

## Desensitized to Sin

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by Glen Young

The discipline of psychology lists antisocial behavior (a pervasive pattern of disregard for, and violation of, the rights of others — *Wikipedia*) as abnormal behavior. It is the inability to empathize with the pain and suffering of others. One who is diagnosed with this problem is someone who is desensitized to the consequence of their actions toward others.

There is much discussion as to how a person develops such behavior. Is it innate [a genetic defect] or learned [environmental] behavior? Empirical evidence points to the problem being one of learned behavior. The Scriptures uphold this observation by pointing out that people are affected by those with whom they associate. Paul warned the Corinthian Christians by saying, *“Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company ruins good morals’”* (1 Corinthians 15:33). This is in accord with what James writes in chapter one verse twenty-seven by saying, *“Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.”* Undoubtedly, Christians are to be aware of their surroundings for the purpose of guarding against being influenced to commit sin.

This brings up the question, why do we see Christians either ignore or accept actions that have been considered sin in the past? The answer is found in the desensitization of Christians with the blatant sinful actions which bombard us everyday. Satan knows this to be the case and uses the constant friction of a holy conscience with sin to desensitize it toward the wickedness surrounding it.

It happens through a gradual process of desensitization. When I was growing up in North Alabama, we worked hard in our gardens and cotton fields. Much of this work was done with a hoe. I remember that in the spring my hands would become blistered and sore from the friction of the hoe handle. This would continue until they developed calluses. When my hands grew accustomed to the abrasive hoe handle, they no longer blistered or became sore.

Desensitization can and does happen in the spiritual realm. This spiritual callousness is in response to the wicked world in which we live. Through television, radio and other media, we are constantly bombarded by evil of every kind. Our neighbors are involved in it. Officials in high office are engaged in it. In the words of an old Sonny & Cher song, *“and the beat goes on!”*

What is needed is a righteous indignation toward sin. Righteous Lot lived among the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah and *“... day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard,”* 2 Peter 2:7-8.

As Christians, we need to maintain strong convictions about those things we see that are sin. This is hard to do because of the constant exposure to sin. The problem is one of remaining righteously indignant toward evil. Initially, the evil of wicked men distresses us, vexes our righteous souls. Prolonged exposure to the lascivious life of the wicked causes our consciences to become callused. This creates an age old problem; the inability to differentiate between good and evil.

Christians are to grow and mature having their senses exercised to know good from evil. Isaiah identified this as a problem for Israel. Hear his words, *“Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!”* (Isaiah 5:20).

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