents—he was the fortieth President from 1981 to 1989—and he talked a lot about government and government interference in the lives of people. He said, “The most terrifying words in the English language are, ‘I’m from the government and I’m here to help.’” He also said, “Government is like a baby; an alimentary canal with a big appetite at one end and no sense of responsibility at the other.” Like a beast. We see that these governments are like a beast—like an animal. 9, New King James.

19) *Then I wished to know the truth about the fourth beast, [this last one, this fourth kingdom] which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its nails of bronze, which devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled the residue with its feet; (NKJV)*

Verse 23.

23) *Thus, he said: The fourth beast shall be A fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all other kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, trample it and break it in pieces. (NKJV)*

So, notice the extra emphasis on this fourth beast that it is indeed different. The timing of the fourth beast is obviously closer to the end of the age, as we will see. We will also see that with this fourth beast, there is a religious element tied in.

With that in mind, we will look forward to see how all this plays out in Revelation 17. You might want to keep a marker in Daniel 7 because we will be coming back there a couple of times. Revelation 17:1, looking at the fulfillment of this as we get close to the end of this age.

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)*

The word “whore” is translated in the NLT and NIV, *a prostitute*. Then it says this prostitute sits on many waters. What does that mean? The Bible defining the Bible, in verse 15 tells us.

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

Just like the sea and earth that was described in Daniel 7. So, we see that this prostitute influences and dominates nations and peoples. Verse 2.

2) *With whom [referring to this great whore] the kings of the earth have committed fornication [intercourse, interaction; it can be economically, it could be religiously, it can cover a lot of territory], and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. (KJV)*

This is not a small phenomenon; this is a worldwide phenomenon. So, we see like we saw in Daniel 7, this great whore has influence and power over political and military leaders who control large populations. Verse 5—now we get to the identity.

5) *And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. (KJV)*

We are told that this prostitute is the mother of all kinds of evil. The Greek word for “mother” here means, *the source, the origin, the genesis*. It is referring to the prostitution of this great whore. Therefore, we see here because we are told, Mystery, Babylon the Great, is that Babylon which is the source of this perversion and this prostitution. Going on in verse 6.

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

Who or what is this great whore? A whore could represent an individual or a system or both but an individual or system that perverts. The entire context is our Father’s way on earth, the true religion and this Babylonian system is trying to pervert the true religion. Only a counterfeit religious system would persecute and kill the Saints. Otherwise, why do it? That has happened down through the centuries to destroy the truth in God’s word, to destroy the truth being preached and promulgated around the earth. We see that it is an outgrowth of ancient Babylon. What is known as the Babylonian mystery religion but here it has grown great; Mystery Babylon the Great.

Now go back to Daniel 7 and we will begin in verse 20, I skipped over these two verses. We will read this out of the New King James.

Daniel 7:20 *... and the ten horns that were on its head [referring to the fourth beast], and the other horn which came up, before which three fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and [notice this] a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance was greater than his fellows.*

21) *I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them ... (NKJV)*

Who would make war with the Saints? That would have to be a false religious system. Speaking pompous words, they would speak against God Almighty and the truth of God Almighty.

22) [this happened] *until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom. (NKJV)*

We see here, putting verses 21 and 22 together, that this false religious system will prevail against the Saints. That is a reality that we must accept. It is going to happen. It continues until the Father and His Son return. As an aside, we read here of the Ancient of Days. Who is that referring to? It only appears three times in the Bible, all here in Daniel. Verse 13 gives us the identity of the Ancient of Days.

13) *I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him [the Son of man] near before him. (NKJV)*

Two beings—the Father and the Son. The Father we know as Yehovah. It's very clear who the Ancient of Days is; there's obviously many other scriptures that support that. Clearly, these are the end times when the Father and the Son return to this earth.

Let's now look at this Babylonian system and ask, who could be behind this system? This system is a human system, but are there influences behind it of a spiritual nature? We know the very familiar scripture—we won't turn there—1 Peter 5:8, that our adversary—our adversary—the devil is like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. That Greek word for "devour" means *to gulp down or to swallow whole*. We know—we won't turn there either, for time's sake—but in Revelation 12, as the end nears, Satan is cast down to the earth and in verse 10, Satan accuses the brethren all the time and in verse 13 he persecutes the woman, which we understand and we know to be the church. The point I'm making is, this false religious system has a backing. This Mystery of Babylon the Great has a spiritual backing. It is not of men, it is of Satan, a very powerful spirit being. Now in Daniel 7:25.

Daniel 7:25 *And he [the spokesman for this false religious system from Satan] shall speak great words against the most High [against the Ancient of Days, against the Almighty], and shall wear out the saints of the most High [number one], and think to change times [number two] and laws [number three]: (NKJV)*

As we get closer to the end, these three things come into play.

1. Changing times.
2. Changing laws.

3. Wearing out of the Saints.

Now, if you are a student of history of the early New Testament church, you will know that this false religious system penetrated the New Testament church early on in an effort to change it, to get it off course, to get it off track. Very early on, this system began to penetrate the church, began to take the church in a different direction to what the apostles had originally taught. Paul acknowledged that and warned the people about it.

2 Thessalonians 2:7 *For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work [in those early days]; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. 8) And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. This mystery of lawlessness is going to continue to work right until the very end and Christ will destroy that system. (NKJV)*

Now go to Jude, the half-brother of Christ and see what Jude has to say. We will begin in verse 3 and read verses 3 and 4 of Jude out of the New King James.

Jude 1:3 *Beloved [he loves the brethren], while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. (NKJV)*

Why would he do this if not that the faith—the belief—was being perverted by this religious system—this false system.

4) For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, [notice what they do] who turn [could we say prostitute?] the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. (NKJV)

Two beings—the only LORD God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. But to prostitute is to turn people away from the truth regarding them. This false system, we were told, changed laws and times in that prophecy. That's exactly what happened in the early church of God. I think most of us have heard about the Quartodeciman controversy. Quartodeciman means fourteenth and that term is actually taken from the Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible of Leviticus 23:5. The Latin word—I rarely get to use my high school Latin and I've forgotten most of it—but the Quartodeciman comes from die quarta decima and it basically means *the fourteenth*. The controversy arose because early Christians as we know kept the New Testament Passover on the fourteenth of the first month of Nissan and no matter what day of the week it fell, it didn't make any difference. It wasn't a set day of the week; it was a set calendar day. The problem is, this false religious system penetrated the churches at Rome and the surrounding areas of Rome and they put ideas in human minds to the point that they began to worship according to the pagans around them so they could bring pagans into the fold so to speak. They began to term it Easter—Ishtar—always on the Sunday following the full

moon, following the spring equinox. It was always on a Sunday, whereas God's way is a fixed date on His calendar. They called it the resurrection of our Savior—the day of the resurrection of our Savior, always on a Sunday. Changing times. They simultaneously changed the Sabbath to Sunday. So, we see from history that this false religious system changed times and laws and wore out the Saints. If you look again at history, only a remnant of the original group in the early New Testament church—after the death of that first generation—only a remnant stayed faithful.

This false religious system, coming down to our day, (most of us who have had a Worldwide Church of God background understand this), penetrated the modern-day church, just as it did back then. They changed the laws. This occurred in the late 1980's and early 1990's. The leaders pursued theology degrees from this false religious system, they adopted the cross as a religious symbol and they adopted this false religious system's understanding of the nature of God. Basically, homogenizing the Father and the Son by way of the trinity. They stated that keeping the Sabbath was no longer a requirement. They did away with the understanding that the world was cut off from God at this time, rather saying it's our job to go out and convert everybody in the world and its war against us and Satan and we're losing. They did away with tithing, saying that the law is not necessary to be kept for salvation. Lastly, they changed the very name of God's church. So, they changed laws and they also changed times. Doing away with the Passover and going to Easter Sunday, exactly what happened back in the early New Testament church. Then they changed the Sabbath to Sunday.

We see, as Solomon said, there is nothing new under the sun. What happened back then has happened in our lifetimes. Changing laws and changing times. These have happened, we have witnessed it with our own eyes. I realize some who are part of Pacific do not have a Worldwide Church of God background and I say this for the benefit of those who have—you can research this and find out for yourself.

All of us have rejected changing the laws and changing the times. But what about the third? The wearing out of the Saints in Daniel 7:25. That effort, by our adversary, is ongoing and is expanding as we get closer and closer to the end time. The question I asked in the beginning, as we are winding up the introduction now—are you tired? Do you feel worn out? Do you feel that life is a burden? That sometimes you can just hardly bare it? I think all of us have been there and done that. That leads to the subject of today—the wearing out of the Saints.

We will see what lessons we can learn from this account that apply to us today and how we can cope with this. We are told this is going to happen. This is an ongoing effort by a spiritual force that is far more powerful than we are. Not as powerful of course as God Almighty—Yehovah—the Most-High God.

Let's ask the question—point number one.

1. How are the Saints worn out?

We are going to talk about three ways. The definition of the Hebrew word “wear out” in Daniel 7:25 is *Strong’s #1080* and it’s interesting when you study this, this word is only used in a mental sense. It’s not talking about being physically tired like when you go for a run or work out and are physically spent; this is talking about *a mental wearing out*. It means *to harass constantly*. Strong’s says it corresponds to #1086, just ten digits away and #1086 means *to become old or to become spent*. This is a process that occurs over time, it doesn’t just happen in one minute or one day or one hour. So, we see—we talk about how are the saints worn out. There are three ways.

1A. We become tired mentally and spiritually.

Look at the upset and the trouble in the church over the last twenty-five years or so. It seems to me that the trials used to be concentrated around Passover back in the 1960’s and 1970’s. Then over time, a gob of trials came upon us around Feast time. But now it seems, in the last several years, the trials come like the waves of the sea. Just one after the other, after the other, after the other, to try and knock us down. Just like the waves of the sea. I ask the question: when we become tired, what happens? I think most of us are alike in the sense that when we become tired, we get a little irritable don’t we? We get a little crabby.

I can remember twenty or so years ago in the Northwest, there was a young girl—I think she was ten or eleven—her name was Megan and we got to be good friends. Megan and her family lived on a farm and I didn’t know it at the time but their goats got out Friday night and the whole family chased around the whole area around their farm chasing these goats. They didn’t get any sleep. They finally got them rounded up and went back to the house, took a shower and came to church; they had a good drive too. After services she was standing in the line next to me—the line for the potluck—she was ahead of me and took the tongs and reached for broccoli and dropped it and then reached a second time and dropped it a second time. She did it the third time and I leaned over and whispered, having a little trouble with our eye and hand coordination today? She stood back with her hands on her hips and said, “Back off Rick”. I started laughing and put my arm around her and said okay tell me what happened last night because she was crabby; she was not happy at all. When we are tired, we get impatient. When we are tired it’s hard to focus. Sometimes we have trouble studying and taking a chain of thought in scripture and following it through. Sometimes we have trouble focusing on what needs to be done and it becomes harder to fast or to study or to pray as we should. When we get tired—mentally tired—we get tired of fighting the flesh. We’re just weary of fighting the flesh, fighting our human nature. Thereby it’s easy to give in to the flesh, to give in to our human nature and Satan understands that. The prince of the power of the air, he broadcasts thoughts and emotions into our mind and we give into them when we are worn out or in the process of being worn out.

Vince Lombardi—I’ve read a couple of his books and a biography of him—he was an incredibly charismatic man; a great motivator and he knew a lot about football. He was the coach of the Green Bay Packers when they won the first three Super Bowls. He made one comment, “Fatigue makes cowards of us all” because we don’t want to fight

against Satan and our human nature; we are just too tired to put forth the effort, too tired to do what needs to be done. We find that when we are tired it's easier to compromise, to fall into sin. Those who are tired and worn out, it's very easy for them to no longer make their religion their number one priority. It is a priority but it's not their number one priority.

We have to remember that wearing out takes time. Satan is very patient. If he doesn't get us today, he will try again tomorrow. If he doesn't get us during the day light hours, he will try at night. Dreams, thoughts, unsettled sleep where we become even more tired. He is patient. It takes months, years, even decades but he's not going to give up.

When I was in graduate school one of the noted psychologists of the day was a Dr. John Court and he did a very famous experiment—we read about it—it was well known even in the public in those days. I'm going to read from the summary of his report.

“A frog was placed in cold water and then the temperature was slowly and imperceptibly increased. Eventually the temperature reached the boiling point yet the frog made no effort to escape. Because the change occurred so slowly there was no recognition of the danger.” [This is Court's own words.] “And the frog died, making no attempt at self-preservation because the temperature increased so slowly, the frog did not recognize it.”

Satan does the same thing; he influences so slowly and in such tiny increments that we don't recognize it. Think about this: If you look at what is on TV today and put it on TV when TV first came out in the early 1950's and you broadcast what was on today back then, you would have riots in the streets. If Congress didn't do anything about it, they would kick them all out. Slowly by slowly, year by year, decade by decade, look at where we are and where we have come. We as God's people need to learn that lesson because we can't let tiny incremental changes, over time, get us from point A to point B and point B can be sin. We have to be careful about that. Let's go to 2 Peter 2:20. I'll read this out of the New King James. Peter is describing a sad state of affairs and we don't want to be there.

2 Peter 2:20 *For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome [increment by increment, over time], the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.*

21) For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn [there it is again; we could say to prostitute themselves] from the holy commandment delivered to them.

22) But it has happened [Peter is saying it's already happening] to them according to the true proverb: [Now he's quoting Proverbs 26:11] A dog returns to his own vomit,” and, a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.” (NKJV)

As a result of Satan's working and wearing people out over time, some have gone back to where they came from and we all know of former brethren in the church who are now keeping Easter, Christmas and they're back in the world—we know that. In Luke 9:62. Christ was referring to this very phenomenon in part when He said what He said there.

Luke 9:62 *And Jesus said unto him, no man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back ... (KJV)*

You are plowing and going forward and want to cut a straight furrow, what on earth are you doing looking behind you? You can't chart your course if you are looking behind you and what is behind you? The world from whence he came.

62 continued) ... *is fit for the kingdom of God.* (KJV)

Yet we have seen people taken captive because of that very thing. Ending this first point—point A—is that the Saints are worn out because of mental fatigue which leads to spiritual fatigue.

A second reason—point B—of how Saints are worn out:

1B. By thinking negatively.

Stop for a minute and look at the world we live in. Look at all the negativity going on in the world today. Shutting down of our society because of Covid. We have an election and we have ICBM's going back and forth or was it accurate, was it not accurate, people are up in arms, fighting back and forth. The undermining of our basic institutions, the undermining of our basic Judeo-Christian ethics and the morals that this country was founded upon. Look at the natural disasters—the hurricanes, the wildfires that just, in California in particular, have no end. Look at the dysfunctional, incompetent, corrupt government that we have that is so partisan, nobody is listening to anybody. The thing that gets me most of course, is the murdering of millions of babies through abortion. All of this with which we are bombarded today, is negative, negative, negative. All the news with the exception of tiny little snippets of news is all negative which can cause us to focus on the negative and get wound up about the negative. The more negative we become the more disillusioned we become. We become bummed out, turned off, disappointed, disillusioned and I think some people say, my life isn't turning out the way I wanted it to. Or I've heard some people say, I didn't sign up for this. Well, yes, we did sign up when we were baptized.

Look at the splintering in the church; it's had a negative effect. Some people who were hoping the church would all come back together feel that somehow God, the church, the ministry have not met their expectations and they are bummed out (*annoyed, upset or disappointed*) about that. We see division on top of division in the church. It's a negative thing that people can glum (*being depressed or down in the dumps*) onto and focus on and then their whole life—given everything that is going wrong in the world—becomes a negative experience. In 1 Corinthians 11:18; Paul is addressing an issue because there

were divisions in the church at Corinth. Some people said they were from Paul and others said they were from Apollos and Barnabas and some said they were from Jesus Christ and the list goes on and on. They had a division about what they did in keeping the Passover. This is from of the NIV.

1 Corinthians 11:18 *In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church [referring to keeping the Passover specifically but if you read all of 1 Corinthians, they had many divisions in that church], there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it.*

19) *No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. (NIV)*

If you have this false religious system creeping into the church and then you have people who look to God and look to the Bible for their foundation and their guidance and you have this false religious system intermingling, is it a surprise that there are differences? Is it a surprise to note that right in front of me, look what I see? Paul is saying division is necessary and will continue to happen to differentiate those who yield to God Almighty and those who yield to this false religious system. There is a separation between those who yield to God Almighty and those who do not yield to God Almighty.

We have all experienced abuses by the ministry and that can be a whole negative thing in and of itself. Some people are stuck in the past and can't get over it and just dwell on it. But abuses by the ministry in the past and even today in some areas, lead to disillusionment with the church—negatively thinking about the church or even negatively thinking about God. I've heard people say, how can this be God's church if this is going on? How can this guy be a minister of God if he's doing this? How can He allow that? And somehow people begin to be bummed out with God Almighty.

Let's take a step back from this and just think for a minute and look at the situation. We have to ask ourselves—we can't ever forget to ask ourselves—who is behind all of this negativity in the world and in the church? Who is behind it? Satan is the author of negative thinking. We are told in John 8:44 that Satan is the author of all lies and by extension we can easily understand that he is the author of all perversion, of all whoredoms of this great whore of Babylon that we are talking about. In the Garden of Eden, Satan provoked Adam and Eve, did he not? He provoked them to become disillusioned with Yehovah. What did he say? God doesn't mean what He says, you can't rely on Him, He's just telling you what you want to hear and He's exalting Himself but I'll tell you the truth.

The issue is, we can't become negative, we can't allow ourselves to become disillusioned with God or the church because of the conduct of some people in it. It's easy to become negative about life in general. My wife and I sometimes watch the news and you are kind of down after the news because there is nothing good going on it, hardly at all. Negativity can color our entire attitude toward life. As a result, Satan wants us to focus on the negative because it diminishes our calling. It diminishes our reward. We get our mind off the end and look at what's happening today and we can get

bumped out about it. Go to Romans 8:28, 29. out of the New Living Translation. This is something we can't forget. I was talking to Toby yesterday and he brought up this very scripture and this very principle regarding the trial that they are going through.

Romans 8:28 *And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.*
(NLT)

So, we can have the absolute faith that whatever trial comes our way God either allows or causes it Himself—whatever trial—is to get us to the point where we are better able to be in His Kingdom. We know that Corinthians and Philippians tell us that we have to change from the old person to the new person. The new person is in the image of Jesus Christ and the trials that our Father allows, come upon us so that we can see and change to become like His Son.

29) *For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.*
(NLT)

We have to emulate His Son and we need to focus on the reward and we need to look at the example of Jesus Christ. Nobody had more persecution than Jesus Christ, nobody had more trials than Jesus Christ and yet He never, ever got off track. He didn't think negatively, He kept His mind on His Father because He said, I come to do the will of My Father. Everything I speak is from Him, every action I take is from Him. When we catch ourselves thinking negatively, we need to turn to Philippians 4:8, let's go there. You know where we are going, but my point is, sometimes when we are bombarded with trials—one negative thing after another—it might be a good idea to take a deep breath, pull out the Bible and turn to Philippians 4:8.

Philippians 4:8 *Finally, brethren, [he's summing up] whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.* (KJV)

Think on these things instead of the garbage that is out in the world and getting caught up in all the kerfuffle that's going everywhere we turn—locally, state level, nationally and world level—and think on these things. So, a second way of Satan getting to us—how the Saints are worn out—is by thinking negatively.

The third way the Saints are worn out:

1C. By allowing our trials to overwhelm us or overcome us.

As I mentioned before, it used to be that trials would come occasionally. Now they seem to come one after the other, just like the waves of the sea—unrelenting, unremitting, one after the other and after a while, if we allow it and get our mind off where our mind

should be, we can become overwhelmed and can't handle it. Yet the Father has said, I'm not going to give you anything you can't handle. When I feel this way personally, what I do is think of Paul's trials and Christ's trials. Let's focus just on the human Paul and go to 1 Corinthians 11:23. As we read this, think of our trials today that we might feel overwhelmed from, we might feel like we just can't handle it, but compare our situation with what Paul went through in his day. He's defending his apostleship. He's defending his ministry against those who are attacking him.

2 Corinthians 11:23 *Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, [Have any of us had so many stripes that we can't count them? Nobody] in prisons more frequent, [have any of us been in prisons? A few—when I came into the church a few were in military prison because of being a conscientious objector] in deaths oft. (KJV)*

Meaning he was close to death often. Have we ever had that?

24) Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. (KJV)

Thirty-nine stripes. The reason it was thirty-nine is because forty was considered a death experience. The average human being could not handle forty so they cut it back, in great mercy of course, to thirty-nine. Paul is saying, I've been through this five times. Can you imagine the lingering pain from five times thirty-nine stripes? Broken bones, torn muscles, ligaments, scars and the after-effect years down the road from these and how he must have been in pain continually! Think about that.

25) Thrice was I beaten with rods, [can you imagine just one time, but he was beaten three times] once was I stoned ... (KJV)

Get in a circle and people with rocks in their hands and they start throwing them at you until you have a concussion and you go down and they keep throwing rocks at you.

25 continued) ... thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; (KJV)

When you look at that, our trials are nothing compared to Paul's trials. When you read accounts like this, it helps put our trials into perspective.

In Acts 14 we see an example of Paul being stoned and notice how he reacted and the help he received. The Jews were after him because he was a turncoat in their view; he was a traitor among traitors.

Acts 14:19 *And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. (KJV)*

He was unconscious and he probably had a concussion and they just threw him out on the ground to rot out there outside the city.

20) Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, [probably thinking, how are we going to bury him?] he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. (KJV)

That was a miracle of deliverance and an example to all of us.

*21) And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch,
22) Confirming the souls of the disciples, [confirming what they were going through] and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. (KJV)*

That is a principle that frankly wasn't around—wasn't emphasized—when I first came into the church because people thought that bad things didn't happen to God's people. Because we know the truth and are converted and have His Holy Spirit, we have this slide into the Kingdom and the fact that there is grease on it, we are just going to slide right into the Kingdom with no difficulty whatsoever. That's not what the Bible says and that's not what Paul experienced, or what Christ experienced or the other apostles experienced. Frankly it's not what we are experiencing either, is it?

How did Paul deal with his overwhelming trials that are far greater than ours? Let's go to Philippians 4:13 and a very simple answer. This is where we have to keep our focus and not on the trial itself, not on one trial after another trial or the negativity around us in the world. Paul's mind was on this.

Philippians 4:13 *I can do all things [not some, not most] through Christ which strengtheneth me. (KJV)*

Closing out this first point, how are the Saints worn out? By being tired, especially mentally, by becoming disillusioned, bummed out, turned off and then allowing our trials to overwhelm us. If Paul could endure these trials and function during these trials, so can we. Go to Mark 10:25, to close out this first point. Christ is speaking and telling His disciples in verse 25:

Mark 10:25 *It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. (KJV)*

Of course, they react to that—He said that in verse 25, now look at verse 26.

26) And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, who then can be saved? (KJV)

Can any of us be saved?

27) And Jesus looking upon them saith, with men it is impossible, but not with God [His Father, God]: for with God [the Father, the Almighty, the Most-High] all things are possible. (KJV)

We have to keep that in mind. We cannot lose sight of our future and our calling.

Second point.

2. Why does God allow this attempt upon us, the Saints?

Why does He allow it? What is His purpose? What is He trying to accomplish in this? Remember He has allowed or caused this false system to change times, to change laws and He is allowing them to try and wear us out. There has to be a purpose behind that. He does so—He allows these trials to come up on us—and He watches us to see how we are going to handle them. Are we going to quit? Are we going to whine and complain? He allows these to come upon us to see what we are spiritually made of. The Proverbs—Proverbs 24—tells us, if you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small. God allows trials to see what level of strength we have. Are we going to rely on Him or just look inward and whine and complain and moan and be negative?

The Father watches us to see if we are going to become disillusioned and go back to from whence, we came. 1 Peter 4:17; we know this scripture but let's apply it to the wearing out of the Saints. To this particular point.

1 Peter 4:17 *For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begins 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)

It's like the Father is allowing us to file ourselves; it's like we are standing in front of a big file cabinet of hanging file folders and there are labels on each file folder and one label says disillusioned, another says weak, another says quitters, another says negative and so on. He's watching to see where we file ourselves. Others are zealous, faithful, loyal, keeps his or her mind on the goal. He allows us to file ourselves; He's watching us. With that in mind go to 2 Timothy 2:3. This out of the New King James.

2 Timothy 2:3 *You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. (NKJV)*

You must endure hardship. "Endure hardship" is one Greek word and it means *to suffer evils, to suffer troubles*. That's part of our life. Go to Hebrews 12:7, and another admonition. Our Father chastises us for a reason; it's not for His pleasure but He does so for a reason.

Hebrews 12:7 *If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? (KJV)*

As we read in Romans 8:28, it's always for our benefit; it's never for our harm. Christ told us—we won't turn there—in Mark 13:12, Christ prophesies and says at the end of the day, brother is going to betray brother and brother will betray brother to death, father to son to death, children are going to rise up against their parents to death and you're going to be hated by all. He's referring to the end times and He said, the only way you are going to get through this is to endure to the end and then you will be saved. Why does the Father allow this attempt by Satan to wear us out? As a test to rely on Him to make us stronger and stronger and stronger as time goes on.

The third and last point.

3. How can we avoid being worn out?

Sometimes we lose track, we lose focus and we think, God why are you doing this to me? How can you allow this to happen to me? The fact is, we have to realize that God Almighty and His Son, Jesus Christ, want us to make it. That is the goal. Everything that He allows or causes is focused on that goal. Go to Luke 12:32; these are basic scriptures but when we are in the middle of our trials, sometimes we forget. We don't think about this and therefore we can become negative and we can go backwards spiritually. Christ is speaking and He's talking to us, the flock. He is the Good Shepherd and we are His sheep.

Luke 12:32 *Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. (KJV)*

Therefore, there is a purpose behind each trial we suffer. We don't know what it is generally, when we are going to through it. It's my experience that we only see in hind sight—you look back and see why He allowed this. I didn't understand it at the time. We know in 1 Timothy 2:4—we won't turn there, very familiar scripture—it says our Father who will have all men [and women] to be saved, to come to the knowledge of the truth; that is the goal. John is like a father to all of us because the other disciples had died long ago, he lived to a ripe old age and is writing as a father would write to his children—his human children.

1 John 4:3 *And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God [very simple, basic truth]: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come [we've read scriptures and talked about that]; and even now already is it in the world. (KJV)*

The prostitution has started, the perversion has started, the corruption has started—in the world and in the church.

4) *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. (KJV)*

Referring to Satan and Satan is extremely powerful, extremely cunning and patient and the only solution is for us to look to our Father and His Son—His Son setting us the example, get behind me Satan, forty days and forty nights, trials and tests we can't even imagine—His Son has overcome and therefore so can we. Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in those who are trying to pervert the truth of God.

If we allow the God of all power—that's why He is called Most High, that is why He is called Almighty, that is why He is called Yehovah; He who has no beginning, He who has no end and He who is alive right now—we cannot be worn out if we rely on Him, but we have to ask. Remember what Christ said in Matthew 7:7, ask and it shall be given to you, seek and you shall find, knock and it will be open to you. Those are all actions we have to take. We have to seek, we have to ask, we have to knock. We can't whine and complain if we don't do that and don't get help from God Almighty. It is our part. All of us need to look at ourselves and we need to return to making our religion our number one priority. Seeking first God's Kingdom, keeping our eye on the goal. In the beginning we sought the Kingdom all the time, we were consumed by it. To overcome the wearing out of the Saints, we have to have that same mindset; we are to be consumed by achieving the Kingdom of God. We need to make sure that we are putting our Father first—the Almighty first—in everything. Our thoughts, our words and our deeds. Let's go to Romans 12:9, this out of the New King James. Paul is giving advice to all of us, it applies to all of us.

Roman 12:9 *Let love be without hypocrisy. (NKJV)*

In other words, don't have an agenda to your love; don't try to get something.

9 continued) ... *Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.*

10) *Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love [what a concept], in honor giving preference to one another; (NKJV)*

We should esteem others better than ourselves—Philippians 2 says do not judge others, look down on others or condemn others, because they are the children of God just like we are.

11) *not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;*

12) *rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; (NKJV)*

I sometimes think, this too shall pass. It's not forever, it will pass. I'm reading out of the New King James. The King James says *continuing instant in prayer*. That is Greek for "continuing instant or continuing steadfastly"—quoting Strong's now—*be constantly diligent*. In usage it's used as a servant. If you have ever watched some of the documentaries about the kings of England in the 1800's, 1700's, 1900's, when they had

a dinner there was a servant behind just about each person and they stood there and watched and when the diner needed something—anything—that attendant was right there instantly. That's the use of the word, being instant in prayer—right there, instant contact, ready to do our Father's bidding. Frankly, when I first came into the church, I could go for hours without thinking about God Almighty. I was young. You get wrapped up in what you were doing, using your own strength—you can do this and God wasn't with me in my mind, minute by minute. Not so anymore because as we get older, we realize the weakness we have—more fatigue, less stamina. In the last several years, God is on my mind constantly. We want to please Him; we want to do His will. The Most-High should be at the very center of our lives at all times. If this is the case, we can avoid being weary; we won't be worn out.

Let's summarize now. Let's ask the question: Has this attempt by Satan to wear us out caused us to spiritually slide, be less converted, less close to God, more bummed out, more negative? Or has it been like a second conversion that has driven us closer to our Father out of necessity and brought us closer to God Almighty and to His Son? God can allow trials to do that very thing, to get us closer to Him.

We cannot let Satan and his false system, wear us out or cause us to become cynical or disillusioned or putting God second in our lives and ourselves first. We cannot allow trials to over time, little by little, little bite sized chunks, get us farther away from our Father—we can't do that. The key is in Galatians 6:9, where Paul is warning the church in Galatia and by extension us today.

Galatians 6:9 *And let us not be weary in well doing: (KJV)*

That's the same concept in the world of just becoming old, spent and tired.

9 continued) *... for in due season [if we endure] we shall reap, if we faint not. (KJV)*

To become weak, to become tired. Knowing this attempt is happening and ongoing should energize us to fight and to overcome it. In 1 Peter 3:11 Peter is encouraging us and we could say, in the midst of trials.

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

You have to actively pursue it, it doesn't just get dropped in our laps, we have to work for it.

12) *For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers [can't forget that]; 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? (NKJV)*

Nobody can harm us. So, with that in mind, let's see how it all ends, one final scripture in Daniel 7:27. Let's see how it all ends, the wearing out of the Saints.

Daniel 7:27 *And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven [spiritually and physically], 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. (KJV)*

The Almighty, the Most-High God, the Ancient of Days. Final verse, verse 18.

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

Let's keep our eyes on our Father and let's not allow ourselves to be worn out.