



And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go. And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn. (Ex 4:21-23)

There is a disease of the heart called, arteriosclerosis. It is commonly referred to as hardening of the arteries and is caused by plaque buildup in the arteries resulting oftentimes from a high cholesterol diet. From the moment of our birth, our arteries are clear and healthy, but conditions of diet and lifestyle begin immediately to develop the condition with insidious perseverance. There are many and varied causes for this condition that matures with the age of its victim. Consuming a diet high in animal fats or sugars is a contributor. A sedentary lifestyle of inaction is a contributor. Undue stress and anxiety is a contributor. All of these contribute to this condition that can lead to the death of its victim, but all three are avoidable. Proper diet, exercise, and a healthy regard for the sovereignty of God can eliminate the major causes of the affliction. The same is true of the disease called ‘spiritual arteriosclerosis’ or hardening of the heart.

A diet rich in the study and love of God’s Word will keep our spiritual heart clean of obstructions. Moreover, an active mind and body that seeks to be found worshipping at first light, and until the last golden beam, will also aid in keeping our spiritual heart clean and healthy. But a diet of idolatry, hate, and disbelief will have the opposite effect. God is not the author of evil. It is our own lack of wickedness and disregard for the things of God that harden the hearts of men. When God says that He will harden the heart of Pharaoh, He simply means that He will give Pharaoh all of the bridle he desires to hang himself on the false virtues and greed of Egyptian pride.

God tempts no man, but when man exercises his own free will, that free will shall always be in obedience with that of Satan. God desires all of our heart and will settle for no partial ownership. If we persist in coveting evil, He will leave us to our just deserts. The same is true of the false and irreverent worship practices we see today in so-called mega-churches and in the antics of TV evangelists. *“Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”* (2 Thess 2:9-12) See also

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; 2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron.” (1 Tim 4:1-2) A conscience, or heart, that has been seared with repeated rejection of the Holy spirit, is hardened and impervious to light.

God has already made a vague threat to Pharaoh and the Land of Egypt in the previous chapter: *“And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand. And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go.”* (Ex 3:19-20)

But now God gives a terrible warning to Pharaoh – one which He also knows Pharaoh will disregard until the tragedy is come and past: *“And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn.”* This is a deep and mysterious reference – not only to Israel as a people – but to the Promised Seed of Abraham which is Jesus Christ, God’s only Begotten Son. Though the righteous ones of faith are never asked to sacrifice their sons (except the trial of Abraham with Isaac), the wicked may, indeed, suffer that sacrifice – and Pharaoh and his people will surely do.

Next we read of another mysterious incident that happens as Moses has begun his return to Egypt. I might add that I address the meaning of this passage carefully and with an admitted absence of confidence in knowing the correct interpretation. But we only have the words of the text itself to guide us, so we therefore must deduce the meaning according to the light we are given by the Lord: *“And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the LORD met him, and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me.”* (Ex 4:24-25) Let us begin with what is known in the matter. God sought to take the life of Moses, and surely would have done so had circumstances gone unanswered. What circumstances you may ask? The failure of Moses to obey the command of God to circumcise his son in accordance with the Law of God for the Hebrews. My assessment follows: God would take such measures against a man He has just called for so important a mission as leading Israel out of bondage, unless He had made Moses aware of the necessity of circumcision.

In order to get a firmer view of the seriousness of circumcision, let us examine the Abrahamic Covenant from Genesis 15:13-14 – *“And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.”* (Gen 15:13-14) You will observe that God makes special mention of His people being under bondage to a strange people. Then we read from Genesis 17 that not man or child may be party to His covenant without circumcision: *“This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.”* (Gen 17:10-14)

This detail may have seemed a trifling matter to Moses, and to the reader, but when God gives clear and serious instruction on matters of salvation, we must heed it. The son of Moses, not being circumcised, was about to be cut off from the people of God – the Living. Irreverence before the things of God is a serious lapse of obedience. An example is given by Samuel: ***“Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.”*** (2 Sam 6:6-7)

Thank goodness that Moses was blessed with a wise and forthright wife. Zipporah saw, and recognized, the danger that threatened her son. She took immediate action to rectify the matter. Though not pleased with the necessity, Zipporah, like every mother, will do whatever is required to save her son – so will God!

There must be unity in the ministry of God. That unity comes, not from acquiescing to the political arguments of men, but in standing solidly, and together, upon the Word of God. ***“And the LORD said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went, and met him in the mount of God, and kissed him. And Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD who had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded him. And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel.”*** (Ex 4:27-29) There was a meeting of the men of God on the same Mountain of God for every great plan of God originates upon the Mountain of God. It is a very high place. Both arrived at the same Mountain and same Mind at the same Time. Moses and Aaron ***“went together.”*** If we are all walking with the Lord, will we not all be going together?

“And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel: And Aaron spake all the words which the LORD had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed: and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped.” (Ex 4:29-31) It is true that the Children of Israel were easy to believe at the moment of this great news, but when the dark clouds of danger rose higher in the foreboding sky, their faith and courage diminished. Read the account given later in the sixth chapter: ***“And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the LORD. And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel: but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.”*** (Ex 6:8-9) Men are very courageous when the time for action is a distance in the future; but when the moment to act arrives, their faith and courage may fail.

Are we not the same?