

"Sir, we wish to see Jesus" — John 12:21

A Story of Degenerating Generations

Dee Bowman

It certainly is not clear that Proverbs 30:11 is written to our generation specifically, but it certainly has an application to us. The inclinations here mentioned are so obviously present in our time that it seems as if Solomon were looking down our street. It behooves us to take a serious look at them. Let's read:

"There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother. There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes and yet is not washed from their filthiness. There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! And their eyelids lifted up. There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men."

There is a generation without respect for parental government. It seems clear that we are immersed in the aggrandizement of youth and because of that fact, most young people have no inclination to listen to their parents nor to accept any sort of parental guidance. The word of God speaks graphically to this youthful tendency. The total diminishing of morality is described in Romans the first chapter, and one of the signs of such moral decay is seen in verses 30-31, "Backbiters, haters of God, despicable, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." That gets awfully close to who and what we are. "Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor thy father and thy mother" (Ephesians 6:1-2). But there is a generation given to diminishing that command.

There is a generation that judges poorly what constitutes authority. Respect for authority has suffered a serious blow in our age, mainly on account of the rise and continued popularity of subjective reasoning. The fact of that is obvious in all areas—parental authority is demeaned, as we have seen; cheating is rampant in every level of education; the prisons are full of people who consider themselves no different than anybody else, except that they got caught; people cheat at all levels of government, ranging from little league baseball and soccer, to the major sports, to the Congress of the United States. Even religion has adopted a subjective appeal by affirming that "it doesn't make any difference what you believe, just as long as you're honest and sincere. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God," we are told (I Peter 4:11); and "the powers that be are ordained of God" (Romans 13:1), and Peter speaks eloquently of those who "despise government" (II Peter 2:10). "Presumptuous are they," he says, and "self-willed, that they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities." There must be an authority outside of man or we're doomed to destruction.

There is a generation dedicated to their own accomplishments. Pride! The fuel for humanism. We live in a time where God is questioned, where creation is answered by evolution, and where the major themes in our Universities and Colleges are concerned with giving specious arguments as to both our existence and our destiny. It's sad. Proverbs 21:2 is an apt description of our present society. "Every man is right in his own eyes." We live in a time where excuses run rampant and reasons for failures are almost non-existent. "How lofty are their eyes! And how their eyelids are lifted up." Foolish pride likes nothing better than unrestrained independence, being free from restrictions, free to choose without fear of being wrong. And that describes our generation, don't you think? We best read the latter part of that passage: "But the Lord pondereth the hearts." We need to understand that our pride does not fool him. He knows.

There is a generation set upon greed. Their teeth are sharpened in order have more and more, even if it means devouring the poor. Nothing will get in the way of financial procurement—not family, not friends, not the Lord. "More! More! More!" That's cry today; and whatever it takes to make more, we seem willing to do it, even if it means sacrificing some of our principles. The philosophy has crept unawares into the church, too. Business excuses for a lack of involvement are com-

Wear Masks

Today's

Schedule

The Lord's Day

8:00 - Assembly

Parking lot - Canopy

9:15 - Assembly

Parking lot - Canopy

10:30 - Assembly

Parking lot - Canopy

mon today. “I had to work. After all, I have to make a living for my family—God said so.” And that’s true, but greed is not part of His plan. And an insatiable appetite for more and more things is not, either. “Better is little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure with trouble therewith” (Proverbs 15:16). And I doubt there could be a greater or more imposing thought than having to meet the Almighty with nothing to defend yourself with but the almighty dollar.

Let’s not be lulled into a state of indifference and lethargy. We cannot afford to be a part of the generations here described. There’s just too much at stake. God will not be fooled, folks. He knows.

Of Gnats and Other Annoyances

Gary Henry

During the summer of 1970, I worked for a road construction company that was rebuilding U.S. Highway 90 along the Mississippi Gulf Coast following the devastation of Hurricane Camille the previous summer. Our long work days began about daybreak. Without even the hint of a breeze at that hour, the waters of the Gulf of Mexico were as still as a sheet of glass. I would have enjoyed the freshness of those mornings if it had not been for another phenomenon familiar to Gulf Coast dwellers: gnats. Down there, anyone foolish enough to come near the sandy beach that early on certain summer mornings is going to be attacked. So small you can hardly see them, these gnats bite with an torment that is out of all proportion to their size. By mid-morning they’ve disappeared, but for the first few hours of the day they are enough to make a grown man cry.

I remember working one morning with Joe Bridges, a grizzled old black man who watched out for me on the job and had become a dear friend. From Tylertown, Mississippi, he had been a common laborer for many long years and had followed construction jobs all over the South. I often marveled at the patient, rhythmic way he worked in difficult conditions, and this morning was no exception. As I furiously fought the gnats and said unappreciative things about the day I was born, Joe seemed to take only slight notice of the devilish little insects.

“Man, how in the world can you stand this?” I finally screamed. “Don’t these gnats bother you?”

“Well,” Joe said, looking at me sideways as he adjusted his hard hat a little, “I guess they would - if I let ‘em.”

It was some years later that I understood: folks who have known what real hardship is don’t pay much attention to gnats.

One measure of a man is the size of what it takes to annoy him. Unfortunately, most of us are far too easily irritated. Since we have so little character, it doesn’t take much to get the best of us. And consequently, our lives are dominated by relatively minor vexations, things that wisdom says we shouldn’t take the time to be troubled about. We’re the vic-

tim of every little unpleasantness that comes along. But rather than grow in character and rise above these petty annoyances, we spend our lives swatting “gnats.” The real work we were sent here to do ends up being neglected because we spend most of our time and energy being annoyed.

The tendency to be easily annoyed is far more than a quirky little “personality” trait. I would suggest that many of the quite serious problems in life — especially in our dealings with other people — boil down to a failure of self-discipline with regard to the basic issue of irritability. If not repented of and removed from our character, annoyance is likely to cause more deadly destruction than we expect. As bad “habits” go, being grouchy is far from harmless.

When find ourselves frequently upset over “gnats” and other annoyances, our hearts are wide open to all manner of evil things. The Bible warns about this. “Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls” (Prov. 25:28). “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city” (Prov. 16:32). “The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and his glory is to overlook a transgression” (Prov. 19:11). “Have fervent love for one another, for ‘love will cover a multitude of sins’” (1 Pt. 4:8). Love is not “easily provoked” (1 Cor. 13:5 KJV).

Paul wrote, “Let your gentleness be known to all men” (Phil. 4:5). The word translated here as “gentleness” (moderation, meekness) has been defined as “strength under control.” To avoid the destructive effects of annoyance in our lives, our strength must be under control. To do this, we must be not only self-disciplined, but wise with a wisdom that comes from God. Listen well to the words of James: “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy” (Jas. 3:13-17).

Most of us would like to have more “peace of mind.” But we tend to see “worry” as the main hindrance to that peace. What we fail to recognize is that annoyance is just as much the enemy of peace of mind as anxiety. The peace of God hardly reigns in our hearts if we’re in a constant state of vexation over the little irritations of life.

So what is it that really gets your goat? Whether it’s a big thing or a little one, do yourself a favor and give this a try: “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:21).



Read your Bible daily