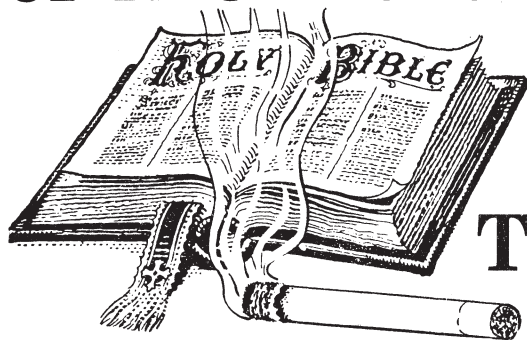


Is It Wrong for A Christian to Use



Tobacco?

IS IT WRONG for a Christian to use tobacco in any form? Does the Bible by direct command or principle have anything to say upon this neglected subject? These questions seem to have never entered the minds of some religious people, but a real Christian will be concerned about this. He wants to please His Lord in every way in all things (Colossians 3:17,23).

The medical world has said much about smoking and the use of tobacco in recent years. Their indictment and verdict against tobacco is clear. It is a primary cause of lung cancer, and it is a great factor in heart diseases. There are many maladies caused by the use of tobacco, not to mention that it aggravates almost any sickness that one may have. It has even been figured out statistically how many years a person's life is shortened by the use of tobacco. The evidence is so overwhelming that the U.S. government requires this warning to appear with cigarette advertizing (and similar information on the pack of cigarettes): "WARNING: The Surgeon General Has Determined That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health." The medical information concerning the harmfulness of tobacco is such common knowledge that we will not attempt to try to prove anything we have said.

Only tobacco companies and such special interest groups would try to deny them.

The "Christian world" for the most part has been silent on the subject of tobacco. Even in the face of the terrible truth of its danger to health and life, most enslaved souls (it seems) will try to justify its use—and still claim to be faithful Christians. One man said that when his conscience bothered him, he would quit. A brother who was more spiritually inclined, said, "If I committed adultery as often as you smoke, I wouldn't think that adultery was wrong either!" Yes, there is such a thing as having your "conscience seared with a hot iron" (I Timothy 4:2), or, would it be better in this case to say a hot cigarette?

But, what we are concerned with is the Bible. Do the Scriptures say anything that would throw any light upon this issue one way or the other? Is there a more spiritual concept governed by New Testament principles that we need to consider?

FIRST, we would like to say that the use of tobacco is tempting God.

Jesus was tempted of the devil to cast himself from the pinnacle of the temple. After all, God would take care of him lest he "dash his foot against

a stone (Matthew 4:5-7). The immediate reply of Jesus was, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Matthew 4:7).

In other words, it would be the same thing if a person threw himself in front of an oncoming car, then asked the Lord to save him. It likewise would be tempting God. We are commanded NOT to tempt God.

How does this apply to smoking? the use of tobacco?

The Christian's life is one of trust and commitment, committing his all unto the Lord (I Peter 5:7; Philippians 4:6). We look to the Lord for His watch-care and our well-being in everything. This we are commanded to do, as well as it being our special privilege.

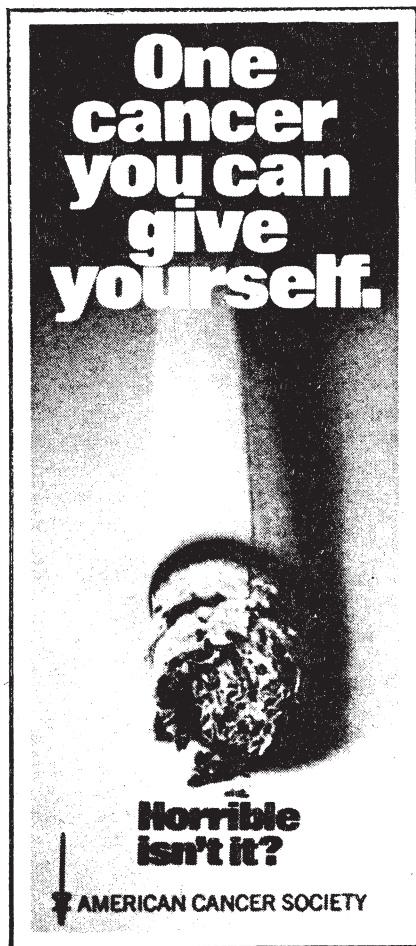
Now, in view of the serious hazards to one's life involved in smoking, and the definite prospects of a premature death, we would be tempting God by continued use of tobacco. To ask the Lord to look out for us and to take care of us, then use tobacco would be really presumptuous in the sight of God. It is the same thing as jumping in front of the car, then asking the Lord to take care of us. It is the same principle that is involved in the temptation of Jesus to leap from the pinnacle of the temple (although, perhaps not as dramatic). Jesus said in no uncertain terms, and may we listen, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

SECOND, there are several other Scriptural reasons we could list against smoking. We will not take the time to examine them in detail, but simply give them.

Paul says in I Corinthians 3:17, "If any man defile (or *destroy*—footnote) the temple of God, him shall God destroy, for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." He has reference to the collective body (the church) being the temple of God, but you will also notice that individually we are the temple of God, i.e. of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19,20). Our bodies belong to God. The warning

here is that if we destroy the temple of God, He will destroy us. What does tobacco do to the body?

Listen again to Paul: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from ALL FILTHINESS of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (II Corinthians 7:1). The promise of God being our Father and our being His children (and Him living in us) should make us clean up our lives in every way. Besides the other factors involved, at its best we must admit that tobacco is a filthy habit. We are commanded to cleanse ourselves



from ALL FILTHINESS of the flesh and spirit.

Let us ask this question: Can you visualize Jesus using tobacco? a cigarette hanging out of his mouth? Be honest now! He is our example in every way (I Peter 2:21). John says that every Christian must "purify himself, even as he (Jesus) is pure" (I John 3:3). O beloved, look to Jesus. He is our example. You can't go wrong here.

Then in addition to its destructive nature, tobacco is habit-forming. There is no question about the drug element in it. We have heard people in tears say that they would like to quit, but they just couldn't (they said). They were under control by tobacco. Even if it were just a matter of opinion, from this perspective it would be wrong for a Christian. Listen to Paul: "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I WILL NOT BE BROUGHT UNDER THE POWER OF ANY" (I Corinthians 6:12). Then again: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). Beloved, if you profess to belong to King Jesus, and have been enslaved by king tobacco, you better take steps to get your life straightened out right away. Let God help you break the bonds that bind you.

Finally, all will have to admit, whether they accept all that has been said here or not, that there is a BIG QUESTION MARK surrounding tobacco. Just from a surface examination there is room for much doubt. Paul, stressing a principle, declared, "He that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: FOR WHATSOEVER IS NOT OF FAITH IS SIN" (Romans 14:23).

THEREFORE, any way you look at it we must conclude that the use of tobacco is not for the Christian. The only way we can sum it up is: IT IS WRONG! That's all you can make out of it. If you profess to be a child



of God (or are thinking about becoming one), quit the stinking habit right away and that without delay. God will help you get the victory, and you will be pleased with yourself for what you have done. The medical and Scriptural evidence are too overwhelming to do otherwise. Let us do nothing to impair our promise of everlasting life. Let us be a spiritual church, one that the Lord Jesus can accept.

(AFTERTHOUGHT: Some have asked why God made the tobacco plant if we can't use it. After He had made everything, He said that His creation was good. But we ask: Why did God make rattlesnakes? Why did God make poison ivy? Why did God make a lot of other things? We don't see many people wanting to "use" these things. The truth is that everything seemingly has its place. We don't know all that God had in mind when he made the tobacco plant, but the tobacco worm thrives very well on it...and it doesn't shorten his life either. Also, we have seen the tobacco plant in a dried, crumbly and powdered form used as an insecticide).

—By JAMES E. GIBBONS

THE PLAN OF SALVATION

The Bible teaches a simple, but effective plan of salvation. It requires:

FAITH . . .

in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. Mark 16:16; Rom. 1:17; 10:10; 10:17; Heb. 11:6.

REPENTANCE . . .

from sin, which is a Godly sorrow for sin that leads to a change of life. Acts 2:38; 17:30; Luke 24:47.

CONFESSION . . .

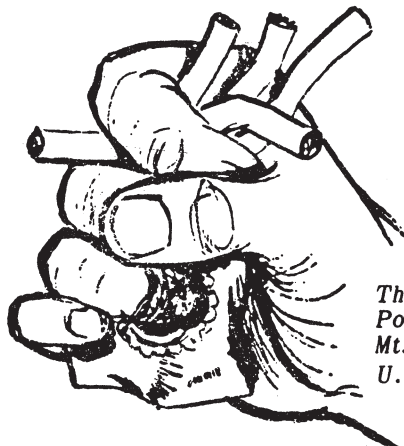
of your faith in Christ at every opportunity. Matt. 10:32; Luke 12:8; Rom. 10:9-10; I Tim. 6:13.

BAPTISM . . .

into Christ, which is a burial in water, symbolizing the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord. Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:16; John 3:5; Acts 2:38; 8:36-40; Rom. 6:1-6.

GROWTH . . .

in Christian faith and virtue, striving to become like Jesus Christ in all things. II Pet. 1:5; II Pet. 3:18; Heb. 6:1-2.



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