

A Crisis of Faith



David Wilkerson (1931-2011) June 17, 2019

Jesus foresaw a crisis of belief when he asked, “When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?” (*Luke 18:8, NKJV*). Our Lord knew many would lose their faith in the last days. Paul spoke of this as well, writing, “The Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons” (*1 Timothy 4:1*). In fact, Paul warned Timothy to hold fast to his faith because so many believers “concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck” (*1:19*).

Peter also warned that a crisis of faith would take place in the last days. He reassures us, however, that those who cling to belief “are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (*1 Peter 1:5*). He adds, “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith...is tested by fire” (*1:6-7*).

Peter was addressing people who had been through trial after trial. He told them, in essence, “Only the Lord knows what it takes to produce in us a faith more precious than gold. Right now, he’s using our trials to do that.”

Many great servants of God throughout history passed the test and became giants of faith. During their most dangerous, frightful times, these saints stood believing. Their lives have been an enduring testimony to God’s faithfulness, and Hebrews 11 lists many of them: Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Jacob and others.

However, there are other, sad cases of believers who failed in their times of crisis. God’s plan for them was the same as it was for those who endured their trials faithfully. Instead, these servants crumbled in their trials, disobeying God and turning away from faith.

King Solomon and the apostle Paul both endured crises of faith, one failing the test while the other passed to encourage generations.

Solomon was blessed with everything a life of serving God had to offer: a godly heritage, a supernatural calling and a personal encounter with the Lord. Moreover, God blessed him with wisdom that surpassed all of the world’s wisdom. His anointing was clear to all, and he was renowned and admired throughout the world. The temple he built in Jerusalem was known as the grandest religious structure of its day. In addition, Solomon wrote thousands of proverbs and songs. He was successful in everything he put his hand to.

Because of these great blessings, “men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon” (*1 Kings 4:34*). One of these awestruck visitors was the Queen of Sheba. She was left breathless by Solomon’s devotion to God’s house, and she was astounded by the widespread happiness of the people in his kingdom. In her eyes, Solomon’s kingdom was paradise, heaven on earth.

Thousands of people served Solomon to bring his brilliant plans to life. He boasted that his every desire, want and pleasure was fulfilled. So, why did this godly man end up saying it was all futile and in vain? Why did he say man was no better than a beast, dying the same way a dog dies? “I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind” (*Ecclesiastes 2:11*).

Some modern scholars don't believe these were Solomon's words. They say a rich man wrote Ecclesiastes using Solomon's name to validate it. Others say there were two authors, one taking a negative view of life, the other positive. I believe with most church fathers that Solomon was "the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem" (1:1) who concluded, "'Vanity of vanities,' says the Preacher; 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity'" (1:2). How did he arrive at such a negative outlook?

Solomon was a servant of God who started out right. He rid the temple ministry of Abiathar, the unfaithful priest, and replaced him with the righteous Zadok priesthood. Solomon walked in God's statutes, praying humbly, "I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in" (1 Kings 3:7). When he finished building the temple, he prayed it would be a house of repentance and forgiveness, of prayer and supplication.

After these godly moves, things changed. We read, "It was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God... Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not fully follow the Lord... So the Lord became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the Lord God of Israel" (1 Kings 11:4, 6, 9).

Simply put, Solomon had a crisis of faith, but what was his crisis?

"King Solomon loved many foreign women...from the nations of whom the Lord had said to the children of Israel, 'You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.' Solomon clung to these in love" (1 Kings 11:1-2). God gave Solomon a direct command not to marry women from heathen nations, yet Solomon did just that, ending up with 700 wives and a harem of 300 concubines. He refused to reign in his sexual lust.

I wonder: How many times did the Spirit of the Lord warn Solomon, "You know God's Word to you. Stop now"? This must have happened every time Solomon acquired a new wife. Over time, the king grew deaf to the Lord's warnings. Soon he disobeyed God's command at will, feeling no conviction or sorrow. He eventually allowed his wives' idols and gods: "(God) had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what the Lord had commanded" (11:10).

Any Christian who won't forsake a besetting sin will eventually develop his own doctrine to excuse himself. That's how such a wise, brilliant yet humble king fell so far. Faith is about more than trusting God to bless and keep us. Faith also means believing that God faithfully judges all willful disobedience. I often hear it said, "There goes a man of incredible faith. He believes God for great things." Yet such a man doesn't have true faith unless he also believes God metes out righteous judgment for disobedience.

In the end, God judged Solomon's lack of faith: "The Lord said to Solomon, 'Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant'" (11:11).

The same judgment comes to everyone today who is deceived by a "Solomon state of mind." They don't believe God will judge their sin, so they willfully indulge in pleasures and lusts of every description. Like Solomon, they end up calling evil good and good evil and making up doctrines to justify their sin. They end up turning his grace into lasciviousness.

Unlike Solomon, Paul passed the test in his crisis of faith.

Paul was one of the most tested servants who ever lived. Everywhere he went, he faced trials and suffering. He wrote, "The Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me" (Acts 20:23). Paul declared, in effect, "I don't know what's coming tomorrow, but I do know the Holy Spirit is leading me. He is faithful to prepare me, warning, 'Suffering awaits you in every city.'"

Through it all, Paul maintained this powerful testimony: "But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God" (20:24).

Satan kept up the attacks, but Paul never quit the ministry that Christ gave him. The devil couldn't scare him away.

Paul encourages us to have the same attitude: “Endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” (2 Timothy 4:5).

Dear saint, God is looking for this kind of testimony. He wants a company of Pauls who will testify of his faithfulness when the world is spinning out of control. Amid all the chaos, these servants stand steady in their faith, ready to answer when people ask, “What shall we do? Where shall we turn?”

Their continued obedience erects a powerful testimony to the Lord’s faithfulness. Paul’s example shouts to an unbelieving world, “You are faithful, Jesus!” Like him, every faithful servant has this blessing awaiting them: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing” (4:7-8). May this be our testimony as well, to hold fast to faith in these latter days. Amen!

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