

Save Yourself From This Untoward Generation

Acts 2:37-40 – “... Save yourselves from this untoward generation.”

The more or less obvious meaning is that they should respond to the invitation of 2:37-39 and not follow the religious leaders’ rejection of the Messiah. But what can we make of the phrase “untoward generation”? There are characteristics of every generation that should be recognized and avoided.

The best place to start is a dictionary:

Untoward – froward or perverse

Froward – obstinately willful or perverse

Perverse – willful determination to be contrary; persistence in wrong; rejection of the good and proper

In Greek, the word for untoward is σκολιος (skolios):

- a. Crooked. Lk.3:5 - ... the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth.
 1. Note our word scoliosis for curvature of the spine
 2. Even in Hebrew, the base word for sin means “to miss the mark”
- b. Unfair, surly, froward – 1 P. 2:18 – servants to be subject not only to the good (masters) but also to the froward.
- c. A perverse desire to stray from the straight path. Often combined as a phrase as “crooked and perverse” – Dt. 32:5 – “They are a perverse and crooked generation” Phl. 2:15 – “...sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation ...”

Even in our common speech we use this idea to denote moral compliance or rejection. “crooked as a dog’s hind leg”, “he is straight”, “a straight-arrow”, “that is really warped”, “that guy is really twisted”

So how can we “save ourselves from this untoward generation”?

The temptation for thousands of years has been to retreat from the world into monasteries, convents, communes, or into self-sufficient and isolated groups. The problem is that you can tuck yourself away in a monastery and still have sin in your heart. We need to be salt and light in this world, yet not to become molded into its image (Rom. 12:1-2)

We need to be able to look at the world around us and recognize it for what it is, whether good or bad. Discernment – ability to distinguish between right and wrong, holy and profane. 1 Chr. 12:32 – the men of Issachar had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do.

We could catalog all the characteristics of the world that should be avoided, but we all know those are wrong. What can we recognize about our own generation that we should “save ourselves from”?

1. Non-Christian worldviews – atheism, communism, humanism, Islamism (in schools and media)
2. Defilements of the flesh and mind
 - a. Sexual perversions – these have been present in every generation, but what we see today is the attempt to force society, not only to look the other way and permit the sins, but to regard them as normal behavior (as not crooked). e.g., homosexuality, transgendering, same-sex marriage, even incest. They want us to be ashamed of our “straightness”, and defy us to speak the truth.
 - b. Piercings, tattoos, scarification, ...
 - c. Physical/mental addictions – alcohol, tobacco, drugs, pornography
 - d. Profanity – purposely introduced to coarsen our culture and deaden our senses
 - e. Violent, occult, horror, perverse movies, videos and games
3. Degradation of marriage – divorce, shacking up, adultery, same-sex marriage, polygamy
4. Degradation of life – abortion, suicide, euthanasia, infanticide, ISIS
5. Escape from reality
 - a. Addictions (as listed above)
 - b. Video games, social media
 - c. Entertainment (including books)
 - d. Suicide (ironic. They are only escaping this present reality.)
6. Governmental and societal pressures
 - a. Hate speech regulation (or hate crimes) – they want us to call evil good, and good evil
 - b. Class envy
 - c. Race-baiting, extortion, and activism
 - d. Victim mentality (blaming others for your troubles)
 - e. Blaming some nebulous group (banks, Jews, doctors, ...) “Here is what *they* don’t want you to know ...”
 - f. Self-esteem (without regard to actual accomplishment). Everybody is “special”.
 - g. Government dependence
 - h. Union bullying
 - i. Academic bullying of Christian individuals and groups
 - j. Idolizing of acting, singing, and sports figures