Dear Friends,

Have you ever been in a situation that requires action, but you don't know what action to take? Have you ever needed something in order to do a job, but you did not have it? Have you ever needed God to talk to you, but heard not a word from Him?

I have.
At such times your heart yearns for answers, for evidence, assurance and providence. You cry out to God for deliverance from your own insufficiency, for answers, for help.

Then you wonder, when those trials come, is this an attack from the enemy or is it the consequence of my failings, insufficiency and ignorance? Am I being tested or is this punishment? Is this for righteousness sake? Or - horrors - am I following my own will and walking outside of His guidance and blessing?

I believe this, my friends, is the proving ground of faith. Hebrews 11 says that faith is both substance and evidence.

Through faith Enoch was translated, Noah prepared an ark, Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, Sarah conceived a son, Moses chose to suffer affliction, Rahab perished not. Through faith others subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, received their dead raised to life again, were tortured, stoned, slain; were destitute, afflicted, tormented...

Can you imagine the temptation to doubt, to fear? Can you imagine how dark and silent it must have seemed to these righteous ones?

Isaiah 50:11 describes their experience:

"Who is among you that fears the Lord, that obeys the voice of His servant, that walks in darkness and has no light?"

How do they do it? How do they survive, how do they maintain trust in God, through such dark times?

Isaiah gives advice:

"Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon [lean on, trust in] His God."

Maybe you are experiencing dark, testing times. I am. Maybe we all are.

Is God good? Is He faithful? Will He bring us through? Yes! Can we trust Him to keep us? Yes! Can we lean on Him when all is dark and incomprehensible? Yes!

May God bring us forth polished and fully reflecting His character.

Thank you for your prayers. And I'll talk more about our documentary project next time. I love hearing from you, and we thank God for your support.

Sincerely,

Pat Arrabito

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**Signs, Seals, and Plagues**

Too many people get their religion from novels, popular TV shows, and movies. They get a warped, misshapen picture. Take, for example, "The Seventh Sign," a 1988 movie with a twisted apocalyptic theme. Reviews of "The Seventh Sign" provide this general overview:

Jesus has returned secretly, disguised as an ordinary man. He carries with him the seven seals [Revelation 5 and onward]. He opens the seals one by one. [The movie confuses the seven seals with the seven plagues of Revelation 15.] As Jesus breaks each seal, disaster strikes some portion of the planet. Supernatural forces are at work. Most people are oblivious to the impending doom. One woman discovers the truth: it’s the end of time, and the human race is about to be wiped out. She convinces herself that she alone can prevent the ultimate catastrophe. People think she's crazy.

The movie takes a legend from mystical Judaism and weaves it into a tangle of Revelation’s seven seals and seven plagues. It's a silly tale that makes a mockery of truth. Sad to say, viewers with little or no familiarity with the Bible take stories like this quite seriously. No wonder secular people have such a low opinion of Bible-based religion.

But there’s a picture of ourselves in the heroine's dilemma. We know that time is running out. Most people don't believe it. What should we do?
"We are now living in the closing scenes of this world’s history. Let men tremble tremble with the sense of the responsibility of knowing the truth.... We should now feel the responsibility of laboring with intense earnestness to impart to others the truths that God has given for this time" (Ellen White in Evangelism, page 16).

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