

The Grace of God



"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us..." (Titus 2:11-12).

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Cigarette Smoking and the Bible

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Although smoking was unknown during the ages when the Bible was being written, the Bible provides teaching, through principle, about this relatively modern habit.

In I Cor. 6:19-20, the Apostle Paul wrote to Christians, "What know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which you have of God, and ye are not your own? For you were bought with a price: Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit which are God's." Much modern evidence shows smoking to be a health hazard to the extent that each package of cigarettes must by law, bear this message, "Warning: the Surgeon General has determined that cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health." Obviously, something dangerous to the health cannot possibly enhance, or build up, the body. Smoking is contrary to healthy living and acts to weaken or destroy the body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Christians do not own their own bodies, their bodies are Christ's, bought and paid for by his death. Christians are not free to use their bodies for all pleasure and in any way they choose. They are to glorify God in their bodies and since smoking does not glorify God, smokers are in violation of this precept.

Christians also need to come face to face with the shocking realities that while more than 90% of all lung cancer victims are smokers; scientific studies have also shown that smokers have more than three times as many heart attacks as do non-smokers. We can simply find no way by which we can justify the destruction of our bodies in such a manner. The Apostle Paul said, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are?" I Cor. 3:16-17.

Some try to put smoking in the category of authorized liberties (Romans 14). I do not believe that assertion can be sustained anymore than drinking alcohol can be put there. Drinking alcohol for anything other than medicinal usage (1 Tim. 5:23) is not permitted (Eph. 5:18). Alcohol is the most commonly used (abused!) drug in the world. Practically every kind of food and many other kinds of items are turned into forms of alcohol. But whatever the kind, God's principles direct us to be "sober", which means "free from the influence of intoxicants" or "to abstain from wine" (Titus 2:2, 4, 6; 1 Pet. 1:13 [nephos] Strongs #3525). Thus God addresses all drugs use by the example of the most commonly abused drug.

Cigarettes actually contain a large variety of **known** carcinogens – cancer causing agents. They also contain a large quantity of other substances, which when they all burn together have any number of unknown reactions. Can we really see Jesus approving of such self-destructive behavior? Even in "moderation"?

Consider further that smoking is wasteful of time and of money. Christians are to be stewards (read Matthew 25:14-30), for like our bodies, our money and our time, are not ours but Christ's.

More can be considered, but for now let us think on quitting. Most smokers find quitting difficult. The smoker who loves Christ has good reason to want to quit and thus the battle is nearly won. Paul wrote in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." If you are a smoker and wish to quit, pray often for strength. Some smokers can quit easily, while others find it difficult. If you are one of these, endure the discomforts, remembering always that you can do it for Christ; your agony is small compared to that which He suffered for you. You can quit for His cause, and for the sake of all those who your smoking might otherwise lose for Christ.

TWO KINDS OF SMOKERS

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When we examine any issue there are only so many possible conclusions that we can reach. Either something is authorized or it is not. If it is not, then we cannot do it and be right with the Lord. If it is authorized then we have some additional options.

Some things are required, like faith and baptism (Mark 16:16). Without these things we remain outside of Christ and in our sins (Gal. 3:26-28). Also, a thing can be allowed or permitted, like eating meats (Rom. 14:14). One may eat or not eat as they see fit without any inherent spiritual harm.

We noted briefly in the previous article that smoking is comparable to alcohol, an abuse of the temple of God. When we learn of the truth about drinking or smoking, there are typically two responses. One is to humbly accept the truth (like those in Acts 2). Some quit immediately or very soon. Some take a little more time to work their way off of it. But as long as they cultivate the mind that desires to please God first and do what is best, these will all sooner or later quit smoking.

The other reaction is the one of rejection, like Acts 7. Some respond to the principles of God's word on smoking or drinking with hostility (in lesser or greater degrees). Some just ignore the principles of God's word. Some will be as pleasant as you please, all the while justifying their actions as not so bad, or necessary to "calm their nerves", etc. Some will become angry and speak against those who inform them that smoking is bad, disregarding medical facts and (more importantly) disrespecting God's word.

The bottom line is that these two reactions reveal the heart of the individual. Is there a receptive heart in us, one that is meek and subject to God's word (James 1:21)? Does our heart express genuine contrition and a true change of mind about sinful actions? Can it be said of us, as Paul did the Corinthians, "For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: **What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.**" (2 Cor. 7:10-11)?

In other words, when they were convicted of wrongdoing, Paul says they now excelled in clearing themselves of the wrong. They changed, zealously changed, diligently changed. They feared God, they were indignant at what sin had done to them, and thus they proved

themselves to be clear of the matter. May we imitate this godly sorrow, repentance and change for the better in every sin and failing of our lives. By the grace of God (by the instruction of His word and permission of His will), He enables us to learn, change and be forgiven. What a merciful God we serve.

PEOPLE TO REMEMBER & PRAY FOR

Sawyer Sims, Jean Gambrell (back), **Johanna Fletcher, Othena Kinnard** (additional treatments), **Mag Bumbalough, Mary Cox, Monie Petty, Dave Poteet** (NHC 225), **Marilyn Poteet-Langford, Betty England, Thelma Klein, Joshua Hill** (Ending his seizure meds), **Ed Williams, Michelle Austin, Lydia Poe, Anthony & Christy Rece, Ralph & Gail Sims, Marci Sims, Jo Miller, Chad & Jamie Sims, Larry Bumbalough, Jake Hale, Joshua & Misty Poteet, Carolyn Williams, Kenley Streeval. Matthew Taylor** (leukemia), **Joyce Simmons Wagner, Lorene Myers** (Rece's Grandmother), **David Price** (David Price's father), **Bill Frazier** (cancer), **Michelle Cunningham** (Lydia's sister), **W.C. Randolph** (Jamie Sims' grandfather), **Emma Featherston** (Adam's grandmother), **Michael Laurence** (evangelist who had eye surgery).

OBEY THE GOSPEL!!!

Hear (Rom. 10:17) Believe (Mark 16:16) Repent (Acts 17:30-31) Confess (Rom. 10:9) Be Baptized (Acts 2:38) Live Faithfully (Rev. 2:10)

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- **Radio Program** - Every Sun. 2pm, AM 1050 WSMT
- **Home Bible Study** - Resumes Jan. 12 & 26, 2008
- **Ladies Class** - 2nd & Last Sunday Each Month
- **Business Meeting** - Sun. Jan. 27
- **GM** - Ron Daly, April 7-11, 2008 (Mon-Fri).
- **GM** - Lanny Smith, Oct.12-17, 2008.

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"My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor detest His correction; For whom the LORD loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights." (Prov. 3:11-12)

"Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, When it is in the power of your hand to do so. Do not say to your neighbor, "Go, and come back, And tomorrow I will give it," When you have it with you." (Prov. 3:27-28)