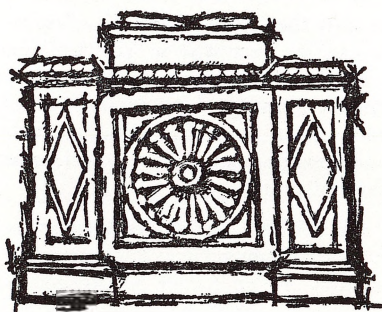


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Student Unrest and the
Silent Majority

A Sermon by

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• LOUISVILLE / KENTUCKY •

Scripture Reference: Titus 3:1-7

During my past two years at the University of Kentucky, more and more I have had to face increasing numbers of student protests, various campus activist groups; and finally this past spring, I had the unique experience of watching parts of my campus burn. This mounting student unrest across our nation has left me in a state of disillusionment. I feel bewildered, not so much with the "so-called" establishment or our current society but with my peers, my fellow students. Some of their actions in the past two years have truly amazed me.

First of all, I wish to briefly examine what I feel student unrest is all about. We all know that most campus uprisings are closely linked with the urban crisis, the war against poverty, the struggle for civil rights, the rise of black nationalism, and, of course, the war in Vietnam. Henry Ford II, Chairman of the Board, Ford Motor Company, said in a recent article in Reader's Digest that the majority of my generation has decided that we are more concerned with the quality of life and our relations with people. We are tired of putting

up with norms that make life less satisfying and complete than it could be. We are tired of the overriding concern of most people for status and material possessions.

Now if we view the "spirit of rebellion," so to speak, from this angle, we can see that it is a "reaffirmation of the human spirit." It is a demand by a majority of my generation for independence and an attack on tyranny of all kinds. So, this spirit holds great hope for building a better world, a more pleasant environment, a just social order, and more freedom for the individual.

However, a minority of our students today feel that loyalties to institutions of our society and obedience to written and unwritten laws are no longer spontaneous or automatic responses. This trend could be terribly dangerous, in my opinion, because unless citizens are not willing to govern themselves by generally accepted social standards, a chaotic police state, which governs by force and fear, may be the result. This minority, including the Hippie faction, the Yippies, Students for a Democratic Society, and other left wing militant groups, sometimes called the newer Revolutionaries, began several years ago, sincerely bringing to attention many of our current social ills. However, their motives have since degenerated. They are not attempting to work from within our present system to build something better than what we already have. They now seem to be condemning society in all it does and wish to tear down everything we now have, in preparation for a fresh start. Some of them choose to withdraw from reality completely to their own separate worlds of self-indulgence.

You know, I never could comprehend the use of violent or irrational means to achieve any end. I guess that is why I feel so dedicated to my study in Journalism for better and more sincere communications among and between people. In my social background, through training at home, mostly, and in school, I have been taught numerous social ideals, some of which I wish to share with you. I have learned to reason out problems, to consider and weigh opposing points of view, to be considerate of the rights of others, to be responsible and dependable. I remember well an English teacher I had during my four years in High School. She was also the advisor to the Year-book staff of which I was a member. This teacher made quite an impression on me, in teaching me to be responsible and dependable, to have all my work in on time, to do the very best that I could, and to strive for perfection, exactness and precision in everything that I did. Of course, when I was led astray by outside forces, the clamp would come down, sometimes rather tightly, but not in a violent manner. Particularly at home, I was more often reasoned and talked with rather than beaten or whipped, and I feel this has helped me to mature. Also I

have been taught what to expect from life and what to expect from an education. I have always learned to expect nothing but the very best, as I have said, and to strive for perfection in everything I do. I do not feel that the abrupt interruption of my educational or college experience is entirely justified, especially through irrational behavior of a minority. I cannot understand why the minority, of which I have been speaking, insists on employing irrational, often violent means, to achieve what they term peaceful ends. It is so ironic, and I often think they tend to contradict themselves. A verse I found in the Bible not long ago in Proverbs says that a violent man enticeth his neighbor, and leadeth him into the way that is not good. Many, for example, say they wish to see the values and mores set forth by our forefathers in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Gettysburg Address made real for all Americans. Is not and has not this been the main goal and dream of this nation for the past two hundred years? Why then does the minority turn around and employ means—often violent means—obviously derogatory of and entirely the reverse of these dreams to achieve what they call peaceful ends in order to save our society, so to speak?

After the events I witnessed as a student this past spring, the way I saw it, the minority group tyrannized the majority, getting them emotionally psyched, persuading them to join, or to use an old colloquialism, to "hop on the bandwagon." There was a time when I could even feel myself being drawn in by this hyper-emotional appeal. It is really amazing what people will do under intense emotional strain or pressure that they would never think of doing otherwise. After witnessing these events, with which, of course, we are all familiar, I began to wonder if these students are actually sure of what they are fighting for and why. I think that many are confused, disoriented, and simply bored with life as it is now.

You probably have heard of the riots which took place in Chicago last week. After reading many of the newspaper articles which described the riots in Grant Park in downtown Chicago, I was under the impression that the City Council of Chicago was attempting to establish a liason or camaraderie between the city government and the youth by sponsoring "pop-rock" concerts in Grant Park. The riots supposedly erupted when one of the main groups, which was to perform last Monday evening, did not show up on time. This irritated the audience. But a spokesman for the City Council said that "chains, rocks, knives, and guns were brought by those bent on destruction, who pushed away the good kids who simply wanted to communicate with the music." He said the battle was planned by persons who wanted to break down or destroy the camaraderie the Park District had established with the youth.

I ask again: why the irrationality? You may think that, perhaps it has become necessary for the modern student militant's approach to reach the irrational level in order for the establishment to listen to what he has to say. In my opinion, this certainly is not the case.

First, it is today and has always been difficult to affect the way things are, to change the complex web of rules and sanctions that hold a society together. Yes, it has been very difficult. Society, or the "establishment," is the product of thousands of years of the development of mankind. Of course, we know it is far from perfect. We did not make it. We have sought to change it, to make it better, but this has been a slow and painful process, requiring much work and dedication. We have been minimally successful. Here in America, we have tackled a racial problem in the past twenty years as no nation before has dared to do. To a certain extent we have desegregated schools, and this process is continuing. We have formally declared war on poverty and have sent millions of dollars in economic aid to many impoverished nations. We have gone to the moon. We have abolished many deadly diseases and have established programs for the physical cleansing and beautification of our environment. People have seen the need and have taken measures, through the proper channels, to do something about it.

We all know there is still a great deal to be done, and I admire my generation for recognizing these problems and striving to correct them, but our entire social establishment cannot be revamped overnight, and violence is the most ridiculous means one can employ to bring these problems to the public's attention.

The "establishment" is "turned off" by this approach. A large city or a great university can be brought to a halt by the violence of a small minority but the more often this happens, the more vigorously such action will be repressed. It was the case in the spring and shall continue to be the case. Such is human nature. Violence surely draws attention, but instead of leading to workable solutions, it becomes really only the beginning of our problems. Billy Graham has said: "When dissent takes a violent form and has no moral purpose, then it can no longer be classified as dissent, but is anarchy." Dwight D. Eisenhower once remarked, "We must never confuse honest dissent with disloyal subversion."

However, contrary to popular belief, it is not impossible to change our society and is considerably less difficult than it was only a few years ago. Our society today has never been more tolerant of diversity and dissent in speech and behavior. Young people say they feel oppressed by too many unnecessary rules. To those whose memories are just a little longer, however, it is plain that people can now say and do

things that would not have been tolerated only a few years ago. In many other countries of the world, a lot of the students' actions would be dealt with in a much more severe manner. We have so many freedoms and opportunities in this nation that we do not seem to appreciate them. On the Fourth of July in Washington, Dr. Billy Graham voiced his belief that in America, "We do not sweep our sins under a rug," that here, "We have a picture window, instead of an iron curtain."

Secondly, why, all of a sudden, does my generation feel it has all the answers to our social ills? I agree that our problems are extremely serious. I agree that they need to be dealt with. I agree that all the youth need to be concerned with them, but this time is not the only critical period we have had in our history. Social crises have been man's chief concern for centuries. As a youth of almost twenty, I personally do not feel qualified, as yet, to go out and try to turn our society around. I feel concerned about it and wish to help in every way I can to make it better for all men, but first, I wish to attain an uninterrupted education. I wish to live life to its fullest, and perhaps after several years, I will have gained enough experience and wisdom to pass judgment on our society and actually seek rational, organized means to restructure it. Until that time, I feel too immature to seriously think about tackling the job.

Thirdly, a history professor at the University of Montana recently stated: "Common courtesy and a regard for the opinion of others are not merely decoration on the pie crust of society; they are the Heart of the Pie." The irrational behavior of the student minority consists of lack of pride for personal appearance, obscene language and behavior, and an inability to intelligently listen and discuss. These personal traits are evident at demonstrations or at large political and social gatherings. For example, you probably saw Honor America Day on television in Washington on the Fourth of July. The Hippies and Yippies were there, marching and frolicking through the waters of the reflecting pool in front of the Lincoln Memorial. They were chanting and yelling obscenities at the speakers throughout the program and usually making complete fools out of themselves. At that celebration as the service was getting ready to begin, Kate Smith was preparing to sing "God Bless America." Now, a lot of you may think this is corny. Well, it may be in 1970 to a lot of us, but any way you look at it, it is still a sincere and dedicated approach, and should be respected. One hundred of the youths marched through the water of the reflecting pool chanting something like, "One, two, three, four, we don't want your war." Yes, they are always there, but are they organized and under responsible leadership? No. Even if one classifies their motives as valid, they surely do not know the proper means to get

them across or make people understand them. Naturally, the "establishment" is instantly "turned off" by the physical appearance and behavior of these people. Many cannot respect their objective simply because of the front or impression they convey. Why can they not at least be courteous enough to allow the opposition to have its say, and take into consideration the good points of both sides of the argument? The minority group does not seem to be willing to do this, and, in my opinion, is very immature. It seems that if the establishment cannot immediately meet the minorities' demands, some form of irrational behavior will result. Such was the case at the University of Kentucky this past spring and across the campuses of our nation.

As I have already mentioned, some of the new rebels withdraw into their own separate worlds as an escape from reality. They have what they call a "new sensitivity." Not only the present generation, but the young of any generation, have felt the same impulse to reach out, to touch the stars, to live freely, and to let the mind loose along unexplored corridors. Young men and women have always felt the same vague sense of restraint that separated them from the ultimate experience, the sudden and complete expansion of the mind, the final fulfillment. It is one of the oldest, sweetest, and most bitter experiences of mankind, but today's young people did not invent sensitivity, and why do many pursue it through the use of drugs? This is one question that I have asked myself time and again, and is probably a question or issue that has been hammered, barked, and pounded into your heads for a long time. Why drugs? Coupled with the violence, the use of drugs by many of the new revolutionaries really takes the cake in my opinion. Why do they do it? A recent article I saw in an issue of *McCall's* magazine gave me the best reason I have been able to find. The fact is, the article says, we are terrified of consciousness. It is too much for us. In Sartre's classic drama, *No Exit*, we have three characters, all in Hell, and each character makes up the other's Hell. The idea conveyed by Sartre is that Hell is other people, and a fascinating detail of his is that each character has no eyelids. The idea being, the damned cannot close their eyes. They are perpetually awake, perpetually conscious. What could be a more terrible fate for man? Some students claim that life is so boring that the use of artificial stimulants is the only thing that makes it worth living.

To be conscious, absolutely conscious, is to understand that one has only his own mind, his own brain, his own spiritual resources. This can be a terrifying experience for young people who have not had to develop individual, intelligent responses to anything, and who are happiest in crowds, who have been allowed to skim along the surface of life, not working for their possessions or for much of any-

thing. Drugs to them make the individual more open and free to intellectual and philosophical discussion. A clear, alert mind seems to them a burden. Precision, exactness, and perfection to them are not virtues. The world looks better when it is hazy, when the mind is slightly deranged and major questions of public and personal life—questions many of the minority say they are concerned with—do not seem so important. And what is worse, one “kick,” so to speak, can lead to another, until one has seriously damaged his mental as well as his physical well-being. Some responses I have heard some kids make are: “I just dig rushes. Smack (a slang term for heroin) makes you feel like you are on top of the world.” Other reasons for drug use are: rebellion against parents, rebellion against the Establishment, enchantment with the forbidden. Shrill demands echo for instant gratification.

Mick Jagger, leader of the popular Rolling Stones, says; “I’ve got no expectations, and the next step is to simply obliterate the desire to have expectations.” It is suicide, this obliteration; this fear of intelligent, rational consciousness is suicide.

So, what can we do? I wish to tell you this morning that I sincerely believe that America’s chief ailment is hypochondria. Like Henry Ford II, a man whose views I have come to admire and adopt as my own, it is possible for the young people to find a place within our social system and still be faithful to themselves and their ideas. Mr. Ford says that it is never easy to be an independent individual and an effective member of society. But it is possible. In order to work with others and still be true to yourself requires a delicate balance between independence and self-assertion on the one hand and cooperation and self-restraint on the other. Working with others requires the grace to accept direction, to accept compromise, to accept delay, and even to accept defeat. To be independent one must have, at the same time, the strength to maintain one’s own standards of right and wrong, the patience to persist, the skill to persuade and motivate others, and one must have the knowledge to come up with the most rational and constructive answers.

These qualities of character, like any other thing of value or merit, have to be developed through hours upon hours of long work and hard practice, and most importantly, they must be developed through a sincere belief and faith in God and our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the right way. He is the only way. As it says in the third chapter of Titus, verses 3-7:

“For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by men and hating one another; but when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of His own mercy

by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by His grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life".

You know, my friends, you can fool people much of the time but you can never fool God. So let us now reconstruct our ideals to rational, constructive thinking rather than destructive thinking. Personally, I believe in my country's ideals and goals. I believe in them and have sincere faith in them. I do not think our country would be as far along as it is now if people had not had faith and belief in the ideals. I do not know about you, but I feel proud to call myself an American. We have many social problems, yes; but I feel America is in a lot better shape than many nations of the world. At least here, peaceful dissent is tolerated and recognized by the higher governmental bureaucracy. And, as I have already said, my generation can remedy these problems and ills, not through behavior of an irrational nature, but through faith and trust in Christ which, I believe, has not become outmoded or gone out of style.

I always did admire the great British statesman, Sir Winston Churchill. You may be familiar with one of his more famous addresses. This particular one was to a group of students at his boyhood school in Harrow, England. "Never give in!" the old fighter told them with a determined gleam in his eye. "Never! Never Never! Pursue the goals, the dreams, and the ideals, and whatever you do, never give in!" This small bit of philosophy can also be my advice to college and particularly high school students today. Never give in to subversion of any kind, to any type of irrational thinking. This, believe me, will never solve your or anyone else's problems. If you will be willing to honestly work for the personal and spiritual qualities of which I have been speaking, the final prize, I can assure you, will be worth the effort. If enough of my generation are willing to make that effort, I feel confident that we can accomplish more for ourselves and for all mankind than any previous generation.