

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)

#04-1024

Hearts Like Channels of Water

March 8, 2010

Lately, I have been intrigued by some of the words frequently used by the political leaders of our day, such as openness, honesty, transparency, bipartisanship, agnostic, and reconciliation, to name a few. Before offering some thoughts on these words, there are six points that need to be made.

First, I believe in being a lawful citizen of my country and am against lawlessness and unrighteousness of all kinds. **Sin is lawlessness** (1 John 3:4), and **all unrighteousness is sin** (1 John 5:17). I hold to Paul's exhortation that **every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God** (Romans 13:1; also 1 Peter 2:13).

Second, absolute power and authority rest with God alone. As the Creator of all things, He alone has the last say in the affairs of men and their kingdoms. We should be reminded that Jesus, the Son of God, is the Creator of all things, **visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities** (Colossians 1:16). As such, He delegates authority to men, but **power belongs to God** (Psalm 62:11; Daniel 2:20; Revelation 19:1), **for Yours is the power** (Matthew 6:13b).

Third, whoever is in authority, whether good or bad, is there by the will of God to carry out God's plan to bring about **the purpose of the eons, which He makes in Christ Jesus, our Lord** (Ephesians 3:11 CV). The eons or ages (i.e., definite periods of time) are according to the purpose of God, and this purpose is fulfilled in and through His Son through whom all things have been created, including time.

Fourth, the Lord moves upon the hearts of kings to move them to do His will, that is, to accomplish His plans, especially in relation to His people. In order to understand this concept in our day, we need to see the word *king* as referring to all heads of state, regardless of the official title. Metaphorically speaking, Solomon likened the Lord's influence on the heart of leaders to channeling water.

The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes. (Proverbs 21:1 NASB)

We might be tempted to think that a king must know the Lord in order to be channeled like water; however, according to Scripture, this is not so.

After all, the Lord **hardened the heart of Pharaoh of Egypt** in order to deliver the sons of Israel out of bondage (Exodus 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:8). The Lord called **Nebuchadnezzar**, the Babylonian king, "**His servant**" (Jeremiah 27:6) as He moved upon his heart to bring the house of Judah into Babylonian captivity. The Lord called **Cyrus "anointed"** in spite of the king not knowing the Lord (Isaiah 45:1, 5) as He moved upon his heart to allow some of the Judahites to return to their land to rebuild Jerusalem. The hearts of these pagan or, perhaps, agnostic kings were moved upon by the Lord in order to judge His people and to release them from the yoke of His judgment.

Applying this truth to our present day means that all leaders (kings) throughout the world, whether believers or not, are appointed to office by God, and their hearts are like channels of water in the hand of the Lord. They serve by and for the will of God. It can be no other way if God is to be sovereign over His entire creation. Further, just as the Lord used the pagan kings to judge His ancient people, He will use the pagan, agnostic, or Christian kings of our day to judge His modern-day people as well.

Fifth, in spite of God channeling hearts, I do not believe God intends for us to wear blinders, as if to ignore the character and nature of our leaders and what He might be doing or speaking to us through them. If they are in authority, not in power, by the will of God, it behooves us to know what He is doing through them or His purpose for putting them into office. For this, we need spiritual discernment. We might be surprised to learn that God reveals His judgment of the nations, its citizens, and, most of all, His people through the words and actions of world leaders.

Sixth, leaders could be a reflection of the character of the citizenry of their nations. I use the word *could*, for it is not always the case. At one time, I thought leaders always reflected the character of the ones they lead, but this is not always true.

Consider ancient Israel as an example; their leaders did not always reflect the character and nature of the people. For example, Moses, Joshua, and Caleb had hearts that were for the Lord while most of the sons of Israel had hearts that were not.

“But My servant Caleb, because he has had a different spirit and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land which he entered, and his descendants shall take possession of it.” (Numbers 14:24 NASB)

Later, the Lord raised up judges or deliverers to keep the people in line. When there were no judges, the people resorted back to their evil ways. Even later, when they demanded a king like the nations and rejected the Lord as their King, the Lord allowed Saul, one much like the people, to be their king. After Solomon’s death, when the kingdom was divided into two houses (Judah and Israel), there were kings that did good things and ones that did evil things. When the king was good, the people prospered; when the king was bad, the people suffered. The same principle has applied throughout the history of nations.

However, it could be said that leaders reflect the heart of the people in nations that freely and openly elect their governmental leaders. This is most likely to occur in democratic and republic forms of government. For example, the US is a republic with a representative (not democratic) government; that is, we elect fellow citizens to represent us in the governance of our country. Consequently, the argument could be made that we are responsible for who represents us. If we keep electing corrupt politicians into office because they give us what we want, even to the detriment of the country, then we are culpable in their unrighteous governance. Today, in the US, we are seeing the fruit of reelecting the same ones into office term after term. We now have a professional, elite class of politicians running the country that is caught up in special interests, power, greed, money, self-preservation, and party-preservation.

Recently, I have heard some in the US media reject such a notion, for they see the corruption, hypocrisy, falsehood, and lies that permeate our current political system as not related to the heart and character of the nation. I disagree with such an assessment and go one step further to state that our leaders are not only a reflection of the condition of the population-at-large but also of the church-at-large in the US that is best described as Laodicean in heart. If we are to be the light and salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13-16) and the leaders of our country have become unrighteous in their governance, then, most likely, it is a reflection of the ones called to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and to stand for His righteousness in days of darkness.

As I have questioned previously; who is standing for the righteousness of God? Who is even speaking to the nation of God’s righteousness and His righteous standard found in His Son? Who is expressing, even demanding, the righteousness of God in a day of self-righteousness? Where is the righteous indignation over what is transpiring in Washington DC these days? See issue #04-1016, February 15, 2010, *“Righteousness is My Standard!”*

I believe that we must keep these last two points in mind as we consider what is transpiring in the world today and, specifically, in our respective nations. Simply, we need to know what God is saying to us through our leaders and their actions or inactions, if we are to understand and respond to His judgments in these last days. We might be surprised to see our own reflection in our leaders. After all, if we look into literal channels of water, we will see our own reflection.