

KEENER THOUGHTS

September. 2012

NO DEGREES IN PATIENCE

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom. 5:1-8)

By grace, I have had the privilege of preaching, lecturing, and teaching classes, and series of classes on given subjects, in several Bible Colleges and Seminaries. I enjoy this, and being, I think, a life-long student myself, I take great interest in what is being taught. Since the era of internet information, I scan the subject matter being offered, and a summary of much of the material being offered in several good Bible colleges, with which I am familiar, across the country. I note, almost in amazement, the variety of degrees, and the fields of study, in which those degrees are offered. I sometimes look at the degrees I have hanging on my office wall, and wonder what they really mean, and how I attained them.

All this being said, I notice that I have never seen a declared degree that any of us has earned in the biblical doctrine of patience. Hanging on our walls, I see Doctor of Divinity. Doctor of Ministry, Doctor of Theology, and Doctor of Philosophy, as well

as many Master and Bachelor degrees. But I have never seen even one Doctor of Patience, Master of Patience, Bachelor of Patience, or even Associate in Patience degree. Nor have I ever seen a course offered that led to any of those degrees. I am not even sure I have ever preached, or even read, a series of messages on the subject, or a series of Sunday School classes that fully covered the issue of patience. Nevertheless, all of us who have walked with the Lord for any extended period have been offered, no not just offered, but assigned, such a series of classes, over and over again, and I think I should say, by God's grace, forced to complete those courses, though I doubt that any of us, reading this article, have graduated from this class yet. Nor do we feel that we have received a very high grade therein. It seems that a good grade on patience comes from an extensive, hands-on, class in tribulation, and apparently none of us aspires to enroll in those classes.

I look back across the seventy nine years of my life, and the nearly fifty nine years that my wife and I have walked the unknown paths of life together, and I can remember heartbreak and trial that then seemed difficult beyond endurance. We often felt, during the time it was transpiring, that we had experienced nothing like it. I expect that we often said to ourselves, as the ordeal ended, if we could live through that we can endure anything. I suppose I have often pledged to God, I will never voice or feel complaint again, but I do.

I often think of Job, whose patience James finds worthy of mentioning in particular. *"Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. (James 1:15)* Job often desired, and even plead, that he might meet with God and earnestly ask for an explanation. He was a man who genuinely sought to walk with God. Moreover God commended his walk and said that he did well, He said to Satan, in Job 1:8, *"Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?"* Nevertheless, God allowed him to be afflicted and tormented beyond imagination, and beside the physical trials, Job's friends misunderstood and came forth to accuse Job unjustly. You will remember how that Job continued to maintain

his innocence, and to plead before his self-righteous friends that he might meet with God and to get an explanation of why he was appointed to such suffering. Remember that when God finally granted Job an audience, He did not rebuke him for lack of understanding, but for being so presumptuous as to think he could understand if God explained. Moreover, he upbraided Job for assuming that he had the intelligence to understand, or the right to ask for an explanation.

Would to God that I might leave off seeking for wisdom and understanding, or imagining that I could perceive the ways of God, in portioning out my tribulation. Rather, let me pray that I might grow in grace, and ask for faith to trust the righteousness and wisdom of God, in sovereignly assigning my pathways. The songwriter said:

***There are so many hills to climb upward I often am longing for rest.
But he who appointeth my pathways knows just what is needful and best.
I know in His word He has promised that my strength it shall be as my day.
And the toils of the road will seem nothing when I get to the end of the
way.***

May I learn not to seek wisdom or knowledge so much as to earnestly seek faith.

--FLK