



LEGACY INSTITUTE

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*"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." <sup>1</sup>  
Romans 6:23*

Dear Fellow-laborers,

I want to discuss with you a serious danger that I have been thinking about a lot lately. It affects how we think; it influences how we act; it molds the nature of our inner hearts; and, for the true Christian, even deadens our relationship with God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

I am talking about the serious danger of letting sin come into our homes; into our relationships with one another; and even into our thoughts and words.

There are countless kinds of sins. Some are easy to spot – others can only be seen by God who searches our hearts. The Holy Bible makes it clear that sin is a natural part of being a human and a child of Adam. Sin is part of our very nature. Jesus taught that those things that defile us come from inside of *us*. See **Mark 7:20-23**:

*"What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man."*

It is in our natures to defile ourselves. Even we who are true Christians who have put away our former lives and already made our commitment to Jesus must continually contend with that part of us that seeks to drag us back into the world we left behind. Satan knows our natures and it doesn't help us that he continually broadcasts evil influences like a radio tower blasts out radio waves. But we will talk more about media later.

The Bible says that the wages of sin is death. For those of us who have been baptized and redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, we no longer have that death penalty hanging over our heads. But *do we still pay a price* for allowing sin to overcome us? Do we *pay a penalty for allowing that sinful part of our natures to rule over us?*

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<sup>1</sup> NKJV throughout unless otherwise noted.

I am reading a very good book written by John MacArthur called, “*The Gospel According to the Apostles*”.<sup>2</sup> In chapter 8 entitled, “*The Death Struggle with Sin*”, Dr. MacArthur talks about the penalties of letting sin overtake us. What does sin do to us?

*“Sin grieves the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30), dishonors God (1 Cor. 6:19-20), keeps our prayers from being answered (1 Peter 3:12), causes good things from God to be withheld (Jer. 5:25), robs us of the joy of our salvation (Ps. 51:12), inhibits spiritual growth (1 Cor. 3:1), brings chastisement from the Lord (Heb. 12:5-7), prevents us from being fit vessels for the Lord’s use (2 Tim. 2:21), pollutes Christian fellowship (1 Cor. 10:21), and can even endanger our physical life and health (1 Cor. 11:29-30).”*<sup>3</sup>

Is it any wonder God HATES sin!? Sin is destructive to us in more ways than we can imagine!

The DEATH STRUGGLE with that sinful part of our natures is part and parcel to being a real Christian. People who are not faced with this struggle haven’t taken a good look at themselves in the mirror lately! **James 1:22-25** says:

*“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.”*

One of the incredible things about the Holy Bible is that every time we look into it – we see more and more just how sinful our natural natures are! God’s Law tells us exactly what kind of man or woman we really are!

In fact, the closer we get to God, the more sin we see in ourselves!

The Apostle Paul talks about this death struggle with sin in Romans 7. You mean Paul the great Apostle to the Gentile nations struggled with sin? You better believe he did! See **verses 14–23**:

*“For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.”*

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<sup>2</sup> 2000, Thomas Nelson.

<sup>3</sup> Page 134, *emphasis my own*.

*"I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."*

Paul was very familiar with this constant struggle that lasted throughout his life. Remember, these verses in Romans were written long after his conversion on the road to Damascus! Finally, Paul cries out:

*"O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God -- through Jesus Christ our Lord!*

*"So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin."*

*(verses 24 and 25)*

If a man like Paul, personally chosen to be an Apostle and powerful servant of Jesus, talked about his own sinful nature in such strong and dramatic terms, where does that leave you and me?

It is a death struggle. Our own worst enemy is our own selves! It is like shadow boxing with yourself. You can never beat your shadow. While you get tired and worn down, the shadow never gets tired! But in the case of the true Christian, Jesus Christ is there to provide the strength we need to continue in the fight against sin. And in the end – *we win!*

Now let's talk about one of the biggest and greatest resources for evil that Satan has lined up against us – THE MEDIA! I am talking about TV, movies, music, and other electronic devices that Satan uses to continuously bombard us with sinful thoughts, words and actions. It provides a steady diet of sin for all who choose to tune in.

It is even on talk radio. I don't listen to talk radio while I am in Thailand. But if I am in the USA and driving a car for any distance, I will tune in to a talk radio station. I am shocked how crass and crude some of these radio talk show hosts can be! I am sensitized to the sinful nature of foul language and unsavory topics because I am not exposed to it on a regular basis.

That's what Satan does. He uses the media to DE-SENSITIZE us to sin! The more we expose ourselves and our families to sin as depicted by our many media devices, the less sensitive to sin we become and the more acceptable sin becomes to us. It is slow and it is subtle. We learn to accept more and more sin in the lives of others and even in our own lives.

What about video games? What kind of effect does it have on developing minds to participate in games, which allow the player to be personally carrying out one violent act after another? Stabbings, shootings, bombings, hackings, and other forms of violent behavior become acceptable. And there seem to be fewer and fewer taboos on the level

of violence our children are exposed to -- and in the case of role-play games - personally carrying them out on others! And the more our children watch violent acts on TV, movies and in video games; the more they become DE-sensitized to violent acts.

Dr. Dusti Howell<sup>4</sup> is on sabbatical leave from his university, and along with his family, is helping us at Legacy Institute in Thailand. His field of expertise is the use of media in learning. In a recent conversation, he explained to me some very shocking information. Researchers in Tennessee found that a child watching television uses up *less* energy than a child doing nothing at all!<sup>5</sup> They compared the energy consumed by children lying on the floor in a dark room doing nothing with energy consumed by the same children while they were watching TV. It appears that the child's body goes into some sort of trance, which lowers the metabolic rate; and the amount of time children spend watching TV, movies and other media is on the increase! University of California researchers found that for Americans, only sleep, driving a car and working take up more time than watching television and movies.<sup>6</sup> For children it gets even worse! After sleep - NO OTHER ACTIVITY TAKES UP MORE TIME THAN WATCHING TELEVISION!<sup>7</sup>

Dr. Howell also commented that young people today are watching or listening to more media than ever before. The exposure is increasing. And our sensitivities to sin are decreasing! In an American child's formative years (ages 2-5), a child will have spent more time watching television than he will later spend in the classroom during 4 years of college! This is SHOCKING!! Our children are becoming slaves to the TV. Many parents are working trying to make ends meet or are divorced, creating single-parent homes. So who ends up babysitting our children? The one-eyed monster! That's who! Satan's instrument to broadcast attitudes, immorality, violence and society's twisted values is what is baby-sitting our kids!

Dr. Howell also told me that research has demonstrated a direct correlation to the increase of violent acts (per capita) in society with the increase of the number of hours children watch TV and movies. The American Academy of Pediatrics, the Surgeon General, Centers for Disease Control, American Medical Association, American Psychological Association and the National Institute of Health all conclude that there is a cause and effect relationship between violence on the screen and violence with kids.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *PhD in Educational Psychology and a PhD in Educational Technology from the University of Wisconsin, Madison; Assoc. Professor of Instructional Design at Emporia State University, Emporia, Kansas.*

<sup>5</sup> *Klesges, R.C. et al, 1993.*

<sup>6</sup> *Dong, L., et al., 2004.*

<sup>7</sup> *Postman, 1985.*

<sup>8</sup> *Pediatrics, 2001.*

Dr. Howell<sup>9</sup> has accumulated a lot of research information on this subject because, he is not only an expert in this field, but he REALLY CARES about the negative spiritual results, as well as the physical results, of exposing our children to hours and hours of television and movies. And so do I.

Am I guilty of watching too much TV or the wrong things on TV? Yes I am. (Yes, we have TVs in Thailand.) But the recent conversations I have had with Dr. Dusti Howell are shocking me out of my lethargy. It really scares me when I think about the effects of television on my grandchildren, let alone on me personally!

Is Satan using TV, movies and computer games to DE-sensitize me to sin and it's corrupting influence? Yes he most certainly is! Is he using TV to corrupt our future generations? Of Course! Is it getting worse? Yes it is!

The deprivations of Sodom did not happen overnight. Those of us who remember TV back in the 1950s and early 60s can compare what we saw then to what we see now. TV was a novelty in the 50s and few had a set. Now there are several sets in each home and many kids have a TV set in their personal bedrooms! These facts are shocking and reveal that Satan is ratcheting up our exposure to sin and corruption to now many hours each day; and his main target is our children.

I actually envy my wife Gloria. She grew up without a TV. She spent her time playing with her sisters and other children, studying for class, reading books or doing house chores. There was also a lot more conversation in her home than in mine (I jokingly call it "*Kaffe Klatching*"). Most importantly she was not exposed to the de-sensitizing, hardening negative broadcasts of Satan the Devil via the TV.

*"For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life." (Romans 6:20-23)*

God wants us to pursue activities that bear the fruit of holiness. He wants us to leave behind the former sins of our past and move on toward the Kingdom of God. What do hours and hours of watching TV or video games have to do with *holiness* and our *sanctification*? Even those of the newer generations of churchgoers have a more cavalier attitude toward sin. Could exposure to hours and hours of television, movies and videos in their pre-teen and teenage years have anything to do with their lack of enthusiasm for the things of God?

Let's not let Satan baby-sit our children (*nor us adults for that matter!*). Let's consider the TV and movie fare to which we expose our children and ourselves. Sin has a price. We may not see its effects right away; but the PRICE WILL BE PAID, if not in our own lives, then in the lives of our children and grandchildren.

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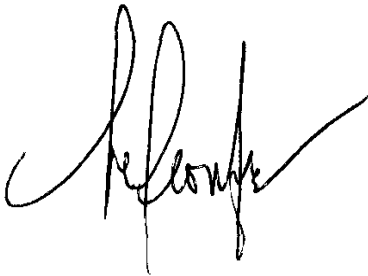
<sup>9</sup> The research information in this letter was entirely provided by Dr. Howell.

Let us all resolve to pursue holiness before God. Sodom was destroyed because God could not find even 10 righteous men among the population. Lot barely got out with the clothes on his back! And angels had to *drag* him out!

Our nation is heading down the path of Sodom. Let's pray that the people of God and our own children do not go down with it. And pray that God is merciful to us all.

Abraham negotiated with God to save his family members who were living in Sodom. God listened. God will listen to us, too.

In Jesus' service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Leon Sexton', with a large, stylized initial 'T' and a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

T. Leon Sexton

**P.S.** For those of you wondering about the situation in Burma, things have returned to status quo. The people are back trying to eke out a meager existence; and the government is as repressive as ever. I have to commend the relief workers from many nations who never gave up but kept working tirelessly to get relief supplies into the country in the face of government paranoia. Our brethren there are all safe. There was damage to homes and some sickness, but God protected them all from the worst. I will be leaving in a few weeks for Rangoon where I will transfer additional financial aid you have donated for relief efforts to COG deacon Myo Zaw for distribution to the needy. I thank all of you for your generosity. It is much appreciated. I will report back to you after my visit.

Also, Herb Vierra, Secretary of Legacy Institute, is recovering well from his heart attack and slowly getting his strength back. Please continue to pray for his full recovery.

On another note, my own diabetes and high blood pressure are still problems. But I am losing weight and taking herbal supplements to bring both under control. Thank you all for your continuing prayers.

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