



Links Players

The Secret Power of Lawlessness

Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day [Christ's return] will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God....for the secret power of lawlessness is already at work, but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. (2 Thessalonians 2:3-7)

Hall Sutton once said of Tiger, "Tiger Woods is not bigger than the game." He would add, "He (Tiger) is not a God." While this was self-motivating talk for Sutton during the 2000 Players Championship (which he won), there is an underlying truth in the statement.

Human beings cannot rise above the context and structures that define and give meaning to their lives. God created the world with specific structures that can never be altered. To attempt to do so is to forfeit one's own identity. It leads to lawlessness and chaos.

The Apostle Paul warns the church against the "power of lawlessness." He counsels the church to worry less about future events and to stand firm against this power, explaining that its defeat is imminent.

Throughout church history, there has been a lot of speculation about who the "man of lawlessness"—the Antichrist—might be. Early Christians thought the antichrist might be an influential Jewish leader who would take center stage in the Temple in Jerusalem. He would persecute and kill followers of Jesus, much like the Apostle Paul did before his conversion.

The Emperor Nero was undoubtedly a candidate for the man of lawlessness in first-century Rome. Nero made "living torches" of Christians along Roman highways after the Christian sect was accused of setting the Great Fire of Rome in AD 64, which destroyed over 70% of the city.

During the 16th and 17th centuries Reformation, the Reformers pointed to the Popes as potential antichrist(s). Tens of thousands of people were killed for breaking the heresy laws of the day, and hundreds were burned at the stake during the English Reformation alone.

In modern times, the man of lawlessness is sometimes considered a politician of European descent who wins the world's favor through forced peace. Books like *The Late Great Planet Earth* and *Left Behind* have exploited this idea, giving way to wild speculation about who the Antichrist might be and the date of Christ's return. This ongoing speculation has created high drama for the Christian community and also sold a lot of books!

While Christians have always tried to guess who the man of lawlessness might be, the power of lawlessness is of genuine concern. This spiritual power attempts to set itself up in people's hearts—do you not know that your bodies are temples? (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

This power is anti-Christ. It refuses to surrender to a loving Creator and deny self for the sake of others. It is self-centered, self-focused, and self-glorifying. This power exalts the self above its Creator. How foolish—how can a creature rise above its Creator?

Paul urges the church to live with confidence and great hope. God's response to this power of lawlessness was to conquer it through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, Jesus. Jesus is overthrowing this dark power with the breath of his mouth—the Holy Spirit. And with the splendor of his coming, he will finally destroy it at its source forever.

Prayer: Not fear or timidity, but love, power and self-discipline. Come Holy Spirit.

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Boo Arnold

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The Links Daily Devotional appears Monday-Friday at linksplayers.com.