

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
**I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.***

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#03-0968

The Kingdom of Our Lord #8.

February 24, 2009

The Law Against Bribery

As a reminder, this series explores what the kingdom of our Lord will look like in the oncoming eon. However, we should also keep in mind that these principles or, better yet, these laws of the kingdom are just as applicable in our day. If our nations followed these laws, then they would be aligning themselves with the will of God; consequently, they would be entering the kingdom of God. Another way of stating this is that the more a nation aligns itself with the laws of the kingdom, the more the kingdom of God comes near to that nation. This is possible in our day, but in the next eon, it will be more the norm as more and more nations see the benefits and blessings of following the laws of the kingdom. These nations will become kingdom nations.

Now, let us consider another law of the kingdom that pertains to bribery and lobbying, which has become a subtle form of bribery in our present day.

“For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe.” (Deuteronomy 10:17 NASB)

The law against bribery comes from the law of impartiality. According to Moses, the Lord does not show partiality. This was covered in issue #03-0964, *The Law of Impartiality*, January 27, 2009. However, the heart of this law is that God does not show favoritism in dealing with mankind, for righteousness and justice demand equal and fair treatment, unlike the way the governments of our day mete out favoritism as a normal course of doing business. As will be shown, this is also the heart of lobbying.

In Hebrew, the word for *bribery* is *shachad*, which means “a donation,” such as a bribe, gift, present, reward. Simply, one receives a gift or reward for some favor. *Bribery* is defined as “anything, especially, money, given or promised to induce a person to do something illegal or wrong; anything given or promised to induce a person to do something against his wishes.” Consequently, bribery is an attempt to influence an outcome by giving something to the person who has control of the outcome. This sort of influence can be manifested in a variety of ways, even in limitless ways, for as the saying goes: “Everyone has a price.” The problem today is that, in some cases, bribery has become so sophisticated that it is often not seen as something wrong or illegal. We could say that it has become the norm or the standard by which business and government are done. It is not uncommon for whole cultures to be based on bribery. The US is no exception, for lobbying the US Congress has become a legal form of bribery, as far as man’s law is concerned, but not according to God’s law.

Isaiah actually sums up the way some cultures or nations operate: **Your rulers are rebels and companions of thieves; everyone loves a bribe and chases after rewards** (Isaiah 1:23 NASB). Unfortunately, this sort of unrighteous behavior is practiced among Christians. Many years ago, I was asked to speak to a group of customs officials at a border crossing between two West African nations. The accepted practice was for the officials to demand money (bribes) from those entering the country. The Christians among the group rationalized their lawlessness as the only way that they could make enough money to live. Actually, this is more like extortion than bribery, but it is the same principle, for it means receiving a gift or reward for a favor, in this case, entering the county. But what did Jesus say to the tax collectors: **“Collect no more than what you have been ordered to”** (Luke 3:13 NASB). We could say that this is another law of the kingdom and a corollary to the law against bribery.

Bribery distorts justice, for it blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous. It corrupts the heart and hurts those who are in the right. As a reminder, the foundation of the Lord’s throne is righteousness and justice.

(19) You shall not distort justice; you shall not be partial, and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous. (20) Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, that you may live and possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you.” (Deuteronomy 16:19-20 NASB)

“You shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of the just.” (Exodus 23:8 NASB)

“Now then let the fear of the LORD be upon you; be very careful what you do, for the LORD our God will have no part in unrighteousness or partiality or the taking of a bribe.” (2 Chronicles 19:7 NASB)

A wicked man receives a bribe from the bosom to pervert the ways of justice. (Proverbs 17:23 NASB)

For oppression makes a wise man mad, and a bribe corrupts the heart. (Ecclesiastes 7:7 NASB)

Who justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away the rights of the ones who are in the right! (Isaiah 5:23 NASB)

In these verses, it becomes abundantly clear why bribery is so evil. There is no justice with bribery, for it favors one over another. It perverts justice.

Now, I submit that lobbying, especially as practiced in the US, is a form of bribery. Constitutional experts tell us that lobbying is justified under **the right to petition clause** of the **First Amendment to the US Constitution**. Simply, the First Amendment states that one can petition the government for a redress of grievances, which gives individuals (or groups) the freedom to petition the government for a correction or repair of some form of injustice without fear of punishment for doing so. This sounds innocent enough. However, this poses a challenge, for righting one injustice for one individual or group can create another injustice for another individual or group. Consequently, the right to petition under man’s law does not insure justice for all.

The current form of lobbying, in fact, does create injustices as one group receives favorable legislation at the expense of others. Lobbying is not aimed at righting injustices; it is aimed at making it **legal**, under man’s law, **to be partial to a certain group, corporation, or industry**. Whether it creates an injustice for others or is just for all often does not enter into the equation. On one level, lobbying yields favoritism and puts man’s stamp of approval on it by making it law, while breaking God’s divine law of impartiality. On another level, it is bribery on the part of the lobbyist and the legislator. To receive special favor, the lobbyist often tries to influence the legislator by giving him or her money, trips to plush resorts, rides on corporate jets, dinners, material gifts, or other types of favors that need not be mentioned. They might be called tokens of appreciation, but they are attempts to “buy” influence. Of course, this has led to all sorts of scandals over the years that have ended the careers of some well-known politicians, and has led Congress to pass some controls over lobbying and what the legislators can and cannot accept. Unfortunately, they seem to conveniently leave loopholes in their rules so that it does not hamstring the process too much. After all, they need money to keep flowing into their campaign war chests so that they can remain in power, and lobbyists are a good source of this money.

It is commendable that on his first day in office, President Obama stated that he was “setting rules that govern not just lobbyists but all those who have been selected to serve in my administration.” But then he turned around and appointed two ex-lobbyists to serve in his administration. When questioned about the apparent disparity, his press secretary explained it away by stating “tough rules require reasonable exceptions.” But it did not stop there, for, according to the last report I heard, at least seventeen exceptions or wavers have been made. So much for ethics reform!

The good news is that there is no buying of influence in the kingdom of our Lord, for there is no place for favoritism or partiality. Today, men hold out their hand to receive the bribe. In the day of Christ, the hand will hold no bribe. **He who walks righteously and speaks with sincerity, he who rejects unjust gain and shakes his hands so that they hold no bribe** (Isaiah 33:15 NASB). This will become the new norm among the nations in the coming eon. Praise God!