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## The Most Important Issue of This Hour

**By David Wilkerson**

June 2, 2008 Christians all over the world have a sense we're living in the final days. The mounting crises, the growing fears, the signs of great shaking — all these things are evident, even to secular commentators. Now, for every follower of Jesus, the question of the hour is this: "Will my faith endure what is coming?"

I believe the most important issue of this hour has to do with what is called "enduring faith." Simply put, will the faith of God's people endure the terrible shaking of all things, the intense trials and testings to come, which no previous generation has faced?

Jesus promised, "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13). When Christ spoke this, he had just described the frightful trials to come upon his disciples: false messiahs, wars and rumors of wars, nation pitted against nation, upheavals in the natural world, earthquakes and pestilence, persecution and martyrdom (see 24:4–12). When those days arrive, Jesus said, "Many shall come in my name... and shall deceive many" (24:5).

What would be the impact of all these things on the church, those who call themselves by his name? Jesus states very clearly: "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (24:12).

Already, our nation is feeling the tremors of the frightful shaking.

Right now, America is facing an economic "perfect storm." This past March (2008), the American financial system nearly collapsed. Bear Stearns, one of the nation's top financial institutions, had to be rescued from bankruptcy by the Federal Bank. The *Wall Street Journal*, a newspaper not prone to alarmism, blared the startling headline: "Fed Saves American Financial System From Collapse."

The Fed had to pour \$30 billion into the deal initially, to stave off a panic that would have sunk this nation into the worst economic depression in its history. To date, more than \$300 billion has been put into the system to save it.

Ten years ago, I wrote a book entitled, *America's Last Call: On the Brink of a Financial Holocaust*. In that book, I warned of the following events:

- There would be a meltdown of the bond market.
- God's judgment would strike suddenly on the U.S. economy.
- A brief, false sense of prosperity would precede the coming economic collapse. (This short flicker of prosperity would be God's final mercy call before the chastening to come.)
- There would be a real estate meltdown, with a market made up of mostly sellers and very few buyers. Multitudes would lose their homes to repossession.
- There would be an ominous rise of homosexual power.
- A sudden storm of confusion would take place on Wall Street.
- God's watchmen and prophets would be silenced.
- The U.S. dollar would collapse.
- America would lose control of its economy. To date, China has loaned America hundreds of billions of dollars. We have become the world's number one debtor nation, no longer in control of our finances.

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Along with many other watchmen, I see that the greatest shaking of all is still to come. What we are about to witness upon the earth will affect every person living. The world is going to see a temporary calm, with relative stability, causing many to say, "The crisis has passed." But in truth, the real panic will still be ahead of us.

Right now, a political madness is gripping America. Think about it: it is utter madness for politicians to promise all kinds of new, multibillion-dollar programs, while the Fed is scrambling to keep the nation's head above the rising flood of debt.

Yet, for the church of Jesus Christ, the real issue is not economic collapse. It isn't even about who presides over the nation. Rather, *it is all about enduring faith.*

Indeed, this one issue has to be foremost in the minds of all who claim to serve Jesus. I ask you: do you at present have an abiding trust in the Lord that will hold up when the world descends into chaos? Or will you waver in times of affliction, as the fearful things Jesus said would come begin to appear on the earth? When that hour comes to pass, will your love for the Lord endure? Or will it grow cold, as Jesus predicted would happen to so many believers?

I ask these questions not to judge or condemn anyone concerning his or her walk with Christ. I ask them of our readers only because these are the questions Jesus put to all who would choose to follow him.

Christ asked, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). Let me give you the context for Jesus' question here.

He had just told the story of a persistent woman who asked a judge to rule in her favor and bring justice to her cause. Jesus uses her as an example of the kind of persistent, enduring faith he is looking for: the kind that calls upon God in times of trial and trusts him to fulfill his promises. Christ knew such enduring faith would be the only kind able to sustain his people in the times to come.

When Jesus addresses this issue of enduring faith, he speaks of those whose belief will endure "but for a while." In other words, when their prayers are not answered — when the deadlines for their requests are not met — they will fall into unbelief. Why? Their faith has no roots.

"He hath no root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended" (Matthew 13:21).

Too often, when afflictions begin showing up in such believers' lives, they become offended. You've probably heard such "offense" expressed by Christians who have faced dire afflictions. They have read God's Word, they have claimed certain promises, they have prayed earnestly, but still their trial continues. And, over time, because they haven't seen an answer to their prayers, they become offended by the Word they've been clinging to.

At some point, a seed of unbelief is planted in their heart. And soon they begin to question God's faithfulness. They can't shake the nagging thought that the Lord has failed to keep his promises to them.

They trusted in him for a while. Whenever you talked with them, their conversation was full of faith, and they testified of God's trustworthiness. But now you begin to hear little doubts in their speech.

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Instead of faith, you hear questions, remarks that betray an inner unbelief.

Make no mistake, Satan feeds those growing doubts. Over time, prayer becomes a burden to such believers. Their love for God's Word begins to fade until they never pick up their Bible anymore. Eventually, their passion for Christ is reduced to a flicker.

Some reading this message are in a dangerous place with their faith. Maybe what I've said here has struck a chord in your soul. I must ask you: have you allowed seeds of unbelief in your heart? Do you now have serious questions regarding God's faithfulness? Instead of worshiping him, do you now doubt him?

"Lord, why haven't you intervened for me? Why have you allowed such confusion in my marriage, my family? You have put on me more than I'm able to bear." Such an attitude can lead to a hardened heart and eventually spiritual deadness.

The apostle Paul exhorted Timothy, "Endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2:3). The Greek word for "hardness" here indicates suffering, difficult afflictions. What does Paul say about these things to Timothy? "Endure them, son! You are a soldier in the Lord's army. You've been trained to undergo hardship in spiritual battle."

We see this reflected in the Old Testament as well. We are told, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, *to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him*" (2 Chronicles 16:9, my italics). The Hebrew word for "perfect" in this verse means "wholly given to him in trust."

Think of it: God looks down upon the whole earth, searching diligently for that man or woman of faith who is wholly given to him in trust. Whenever the Lord finds such a servant, he says of that person, "This beloved one is holding fast to his faith and confidence in me. Therefore, I will show myself strong to him. He's going to know my power, to see my strong arm revealed on his behalf."

The words in this verse were first spoken to King Asa, ruler of Judah, by the prophet Hanani. The searching eyes of the Lord had come upon King Asa, who was loved because he "did what was right before God's eyes."

Asa was by every measure a righteous man who trusted God. He walked in faith, bringing each matter before the Lord so he might receive divine direction. The king was a devoted man of prayer, wholly dependent on God — and his actions proved it.

Asa abolished idolatry in the land, tearing down all false gods. He abolished witchcraft, sodomy and prostitution. And he built up the cities, with strong towers, high walls and secure gates. Under this faithful king's rule, the nation of Judah prospered and was blessed.

And Asa was faithful to remind the people that all their blessings had come to them "because we have sought the Lord our God, we have sought him, and he hath given us rest on every side. So they built and prospered" (2 Chronicles 14:7).

It must have been wonderful to be an Israelite living in Judah at that time. Try to imagine the atmosphere in Judah during those years under Asa's righteous rule. There was peace all around, with everything in divine order. The people were blessed, with full employment and abundant harvests,

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because God was in their midst. No one had to go off to war, because both the king and the people were seeking after the Lord. There was no call for judgment because these were an obedient people.

But one day, suddenly, that peaceful environment changed. A messenger brought to Asa a frightful report: a million-man army was spied heading toward Judah. The Ethiopians and Lubims had combined forces, and now they had a huge militia. It was made up of 300 chariots, multitudes of horsemen, and a million-man infantry, all racing toward Judah and bent on its destruction.

On the very day prior to this, Asa had called on the people to give thanks to the Lord, for the peace and blessings they were enjoying *because they had sought him*. Now we read, “And there came out against them...” (2 Chronicles 14:9). Overnight, Judah was at war, facing one million hostile soldiers.

So, what does a trusting servant of God do when facing such a dilemma? How does he react? Will he panic? Will he turn to the arm of man for help, or place everything into the Lord’s hands, in total trust?

God had his searching eye on Asa in this critical hour. What was the righteous king’s reaction?

“Asa cried unto the Lord his God, and said, Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee. So the Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled” (2 Chronicles 14:11–12).

Tell me, what does Asa’s reaction here say to us, the church of Jesus Christ, today? This godly man had been given the most horrible, frightful news. He was facing incomprehensible odds against his survival, much less victory.

Beloved, the meaning of this passage is clear: *it shows us that victory — impossible victory — is preserved for those who put their trust wholly in the Lord.*

The awful crisis had fallen on Asa and Judah during their most wonderful time of seeking the Lord, when God was smiling on them with his favor. I can’t explain why the Lord allows attacks on his godly servants. But I do know Scripture warns us to expect fiery trials to test our faith. Yet, even so, we are told God will find pure gold in our enduring faith.

Surely the Lord was pleased with Asa’s faith in this crisis. Still, he sent a prophet to warn him:

“Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah...The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if you seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you” (2 Chronicles 15:2).

The prophet added that this had been true for God’s people throughout their history. In times past, whenever there was no peace but only vexation and trouble, each time God’s people turned to seek him he was found of them (see 15:3–4).

Azariah’s prophecy to Judah is a warning to the church of Jesus Christ today as well: “One glorious victory of faith is not enough.” More great trials will come to pass in the life of every believer. Indeed, the more you seek the Lord, the greater your call, the deeper your walk with him — you’ll also encounter further afflictions and sufferings, ever-increasing tests of faith. These will continue until the end, Scripture assures us.

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So, what is God's message to us in all of this? Simply the following: *We are not to be shaken in faith when even greater tests come upon us.*

Beloved, please know that I do not speak this word to you lightly. What I am preaching in this message has been born from my own personal crucible of great sufferings, hard times and crushing trials of faith.

Don't misunderstand: I am not complaining. I can testify that I have seen the loving hand of God in every trial and tribulation throughout my years. I have watched as my wife, Gwen, and my two daughters have come close to death from cancer. I have endured the death of a granddaughter from cancer. I have seen all my children and grandchildren under attack at various times. And I have gone through personal fiery trials.

Through it all, I have experienced eclipses of faith, where the Lord's face seemed completely hidden from me during my ordeal. Yet, after all these years of afflictions, here I stand, testifying that God has brought me through each trial with peace and his song of victory.

Yet, this is not the end of the story.

After thirty-six years of walking in trust and enduring trials faithfully, Asa grieved God's heart. Another terrible crisis arose in Asa's life. This time, the righteous king of Judah lost his faith.

Up to that point, Asa had lived as a trusting man of God. He was a vibrant example of devoted faith and zeal, seeking the Lord continually. His ministry over Judah had brought about a powerful spiritual revival in that land, establishing God's righteous rule.

Then another sudden crisis befell Asa and the nation of Judah. This time, word came to the king that Jerusalem was being blockaded by an enemy army. All trade routes into Judah had been shut down by this foe. The town of Ramah, just five miles outside of Jerusalem, had been invaded, captured and fortified, with all roads shut. No one could go in or come out.

The blockade could cripple Judah's economy. Something had to be done quickly, or the people would starve. So, what did King Asa do?

This time, he did not go to the Lord. In fact, Asa didn't even pray or consult his spiritual advisors. Instead, he panicked. He didn't just put his trust in man — he relied on his own enemy! Asa turned to wicked king Ben-hadad of Syria, Judah's arch enemy, to seek military aid.

In this way, Asa bribed his way out of the conflict. He stripped the nation's treasury of all silver and gold and sent it to King Ben-hadad, with this message: "Here is all of our gold and silver. It's yours. Just get this invader off my back. Deliver me from my attacker."

How utterly tragic! It is always a great tragedy when godly people who have trusted God before the world's eyes suddenly fail in their belief, turning to the flesh in a time of crisis. And the world responds with mockery, saying, "Is this what happens after spending years believing in God? Is this how faith ends, in shipwreck? How foolish that you ever believed in God in the first place."

Now another prophet was sent to Asa, with this word from the Lord:

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“Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the Lord thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand.... Therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars” (2 Chronicles 16:7, 9).

Let me sum up this whole issue of enduring faith. Here is enduring faith: it is *the committing of all things into God's hands*. Enduring faith says to the Lord, “I cast every event, every future success, into your care. And I hold you to your promise to commit all that you are — all your omniscience and omnipotent strength — to preserve me.”

Whenever we face afflictions and persecution, Satan comes to us whispering fears and lies:

“How are you going to make it through this crisis? What will you do now? If God is faithful, how could he allow this to happen to you? How could he put your loved ones at risk this way? What will become of you, your family, your job, your ministry?”

But enduring faith rises up and answers the enemy's lies:

“Devil, you're asking the wrong questions. The question for me right now is not how I'm going to make it. It is not what shall become of me and mine. I have already placed everything — all afflictions, all trials, everything that concerns me — into my loving Father's hands. I have trusted all future events to him. And he has proved himself faithful time after time. He is trustworthy with my future.”

With this established in our hearts, the question for us then becomes clear. The question for us is, “How can I love and serve my Lord better? How shall I serve others as myself?”

You see, enduring faith means casting ourselves wholly on the will of God as Jesus describes it in the Sermon on the Mount. In short: we are to seek God and his concerns first, and the desires of our heart will then be given to us (see Matthew 6:33).

Enduring faith declares, “I have no will of my own. Rather, *his* will be done. No more personal agenda for me. No more playing God by trying to solve my own problems or those of others. Holy Spirit, keep my mind stayed on my Lord and his promises.”

With such faith, we'll be ready for whatever the present hour brings. Amen!

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