

NETWORK

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Personal from...

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Dear Friends,

So, where do we go from here? By now you have gotten through all the retrospective programs that bore us with all the news stories from the year 2000. For me, it is like watching a dull movie the second time. I watched all that news as it happened, and I am not very excited about sitting through it again.

Of far more interest is the question of what lies ahead in the new year. What is going to happen in the Middle East? Will the stock market recover? Are we headed for a recession? Will you still have a job by this time next year?

The only honest answer to those questions is, "I don't know," but it is a good time to consider the importance of keeping our head up and watching what is happening. The implications of some of the things on the horizon give a person cause for concern.

The Daily Telegraph of London published a CIA report at the end of the year that was full of danger and hope. Looking ahead fifteen years, they saw good news in areas where you might not expect it. "Energy resources will be sufficient to meet demand," the study says. The CIA believes the world

economy has a potential for growth that outstrips anything seen in a very long time. Many people attribute the booming economy of the past 8 years to government decisions but the CIA recognized, as have many analysts, that the economy owes most of its growth to the incredible increased productivity produced by the computer.

The report did not see famine as a major threat due to genetically modified crops which have increased yields enormously. People will have enough to eat. China, with its huge population, will overtake Europe as the second largest economy in the world. They see the Russian economy continuing to contract.

But the future holds a great deal of danger as well. The CIA sees the possibility of alliances between some of the largest criminal enterprises in the world. They have become staggeringly wealthy with their drug revenues and are bigger than a lot of small countries. The report sees them infiltrating banks and businesses and gaining effective control of some small countries.

One thing the report envisions is not very hard to see. It is

Inside this Issue

Daily Stations.....2

Broadcast Schedule....2

Station Updates.....2

**Would God Harden
Your Heart?.....3**

already here: "Governments will have less and less control over flows of information, technology, diseases, migrants, arms, and financial transactions, whether licit or illicit." There are those who say that a loss of control of information was directly a factor in the fall of the Soviet Union. Information is now available in such quantities that it threatens to overwhelm all of us. The genie is out of the bottle and no one is going to get it back in.

Then there is terrorism. Up to now, most terrorist attacks have been the equivalent of a group being struck by lightning. A few years ago, a handful of students were taking shelter under a tree during a storm. Lightning hit the tree and killed them all. If they had been on a bus that had been bombed by terrorists, there would have been a great outcry, but in the

See "Personal" next page

end, the terrorist attack would have had little more effect on policy than the lightning strike.

Look for that to change as terrorist organization look to kill off a few thousand people at a time rather than a few dozen. Evidence mounts that terrorists are getting chemical and biological weapons, and may already have suitcase sized nuclear devices.

And, of course, there is the tragedy of Africa where AIDS is rewriting the history of a continent. The situation is only going to get worse as there are no solutions in sight that have a chance of implementation.

What all this means for you and me is anyone's guess. We have known all along that we live in a dangerous world and that our hold on this life is always tenuous. The years of our life hasten by, and it isn't terribly relevant in the end whether it is heart disease, cancer or a terrorist bomb that takes us out of it. What does matter is what we do with our life while we have it.

And perhaps that is where we should give our attention as we start a new year. What, exactly, do we plan to do with this new allotment of time? Make some new year's resolutions that we know we will break? Or maybe treat this year as the last year before Christ's return. Whether this is the year of Christ's return or not, it could be all we have.

Our wish for you in the year 2001 is that God will draw you ever closer to Him, that He will turn the hearts of your family to one another. One of the best ways to keep a close relationship with God is to build a strong foundation for

your beliefs.

Our tape offer this time is titled, "The Administration of Covenant," and it will help fill in the background of this most important subject. To receive your *free* cassette tape of the message just check the box on the enclosed card and return it to us.

Keep in touch throughout the year.

With love in Christ's service,
Ronald L. Dart

Radio Update

Please note the following new stations and times:

- Denver, Colorado**
KLT 670 AM
5:00 a.m. Monday - Friday
- Prescott, Arizona**
KNOT 99.1 FM
7:00 a.m. Sundays
- Boston, Massachusetts**
WROL 950 AM
9:00 a.m. Saturdays



Tune in for the latest broadcast.

January 20 - January 26

Christian Origins 44

January 27 - February 2

Christian Origins 45

February 3 - February 9

Christian Origins 46

February 10 - February 16

Christian Holidays 1

Daily Radio

The *Born to Win* broadcast can be heard daily on these stations:

- Huntsville, Alabama**
3:30 p.m. daily
WBXR 1140 AM
 - Little Rock, Arkansas**
5:30 p.m. daily
KAAY 1090 AM
 - Denver, Colorado**
KLT 670 AM
5:00 a.m. Daily
 - Augusta, Georgia**
5:30 p.m. daily
WFAM 1050 AM
 - Morrow, Georgia**
7:30 a.m. and 7 p.m. daily
WSSA 1570 AM
 - Richmond, Kentucky**
12:30 p.m. daily
WCBR 1110 AM
 - Denton, Maryland**
10:00 a.m. daily
WKDI 840 AM
 - Omaha, Nebraska**
3:30 p.m. daily
KLNQ 1560 AM
 - Asheville, North Carolina**
4:00 p.m. daily
WSKY 1230 AM
 - Charleston, South Carolina**
4:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. daily
WZJY 1480 AM
 - Greenville, South Carolina**
4:30 p.m. daily
WELP 1050 AM
 - Chattanooga, Tennessee**
5:30 p.m. daily
WLMR 1450 AM
 - Beaumont, Texas**
8:30 a.m. daily
KQHN 1510 AM
 - Dallas, Texas**
6:30 a.m. daily
KSKY 660 AM
 - Ephrata, Washington**
6:00 a.m. Mon. - Sat.
KTRW 970 AM
- The following stations broadcast daily at 2:30 p.m.
- Northeastern Oregon**
KGDN 101.3 FM
 - Central Washington**
KGER 95.9 FM
 - Moses Lake, Washington**
KTAC 93.9 FM
 - Northwest Washington**
KTBI 810 AM
 - Spokane, Washington**
KSP0 106.5 FM
 - Yakima, Washington**
KYAK 930 AM

Would God Harden Your Heart?

By Ronald L. Dart

Why did God harden Pharaoh's heart? When I taught Old Testament Survey class, we could never get through this section of Exodus without a lively discussion on this question. Did Pharaoh have a choice in the matter? Was it impossible for him to repent? "I thought all men possessed free moral agency. Did God take that away from Pharaoh?" asked a girl from Glasgow. "Seems like the poor beggar never had a chance," opined an Australian student.

The first year I taught the class I was curious. Why so much sympathy for Pharaoh? After all, he was the villain in this piece, so why should anyone care if he got it in the neck?

As the questioning continued, however, it clearly wasn't Pharaoh that generated so much concern. If God could arbitrarily decide to make a man the object of His wrath, it could happen to anyone — even me. And if God could get down inside someone's head and rearrange the wires in his brain to make him evil, why couldn't God simply rearrange the wires to make him good? Why couldn't God soften Pharaoh's heart so that he would let Israel go without all that pain, anguish, grief, and woe. Thousands of people lost their firstborn son because God hardened this one man. Was that fair?

Before we can get serious about explaining why God hardened Pharaoh's heart, we really need to have clear minds about what it was that He did. Did He take a peaceful, humble, generous, good-hearted man and turn him into a murdering tyrant? Did God, indeed, get down inside his head and rearrange the circuits?

If you haven't already done so, you might pause at this point and read chapters 3 through 12 of the book of Exodus. If you will keep your Bible handy, I will point out some relevant verses as we go. In chapter three of

Exodus we find the record of God appearing to Moses from the burning bush and commissioning him to go to Egypt to rescue the children of Israel.

In verse 19, we find an important key to understanding what follows. God says to Moses, "And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no not by a mighty hand." That makes sense. After all, the man is an absolute ruler in the land, is a god to the Egyptians, and probably is possessed by the arrogance that goes with such status in the eyes of his fellow men. In all probability, no one had said "no" to Pharaoh in his entire life. Pharaoh, in other words, would have been disposed to have spit in Moses' eye from the very beginning.

There is no indication of any intervention on God's part up to and including Moses' first interview with Pharaoh. In chapter 5, verse 2, Pharaoh replies to Moses' request, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." Why should he? Can you contemplate voluntarily and freely relinquishing a labor force of 600,000 men plus women and children — a labor force that costs you nothing?

In chapter 7, God outlines for Moses what is about to happen and why. He states in verse 1 that He has made Moses a sort of god to Pharaoh and has appointed Aaron as His prophet. He says that He will harden Pharaoh's heart and multiply signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, "But Pharaoh shall not harken unto you, that I many 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. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord. . ." (verses 4, 5).

The first instance where God specifically hardens Pharaoh's heart is found in verse 13 of this chapter, and it

is quite revealing. It follows on the heels of Moses' first sign to Pharaoh — casting down his rod which immediately became a serpent. One would think such a miracle would have a profound effect upon a man, and no doubt it would have if it hadn't been for one thing. Pharaoh's magicians promptly duplicated the sign! Although Moses' serpent devoured the serpents of Pharaoh's magicians, Pharaoh was unimpressed.

How did God harden Pharaoh's heart? By allowing Pharaoh's magicians to perform a similar sign to that of Moses. Pharaoh's attitude, then, came about as a response to external events, rather than being prompted by some internal change generated by God. The same thing happens later in the chapter when the river is turned to blood, and the magicians of Egypt duplicate the feat. We are told in verse 22, "And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, neither did he harken unto them; as the Lord had said."

Beginning with the plague of frogs in chapter 8, there is a most instructive cause-effect sequence. It has implications for us reaching far beyond the mere satisfaction of our curiosity regarding Pharaoh.

Finally, at long last, Pharaoh is moved to relent and let Israel go. The magicians had duplicated the fear of the frogs, but they had not been able to get rid of them. "Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, 'Entreat the Lord, that He may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go.'" (Exodus 8:8).

Although he did not acknowledge the existence of God before, he now asked Moses to pray for him — to entreat the Lord for him. How did God soften Pharaoh's heart? With the plague of frogs. How did He harden Pharaoh's heart? By removing the plague: "But

Continued on page 4. . .

Continued from page 3 . . .

when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart and harkened not unto them; as the Lord had said” (verse 15).

Pharaoh’s heart was softened as a response to external events, and it was hardened as a response to external events. His freedom to choose, repent, change, had not been abridged in any way.

Then came the plague of lice where God did not allow the magicians of Pharaoh to duplicate it, and they said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God: and Pharaoh’s heart was hardened” (verse 19). The plague of lice was insufficient to reach him.

Then came the plague of flies in which God said, “And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end that you may know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth. And I will put a division between my people and your people; tomorrow shall this sign be.”

Up until this time, the Israelites had suffered along with the Egyptians. At this point, God took events a step further to reach Pharaoh — with only modest effect. “And Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Go you, sacrifice to your God in the land.” He gave in to a small extent, but he wouldn’t let them leave Egypt.

In verse 31, we read that God removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from His people. Pharaoh’s response? “And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go.”

Pharaoh remained hardened through the plague of murrain and boils and Moses, in preparation for the plague of hail, delivered this message to Pharaoh, “And in very deed for this cause have I raised you up, for to show in you my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.”

Did God raise up a good man only to harden his heart and cause him great pain? Or did He select a man whose

choices in his life indicated that he would harden himself?

In this plague the Egyptians were given a chance to respond to God with a warning about the storm of hail mingled with fire. “He that feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses; and he that regardeth not the word of the Lord left his servants and his cattle in the field.” Then came a violent plague of hail and fire upon the land of Egypt with the exception of the area where the children of Israel were.

And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, “I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. Intreat the Lord (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail: and I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer” (verse 27).

So the hail ceased and the thunder stopped, “And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants” (verse 34). How did God harden Pharaoh’s heart? By removing the chastisement which had softened his heart. It required no intervention in Pharaoh’s mind, but merely a manipulation of events. And so it continued through the plague of locusts, the plague of darkness, and the destruction of the firstborn in all of Egypt.

There is no need for the 21st-century Christian to be concerned as to whether he might be “a vessel of

wrath fitted for destruction,” or someone whom God has chosen to harden.

Pharaoh’s freedom of choice was not abridged at any time. It’s just that God knew what sort of man He was dealing with — in fact he had chosen just that type of man to be in that place at that time. All He had to do was change events to create a response from Pharaoh. This pattern is repeated in many circumstances in the Bible. In fact, the entire book of Judges is a record of oscillations to and from God on the part of the people of Israel. When they were chastised, they repented and turned to God. When they prospered, they turned away and became hardened.

They had been warned by Moses in a moving speech in Deuteronomy 6 through 8, that their greatest danger in turning away from God would come in a time of prosperity. It proved to be so.

The chances are that every one of us has gone through this cycle of repentance and hardness several times — even since baptism. Do you suppose it’s possible that in a time of prosperity, a time of happiness, a time of ease, that we could remember God for a change? Must it always be necessary that we be chastised, humbled, frightened, hurt in order that we kneel before God?

Why did God harden Pharaoh’s heart?

That men everywhere might learn in him the power and the majesty of God. Satan’s world is doing its best to harden you, to make you callous. But you can choose to be tenderhearted before God and not to respond as Pharaoh did.



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That the man of God may be proficient and equipped for every good work.