

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)

#04-1040

Hardened Hearts

April 11, 2010

Recently, as the debate raged over the massive healthcare reform sought by President Obama and his party, I was impressed by the resolve of the key players to pass this legislation in spite of much opposition from average Americans. Many who were in opposition to what has become known as *Obamacare* were crying out that it was against the will of the people, that the president and the majority leaders of Congress were ignoring the will of the people. Of course, there were others on the other side of the spectrum who took exception to this, for their camp was staunchly in support of it. If the polls are to be believed as accurate, it appears that, at times, over 60% of American voters opposed the *Obamacare* legislation that was passed by the House on March 21, 2010 and signed by the president on the 23rd.

Again, what impressed me was the resolve of those in leadership in spite of much opposition. It was as if the will of the majority of the people did not matter. All that President Obama is trying to do and the manner in which he is doing it has caused many to question his motives and ultimate agenda.

These are legitimate questions and concerns in our open and free society in which freedom of speech is a right under our Constitution. Political debate, and often raucous debate, has been with us since the founding of our great country, so we should not be surprised or dismayed by what has transpired and continues to transpire in the political realm of our country.

However, I believe we need to look beyond the resolve of our national leaders, which, by the way, was on both sides of the political aisle, and ask: Has the Lord Himself given them this resolve, that is, has He hardened their hearts to pursue this particular course for the country? If so, what is God's intent in doing so? How does this fit into God's plan to bring about His purpose of the eons—the eons (ages) which He has made through His Son, our Lord Jesus (Hebrews 1:2 CV)?

After all, there is historical and biblical precedence for the Lord to harden hearts of rulers in order to bring about His plan for His people. As I listened and watched the debate on healthcare and the resolve of the leaders on both sides of the issue, in both the majority and the minority, I kept hearing two things: **“The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart,”** and **“Let My people go.”** In issue #04-1024, March 8, 2010, *Hearts Like Channels of Water*, I touched upon how **the king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes** (Proverbs 21:1). Obviously, channeling a ruler's heart means that the Lord can move upon his heart in any manner He wishes in order to accomplish His end through the leader. By the way, it does not necessarily mean that the leader is evil; it could simply mean that his heart must be hardened to pursue God's course.

The first account of the Lord hardening a heart is discovered in the exodus of the sons of Israel out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses. The Hebrews had been under Egyptian rule for 210 years when the **appointed time of the Lord** came for them to return to the land promised to their fathers. See issues #03-09125, May 27, 2009, *Starting Point for 400 and 430 Years*; and #03-09126, May 28, 2009, *Jacob's Distress: 21 & 210-Year Cycles*.

(21) The LORD said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. (22) Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Israel is My son, My firstborn. (23) “So I said to you, ‘Let My son go that he may serve Me’; but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn.’”” (Exodus 4:21-23 NASB)

And the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not listen to them, just as the LORD had spoken to Moses. (Exodus 9:12 NASB; also 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10)

Right from the start, we are told that the Lord was going to harden Pharaoh's heart in order to release His people from bondage. In the account of the exodus, the word *harden* (*hardened*) appears 18 times. The number **18** signifies **bondage** and **release from bondage**. Thus, it was through the hardening of a ruler's heart that release came for God's people. What was God's purpose in releasing them?

And afterward Moses and Aaron came and said to Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Let My people go that they may celebrate a feast to Me in the wilderness.'" (Exodus 5:1 NASB)

The sons of Israel were commanded to celebrate three national feasts: the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover), the Feast of the Harvest of the first fruits (Pentecost), and the Feast of the Ingathering (Tabernacles) (Exodus 23:14-17). This last feast signified **the building of the tabernacle** and **entering into the inheritance of the Promised Land**, which is a key to our understanding.

However, this was not the first and only time the Lord channeled a king's heart in this fashion.

"But Sihon king of Heshbon was not willing for us to pass through his land; for the LORD your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, in order to deliver him into your hand, as he is today." (Deuteronomy 2:30 NASB)

And, this will not be the last time either, for, at the end of our present wicked eon, God will channel the hearts of ten kings to turn against Mystery Babylon, the harlot city that reigns over the earth.

(17) "For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled. (18) The woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth." (Revelation 17:17-18 NASB)

Now, this leads to the thought that came to me as I listened to the debate over healthcare reform. It is my opinion that, like Pharaoh, the president's heart has been hardened in order to further increase our bondage to Mystery Babylon and to cause us to cry out to God for help. However, as for this particular piece of legislation, the president was not alone, for hardened hearts were necessary on all sides of the issue in order to produce the type of legislation that became law. Again, this is not to imply evil intent; it just means that their hearts were strengthened to hold a position; all in accord with God's plan.

The Hebrew word from which the word *hardened* is translated means "to fasten upon; hence to seize, be strong." The leaders on all sides were strong in their support or opposition. Undoubtedly, compromise would have created something different and, perhaps, with less bondage. By most accounts, the new healthcare law greatly expands the control of government over the lives of all Americans and, by some accounts, runs the risk of greatly increasing the national debt, which will lead to higher taxes and, eventually, inflation.

What is coming upon the US and, for that matter, all the nations could be likened to Pharaoh increasing the burden on the sons of Israel, causing them to sigh for relief. **They cried out; and their cry for help because of their bondage rose up to God, and God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob** (Exodus 2:23-24).

The ultimate purpose of bondage is to drive us (God's people) to turn to Him with our whole heart and cry out to Him, not to man, for release from bondage. The Lord has hardened hearts to get to the heart of His people and, specifically, to prepare His conquerors to experience Tabernacles on a level never experienced by mankind. A day is coming when heaven will say: **"Come out of her** (i.e., Mystery Babylon, worldwide beast-system), **My people"** (Revelation 18:4); but commensurate with this call is a greater call to put off our earthly tabernacle and put on our new tabernacle, our dwelling from heaven, our Promised Land. Tabernacles is not about inheriting a piece of real estate on earth; it is about inheriting a piece of real estate out of heaven—an immortal, glorified, celestial, spiritual body in the image of Christ. Can you imagine any greater inheritance, any greater hope?

Let us not fight what God is doing in our day. Let us be strong in the Lord, not in our flesh. Let us turn to the Lord, trusting Him and loving Him with our whole heart. Let us be ready to answer the call to come out to receive the promise of God at the appointed time and hear God say to us, **"My son."**