

## ***In The Midst Of A Crooked And Perverse Generation***

"Do all things without murmurings and questions; that ye may become blameless and harmless, children of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye are seen as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:14, 15).

The Philippian Christians had to serve God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. They were neither the first nor the last to find themselves under such circumstances. In fact, every person who ever served God did so "in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation," and so must we.

Surely no-one would question the perverseness of the generation in which we live. We are surrounded by indecency. Moral filth lines the shelves of the neighborhood store and video shop. Drug scandals rock the sports and entertainment worlds. Christians working in factories are exposed to bad language, filthy stories, and rumors of immorality among their fellow employees. Our children attend schools that are filled with wickedness. We are not overstating the case - this is the world as it really is, a crooked and perverse generation indeed.

We face two possible choices as Christians: (1) try to clean up the society in which we live, so that we and our children can serve God without the pressures and evil influences that presently exist. We would not discourage reasonable effort on the part of individual Christians along these lines, but success in any such efforts will be on a small scale. It matters not how hard we work at it, by and large, the world will still be a corrupt world when we die: evil will still exist on TV and in the movies; pornography will still be a problem; corruption will still exist in government; and schools will still have their ungodly influences. Our purpose as Christians is to call people out of darkness through the gospel and into light. We can do that, but efforts to eradicate darkness will for the most part be futile. Fortunately, we have another choice: (2) make up our minds to serve God faithfully in whatever environment we find ourselves. This is the only viable choice for the Christian.

It can be done. Consider Noah's generation when "every imagination of the thoughts of (man's) heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5); or Lot's generation when ten righteous souls could not be found in all of Sodom; or Elijah's generation when wicked Ahab served as king in the wicked nation of Israel; or Daniel's generation when as a young man he found himself in a foreign land facing pressures to eat the king's meats and drink his wines (Dan. 1:8); or the apostles' generation when Rome ruled the world and the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees dominated the religious scene. What were these men doing in such crooked and perverse circumstances? They were serving God! That's what they were doing! The point is this: if these could serve God in the midst of the crooked and perverse circumstances in which they found themselves, and if the Philippians could shine "as lights in the world" in the midst of their crooked and perverse generation, so can we. Our eternal destiny is not determined by the environment in which we live, but by our own determination to be what we ought to be in whatever environment we find ourselves. We must lay aside our excuses, both for ourselves and our children, and make up our minds to say with Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15). This we shall do, and with God's help we shall overcome.

**- by Bill Hall**

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## ***President James A. Garfield***

James A. Garfield, twentieth President of the United States, resigned as an elder of the church of Christ in 1881 to take office. It is reported on that occasion he said, "*I resign the highest office in the land to become President of the United States.*"

Thirty years earlier at age 19, he was planning to take a riverboat trip with friends. He recalled, "*But two days before we intended to leave, I injured my foot while chopping wood. It was only a small cut, but the blue dye in the homemade socks I wore poisoned the wound, and I was compelled to stay at home. While my friends were on their journey, a powerful preacher came to our town to hold revival meetings. I was invited, and since I didn't have anything else to do, I decided to attend. The message touched me deeply, and as a result, I surrendered my heart to the Lord and was baptized into his kingdom.*"

Eight years later in 1853, he began preaching. He ended his first sermon saying, "*Jesus will come again, not as the babe in helplessness ...but as King of kings and Lord of lords.*" It was reported that attention to his sermons was intense and the stillness most profound. He baptized people into Christ, married people, spoke at funerals. He preached ~ primarily well-received revivals ~ until he entered Congress in 1863.

The first week after his inauguration as President of the United States, a member of his cabinet insisted on an urgent meeting at 10:00 Sunday morning to handle a threatened national crisis. Garfield refused to attend because he had a more important appointment. The cabinet member demanded to know what it was. The president replied, "*I will be as frank as you are. My engagement is with the Lord to meet Him in His house at His table at 10:00 tomorrow, and I shall be there.*"

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## ***The Cure For Fighting***

A common complaint of parents is the frequent fussing and fighting that occurs between their children. The scenario typically develops like this: one starts it all with an unkind word or deed, the other responds in kind, and the fight is on. Before it is over, the words have become meaner, the blows have become harder, and tempers have flared higher. Usually these serious fights result over some amazingly petty and insignificant things. And, of course, there's always the "tattling" and accusations concerning who is at fault. All in all, it is a pretty ugly thing.

Spiritual brothers often exhibit the same propensity for fighting. The similarities are truly striking! Think about it: it's usually started by an unkind word or deed; words become harsher; tempers get involved; it is usually over something that is very insignificant; there's always the name calling and finger pointing coupled with gossip and rumoring. All in all, it is a pretty ugly thing.

The important 'bottom line' is that God commands us to be better than this. That goes for our relationships in the family and in the church. Parents hope that the problems with their children will be overcome with teaching and maturity. It is certain that problems among brethren can only be avoided in the same way.

"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love." (Romans 12: 10). Think!

**- by Greg Gwin**