



“I will harden Pharaoh's heart...”

²Thou shalt speak all that I command thee: and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land. ³And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt. ⁴But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. ⁵And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them. ⁶And Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded them, so did they. ⁷And Moses was fourscore years old, and Aaron fourscore and three years old, when they spake unto Pharaoh. (Ex 7:2-7)

Though the Lord has called you, are you too old, too halt, to glib with your tongue, to speak on the Lord's behalf? Not Moses! He was a chipper eighty-three years old when he braved the wrath of the most powerful sovereign on earth and went boldly before the courts of Pharaoh and “*did as the LORD commanded them, so did they.*” This was not fearful cringing before the powers of bad government, but a courageous choice as to who to obey – God, not Mammon. They regarded their DUTY before God above any presumed duty to the state. Have we done so? Read the words of a great Christian general:

Duty – Honor - Country — those three hallowed words reverently dictate what you want to be, what you can be, what you will be. They are your rallying point to build courage when courage seems to fail, to regain faith when there seems to be little cause for faith, to create hope when hope becomes forlorn. Unhappily, I possess neither that eloquence of diction, that poetry of imagination, nor that brilliance of metaphor to tell you all that they mean.

The unbelievers will say they are but words, but a slogan, but a flamboyant phrase. Every pedant, every demagogue, every cynic, every hypocrite, every troublemaker, and, I am sorry to say, some others of an entirely different character, will try to downgrade them even to the extent of mockery and ridicule.

But these are some of the things they do. They build your basic character. They mold you for your future roles as the custodians of the nation's defense. They make you strong enough to know when you are weak, and brave enough to face yourself when you are afraid. *General of the Army, Douglas MacArthur, West Point, 12 May 1962*

His sense of duty to God gave Moses the courage to go before the Pharaoh with the demands God laid out for him in the face of awesome fear. That my friend is courage and bravery – to act on conscience even when to do so brings with it a bone-chilling fear – to act and do the right thing in spite of our fears and to give little counsel to them. This, Moses did!

A great Pastor and writer wrote, more than one hundred years ago, this comment on verses 1-8 of this chapter:

1. The message (verses 1-8), in its substance and its circumstances, was fitted to arrest the people's attention and win their love. In that message, whether you regard its Author, its bearer, or its nature, everything tended to entice; nothing to repel them. Its author was the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob; its bearer was Moses, a man who for their sakes had sacrificed his position among the princes of Pharaoh, and taken: refuge in a desert; its nature was hope to the desponding and freedom to the enslaved. The time, too, seemed fit: when the bondage had become unbearable, word is sent that the bondage is almost done. Before the slave a prospect of liberty is opened; before the weary a prospect of rest. Will the drooping spirits of the multitude revive at this intelligence? will they shake of the inert submissiveness of a lifetime, and boldly strike for freedom in concert with their deliverer?

2. No. The promise, although it was exceedingly rich and precious, stirred not the sluggish mass. It was a spark of fire that fell, but it fell on wetted wood, and kindled therefore no flame. "**They hearkened not unto Moses.**" Why? No people could be in deeper affliction; to no afflicted people could a kinder message come, no kinder message could be better authenticated, and yet they heeded not. They neither denied the truth of the message, nor injured the messenger who bore it. When God's great salvation was provided and offered, the people neglected it. This is the head and front of their offending. They said nothing against it, but they let it alone.

As American staggers deeper and deeper into spiritual, social, political, and economic bondage to the taskmasters of their own making, do the words of Exodus, of great generals, and of great Christian writers not awaken us to the clarion call of DUTY, first, to God, and then to our fellow man? Does God's Word no longer "*stir the sluggish mass?*"

God brings great judgments against Egypt but, remember, if the people of Israel had failed to do precisely as God commanded, the same final judgment would have fallen with equal severity upon them – and the first born of Israel would also have been taken that dreadful Passover night in Goshen. I fear that each man and woman of America today votes without regard for their duty to God first. We compromise our duty to God by opting for economic advantage over the lives of millions of unborn innocents.

We have, in America, recently experienced an amazing expression of dissatisfaction of the American people for the belligerent and ungodly leadership with which we have been cursed for the past years. But will the turning of the tables result in real change? Will our country continue to pursue, in more sophisticated and silkened-gloved rule, the same old abuses that led to the revolt at the polls? Will the unborn still have no defense against a decadent and murderous institution of abortion? Will we continue to dishonor the first institution of marriage for the sake of 'political correctness'? Will our beloved land yet remain exposed, as a virgin to ravaging wolves, to illegal usurpation of her borders? When will the water become so hot that we

recognize that we are dying? Did this happen to Israel in Egypt? When they awoke to their bondage, was it too late to brake the shackles without the direct intervention of God Almighty?

God is unrelenting, as long as faith remains, in warning and cajoling His people from their self-imposed hazards. He may demonstrate many marvelous wonders in order to awaken the sleepers at the gate: *"8 And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, 9 When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you: then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent. 10 And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the LORD had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent. 11 Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. 12 For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. 13 And he hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said."* (Ex 7:8-13)

It was not the 'unresisting' of the Will of God that hardened Pharaoh's heart, but the 'resisting' of that Will. Above all else, it was not in the mind of Pharaoh to allow the Children of Israel to go free. So no matter the marvelous and undeniable miracles, he was only hardened in his resolve rather than receptive of God's demand. There are a great many demagogues in Washington, D.C. today who are of the precise same mold.

The next miracle would add further inarguable evidence that Moses was sent by God. Though Pharaoh did not relent, I believe, just as the Pharisees truly knew who Jesus was – and denied, so will Pharaoh know that God is moving, but rebels against Him. *"14 And the LORD said unto Moses, Pharaoh's heart is hardened, he refuseth to let the people go. 15 Get thee unto Pharaoh in the morning; lo, he goeth out unto the water; and thou shalt stand by the river's brink against he come; and the rod which was turned to a serpent shalt thou take in thine hand. 16 And thou shalt say unto him, The LORD God of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee, saying, Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness: and, behold, hitherto thou wouldest not hear. 17 Thus saith the LORD, In this thou shalt know that I am the LORD: behold, I will smite with the rod that is in mine hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood. 18 And the fish that is in the river shall die, and the river shall stink; and the Egyptians shall lothe to drink of the water of the river. 19 And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood; and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood, and in vessels of stone."* (Ex 7:14-19)

It is far more desirable to have rivers of blood, than the spilling of the blood of our firstborn. Pharaoh will, in due course, feel the mournful sting of the latter. Moses and Aaron again obey the precise counsel of God: *"20 And Moses and Aaron did so, as the LORD commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. 21 And the fish that was in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt. 22 And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, neither did he hearken unto them; as the LORD had said. 23 And Pharaoh turned and went into his house, neither did he set his heart to this also. 24 And all the Egyptians digged round about the river for water to drink; for they could not drink of the water of the river. 25 And seven days were fulfilled, after that the LORD had smitten the river."* (Ex 7:20-25)

The extent that ungodly governments will go to reject the Word of God is awe-inspiring. My father used to tell me that there are some particularly reprobate men who would rather climb a rocky cliff to tell a lie than to stand flat-footed upon the earth and

tell the truth. That pretty much summarizes governments unrestrained by the moral law of God. When Jesus referred to Caesar, he spoke of unrestrained power; but who is Caesar in the American government if it is not the people themselves? WE are responsible for ungodly political choices and decisions. When will we recognize that all legitimate government and law comes down from God? *“When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.”* (Prov 29:2)

Have we not mourned enough in recent years?