

DO YOU SMOKE ?

YOU answer "Yes," sometimes, and the question is asked, "And are you a child of GOD ?" You feel almost insulted. You have owned His Name for years, and godly men have "smoked," and thus you have your foundation. Moreover, you do not wish to be brought into bondage. And so the matter ends.

BUT DOES IT END THERE ? Others are watching you, and even the world is surprised if those who emphasize spirituality smoke. "Ah, but," you say, "We cannot always take notice of what people say." No, not when they speak all manner of evil against us **FOR CHRIST'S SAKE**. Howbeit, we are to walk circumspectly, and not to cause the world to stumble (1 Cor. 10. 32). Furthermore, there are **YOUNG BELIEVERS** watching you,—and imitating. Are you **GLAD** when you see them beginning to smoke ? Do you give **THANKS** for this "encouragement" in their spiritual life ? Why not, if you are really satisfied before the Lord as to your action ? Is it not possible that you connect smoking (more than you realize) with the public house rather than with the meeting room, with the earthly race-course rather than with the heavenly race ? You are pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling: what reward will you have for your smoking ? Do you feel the Lord will say that your example was more helpful thereby, your body made more fit for His service, and your money lovingly spent for His glory ? **DOES THE MATTER END WHERE YOU THOUGHT IT ENDED ?**

You feel pained when you see women smoking. Why, if it is a spiritually and mentally helpful action ? Why would you rob sisters in Christ of that which you find so beneficial in your own life ? You recoil from the thought. Why, if it is so soothing and refreshing ? Why should it be so unkindly restricted ? Do not these questions suggest a quick retracing of steps ? If in error, do not defend it, beloved reader. 1 John 1. 9 stands, and the Lord is gracious **TO-DAY**.

Have you ever known a child of God who found it hard to give up smoking when he felt it desirable ? What does this suggest ? Does not the habit "hold" many ? "I will not be brought under the power of any (thing)" was the beautiful witness of God's servant (1 Cor. 6. 12). But you may not want to bear **OTHERS'** burdens in this way (Gal. 6. 2). You think that "others" should look after themselves, as you do, and that "others" should not be grieved; yet Romans 14. 15 and 1 Corinthians 8. 11-13 are still as much part of Scripture as John 3. 16. And with the psalmist you want to say, "My soul hath kept Thy testimonies, and I love them exceedingly" (Psalm 119. 167), but you "cannot" give up this practice for the sake of others ! The Lord graciously keeps His own (John 6. 36), yet the trend of your action is to destroy a brother, and He Who says Abraham actually offered up Isaac is not unmindful of the natural, deadly result of your wounding a brother, though He deigns to prevent and to heal.

But you have been blest **WHILE** smoking, and you suggest, "I do not think God would have used me if I had been grieving His Holy Spirit." Remember the flowing water when the rock was **WRONGLY** smitten, and the blessing to Israel when peace was made with the Gibeonites **WITHOUT** knowledge of the Lord's will. The Lord does not wait till we are free from grieving Him to use us, but we ought not to misuse His tender patience, ought we ?

"Ah," you add, "every man must be guided for himself," and "It is wrong to interfere with personal details," and "This is such a small matter." But can we not help one another ? And what if the guidance **HAS** been given in Scripture ? What if even 1 Corinthians 10. 28, 29 applies. If this is so trivial, and you are not "bound" by the habit at all, you will readily give it up rather than trouble those who own the Name of the Lord Jesus. If you feel no chain, the giving up will be so easy.

"I have never been **LED** to see I ought to give up smoking." One moment, beloved friend, if it causes to stumble, do you ask for the "leading" that has already **BEEN GIVEN** in Scripture ? And, further, do you think you were "**LED**" to **COMMENCE** ? Some of us must own that we have had qualms in **VARIOUS** matters, and have not always been so responsive when our own wishes have been involved, **AS IN ADVISING OTHERS**. I wonder if you have ever been **UNCERTAIN** before the Lord regarding this, and if you have acted before being sure it was of the Lord ? If so, it may be there will result a slowness to perceive God's will.

For all arrangements, we want the Lord's principles or precepts, expressed in His words. Would you collect the passages which seem to you a Scriptural reason, a POSITIVE Scriptural reason for smoking? It is not enough to say, "I do not wish to argue, or to do anything of this kind." IF you have a Scriptural basis, will you help us by this Bible Study?

Incidentally the financial aspect has been mentioned, but I do not want you to feel that "we" would interfere with "your" use of "your" own money. There is only this thought in our mind. It is blessed to remember we ourselves are NOT our own, and there are more spiritual opportunities than we realized.

The physical effects have been hinted. They are sometimes, at least, MANIFESTLY harmful. And the body is not unimportant. It belongs to the Lord, and is to express love to Him. Are you encouraging believers to use the body as a living sacrifice (Rom. 12. 1), or do you WONDER if, after all, it is otherwise? It is so delightful to seek to glorify God in the BODY (1 Cor. 6. 20).

But you think "Enough has been said." Then will you go and pray over it, without ANY "wish" to continue or to maintain the point? Permit loving plainness of speech. It is so important for us all to be delivered from ANY "WISH" even in this matter? It is so natural to "wish" not to change. "Giving up" looks like a confession "I was wrong," and it seems humbling, and "people will talk." But at least they will not say you are becoming more worldly, and more unlike Christ. If you bear reproach, it may be His reproach after all (Heb. 12. 12), and that is a treasure (Heb. 11. 26).

I do not want to burden you unduly, but I have sometimes found a strange selfishness as to smoking. I do not only refer to the LAWLESS entry of a NON-smoking railway carriage, but why should a loving child of God sit in front of others on a tram, and puff smoke out of his mouth that blows in their faces? Is this the fulness of courtesy? Some do not like it. But they SAY little. How readily smokers shut windows, and hinder this blowing in THEIR OWN faces. And the smell of smoke remains, as an evidence of the habit. Have you ever sought to hide this? Would an anxious soul specially welcome the earnest dealing of any whose breath and clothing were permeated thereby? Let the man who is TROUBLED over sin indicate whether he would desire the witness from such. Would he be impressed thereby that he was speaking with a man of God who valued Christ more than all earthly things, and who was living, in the Holy Spirit, DEVOTEDLY for Him?

It may be you feel a little "concerned." Do not, dear reader, set aside such a condition. Do not smoke WHILE waiting on God regarding HIS WILL. We agree that "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14. 23), do we not? If, therefore, we persist in anything, may we not hinder the openness of heart which will perceive the loving WILL of the Lord? And in view of His Judgment Seat, when all actions done in (or, literally, through) THE BODY must be dealt with, it is WELL to be concerned (2 Cor. 5. 10). Smoking is manifestly done THROUGH THE BODY: what reward, or what loss, will it bring in the Day when the Lord Jesus comes back?

(The writer desires to record to God's glory that believers with whom he is associated, in the Lord's service, are of one heart against smoking by children of God). Copies of the leaflet from which the above is slightly enlarged gladly sent: applications have been received, and, with thankfulness to God, we reprint. May He have all the glory.

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