**IN THE MIDST OF A CROOKED AND PERVERSE GENERATION**

 ***SCRIPTURE READING… ([Php 2:12-16](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Php%202.12-16%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)) 2 If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,2Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.3Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.4Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.5Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:6Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:7But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:8And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.9Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:10That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;11And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.12Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.13For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.14Do all things without murmurings and disputings:15That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;16Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.***

**1. A grave concern to any thoughtful Christian is how quickly our**

 **society is changing, and clearly for the worse!!!! Last Sunday when I was led by the Spirit of God to minister the word of God, I spoke on the terrible shape the world is in today, all because of how satan has occupied the minds of many people! Beloved many ministers are all in line with what is being accomplished in the world and are in agreement that the world as we know it is in line with God’s word….A COMPLETE DISASTER!!!!**

**2. As some theologians would describe it, we now live in a**

 **"post-Christian culture"**

 **a. This simply means that the old norms once held true are no longer**

 **accepted by the majority of people!!!!**

 **b. For example, people as a majority once believed in God, they also**

 **believed that the Bible was the Word of God, and that Jesus was the Son**

 **of God; but such is no longer the case!!!!!**

 **c. The majority no longer accepts certain basic principles of**

 **morality taught in both the Old and New Testament, even ridiculing**

 **those people who do as "old-fashioned" and "un-enlightened"**

**Listen some are out to prove that the world is not round in shape but flat!!!**

**3. That we live in a "post-Christian culture" is true both socially and**

 **religiously**

 **a. Socially, in that divorce, remarriage, living together without**

 **marriage, and homosexuality are now commonly accepted as**

 ***"alternative lifestyles"*……REALLy!!!!! In other words you know have a**

 **choice of gender/marriage partner…etc etc. It’s Ok go for it!!!**

 **b. Religiously, in that we find in the role of church leadership,**

 **homosexual ministers, thieves and robbers, self-proclaimed Pastors, and**

 **many other various forms of "new age" religions are now accepted by**

 **many as a norm of life!!!**

**The question that now arises in the mind of any Christian is the following..**

**4. How are we as Christians to react to this change in our society?**

**Remember we are called to …….**

**“SHINE AS LIGHTS IN A WORLD THAT IS A CROOKED AND PERVERSE GENERATION….**

1. **Is there anything we can do to change the direction in which our**

**society is heading?**

 **1) Should we form "political action committees" and try to change**

 **it using the organizational powers of the church?**

 **2) Should we resort to boycotts, picketing, or other forms of**

 **"economic blackmail"? such as what we see and hear from such groups**

 **as “The Dreamers” or “Daca” or “Immigrants” !!!**

 **3) Should we resort to violence, both verbal and physical, if**

 **necessary?**

 **b. What can we do to protect ourselves, and our children?**

 **1) Should we simply change our views to conform to those of**

 **society?**

 **2) Should we isolate ourselves, or form private communities?**

**5. I believe that the Scriptures provide the correct answer, in the letter**

 **written by Paul to the Philippians, a church which, like many others in**

 **New Testament times, lived in a "PRE-Christian culture"**

 **a. Paul wrote to these Christians living in city heavily influenced by the**

 **Roman culture, with its paganism, intellectualism, and immorality!!!**

 **b. What Paul wrote to them, is very likely the sort of things, I believe he**

 **would write today if he himself were present in our midst, and then even**

 **some things that would cause waves to ripple in the Christian community!**

1. **Paul simply wrote the following to the church at Ephesus…..**

[**Php 2:14-16**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Php%202.12-16)**…*14Do all things without murmurings and disputings:15That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;***

**6. This message is designed to help us all to pay attention carefully to**

 **what Paul wrote in this passage….**

 **a. I believe these words contains guidance for Christians living "in the**

 **midst of a crooked and perverse generation", whether then or now!!!**

 **b. The directions of, hope, and warnings will help us to**

 **"shine as lights in the world"**

**Beloved, if we are going to shine as lights "in the midst of a**

**crooked and perverse generation", we must do certain things to achieve that goal...]**

***I. WORKING OUT OUR OWN SALVATION FIRST! (12a)***

1. **AS JESUS PUT IT, "FIRST REMOVE THE PLANK FROM YOUR OWN EYE" –**

[**Mt 7:1-6**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Mt%207.1-6)**…*Judge not, that ye be not judged.2For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.3And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?4Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?5Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.6Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.***

1. **What this passage is trying to communicate is, the importance of**

**"getting your own act together first"**

1. **Notice, that once you have "removed the plank"from your own eye,**

**then you can then "remove the speck" in your brother’s eye.**

**We can be more careful with each other, and "shine as lights in the world", and we must do so with…..**

***II. WITH "FEAR AND TREMBLING"* (12b)**

1. **THE WORD *"FEAR"* IN CONNECTION WITH GOD IS NOT POPULAR TODAY...**
2. **This is all Perhaps a reaction to the "hell, fire and brimstone"**

 **preaching of another generation. I don’t see or hear too many**

 **minister preaching on the “FEAR OF GOD” except for a couple who I**

 **personally know!!**

 **2. So then could it be that we have gone to the other extreme?**

 **a. Have we diluted the concept of the "fear of the Lord" by our**

 **definitions?**

 **b. To the point there is no place for "trembling" in our**

 **definition of fear?**

1. **Jesus certainly taught the "fear of the Lord" –**

[***Mt 10:28***](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Mt%2010.28)***28And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.***

1. ***CHRISTIANS TODAY NEED TO HAVE A PROPER "FEAR AND TREMBLING" IN THEIR LIVES IN ORDER TO SHINE BRIGHTLY FOR THE LORD IN THE MIDST OF PERVERSE AND FULLY CROOKED GENERATION...***

 **1. Without it, it is unlikely we will seriously make the effort to**

 **"work out our own salvation"**

 **2. Could this be a reason there is so much apathy and**

 **fruitlessness in the church today?**

**[BELOVED, another reason for such fruitlessness; is, we failed and**

**don't "shine as lights in the world"...]**

***III.Next IN LINE TO CONSIDER IS LETTING GOD WORK IN US* (13)**

 **A. TO SUCCEED AS "LIGHTS IN THE WORLD"...**

 **1. It will be essential to let God do His work in you and through you,**

 **something He is able to do beyond our ability to comprehend –**

[***Ep 3:20-21***](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Ep%203.20-21)***20Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,21Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.***

 **2. BELOVED, He is there "working in you"! - cf.**

[***Php 1:6***](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Php%201.6)***6Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:***

 **3. you may ask…How? 2 DISTINCT WAYS…..**

 **a. To "will" - helping us in our motivation! ALL OF US CAN USE SOME**

 **MOTIVATION FROM TIME TO TIME IN ORDER TO DO THE WORK OF THE LORD!!**

1. **To "do" - helping us in our ability TO FUNCTION AND WORK WHERE HE**

**CALL US TO! YOUR LIGHT IS NEEDED WHERE HE NEEDS IT!!**

1. **BUT IF WE ARE NOT CAREFUL, WE CAN EASILY...**

 **1. Quench God's efforts to work in us**

 **2. Prevent God from using us altogether (at least for doing things**

 **for our own good)!**

**Another important element in our "shining as lights" is that we go**

**about our task...]**

**IV. WITHOUT MURMURING AND DISPUTING (14)**

1. **BY MAINTAINING A POSITIVE ATTITUDE...**

 **1. Living in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation can**

 **easily get us down, where we can become constant complainers**

 **2. But allowing that to happen will render us less effective!**

 **3.REMEMBER Israel, "murmuring" can lead to our own downfall**

 **-**

[***1Co 10:10-12***](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1Co%2010.10-12)***10Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.11Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.12Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.***

 **B. BY GETTING ALONG WITH YOUR BRETHREN...**

 **1. Unity among brethren is extremely important as we try to**

 **convince the world concerning Jesus -** [**Jn 17:20-23**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Jn%2017.20-23)

 **2. Disputing with one another simply reveals we have some growing**

 **up to do! -** [**1Co 3:1-4**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1Co%203.1-4)

**[If the "body of Christ" is going to influence the world the way it**

**should, it cannot be devouring itself through such destructive forces**

**like "murmuring" and "disputing" among themselves.**

**But also important is our relation to those in the world, and that they**

**truly see us...OUR LIGHT MUST BE SHINING BRIGHTLY IN THIS LOST SOCIETY OF A “CROOKED,AND PERVERSE GENERATION”**

**V. WE MUST TRULY BE AS CHILDREN OF GOD WITHOUT FAULT (15)**

 **A. WHICH REQUIRES US TO BECOME "BLAMELESS"...**

 **1. Not that we are perfect, but like elders are to be blameless,**

 **we are to be "above reproach"**

 **a. We may be sinners, but we quickly confess our sins and make**

 **amends when it is called for**

 **b. We should live in such a way that we have no "outstanding**

 **faults" that are clearly evident to others**

 **2. Nothing hinders our ability to "shine as lights" like**

 **inconsistency and hypocrisy, especially that which is evident**

 **to all!**

 **B. IT ALSO REQUIRES US TO BE "HARMLESS"...**

 **1. Though we may firmly oppose sin in all forms, sinners should**

 **never fear bodily harm from us! - again cf.** [**2Ti 2:24-26**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/2Ti%202.24-26)

 **2. Sadly, many so-called "Christians" appear to be using "Old**

 **Covenant" methods in their efforts to change others, and come**

 **across as likely to produce great bodily harm!**

 **3. But as Jesus said, we are to be "wise as serpents and harmless**

 **as doves" -** [**Mt 10:16**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Mt%2010.16)

**[Finally, if we are to really "shine as lights in the midst of a**

**crooked and perverse generation", we must be...]**

**VI. HOLDING FAST THE WORDS OF LIFE (16)**

 **A. REMEMBER, THE WORD OF GOD IS THE "SWORD OF THE SPIRIT"!**

 **1. It is the ONLY "offensive weapon" we have in the armor of God**

 **-**

[**Ep 6:10-17**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Ep%206.10-17)**17And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:**

 **2. It is the instrument by which the Spirit convicts the world of**

 **sin, produces repentance and brings about the new birth - cf.**

[**Jm 1:18**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Jm%201.18)**;** [**1Pe 1:23**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1Pe%201.23)**;** [**Ro 1:16**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Ro%201.16)

 **3. Thus it is truly the "word of life"!**

 **B. WE MUST BOTH "HOLD FAST" AND "HOLD FORTH" THIS POWERFUL WORD!**

 **1. Some translations say "hold fast", others "hold forth"**

 **2. Both are called for, as we should:**

 **a. "Hold fast" the word in our own study and application**

 **b. "Hold forth" the word as we proclaim it to those we are**

 **trying to change**

 **3. In this, we would do well to follow the example of Ezra, and**

 **the order in which he applied himself.**

[**Ezra 7:10**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Ezra%207.10)**…*10For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.***

 **a. To first "seek the Law of the Lord"**

 **b. Then "to do it"**

 **c. Finally, "to teach" others**

**YOU SAY YOU ARE “SHINING IN THE MIDST OF A CROOKED AND PERVERSE GENERATION..THINK AGAIN…WE HAVE MUCH TO ACCOMPLISH!!!!**

**CONCLUSION**

**1. In these verses, then, I believe we find the way Christians are to**

 **"shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation"**

**2. It involves...**

 **a. Working out our own salvation**

 **b. With fear and trembling**

 **c. By letting God work in us**

 **d. Doing things without murmuring and disputing**

 **e. As children of God without fault**

 **f. Holding fast the word of life**

**3. If our ultimate objective is not just changing legislation, but the**

 **hearts of men to the ways of God, then this is how we can do it!**

**4. And this is how we will "rejoice in the day of Christ" -- and know**

 **that our own labor will not be in vain! - cf.** [**Php 2:16**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Php%202.16)

**for now,MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS….**

**have you given serious thoughts as to how YOU shine in the world FOR JESUS...? OR ARE THE LIGHTS IN THE HOOD BRIGHTER THAN OURS?????**