

Becoming Blameless

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I guess my dad and I have just a quick interesting thing that we went to. Stacy and I lived in Honduras for a couple, maybe little more years on and off through either permanently or on the ship that we were on. And during that time my dad and some of the individuals and my mom from the church came down to visit us. And during that time, one of the times we went on a, on a missionary trip with a minister who had several churches. But his assistant or helper was a guy named Lindbergh Gough, a self described ship captain, an alcoholic who had ruined his first marriage and children and later found Christ.

And he was kind of an interesting guy. He was more of an islander, spoke good English, had a big Dodge Dually truck that it was very strange to have in Honduras. And he would use all of his stuff, his house, his truck and his resources to help this minister, this evangelist in the places that he would go in the Mosquito coast and different parts of Honduras. So when we went there, we also went in Lindbergh Gough's truck to different parts in Honduras. So we would all pile in the back of this big Dually Dodge and we'd drive to the banana place or up in the the hills and all of us were just sitting in the back of this truck.

So a lot of time has passed, actually 24 years have passed since we've had connection with him. Last Valentine's Day, my dad and I were talking and we looked up and sure enough, Enrique Escobar the evangelist is dead, but Lindbergo is still alive and has started a small church there in, in La Ceiba on the north coast of Honduras. And so we got in contact with him and my dad's been talking with him and Lindbergh Bose has

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been sharing with me. But one of the interesting things that happened today was that they received 50 shoeboxes from Samaritan's purse, similar to what the church has taken part in in a limited way. And so he sent me pictures of these children all holding these shoeboxes from this morning.

So ahead of our time. But they were very excited holding these shoeboxes this morning there in Honduras. They weren't the ones from this church obviously, but they came from somewhere. So it's interesting to see them having an impact somewhere. So anyway, Lindbergh go.

And so my dad has been prepping or thinking about the possibility of going to the north coast of Honduras at some point in the future and re establishing that connection. So interesting thought, but okay. Okay, we're going to be in Philippians chapter two to be completely honest, there's interesting thoughts that are continually running through my head, being an individual that gets to share publicly God's Word with other people. And honestly, one of those is deep regret.

As the limitations or the inadequacies of my character, of my person become painfully apparent to me. I have a deep remorse that the full impact that my spirit is receiving from God's Word doesn't make it over the communication line to other people. And I feel as I read God's Word, as I chew on it, as I digest it, I feel a source of power and encouragement that oftentimes falls incredibly flat. And I really do just ask forgiveness for that. I'm very sorry and I wish it weren't true.

But one of those times was a couple weeks ago, and I want to revisit a scripture a little bit.

In chapter 2, verse 15, Philippians 2:15, it says that you may become blameless and harmless children of God without fault, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation among whom you shine as lights in the world.

That you may become blameless and harmless children of God without fault, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation among whom you shine as lights in the world. Let's pray. O Father, oh Father. Lord, we just ask, Lord, if possible, that some of

the impact of the wisdom and power of your word, Lord, saved through the ages, delivered, Lord, time and time again. But still having power to affect our lives, Lord, would make an impact on our hearts today, Lord, in this small and seemingly out of the way place that the fullness of your person would be brought to bear in our lives, Lord, we just ask in Jesus name.

Amen.

Here Paul in chapter two, in his desire to see a people who serve the individuals around them through the example of Jesus Christ's service for us upon the cross, is encouraging us to demonstrate a kind of life in the midst of the environment that we are around. And he describes that in verse 15. That you may become blameless and harmless children of God without fault, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. The desire that you and I would experience and demonstrate a kind of character that resembles that of God Himself.

That ministry is to bear in a crooked and perverse generation that Paul tells us in another place, that we're not to flee and we're to be in the world, but not of the world, that we're not to remove ourselves from all sexually immoral people, just those of the church where if we had to remove ourselves from all sexually immoral people we would have to take ourselves out of the world, which he does not instruct us to do. He encourages us to be in the world. So we're going to look at what that world looks like. It is described here as being crooked and perverse. Crooked and perverse.

It's interesting. Straight is an extremely difficult thing to obtain.

At least trying to be a builder, right? And building houses or structures, anything like straight and square would be easy things to obtain. Actually, straight is actually an extremely difficult concept to come upon because with your own nature, we look around us and it seems natural that things should be straight. We look around us and every tree seems to point upwards straight up. It's a strange thing, and we think, oh, it must be easy.

But when you have to build straight, it's actually extremely difficult to build straight. I thought we had the wall straight. We put another wall on top of it. And then Zach, when I gone, he goes and checks the work that we do, and he put a big level, a plum on the wall. And he's like, papa, hey, the wall's 3/4 of an inch out.

I'm like 3/4 of an inch out. How does that even happen? How could it be out that far? We checked it, we braced it, and still straight is extremely hard to come by. It's interesting.

Bees, which have really no natural intelligence, always, with thousands of them working together, build their combs straight down. They have to start with somewhere right on top. They're never in the same spot, but they build their combs 5, 16 of an inch apart, hanging straight down. How do they do it? When I line up walls, we have to have the saws all close because we have to cut studs out so many times to move them.

It's so hard to get them in the right spot. But crooked is different than straight. Crooked is only a perversion of straight. It's easy to make things crooked. It's easy to push them out of place, to get them in the wrong place.

It says that we live in the midst of a crooked world. This crooked world is not just one that naturally things go wrong. What they call it Gumford's Law or something like that. If it can go wrong. I'm not sure if that's the right law, Murphy's Law.

If it can go wrong, it will go wrong. If you can put it out of place, if you can lose it, it's definitely going to happen. It's natural for things to be crooked. But we're also influenced in this natural world by an individual who is described as Our enemy, whose desire is to make things crooked. He uses deceit and intrigue to make straight ways crooked.

If you remember that instance in which Paul and his missionaries was journeyed was. It was in the house of the consul in Cyprus and he was the consul Sergius. Someone was wanting to hear the word of God and brought Paul into his house. But Paul was being undermined by a false prophet, an individual called Bar Jesus. And Paul eventually

looked at him and called him, o you son of the devil.

How long will you pervert or make twist the straight ways of the Lord? That we have an individual, an enemy, who seeks to make the straight ways crooked. He sends us on a crooked path where from one thing to another we are led astray.

Raise beef, cows. And in that, from starting, from absolute scratch, we have, you know, built up a herd of cows. But when you do something for scratch, you make every mistake that there is possible to make when you do it, and it makes it much, much harder. And so we have a cattle chute that we send the cows through at a certain amount of time. And it's straight.

It's a straight cattle chute. I just realized this last week Mickey got a book on raising cattle and it said, you never want to make your cattle shoot straight because they can see it. A crooked cattle shoot. They just follow the person in front of them and they never know where they are going until it's too late. Reminded me of Proverbs 7.

With her enticing speech she caused him to yield. With her flattering lips she se immediately he went after her. As an ox goes to the slaughter, or a fool to the correction of the stocks. Till an arrow struck his liver. As a bird hastens to the snare, he did not know it would cost his life.

The Lord's ways are straight. They are perfectly understandable. You know where you're going. He doesn't hide things from you. But Satan twists the turns and pushes us out of line.

And so he deceives people into a crooked path where straight ways are made crooked. We're encouraged through the prophets to look for the old way, the good way, where you find peace to your soul. But Satan is doing his best to turn people out of that way onto a. A crooked path. A crooked path.

The next thing that this generation that you and I live in is a perverse generation. It is a perverted generation. Perverse. It does not have the truth. Satan is described as being a liar and the father of lies, as one who comes to kill, steal and destroy.

But he has no new or novel information or paths or abilities. His only possibilities to do anything are to take what is good and pervert it. He can do nothing more. He can only take what is beautiful and corrupted. He can only take what is pure and defile it.

He can only take what is good and destroy it. Satan is the one that is the God of this age and influencing a perverse generation, a curse generation. It's perverse. And his perversion is to always pervert. One of the things he perverts is God's name.

We have the blessing or the opportunity to go to Obie's wrestling meet this weekend. And it was fun. It was an enjoyable experience. But one of the hurtful things was to see the amount of people perverting God's holy name.

Individuals who are no more than the evaporation on one drop of water in the midst of a sea, who have no value in the grand scheme of things, in the eternal purposes of God, are not even measured as the dust on the scales in the throne of God. They're nothing. And if they take it upon themselves to drag that most holy name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, they curse him. Who are they to take that most holy King who left heaven on our behalf to come and spilled his blood for you and I to take his name and choose to curse one thing after another with it? Who are they that they could pervert that holy name, that good name?

Jesus, who spent his whole life investing in sinners, giving himself to the point of exhaustion, life and abundance and peace and rest to the hurting, always caring for those who are broken.

The name that all spiritual authorities tremble and will bow down. The one whose word has never been compromised or disobeyed, even by Satan himself who speaks and everything comes into existence, that the wind and the wane immediately stop their moving at his voice and we curse his name. How? How did it happen? In a country where we say that we trust in God, how we pervert God's nature, that nature of God, which is so beautiful and caring and loving, whose only desire was to share of the beauty of his character with a people forever.

Now a perverted and a faithless generation has turned God Almighty, whose clearest picture could be found in the cross, have turned him into a monster. They call him wicked and hateful and they spit at him and mock him. They pervert the nature of God. They pervert the laws of God, those laws which are intended to be a safeguard for us, a wall of protection on one side or the other. They pervert them.

Because Satan can do nothing novel. All he can do is twist and pervert God's ways. And so every holy commandment delivered to us has been perverted and exalted in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. And everything good and beautiful, which we should focus on all the time and lift up as something holy in our presence. Those very things have been perverted until good is called evil and evil good.

I don't think that if you have lived in our culture that you could disagree that the times are changing and that we live in a crooked and perverse generation. Straight ways made crooked, right things made perverse. And yet here we're called to be. Not told to flee, not told to hide ourselves, not told to run or to fight, or to take up man's tools against this, but rather the encouragement we're given in this ugly and so fruitless, futile existence of this crooked and perverse mentality. We're told simply to shine as lights.

To shine as lights. We have to understand that we are not the light, that Jesus is the light we're told to shine. But we have to recognize we are not the light. Before there ever was an earth, before the mountains were settled or the sea, was there anything had come into existence. Jesus was the light when he made the earth the primal dust of the world, that he existed there, that he made the earth and started it spinning.

And there was day and night before there was a sun, because Jesus was the light. And when this world passes away with a great noise and terrible heat, there will no longer be the sun or the moon or the stars to give light, because the Lamb is the light. And there will be no darkness ever again. He came into this world in John chapter one. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the light that all through him might believe he was not that light, but he was sent to bear witness of the light.

Jesus. In chapter eight of John, after his encounter with with the woman caught in adultery, Jesus says to her in chapter 8, verse 12 of John. Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the walk of life, have the light of life. Jesus is the light.

Those who follow him display his light in their life. That light is the light we're looking for. In John 12:36, it says, While you have the light, start in verse 35. Then Jesus said to them, a little while longer, the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you.

He who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light that you may become sons of the light. These things Jesus spoke and departed and was hidden from them. We're told that this light is something that we are to take advantage of while we still have it. You and I are called according to Matthew, chapter five.

We are told in chapter five, verse 13, you were the salt of the earth, but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing to be thrown out and trampled under foot of men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, put it under a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. Here we have Jesus as the light of the world. But they did with him what they desired to do. He was murdered on a cross and physically departed. That light which he brought to the world in his physical life, departed.

And since then his spirit, the Spirit of God, has been in the lives of believers, showing the light to people. That we are to exhibit the life of Jesus Christ through the spirit of

God. We're called to be that city on a hill, that lamp that doesn't have a basket over the top. We're told to let our light shine before all men. We were at the wrestling tournament, and individuals are trying to let their light shine.

And so a good number of the individuals had Jesus shirts on. And I'm not saying that wearing a Jesus shirt is wrong. It might be a desire to let your light shine. Other people had crosses shaved into their head or Christian tattoos, or one guy even had two long, dangly crosses in his ear. An attempt maybe in some way to let your light shine.

I'm not sure which would be best for our church to encourage which kind of thing. I'm not one for tattoos or ear piercings myself.

If we go back to Philippians, that you may become blameless and harmless children of God without fault, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain or labored in vain. And while I'm not trying to, I hope I'm not trying to make fun of or ridicule individuals who do use shirts and other things to share the light. I think the most practical thing we can look at is the thing that makes the generation crooked and perverse. John the Baptist when he came back in John chapter in John 1, we see what happens his ministry. They ask of him, are you the coming one, or should we wait for another?

He responds, I am not the coming one. And then his ministry is given. They say, who are you that we may have an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness.

Make straight the way of the Lord our goal if we're to shine as a light in the midst of a crooked generation, we've got to live a straight life. We've got to make straight paths for our feet. Now, there's two ways to expose something as crooked. One is you yell at them and you tell them how crooked they are. The other is to put something straight alongside of what's crooked.

And all of a sudden what appeared think might have been crooked is recognized as being crooked. You look at a wall so often, you think, oh, that's a straight wall until you

put a string line against it, and then you know how to bring it. How do we make straight paths for our feet? How is our life straightened? In Hebrews 12:12 it says, Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather healed.

There is a recognition that our goal in confronting a crooked generation is to make sure that our paths are straight. That comes from a recognition that when the heavy hand of God is on us, disciplining us, showing us that, hey, you got the crookedness here. You're out of line. You're like Balaam's donkey pushing aside out of the path that we're to bring our lives back into line, that we might be a straightness in the lives of a generation of crooked people. For us it means that when the Lord is dealing with the perversity of our own heart, that we have to be a willingness, a recognition to bring that area before for God and allow him to deal with it.

In speaking about discipline, it says in verse 11 of same part of Hebrews now, no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful nevertheless. Afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. We love the little perversities that we have in our life. But the Lord is seeking to remove that perverseness from our lives so that the difference in our lives might be of such a brilliant nature that others are able to see by it. How can we continue in the midst of a broken generation without that light to guide our own path?

He is that light for us. My encouragement for us is not to run from this generation. It's crooked, it's perverse. But hammering it and judging it and speaking evil against it and making fun of it is not how we're told to encounter it. A straight life is what should shows a crooked line.

Crooked, a pure life is what shows perversity. And even though those things cause us to cringe and to hurt, we're to encounter it and confront it with that love of Christ that the light of God might shine brilliantly around us. We're going to close with that. Let's pray.

Oh Father. Lord, when we judge, Lord, we're guilty of the same sin, Lord. When we attack, Lord, it's only attacking ourselves. O Lord. Raca, you fool.

O Lord, surely we endanger our own lives. Lord, forgive us. But Lord, I pray in my heart and for the lives of us here, after asking by God's grace, by that good gift which he gives to people who ask for it, Lord. For a desire for a straight life, Lord. A desire for a holy life.

Lord, we just ask in Jesus name, Amen.