

nant of approximately three thousand souls responded to Peter's testimony with hearts pricked by godly sorrow, saying "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).

But Peter's stirring words ring true for our generation as well as for his and seem to leap from their first-century context to confront us with our sin, and the spiritual decadence of our generation. By so doing they become a beacon light, showing us the way out of a culture headed toward destruction, and the way home to a God seeking to deliver us from this present evil age (Gal. 1:4) and the wrath so richly warranted by our manifold transgressions (I Thess. 1:10). The permanent relevance of His inspired words becomes abundantly clear when one considers that we, much like his hearers, are members of a generation that is notoriously evil, having expressed its deep depravity in a blatant rejection of Christ and His Words. And consequently, our salvation, like that of his original audience, consists in a thorough deliverance from the spiritual influence, moral drift, and final issue of a decadent age.

### *Of Men and Generations*

The Scriptures are clear in their assertion that God deals with mankind on three levels: (1) as individuals with personal accountability to God (Eze. 18:4; Rom. 14:11,12); (2) as generations, or groups of individuals that live in the same period of history, are subject to similar influences, and display relatively common characteristics (Luke 11:29,50,51); (3) and as nations, or those who fall under the same ethnic or political categories (Matt. 25:32; Ps. 9:17; Amos 9:8; Eze. 14:13).

The fact that God deals with men as members of a particular generation is noteworthy, simply because an individual's salvation, when viewed from such a standpoint, is inseparably related

to a soul's willingness to distance himself from the common sins and characteristic spirit of his particular age. Each generation has its predominant spirit, which is none other than the ruling demonic entity that worketh in the children of disobedience (Eph. 2:2; Gal. 1:4; II Cor. 4:4), its own characteristic cares (Mk. 4:19), and its common sins (Mk. 8:38; Deut. 32:5,20). Therefore the salvation to the uttermost which Jesus so freely bestows (Heb. 7:25), must of necessity involve a complete repudiation of any spiritual or moral affinity with the culture of our particular age. This is the profound significance of Peter's telling exhortation "Save yourselves from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:40). According to the words of the Apostle, unless we repent and are converted from the depraved character of our perverse generation, we shall perish with our generation.

The idea of a generation possessing a common moral nature is not a superimposition upon the words of our text, for the very word translated "generation" in Acts 2:40 is γενεά, which refers to a race, tribe, or generation exhibiting cultural similarities. In a word, Peter is informing us in the clearest terms that if our Christianity is not counter-cultural, it is counter-scriptural; if it is not contra mundane, it contradicts the Bible.

### *Notable Generations of the Past*

The Scriptures do not leave us without witness to the meaning of Peter's summons to be saved from our generation, for they refer to several generations that were notoriously evil, and warn us that the terminal generation will be a period in which mankind's cup of iniquity will have reached the brim, and iniquity abounds (Matt. 24:12). One such generation was the wilderness generation. Imagine, if you will, an

entire generation that was given unprecedented spiritual privileges. According to I Cor. 10:1-5, this generation walked under the canopy of the glory-cloud, marched through the Red Sea as on dry land, ate angel's food, and slaked their burning thirst with a cool draught from the water that ran as rivers out of Christ the Rock that followed them: "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness."

Yet despite their exalted privileges, with many of them God was not well pleased, for during the wilderness probation, their heart proved to be lustful, idolatrous, fornicating, testy, and complaining. In fact, on no less than four distinct occasions, God threatened to annihilate them, and but for Moses' intercession, would have. Listen to the language of exhausted patience, as God laments their incorrigible condition: "Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in [their] heart; and they have not known my ways" (Heb. 3:10); and to the decree of kindled anger, as He assigns their punishment: "So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest" (Heb. 3:11). This generation, which tempted God ten times (Num. 14:22), and despised the pleasant land of promise (Ps. 106:24), became infamous for its perversity, which Moses scathingly described in sacred song: "They have corrupted themselves, their spot [is] not [the spot] of his children: [they are] a perverse and crooked generation"; and again, "He said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end [shall be]: for they [are] a very

froward generation, children in whom [is] no faith" (Deut. 32:5,20). Finally, as a consequence of their deplorable wickedness, God doomed the entire generation to die, and the wilderness of their wandering became their graveyard.

And then there was the generation of our Lord Jesus, which, depicted by the lowly Nazarene as faithless and perverse (Matt. 17:17), adulterous (Matt. 12:39), evil (Luke 11:29), and sinful (Mk. 8:38), added this yet above its many sins, that it crucified the very Lord of Glory (I Cor. 2:8). Is it any wonder that the wrath of God came upon it to the uttermost a bare forty years subsequent to the resurrection of the Lord, Jerusalem being trodden down of the Gentiles, its inhabitants falling by the edge of the sword, and being led away captive into all nations (Luke 21:24)? Surely the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things (Rom. 2:2).

But ah, my reader, what of this generation, with its unique idols and pseudo-sophisticated arrogance. How can we point the finger of accusation at Christ's generation when untold multitudes of our day have trodden underfoot the Son of God, crucified Him afresh, and done despite to the Spirit of grace (Heb. 6:6; 10:29), Who ever strives against the characteristic sins of this wicked age? Are we any better than they? No, my dear reader, we stand in as much need of "saving ourselves from [our] untoward generation" as did those of Christ's and Peter's day. In fact, the Scriptures speak of the last-day generation as a period of unprecedented evil, when lawlessness shall abound (Matt. 24:12), with wicked men waxing worse and worse (II Tim. 3:13), as the transgressors come to the full (Daniel 8:23), filling up the measure of their Christ-hating, sinful sentiment. While the generation of Peter's day crucified Christ, our generation may well be the

last one that is depicted in Revelation as actually opposing Christ at His glorious Advent (Rev. 17:14; 19:19), so averse is it to having this Man to rule over them (Luke 19:14)!

### *Save Yourself*

If God's sighing complaint against a generation and nation such as this is similar to the question posed to the generation of His wrath (Jer. 7:29) in Jeremiah's day, "Shall I not visit for these [things]? saith the LORD: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" (Jer. 5:9,29; 9:9), what must we do to be saved from the spiritual influence, moral drift, and final issue of our depraved age? Peter's answer today would be the same as it was to his first-century hearers: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). In this condensed call to repentance, we have a clear outline of the steps to be taken if we are to escape the wrath to come.

### *Repent and Be Baptized*

Upon hearing God's call to "save ourselves from this untoward (τῆς σκολιᾶς—wicked, perverse) generation, we must do a spiritual about-face—a 180 degree turn from all personal transgression—and turn toward God. The verb translated repent (μετανοέω) refers to a thoroughgoing change in attitude (Acts 26:20) and behavior wrought by the Spirit of God's (Zech. 12:10) action upon the soul of man and accompanied by sorrow of a godly sort (II Cor. 7:10). But prior to such a radical turnabout, there must be an heart-rending recognition of the sin that has burdened our generation and blighted our

souls. The men who responded to Peter's exhortation were men agitated in mind, whose hearts God had pricked as they listened to Peter's scathing indictment of their generation's rejection of Christ. They were anxious inquirers for the remedy of Divine pardon as they humbly queried, "Men [and] brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). When confronted with their personal and generational sin, they felt compunction and turned from the iniquity of their sin. The generation of our day likewise has its characteristic sins. Immodesty in dress, fornication, adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism, incest, social drinking, drunkenness, covetousness, pride, envy, witchcraft, magic, and sorcery—all have enlisted their devotees, and contributed to the collective guilt of this hell-bound age. Men and women who would escape the rushing moral current of these times must be willing to repent, and submit to immersion in water as a symbol of their amendment of life and identification with Christ's death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:1-5).

### *For the Remission of Sins*

The wonderful truth announced to the gathered multitude on the day of Pentecost was that a full pardon for all past transgression was offered through faith in the crucified and resurrected Savior, Jesus Christ. The word "remission" is the Greek word ἄφεσις, and denotes "to let go, give up a debt, by not demanding it," hence, to remove guilt, to release from the punishment demanded in satisfaction of God's violated law. Paul spoke of this glorious freedom in Acts 13:39, when, in reference to forgiveness in Christ, he said: "And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." If we would be guilt-free and find a righteous standing before God, we must repent and believe the Gospel of Christ.

### *And Ye Shall Receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost*

The final promise addressed to Peter's attentive audience concerned the infilling of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit that was poured forth upon the one hundred and twenty, prompted them to speak in new tongues, and was now impelling Peter to preach, was seeking to establish a personal residence in the heart of each of the hearers. No deliverance from this untoward generation, which is racing toward judgment, would be possible apart from a personal pentecost, whereby the believer is supplied with the supernatural strength to withstand in an evil day (Eph. 3:16), the power to boldly proclaim the Gospel (Acts 1:5-8), and ability to mortify the deeds of the body (Rom. 8:13). Since the Spirit alone is sufficient to raise up an effective standard against the inroads of an untoward age, we would do well to heed Peter's exhortation and prayer for the reception of the Spirit, that we might be inwardly fortified to withstand the influence of this evil generation.



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# *Save Yourself From This Untoward Generation*

*And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.  
Acts 2:40*

Peter's fiery sermon fell on sensitive ears that mid-morning of Pentecost day in the year 30 A.D. The telling power of his anointed words gripped the hearts and agitated the minds of the bewildered masses who gathered to witness the profound miracle of unlearned and lowly Galileans declaring the wonderful works and marvelous perfections of God in languages hitherto unknown to them. A melting pot of humanity, Jews and proselytes from every nation under heaven (Acts 2:5), stood in stark amazement (Acts 2:7) as Peter lifted up his voice to solemnly proclaim the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, the meaning of the Pentecostal profusion, and God's call to repentance for the remission of sins. In plain language, he indicted his generation for the premeditated murder of the Lord of Glory (Acts 2:23,36), concluding his stinging discourse with a summary exhortation to "save [themselves] from [that] untoward generation" (Acts 2:40). A rem-