

Be Careful What You Pray For

Ron Roberts

I sometimes feel I should apologize to the nation. I frequently pray for patience, humility, and wisdom. We all should truly want these qualities, but sometimes we forget the avenue by which they come. What I mean to say is perhaps the Coronavirus, the shutdown of our businesses, and the plunge in our stock market is the way God is giving us patience, humility, and wisdom. Consider what Paul said about patience.

Rom 5:3 *And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope: 5 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.*

The word “*experience*” in the KJV is often rendered character. So, tribulation brings patience, patience brings character, character brings hope, and hope removes shame and brings us to God’s love.

Therefore, when we pray for **patience** we are inviting the Lord to bring us tribulation. We should be grateful for the tribulation because it produces the desired patience (Jms. 1:2-4). The virus that has hit us has produced patience in many. We cannot run out to the restaurant anymore. We cannot go shopping as we once did. Some feel stuck at home with the wife and the kids and no sports on TV. We are learning patience through this pandemic.

We are also gaining the needed trait of **humility**. How many of us thought we had everything under control? Our investments were doing well and we trusted in these uncertain riches (1 Tim. 6:17). We were healthy and feared nothing. We

believed everything would continue on as it had in our world and gave no thought to the quick way our life could change.

Isa 57:15 tells us two places where the Lord dwells. *For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.*

If we do not have a humble and contrite spirit then we do not have God. He resists the proud. He desires our humility. There are times we need Him to drive pride from our hearts and expose to us our dependence on Him.

After Solomon completed the temple, God spoke to him in 2 Chron 7:14. *If my people, which are called by my name, shall **humble themselves**, and **pray**, and **seek my face**, and **turn from their wicked ways**; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.* If we want God to restore America’s greatness, we need to humble ourselves before Him. Our nation needs to have greater righteousness and less pride in our economic accomplishments.

I also prayed for wisdom. Prov 3:11-14 says, *11 My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: 12 For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth. 13 Happy is the man that findeth **wisdom**, and the man that getteth understanding. 14 For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.*

Sometimes wisdom comes from the chastening of the Lord. There are times our thinking needs correction. Rather than being bitter with the chastening we should rejoice with the

wisdom we have obtained through it. Through the trial our nation is facing we are gaining wisdom. Some of our politicians have recognized we are too dependent on China and other nations for our necessities. Other leaders have recognized the foolishness of criticizing one another when we should all be united against a common enemy. Many individuals and businesses have stepped up to help the health care workers and first responders, who help the rest of us. How many of us gave little or no thought to doctors and nurses prior to this virus?

I greatly miss assembling with the saints. I have lessons I want to preach, and bulletins I want to share. My isolation is giving me patience. I will have to wait until it is safe for us to assemble again. It also gives me humility. While I am unable to present God's word to you, I have been listening to websites and CD's with other preachers' lessons. I am always humbled when I hear others speak and recognize what a tremendous blessing I have been given to preach the Gospel for you.

Before we were separated from one another I put an article in a bulletin from Mark Roberts on meditation. I did a lesson on the same subject. Meditation is the deep mental process we go through in reflecting upon God's word. When I need to write bulletins, preach sermons, and teach classes each week; I sometimes fail to think long and hard on what I have read. This break in the action has given me time to think more deeply about God's word, His people, and the blessings we have in this life. The time in meditation increased my wisdom.

I heard a newscaster say the other day that we are saving lives by staying home. He said one day we will tell our grandkids about our heroic deed that saved many. We stayed on the couch and watched TV. I hope we are doing more with our time than that. I pray we are getting the patience, humility, and wisdom we prayed for through this period.