

Confronting Our Culture

By Bill Scheidler

With the recent ordination of an openly “gay” priest in the Episcopal Church we are once again reminded of the moral decay in our culture. The church, which is the instrument of God in the earth today to represent His character and nature to the world, must arise, put on her beautiful garments and contend for the purposes of God.

The implications of this ordination are staggering. If you can ordain a priest who is homosexual in his expression, you can never again discipline believers in the area of sexual behavior outside of marriage. If this behavior is to be condoned, then any fornication must be condoned. In the Fourth Century AD, the church conquered the Roman Empire, but in our day the world is making an assault to infiltrate the church.

Paul warned us of this in the last days. In II Timothy 3:1-7 he summarized the context in which the last day church would find itself.

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! 6 For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, 7 always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Here Paul tells us that people would be **lovers of themselves**. That is, there will be people who have a supreme regard for their own interests and activities with a total disregard for the rights and comforts of others. The word here literally means “fond of self.” These individuals make “self” the central object of living and trample on anything and anybody that interferes with that.

Paul indicated that people would be **lovers of money** or covetous. That is, there will be people who will make money their goal in life. For these people every endeavor is evaluated on the basis of what it will produce or what it will cost in dollars and cents.

He said that people would be **boasters**. That is, there will be people who will go to great extremes to make you believe that they are something other than what they really are.

He said that people would be **proud**. That is, there will be people who enjoy putting others down so that they might appear above them. These are people who with pride, arrogance and foolish presumption brag about their position, power, wealth, education, and despise others of lower station and treat them with contempt.

He said that people would be **blasphemers**. That is, there will be people who love to insult. Pride always begets insult. This activity can be directed toward God by those who continually insult God by casting doubts on His true nature and character. This can be directed toward other people in cutting and hurting remarks or actions that wound them.

He said that people would be **disobedient to parents**. That is, there will be those who manifest obstinate opposition to parents. It is a sign of a decaying society when youth loses respect for the aged and when they fail to recognize the debt that they owe to those who gave them life.

He said that people would be **unthankful and unholy**. That is, there will be those who refuse to recognize even the ultimate decencies of life. The Greek word for “unholy” does not so much mean that

men will break written laws; it means that they will offend against the unwritten laws, which are part and parcel of the very essence of life. To the Greeks, for a brother to marry a sister, a father to molest a child, or men to live with men would offend against the fundamental decencies of life. The person who is mastered by his lower passions will gratify them in the most shameless ways. The man who has exhausted the normal pleasures of life, and is still not satisfied, will seek his thrill in abnormal and shameful pleasures.

He said that people would be **without natural affection**. The word Paul uses for “affection” refers specifically to “family love”. This refers to people, particularly parents who will not possess a normal, healthy love for their children. The Romans practiced “exposure” of unwanted children. This has been the practice of the heathen throughout the ages. Not only a sacrificing of sons and daughters to their gods, but other wicked practices as well. The ancient Persians would bury unwanted children alive. In most of the Grecian states the killing of infants was not merely permitted, but actually enforced by law. The Spartan lawgiver expressly ordained that every child that was born should be examined by the men of the tribe, and if it was found weak or deformed, it should be thrown into a deep cavern at the foot of Mt. Tagetus. Aristotle encouraged the exposure of children who were naturally feeble and deformed in order to prevent an excess of population. How similar these things are to abortion practices in our day.

Paul said that people would be **trucebreakers**. This Greek word literally means “a pouring out of life.” It indicates that there will be those who are not willing to pour out their lives for another. It refers to those who cannot be persuaded to enter into a covenant commitment.

Paul’s list of qualities of the last day generation includes false accusers, incontinent (lacking self-control), fierce (loving brutality), despisers of good (lit. hostile to virtue), traitors, heady, conceited and lovers of pleasure. This last one refers to those who have taken up vain amusements—those who are ruled by their senses, who give in to any and all passions.

The sad commentary is that all these people **maintain a form of godliness**. That is, they have some external semblance of religion in their life, but it is a religion devoid of power and personal relationship with Jesus. Their brand of religion imposes no restraint on their passions and carnal lifestyle, but in all respects they live as if they had none.

This is the culture that we are called upon to confront. We confront it by being different. This is the world (system) from which we are to distinguish ourselves.

How significant are Peter’s words to those responding to the first altar call in Acts 2 when they asked, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37-47).

Peter admonished the crowd to “Repent! Be baptized in water! Be baptized in the Holy Spirit! **AND... Save yourselves from this perverse generation!**”

If Peter could say that he was living in a perverse generation, how much more are we who are living in the spiritual climate of the end times.

The word “perverse” means “crooked, twisted, warped or winding.” Biblically speaking, “it is used to apply to anything that will not go toward, that is, straight onward, but will go now on this side and now on that side making a crooked path.”

The Bible speaks of a faithless and perverse generation (Luke 9:1), a stubborn and a rebellious generation (Ps. 78:8), an adulterous and sinful generation (Mk. 8:38), and a perverse and crooked generation (Deut. 32:5, 20).

It seems that we have been chosen to live in the culmination of all of these generations.

This all sounds pretty grim. However, in the midst of this negative God is calling out a CHOSEN GENERATION and a HOLY PRIESTHOOD who are called to show forth the virtues of Him who has called us out of darkness into this present light (I Pet. 2:9).

In the midst of all of this God's church will shake itself from the dust, arise and shine and put on her beautiful garments (Is. 52:1-2; Is. 60:1-3). The church is going to be that city set on a hill radiating the light of God to the world. It will be a beacon of hope to a world without hope. In the midst of all of the negative indicators there will be a people who will rise up and praise the Lord (Ps. 102:18).

This people or generation will be characterized by righteousness and true holiness, their obedient way of life, their love for each other, their humility and submission, their exaltation of the true God and by their white garments.

The current of the generation in which Peter was living was flowing down hill fast. The danger was that many would be swept away. But Peter preaching to the multitudes said that they could "save themselves" or "be saved". They would need to work to swim against the current if they did not want to be swept along.

"Save yourselves" means to deliver, separate or distinguish yourselves. In other words, to separate yourself is the only way to save yourself. How do we separate ourselves? Ask yourself these seven questions when evaluating your present lifestyle:

1. It is of the world system (I John 2:15-16)?

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world."

2. Is it to the glory of God (I Cor. 10:31)?

"Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

3. Can you invoke the blessing of God on it (Pro. 10:22)?

"The blessing of the Lord makes one rich, and adds no sorrow with it."

4. It is a stumbling block to others (I Cor. 10:32-33)?

"Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved."

5. Has it the appearance of evil (I Th. 5:22)?

"Abstain from all appearance of evil." (KJV) The Knox translation says "all that has a look of evil about it."

6. Is its atmosphere good? Could you enjoy communion with God when engaging in this activity or would God be out of place (II Cor. 6:14)?

"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?"

7. It is a weight or a distraction from God's purpose for your life (Heb. 12:1)?

"Therefore...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."

Unless the church is willing to stand up, measure itself by the Word of God, hold up a righteous standard and challenge the post-modern thinking of our day, we will run the risk of becoming like Lot of old. His soul was grieved as he watched his city decline, but he was powerless to change his culture because he himself needed change. God give us courage to stand up like the apostles of old and be a prophetic voice to our world as we yield ourselves to be instruments of God to extend the purposes of God in this generation. Let it be said of us what it was said of David that "he served his own generation by the will of God" (Acts 13:36).