

# KEENER THOUGHTS

August. 2012

## OLD AGE AND RESPONSIBILITY

**A**nd it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, here am I. And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death:--Gen. 27:2.

Having passed the three score and ten-mark, some time ago, I now frequently joke with my friends about age. Sometimes, I call one of them old man, or they call me that, and usually we humorously rebuke each other for using such a disrespectful word as old to describe our years of life. Obviously, our assessment of age is a matter of perspective, and always must be. When I was thirty years old, forty was slightly over the hill. Looking back now at a forty year old person, I feel like I am viewing youth personified. How very rapidly this perspective can change!

At the point in time of the above scripture, Isaac had grown old enough that his eyesight had diminished to the point that he could not surely tell one of his sons from the other. He states, as all of us must, "*I do not know the day of my death.*" He still had something more than twenty years to live in this diminished capacity, but he did not know that, and we cannot state from scripture exactly how long it was to be. He did live, however, until after Jacob returned from Padan-Aram twenty years later. In any case, he was aware that he yet had some important earthly family responsibilities to attend to before he died. I am sure that Isaac knew, and I certainly know, that every day that lies before us is a grant from God, and every day is an opportunity, and a responsibility. We need to put our house in order, and keep it so, but the order of our house required today can easily change tomorrow. Mary and I often discuss how long we can live in this house, and what should be the alternative when we can't. Today we can do it fine, and that is what we want to do. But that

does not help us with tomorrow, because we know nothing of what our physical, mental and emotional health may be tomorrow. To those who have a solution as to how to solve this problem, let me assure you your solution may be and probably is faulty. I have known many couples who moved from their home to an assisted living apartment, or something of that sort, and in a matter of months found they simply could not tolerate it. *"I know not the day of my death"* is a profound truth, and it has a thousand complex implications.

Let us remember though that this has always been true, not only with the elderly, but with every human alive, not only with the believer, but with the unbeliever.

Only God knows, and He does know, so we who fear God must walk by faith. Solomon, by the leadership of the Holy Spirit, gives us a great formula; and it will work equally well for each of us. *"Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth. If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be. He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap. As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all. In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."*

The implications of this passage are complex beyond imagination, but they are an admonition to walk by faith and to work in faith. The sower sows by faith, depending on many "elements of nature" of which he can't even understand the function, causing the seed to germinate, sprout, grow, mature and produce fruit. Many people, who can neither read nor write, do this every day, and God gives them food and life. Should not we who know the Lord and have had the privilege of learning His promise, do the same, following the admonition of God's word, *"In the*

*morning sow thy seed.*"? As years go by, most of us are sure to weep over labors we have bestowed in the past, being wasted and coming to nought. Some things for which we had the greatest of hope have fallen apart, but let us not be embittered. It is the "*Work of God who maketh all*" that shall ultimately determine which shall prosper, either this or that, or whether both shall be alike good. Many projects that I have designed and attempted in the ministry have apparently failed, and later I learned of a wonderful work which was actually a side effect of them. In other cases, something that I was sure had been quite productive, has turned out to be destructive. There are some aspects of my ministry, that it seems, as of now, will last long after my life is over. Other projects, which I expected to outlive me, have apparently fizzled out already. The fact is, I just don't know what shall succeed or fail. It is in the hands of God!

Assuming that this analysis is essentially accurate, what should we do as concerning the future, the days or years we have left? Do not sit silent and idle. Do not waste your life pursuing pleasure. Ultimately, it will not please you. A wise man once said, "*Happiness is seldom found in the pursuit of happiness. It is more often stumbled over in the pursuit of duty.*" At whatever stage of life you now live, there are some things you cannot do. That is true with all of us, and at every stage of life. However, if it is something you see as needing to be done, do not assume you cannot do it, until you have tried a few hundred times. But remember this. You are God's creature, He made you. He is your owner, and He sustains you. Seek to know what your responsibilities are, and start to execute them as soon as you know them. If God interrupts a good activity you are involved in by ending your life, He can finish it, or the world can live without it. God is the author of all true pleasure, and is sovereign over all sorrow. I assure you that you will find more joy in pursuing the pleasure of God, than in any earthly enjoyment. Earthly pastimes can soon change into shameful and sorrowful memories. A half-finished job at the time of your death speaks of a job that was begun, or at least, attempted. You, like Isaac, may have another twenty years or more, til the day of your death. Don't just sit there, do something.

--FLK