



## LEGACY INSTITUTE

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Dear Fellow Laborers,

Gloria and I recently arrived back in Thailand from Rangoon, Burma. I have to confess that Burma is not my favorite place on earth. The last time I went to Burma was about a year and a half ago. The night I arrived back in Thailand, I ended up in the hospital with congestive heart failure—which then led to three strokes in rapid succession. It is only by God’s merciful intervention that I can write this letter to you today. On other trips, I have returned from Burma to Thailand and gone into the hospital for one reason or another. One time I was bitten by some kind of bug that caused my leg to swell up twice its size. So, as you can only imagine, I was apprehensive about going to Burma again. But the Work of God sometimes demands that we bite the bullet, pray in faith, and trust God to protect us from disease and accident.

Jesus said: “Go . . . teach all nations, baptizing them . . . Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, . . .”<sup>1</sup> Notice that Jesus’ command does NOT say: “Go and teach only those nations who speak English,” or, “Go and baptize only those who are from modern-



L.toR.: Leon Sexton, Tu Mar, Gloria Sexton, Anyalay, Chintin, Ehklokway and Myo Zaw.

day Israel,” or, “Go only to those places that are safe, comfortable and have five-star hotels for you to stay in.” Jesus did not qualify His command in any of these ways.

Sometimes doing the Work of God is dangerous and uncomfortable. Burma is one of those places that can be uncomfortable and even dangerous to one’s health. But I have no right to complain. I read the stories of what the first-Century apostles and evangelists had to go through to carry out our Lord’s command, and my mouth is stopped up.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 28:19-20. All Bible quotes KJV unless otherwise noted.

“ . . . in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty *stripes* save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; *In* journeyings often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils by *mine own* countrymen, *in* perils by the heathen, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.”<sup>2</sup>

It is men like Paul who left us the legacy of the Word of God. But that is not all. They also left us a legacy of dedication and relentless pursuit of the preaching of the Gospel, baptizing, and teaching to the four corners of the civilized world and far beyond. They worked without rest; they suffered persecution and disease; and most died for their efforts.

There is a growing Church of God congregation in central Burma near the city of Taungoo. Most members are very poor. Most eke out a living from subsistence farming or as day laborers. Many collect the food they can from what grows wild in the jungle. Recently, we had to send them assistance, because their crops failed and they had no money to buy food.

I received news that a young couple from this church area wanted to be baptized. There is no local pastor. Their pastor (Saw Htoo Saw) fell out of a tree over five years ago. He was fighting bees while collecting wild honey and died from injuries he sustained in the fall.

I had arranged for Myo Zaw, the COG deacon in Rangoon, to bring them across the Thailand border at Mae Sot where we would meet them for baptism counseling. But, they could not cross since they had no Burmese I.D. cards. Many poor who live in border regions of Burma near Thailand and China cannot even afford the money it takes to acquire a national I.D. card. What do we do?

Gloria and I discussed it, and felt that my health was good enough to fly to Rangoon to counsel about baptism. Sound simple? Well, nothing is ever simple when it comes to Burma!

I contacted Myo Zaw and asked him to find a hotel with a bathtub in case we needed to use it for baptisms. Then we had to get our visas at the Myanmar Embassy in Bangkok and our re-entry permits at Thai Immigration. This always takes time and involves red tape. We then flew to Rangoon. Upon arrival we were met at the airport by Myo Zaw and his wife Tu Mar. They live in Rangoon and Sabbath services are held regularly in their home. The hotel that had tubs was fully booked. There was a gems and jade show being held in Rangoon at the same time, so all the hotels were booked solid. Burma is famous for sapphires, rubies, and

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<sup>2</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:23-28

jade. Our plane was full of mostly Chinese gem and jade dealers coming to Rangoon to find good deals. The very best sapphires and rubies come from Burma. Most people believe that the best jade comes from China. That is not true. All the best so-called Chinese jade comes from Burma.

We traveled around in our taxi with our luggage until we found a room at a small hotel called the “Eden Palace Hotel” (not-so-palace hotel), a converted colonial house from the British period. It had no tub, only an “Asian-style” shower.

We then tried to get permission to use a baptismal at a local church building. We were not able to get permission. There is a large lake in Rangoon called Inye Lake. Myo Zaw’s son, Zin, went and talked to government authorities about using the lake for the baptisms. He got permission, but I decided not to use the lake, because it is a public area and is the same lake on which Aung San Suu Kyi’s house is located. She remains there under house arrest. Police and guards are everywhere on the lake and Americans holding a Christian religious ceremony at the lake was just not a good idea at all. Zin then suggested a public swimming pool. I said no for the same reason. Jesus tells us to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. The Burmese authorities are very sensitive about foreigners—especially Americans—carrying out any kind of Christian activities in their country. It is wiser to respect their sensitivities. We were in a quandary.

Finally, Gloria asked why we didn’t just use the water tank in Myo Zaw’s home. Myo Zaw and Tu Mar have a cement tank that holds water used for bathing and washing clothes. At first I thought it was too small. But after looking at it, I could see that we could successfully use it, because the tribal couple to be baptized were much smaller than the typical American. With some careful planning we could get them completely immersed. So, Myo Zaw’s water tank became the place of their watery grave.

When counseling for baptism, I always ask the question, “Why do you want to be baptized?” I get some very interesting answers. The husband’s name is Chintin, from the Karen tribe. Chintin told me the story about what turned him to God. He was working for a man cutting trees in the forest. In Burma and Thailand, elephants have been traditionally used to haul logs from the forest. Chintin was attacked by one of the elephants that went crazy. The animal grabbed him and nearly ripped his arm from his body. He barely escaped with his life. That is what turned him to seek God. Over the past year he and his wife have been learning the true gospel in the Bible from the Taungoo brethren and have been trying to keep God’s laws.

Chintin’s wife’s name is Anyalay, from the Wa tribe. The Wa are a tribal group from southern China. She told me that she had wanted to be baptized for some time. The Wa are a primitive and superstitious tribe. As a child her parents had accused her of having a spirit because she wasn’t able to learn as quickly as other children. She was seeking God because she believed He could give her a new life. Both said they wanted to be with God forever.

At Sabbath services in Myo Zaw's house, my sermon was about the two trees and I asked the question, "Why did Adam and Eve choose to eat from the forbidden tree when the Tree of Life was among those trees in the garden not forbidden by God?" They chose the tree that brought death and rejected the tree that brought eternal life. Why?



Anyalay (L.) and Chintin



Leon Sexton (Ctr.) and Myo Zaw (R.) baptize Chintin

The answer is that they believed Satan's lies and not God's truth. Satan told them two great lies. The first was that they already had eternal life and didn't need God to give it to them. The second lie was that they didn't need God's law to tell them right from wrong. Satan told them that if they ate the forbidden fruit, they would become "wise" and figure it all out for themselves. So they believed that you don't need God to live forever, because you already have an immortal soul; and you don't need God to direct your life, because you can decide for yourself what is right and wrong.<sup>3</sup> This is the path that mankind has followed ever since Eden. But without God we cannot have eternal life. It is a gift He must give us.<sup>4</sup> We do not possess eternal life by ourselves and we cannot gain it by ourselves, no matter what we do. God shut off the way to the Tree of Life from mankind. He put cherubim and a flaming sword at the entrance to the garden. Without God, the only end of life is death—death that lasts eternally.

That same afternoon, I baptized Chintin and Anyalay in the water tank. Deacon Myo Zaw made sure every part of their body was under the water. Then I laid hands on them and asked God to give them His Holy Spirit and make them a part of the Body of Christ.

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<sup>3</sup> Genesis 3:1-6

<sup>4</sup> Romans 6:23

The people living in the Taungoo area are very poor. Many lack a good education. They live hand to mouth. But they are faithful and the church is growing. This is where the Holy Spirit is actively working. This is where the people are being called and chosen. We are humbled that God worked all things out so that we could be used to help them make their baptism covenant with God Almighty and receive the Holy Spirit.



Naw Hgee Ler (L.) and Gloria Sexton

We also had a chance to interview a young lady who wants to come to Legacy Institute's school in Chiang Mai. She has already graduated from an SDA high school and wants to become a nurse. Legacy will be sponsoring her to attend a nurse's aid training course in Rangoon. If all goes well and she proves herself, we will consider her for acceptance to Legacy.

Soon we will travel to a small village near a refugee camp to counsel with some others seeking baptism. Then we will hold Passover services for members from the camp.

Nathan Kimmons, a volunteer teacher at Legacy, will travel with Jay, one of our Legacy grads, to another refugee camp to hold Passover services for COG members there. Erika Pedersen, Legacy's Deputy Director, will have Passover with three other COG ladies who will be remaining at the school in Chiang Mai.

Things are moving along. The Work in this part of the world is getting done. It is not getting done as fast as I would like it to. I am impatient. I want to see us doing more.

We now have a chance to purchase the land right next to what we call "The Farm." We can expand our garden area and make another pond for growing fish. There are about seven or eight acres available. Some of this area could be used for our building project. I was informed that some people were looking around at the compound we now lease for classrooms and dorm space. If it gets sold, we may have to move out. I will keep all of you informed.

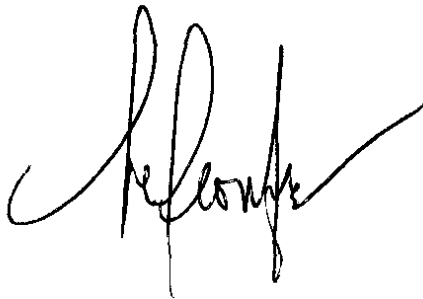
Please pray for the king and queen of Thailand. A group of protesters called the "Red Shirts" (because of the color of the shirts they wear) gathered in Bangkok while we were there and demanded the resignation of the Prime Minister and called for a

“class war.”<sup>5</sup> Thailand’s present PM is Oxford educated and has been doing a good job in keeping the peace and helping the country recover from the worldwide economic disaster. But the former Prime Minister (who was convicted for corruption and tax evasion and received a jail sentence) is a fugitive, living from place to place outside the country. He wants to oust the current Prime Minister and return to power. He is the hero of the Red Shirts. 82 year old King Bhumibol is in the hospital recovering from a lung infection. Queen Sirikit stays with him. Red Shirts causing political turmoil surely affects his recovery. The growing work of God in Southeast Asia is being done from this country. Thailand needs to have peace and stability in order for us to remain here. Satan is doing his best to employ his evil forces to stop this work that is being blessed. Pray that God stops Satan and stops the evil that is growing more and more powerful in this small kingdom with a king and queen that have treated God’s people so well. God hears the prayers of His saints.

Please also pray that God will provide more workers for His fields from among the young people we are now training. And please pray that God quickly intervenes to help the United States of America.

May God bless all of you.

In Our Lord’s Service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Leon Sexton', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

T. Leon Sexton

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P.S. Please remember our NEW mailing address which you can find at the top of this letter.

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<sup>5</sup> “Red Shirts Call for Class War,” *Bangkok Post*, March 18, 2010, page 1.