

## **PORNOGRAPHY: A DEADLY POISON**

by Douglas Wantz

Used by permission of the **Brethren Revival Fellowship (BRF)**, published in **BRF Witness**, **May/June 1991, Volume 26, Number 3**

---

“Danger: Harmful or fatal if swallowed; not to be taken internally.” This warning is one commonly found on the labels of many products we use in our homes. It makes us aware that the contents of certain packages are not meant to be allowed inside the human body.

Physical damage to a person’s health may occur if such warnings did not exist, or if they were ignored. For this reason, all poisonous chemical products are required to be clearly labeled as such at the time they are sold to consumers. Yet, as inconceivable as it might seem, there is one type of poison which has no such legal requirement even though it is just as deadly in its effects as any chemical produced. That poison is pornography, and it has ruined the lives of many users.

The pornography poison has not only remained unlabeled for a long period of time, but there were even occasions when it received a stamp of approval. In 1907, President Johnson appointed an Attorney General’s Commission to study and report on the effects of pornography. In their report, issued in 1970, the conclusion was that there was no persuasive evidence that pornography led to antisocial behavior. They even went so far as to say that it had a cleansing effect because it relieved sexual tension in a “natural way.” They believed that with the use of pornography, violence and sexual problems would actually decrease. Although this report was eventually rejected by President Nixon and the Congress when it was presented, still there were many people who personally held the opinions expressed by the Commission.

There is now factual evidence which demonstrates that the claims of pornography’s harmlessness are absurd. Law enforcement statistics reveal that the number of violent, sex-related crimes has continually been on the increase in our country. Immorality is running rampant, often resulting in the break-up of countless numbers of families. There have also been scientific studies which point to pornography’s destructive nature.

Pornography is neither beneficial nor neutral; it is an abusive cancer which will continue to eat away at our society until it is removed. It is an outgrowth of the depravity of the human heart, and as such is under the condemnation of God. An application of Paul's words to the Romans reveals three reasons why Christians need to be active in removing pornography from their personal lives, and from the life of their community.

## **1. PORNOGRAPHY IS IDOLATRY, WITH SEX BEING SUBSTITUTED FOR GOD AS THE OBJECT OF A PERSON'S WORSHIP.**

Idolatry is the result of rebellion. It involves a willful act of rejecting God's revelation about Himself and embracing some other object in His place. At the heart of the matter is the question of control. Who will be the final authority in a person's life? Those who worship God know that He is the One who has that authority, and thus we are to be obedient to Him. But human nature often wants that authority for itself. A conflict results, which some choose to resolve by creating their own gods which are a reflection of their personal desires. In doing this, people have a god which they can control, since they are its creator.

Choosing to create and worship an idol, however, is actually a poor substitute which will never satisfy the deepest needs of the human heart. Paul writes concerning those who have made such a choice: *"Professing to be wise, they became fools"* (**Romans 1:22 NASB**). In worshipping a created thing rather than the Creator, the idolater has chosen to devote his or her life to that which is greatly inferior.

The idolatry of pornography can be seen, not just in the visual images which are presented, but also in the lifestyle it promotes. People, particularly women, are seen only as objects to be possessed and used in such a way that others can fulfill their lustful desires. Pornography promotes a removal of all restraints which God or society had previously placed upon sexual behavior. Morals and values are seen as unnecessary. The philosophy is, "If it feels good, do it."

The results of such lifestyles speak for themselves: Unwanted pregnancies, venereal diseases, AIDS, fear, guilt, shame, the feeling of being "used," and shattered relationships. The playboy philosophy is clearly not as glorious (nor as liberating) as it claims to be. How foolish it really is to exchange the true joy that comes from God, for the temporary pleasure of immorality which in the end only brings frustration and pain.

## **2. PORNOGRAPHY CONTINUALLY LEADS ITS USERS INTO MORE PERVERSE LIFESTYLES WHICH OFTEN CLAIM INNOCENT VICTIMS.**

Sin always leads persons into a downward spiral which continues to draw them farther away from God. This progression of sinful desire is seen in **Romans 1:20-32**. It begins

with a rejection of God in verses 20-21. God gave the human race clear evidence of His presence and identity, yet *“even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened” (1:21)*. After rejecting God, the human family then made gods in their own image, as described in **verses 22-23**. They made these gods *“in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures” (1:23)*. Next, they continued to lust after sin, even though it dishonored their bodies and caused God to chastise them, as Paul records in **verses 24-27**. God *“gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity” (1:24)*, and *“gave them over to degrading passions” (1:26)*, resulting in both men and women *“receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error” (1:27)*. In all of their perversity, they began to demonstrate a hatred both for God and for other people, *“being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful.” (1:29-31)*. The final step is given in the last half of **verse 32** – not only are they sinking deeper into sin through this lifestyle, but they encourage others to join them.

Because pornography originates from the sinful nature and evil desires of the human heart, it exhibits the same qualities of depravity which Paul mentioned in the first chapter of Romans.

Dr. Victor Kline, a clinical psychologist from the University of Utah, observed a four-step pattern in sex offenders who have had intensive exposure to hard-core pornography. The pattern began with *addiction*, where there was a longing created for continual exposure to sexually stimulating material. This addiction is every bit as strong as the addiction to drugs. When stimulation occurs, there is a release of a chemical within the body which serves to lock into the mind an image of whatever has caused the stimulation to occur. In effect the body forms a permanent library of these images that are difficult to erase, and they are continually reinforced whenever they are recalled and further stimulation occurs.

The second step in the pattern is *escalation*. The pornography user begins to feel the need for rougher, more explicit material in order to achieve the same level of stimulation experienced previously. It is a principle that is once again very similar to that of drug addicts who need to progress both to harder drugs (and more of them) in order to achieve the same “high” to satisfy their desires. In the case of pornography, a person may eventually feel the need to progress from “softcore” pornography to

obscenity, which includes such things as child pornography, bestiality, homosexual acts, and “snuff films” (where a person actually has life snuffed out during filming).

The third stop in the pattern is that of *desensitization*. What once was shocking and repulsive, now becomes commonplace. This is why pornography is often used by those who molest children or use such innocent victims to produce child porn. By showing this material to the children, the molester tries to gain the child’s willing cooperation, assuring the child that such acts are all right and that they are even natural and acceptable.

The fourth and final stop is that of *inclination*, where individuals begin to act out what they have seen. An illustration of this can be seen in a study conducted at UCLA where a group of men were exposed to a rape story from Penthouse magazine (supposedly soft-core) which implied that women enjoyed being sexually mistreated. Following this exposure, the group was asked if they would not go out and rape a woman if there was no fear of retribution. The startling result was that more than half of them said “Yes.”

Sin is not an isolated event. Many times, innocent victims will suffer because of the sin of another person. In the case of pornography, the innocent victims include those who are raped and molested, as well as their family members. Even the user is a victim, although he cannot be referred to as “innocent” since he has made a deliberate choice. And so this devastation brought on by the downward spiral of sin should serve as a call to action by Christians. After all, for a few poisoned capsules, whole shipments of Tylenol capsules were removed from store shelves. Compared to the threat from pornography, the danger posed by a few poisoned capsules is very small. Why then is there not more of an outcry against the evil of pornography?

### **3. PORNOGRAPHY SUBJECTS ITS USERS TO SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES WHEN THEY ARE CALLED TO GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF THEIR ACTS BEFORE A HOLY GOD.**

Sin always has a consequence which must be paid, and this is true whether the person committing it is a believer or not. Some of the consequences may be experienced here on earth in this life; others may not become evident until a person passes into eternity. In either case, the consequences are never pleasant.

One such consequence is the fact that the sinner becomes subject to the wrath of God. Sin in a person’s life puts up a barrier between the individual and God, and that barrier cannot be removed until repentance occurs. As long as the barrier remains, the person will be unable to experience the blessings of God. The only other alternative is to experience His wrath. **Romans 1:18** says, “*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven*

*against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.*

The wrath of God is His righteous anger exercised against ungodliness. It is a holy wrath that has mercy as its goal. We must understand that God does not chastise just for the sake of punishing; He chastises to open up the possibility of restoration, which can come only after repentance occurs. The ultimate goal is to *restore* the unrighteous person back into fellowship with Himself. Still, the process of chastising can be extremely painful.

One way in which God's wrath is manifested, is by His allowing people to experience the full impact of what they have been striving for. In the case of those who persistently continue in their sin, there will come a time when God removes all restraints and allow them to fully reap the consequences of their actions. Three times in **Romans 1 (verses 24, 26, 28)** Paul repeats the phrase, *"God gave them over."* Pastor and author Ray Stedman makes this comment: "God forces us to harvest the crop we insist on sowing." When people are intent upon living an unrighteous lifestyle, God may choose to allow them to experience the hardship and heartache such living brings, in the hope that reality will lead them to turn back to Him.

Another consequence which individuals may find themselves facing, when called to give an account to God, is death. Depending upon the circumstances, this death could be either spiritual or physical. Spiritual death would be experienced by those who refuse to leave their old way of life behind, and who refuse God's offer of salvation through Jesus Christ, as seen in **Romans 1:21**. *"Because, although they knew God [speaking of an awareness that He exists rather than a heartfelt belief], they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened."* Such willing rejection leads to eternal separation from the Savior, which is the essence of spiritual death. But the experience of physical death is also a possibility. If Christians become so engrossed in sin that they find they cannot give it up, God may see a physical separation from the sinful world as the best alternative (**1 Corinthians 11:30-32**).

The consequences of spiritual or physical death are drastic and may even be a last resort in the plan of God, but we must realize that if such a response on His part become necessary, He is perfectly justified in carrying it out. **Romans 1:32** says, *"those who practice such things [the sins listed in the previous verses] are worthy of death."* God is not unfair in dealing with hardened rebels in this way. Their actions have demanded it.

## A CALL TO ACTION

The three reasons presented in the major part of this paper have demonstrated *why* we should oppose pornography. Now the question is, “How do we begin?” In response to this question, we ask readers to consider the following suggestions:

- 1)** Realize that the place where any action must begin is with ourselves. If you are a Christian and are using pornography (and yes, there are Christian people who are addicted to it), you need to repent and seek God’s help in removing it from your life. If you are not a Christian, you likewise need to repent, but you must also come to know Jesus Christ as your Savior, seeking His forgiveness and His cleansing power.
- 2)** Write letters. Hard-core pornography is illegal, and not protected by the First Amendment. Eliminating pornography is not a question of censorship, but of upholding the laws of the land. Write letters to both local and national authorities expressing your desire to see the current laws against obscenity enforced.
- 3)** Be a good steward of your resources. Refuse to buy in stores where pornography is sold and let the owners or managers of such stores know of your decision. It is amazing to see the impact that just one person can make by taking, such action. Many store owners will be sensitive to your concerns when they are presented with the facts.
- 4)** Join others in your community who have similar concerns. The American Family Association, for example, is a nationwide organization which has many state and local chapters. Concerned citizens are able to join together in a concerted effort to promote positive values in their communities. Sexually explicit material is not an isolated minority concern.
- 5)** Be committed to living a life of moral purity. Let **Philippians 4:8** be a guiding light for your life: *“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report .. meditate on these things.”*

Pornography is a deadly poison about which all of us should be aware. But let us not be content to just label it. Let us do what we can to try and get rid of it. With God’s help we can make a mark in our own lives and in the lives of others, as we obey Jesus’ command to be salt and light in the communities where we live.