

Light Up and Die! : The Smoking Addiction - Part 1

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My Father's Habits, My Opinion Concerning Cigarette Smoking, My First Kiss And Old Furnace Mouth, Selfish Smokers And Do Unto Others, God Lets Us Stew In Our Juice So That We Learn From Our Mistakes And Experiences, Parents And Disciplining Children, A Pit Of Your Own Making, Stubbornly Ignoring The Warnings For Years, The Greedy American Tobacco Industry And The Tobacco Lobby, Statistics Concerning Global Smokers And Mortality Rates, A Quarter Of Your Life Unnecessarily Lost Due To Smoking Habit, Television Cigarette Commercials And Tobacco Industry Icons, A Message To My Christian Brethren, Sitting In The Muck And Mire Of Our Own Rebellion And Sins, Our Body Is The Temple Of God's Holy Spirit, Polluting And Defiling Temple And Sanctuary Of Our Body, Him Shall God Destroy, Turning Our Bodies Into Abominable Things Through Smoking, Glorify God In Your Body, Vices And The Demons Of Addiction, Satan Has Been A Liar And Murderer From The Very Beginning, Ye Shall Not Surely Die, Don't Let Sin Reign In Your Body, Lusting After Cigarettes, Yield Yourself To God, Ugly Agonizing End Of A Smoker's Life, Resist Dominion Of Addiction, Chained Slave To Nicotine Addiction, Fruit Of Your Addiction May Be Death, Paul's Flesh Vs Spirit Battle

As a small number of my longtime friends will know, I have a rather strong opinion when it comes to the issue of smoking. My own father was a heavy smoker while I was growing up over forty years ago. While he at first smoked cigarettes -- Lucky Strikes as I recall -- he later switched to smoking cigars, -- King Edward -- in the erroneous belief that they were not quite as hazardous to his health as cigarettes. My dad would smoke in the house as he watched weekend sports, as well as in the car while he drove us kids to some particular outing. Today, decades later, considering what has been discovered regarding the danger of secondhand smoke, I have found myself looking back and questioning my dad's seeming lack of concern for us kids who were forced to breath in the cigarette smoke in an enclosed environment, such as in the car.

Quite frankly, I consider cigarette smoking to be a dirty, disgusting habit. I do not allow anyone to smoke in my home. Even finding cigarette butts that were discarded by neighbors laying in the doorway outside my front door will perturb me. In fact, I am so sensitive, that just the whiff of cigarette smoke passing through the air can be enough to immediately clog up my sinuses. It is like a natural defense mechanism, or perhaps it is an allergic reaction, I suppose. The stench of cigarette smoke in someone's hair, or on their clothing, utterly repulses me. While they appear to be oblivious to it, having grown accustomed to it, I am most certainly not.

I have shared the story before regarding the first woman who I ever kissed. At that time, I was still a young man in my

early twenties, and totally inexperienced when it came to the opposite sex. Yes, I was a so-called late bloomer. This was due in large part not only to the fact that I was rather shy and introverted, but also to my beliefs as a Christian man. From reading my "Good News for Modern Man" New Testament as a young teenager, I had acquired some very conservative views regarding human sexuality.

At any rate, this woman -- a resident of one of the colonias of Mexico City, D.F. -- took an interest in me. She was the aggressor. Thus, a very brief relationship ensued. She also happened to be a regular smoker. My gosh! It is an experience which I will never forget! I can still recall the shock and disgust I experienced when we became intimate. The taste of cigarette smoke in her mouth, and the numbing sensation which began to occur as a result of what I assume was an apparently high concentration of nicotine inside of her mouth, is quite unforgettable. Not wanting to offend her, I said nothing at the time.

While I can only vaguely recall what this woman looked like, I do remember her first name, even though this event occurred in my life almost forty years ago. However, on the very few occasions when this event has surfaced in my memory, I have preferred to think of her as "Old Furnace Mouth". Some of you smokers may take offense at my designation, but it perfectly describes how I remember this experience from many years ago. No doubt, this experience, as well as my experiences with my dad, my experiences with my neighbors, and other incidents which have involved smokers in elevators, etc., have helped to shape my opinion concerning smokers in general.

Basically, I have formed the opinion that some smokers -- but not all -- are very selfish, inconsiderate, rude people whose only thought is to engage in their filthy habit, regardless of how their actions affect others. One thing is for certain. It is not doing unto others, as Jesus commanded us to do in the following verse:

"And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."
Luke 6:31, KJV

What actually motivated me to write this current article is that two days ago, I was engaged in an online exchange with a friend who is currently endeavoring to kick the nasty smoking habit. As I explained to this individual, some smokers seem to expect God to supernaturally take the desire to smoke away from them. However, personally, I am not convinced that this is how God normally chooses to operate. If He did, not only would we learn very little from our mistakes and experiences, but we might be tempted to adopt the attitude that no matter what we do wrong, there is no need to worry about it, because God will always pull us out of it.

Imagine if we were to operate in the same manner with our own children. By allowing them to believe that we will always be there to bail them out when they make mistakes, not only are we doing them a disservice, but we are asking for trouble. If we choose to operate in this fashion, a young individual may be prone to think "If I get caught speeding, no worry; mom and dad will just pay the fine for me." Or imagine the child

who becomes involved in taking drugs. "Oh, if I get caught smoking this joint, no worry; mom and dad will just call in some favors, pay the fine, and I will be out of this mess." I discuss this same theme in articles such as "Beholding the Evil and the Good". Sometimes, God in fact prefers to let us stew in our own juice for a while, until we really learn the lesson that He is trying to teach us.

At any rate, if you happen to find yourself in the position where you want to stop smoking, please seriously consider the remainder of this article. I hope that it will be a help to you, even if it is somewhat of a hard pill to swallow.

While it may be difficult for some smokers to admit, the simple truth of the matter is that you knowingly dug the pit in which you currently find yourself. No doubt, many of you stubbornly ignored all of the warnings that have appeared on cigarette packages for literally decades now. You purposely ignored warnings that you read and heard elsewhere as well. In some cases, perhaps you also foolishly ignored what you saw happening to some of your acquaintances who are likewise smokers. How many have died from lung cancer, or suffer from other smoking-related illnesses?

Despite the abundance of evidence which has been before your very eyes, you just stubbornly kept on smoking anyway. Maybe it was because you erroneously thought that smoking is cool. Or perhaps you just couldn't resist peer pressure. Or maybe your dependence on your nicotine fix has built a cage around you from which you cannot escape. Whatever the case may be, in a word, you did this to yourself. Now that you need help and realize your error, you expect the Lord to just take away the desire to smoke. As I said, it doesn't quite work that way.

I first discussed this issue in my 1999 fourteen-part series entitled "Fulfilled Prophecy: The Beginning of Sorrows". In that particular series, I expose the greedy machinations of the American tobacco industry and the powerful tobacco lobby, which even today continue to reap great financial rewards at the expense of millions of addicted American citizens. While the following information is somewhat dated, nevertheless, it helps to expose the extent of the problem. I extracted this information from the World Health Organization website when I wrote the original version of the aforementioned series:

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About Tobacco and Treatment

* Tobacco use is widespread. At the beginning of this decade at least one-third of the global adult population, or 1.1 billion people, used tobacco. Although overall tobacco use is decreased in many developed countries, it increased in most developing countries. An estimated 48% of men and 7% of women in developing countries smoked; in industrialized countries, 42% of men and 24% of women smoked, representing a marked increase among women. Tobacco use is a pediatric epidemic, as well. Most tobacco use starts during childhood and adolescence.

* Tobacco kills. A long-term tobacco user has a 50% chance

of dying prematurely from tobacco-caused disease. Each year, tobacco causes some 4 million premature deaths, with 1 million of these occurring in countries that can least afford the health-care burden. This epidemic is predicted to kill 250 million children and adolescents who are alive today, a third of whom live in developing countries. By the year 2030, tobacco likely will be the world's leading cause of death and disability, killing more than 10 million people annually and claiming more lives than HIV, tuberculosis, maternal mortality, motor vehicle accidents, suicide, and homicide combined.

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As I mentioned earlier, despite the fact that most people are aware to some degree of the dangerous health hazards which are associated with inhaling cigarette smoke, and using other tobacco-related products, a November 1999 CNN report clearly indicated that just as the WHO report had stated, this global addiction is on the rise, and millions of people continue to cut their lives short needlessly. Consider the following:

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More People Smoking Despite Known Health Risks

(CNN) -- Thursday is the American Cancer Society's "Great American Smoke Out," a day smokers around the country are encouraged to kick the habit. Despite millions of dollars in state spending for anti-smoking campaigns, more adults and teens are smoking now than in the early 1990s.

In 1991, 28 percent of high school age teen-agers said they had smoked in the past month. By 1997, the most recent figures available, that number jumped to 36 percent. And young adults aren't doing much better. Smoking among 18 to 24 year-olds has increased from 25 percent in 1990 to 29 percent in 1997

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Another report that was issued almost two decades ago in 1993 further reveals the extent of the problem. What I find most alarming is the fact that it states that people who smoke lose an average of twenty to twenty-five years of non-smoker life expectancy. It is crazy! Is losing a quarter or more of your life worth your foolish habit?

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Human Resources Development and Operations Policy
HRO Dissemination Notes
Number 1, February, 1993

Added to all the most fearsome plagues (the Black Death, smallpox, malaria, and tuberculosis), a man-made plague -- diseases resulting from the smoking, chewing and snuffing of tobacco -- is now the leading scourge of the twentieth century. But unlike most microbial plagues, damage to the human body from cigarettes progresses slowly. Approximately five trillion cigarettes are produced each year, or 1,000 cigarettes for each man, woman, and child on earth.

Worldwide, consumption is increasing about 2% per year, with the greatest rise occurring in the developing countries and eastern Europe. China is the world's leading consumer of cigarettes (31%), followed by the United States (10%), Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (7%), and Japan (6%). Fifty-two percent of cigarettes are consumed in Asia.

Hazards of Tobacco

Tobacco is highly addictive: studies of people who have smoked for many years show grossly higher death rates among smokers than among non-smokers. Most of this excess mortality is caused by tobacco. Overall, more than one-third of all regular cigarette smokers, many of these still in middle age, will be killed by the habit. Smokers lose an average of 20-25 years of non-smoker life expectancy. Tobacco also causes excess morbidity. Up to 14% of all preterm deliveries in the U.S. may be attributable to maternal smoking. Children whose parents smoke experience more respiratory symptoms and have an increased frequency of bronchitis and pneumonia.

Magnitude of the Hazard

The annual global tobacco death toll is already about three million -- about 1 million in developing countries -- and will rise to more than ten million by the 2020s according to current trends. Most of this increase will occur in developing countries. Of all the people aged under 20 alive today in China, 50 million will die prematurely from tobacco. For men, the epidemic of premature death from tobacco has already become substantial in all developed countries. The death rates in middle-aged men from all causes are especially high in eastern Europe, one major reason for this being tobacco.

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When I was a young teenager, it was still permissible to air cigarette commercials on the television set. Looking back at that time, it is nothing short of mind-boggling to observe how many people allowed themselves to be duped and enticed into smoking and chewing lethal tobacco products -- and thus gradually filling their lungs with tar, and encouraging the growth of cancerous cells -- through deceptive advertising campaigns which promoted such industry icons as the "macho" Marlboro Man, the supposedly "graceful" Virginia Slim, and the idiotic "cool" Joe Camel. It would be ludicrous, if it was not so tragic. Have you allowed a fictitious character to take a huge chunk out of your life?

I honestly do not expect anything I say in this article to have an effect on the children of the world who smoke. After all, if decades of official warnings haven't turned the tide and woken up people, why should my words? However, it is my hope that at least some of my own Christian brethren will sit up and take heed to what I am sharing in this article. It is my hope that this discussion will speak to your heart, and perhaps give you the strength and the conviction to do what needs to be done, so that you can extend your life for His glory.

As I noted earlier, it is my personal belief that sometimes

the Lord purposely allows us to stew in our own juice, just as any wise parent will do when a child repeatedly fails to take heed to parental warnings regarding some unacceptable or dangerous behavior. As I explain in "Beholding the Evil and the Good", sometimes, this is the only way that certain stubborn people will learn their lesson; but experience can be a very tough and unmerciful teacher.

At any rate, the Lord may allow us to sit in the muck and the mire of our own rebellion, sins and mistakes for a while so that we get a good dose of it. He symbolically shoves our face in it as if to say "Now is this really what you want, oh foolish, rebellious child?" In other words, through your current battle with smoking cigarettes, perhaps the Lord is trying to teach you an important lesson. While the children of the world may never stop to consider or even care what God thinks about their filthy habit, as a Bible-believing Christian, you are held to a higher standard, and you should consider how the Lord views your smoking addiction. God gave you a wonderful, healthy body to enjoy, and to use for His glory. Furthermore, the Apostle Paul informs us that our physical body is the temple of God's Holy Spirit, as we see by the following verses:

"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."
1 Corinthians 3:16-17, KJV

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."
1 Corinthians 6:19-20, KJV

Wow! Notice Paul's stiff warning in the first set of verses. "Him shall God destroy" Paul writes. That one warning alone should really be enough to sober up any Christian who is a smoker. What if God were to simply allow cancer to take your body due to your foolish rebellion? Whose fault would it be? In the Book of Daniel, we discover the following prophecy which concerns an event that occurs near the end of the prophetic age:

"And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate."
Daniel 11:31, KJV

While the previous verse is actually describing a certain leader and his army -- or arms -- who desecrate the Temple in Jerusalem, remove the Daily Sacrifice, and set up the Abomination of Desolation, in a symbolic sense, through your filthy smoking habit, you have turned around and knowingly disrespected your body, as well as polluted the temple, or sanctuary, of the Holy Spirit; that is, your body. We find another symbolic parallel in the following verse that is found in the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah:

"And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the

fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination."
Jeremiah 2:7, KJV

While the previous verse is actually describing how the Lord brought the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob into the land of Israel, and gave it to them for an inheritance, only to have them turn around and pollute and defile the land with pagan worship, child sacrifice, and other evil practices that greatly displeased and angered the Lord, at the same time, we can symbolically view this land as our bodies of clay. After all, as we read in the Book of Genesis:

"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."
Genesis 2:7, KJV

Now isn't that interesting: Jeremiah 2:7 and Genesis 2:7. So you see, God gave you life when He brought your spirit into the "land" of your body of flesh to enjoy, and to serve and glorify Him. However, by indulging in your smoking habit, you have turned around and abused and defiled your land; that is, your body. You have made the heritage which you received from the Lord -- again, your body of clay -- a dirty, abominable thing in His sight. You have filled your lungs with tar and other poisons and foreign pollutants. In the previous verse we read from the Book of Jeremiah, the word "abomination" is derived from the Hebrew word "towebah". This word refers to a disgusting, abominable, unclean thing. So as I said, you have polluted and defiled your temple which houses your spirit, and turned it into an unclean thing.

You will recall that in his first Epistle to the brethren at Corinth, the Apostle Paul wrote "therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." Later on in that same Epistle he reiterates the same point by saying the following:

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."
1 Corinthians 10:31, KJV

Obviously, by smoking, you are not glorifying God. In fact, you are not glorifying self either. You are actually slowly killing yourself.

While to some people smoking cigarettes -- or cigars for that matter -- is viewed as a physical habit and one of the many "pleasures" of this life, it is my belief that whether it is drinking, smoking, taking drugs or any other vice, whether we realize it or not -- and most people don't -- we are actually allowing ourselves to become enslaved by a deceptive demon of addiction. That demon just rides our backs as we slowly kill ourselves through our own foolish and irresponsible behavior. You may recall that in John chapter eight, Jesus clearly said that the Devil is a liar and a murderer. He has been killing people -- both physically and spiritually -- since the very beginning of the world. Consider this verse:

"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and

abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."
John 8:44, KJV

As I explain in other articles, that subtle serpent and demon of darkness pronounced a sentence of death on the first pair -- Adam and Eve -- when he purposely lied to them by saying "Ye shall not surely die." -- Genesis 3:4. As we all know, he told them the exact opposite of the truth. Satan's demons of addiction do the very same thing. They likewise lie to people and provoke them to slowly kill themselves through their own addictions. "Oh, just try it once. It is lots of fun. Doing this will make you cool, and you will have lots of friends. It won't kill you. You can stop at any time. Oh, come on now. Don't be a wimp!" Have you foolishly listened to these lies?

In the sixth chapter of the Apostle Paul's Epistle to the brethren at Rome, we find the following interesting verses:

"Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness."
Romans 6:9-19, KJV

Please notice that Paul writes "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." This is exactly what you are doing. Sin -- which is breaking, violating or transgressing God's Laws -- does reign in your body; and because it does, you are obeying the lusts of your body, exactly as Paul writes. Because of your uncontrollable nicotine fix, your body is in fact physically and mentally lusting after cigarettes. How often and how many do you smoke a day? One pack? Two packs? More? Do you think that you are addicted?

However, rather than obey the lusts of our flesh, what does Paul advise us to do? He writes "but yield yourselves unto God". It is as simple as that. Instead of yielding to your demonic addiction, what you really need to do is yield to God's Spirit and strive to kick your habit, regardless of

what it takes. To do otherwise is to slowly kill yourself; and the very end will not be pretty. As my very own father informed me regarding one of my cousins who was a longtime smoker who died in recent years, a death from lung cancer can be very slow, very agonizing, and very ugly. The Apostle James offers us similar advice when he writes the following:

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."
James 4:7, KJV

The Apostle Paul then continues by saying "for sin shall not have dominion over you". To reiterate, that is exactly what has happened to you. The sin of addiction has in fact taken dominion over you. Furthermore, you have yielded to it for so long, that now that you want to resist it, and break your smoking habit, you are finding it extremely difficult to do. Your flesh is rebelling and shouting "No! No! Give me more nicotine, give me more!"; but God's Spirit within is saying, "You really need to stop smoking before you kill yourself."

Paul then continues with "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey". As we have already seen, this is precisely what occurs to smokers such as yourself. You have in fact become the very servant -- or more accurately stated, slave, from the Greek word "doulos" -- to your nicotine and cigarette addiction. You no longer have control over it, it has complete control over you. Your nicotine addiction has you tightly bound in chains. Have you in fact become a literal chain smoker?

Notice that Paul uses the phrase "the infirmity of your flesh". Because you have yielded yourself to this demon of addiction, you have in fact become infirm -- or sick -- in the flesh, and it will only continue to get a lot worse, the longer that you continue to smoke, until you reach an ugly end. Is that what you really want? Do you really want to continue to fill up your lungs with tar and other poisons? Do you have a suicidal death wish? Do you honestly want to cut your life short by possibly twenty-five per cent?

Paul then states "for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness". As we have already seen, this is precisely what you need to do now. You need to resist Satan and his demons -- particularly his demon of addiction -- and yield yourself to God. You need to sanctify your body unto the Lord, and remember that it is the temple of His Spirit, which is meant to be used for His honor and glory. Paul concludes by saying the following:

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."
Romans 6:23, KJV

While the Apostle Paul is obviously speaking of Eternal Life versus death in the previous verse, as we have already seen, in a very real, physical sense, the wages -- or fruit -- of your sin of the flesh -- that is, addiction -- may also very well be a premature, painful death. Do you really want that to occur? Isn't it time for you to stand up and resist Satan

and his demon of addiction and take back the reins of your life? Or are you just going to go quietly into the night and be another victim of smoking and lung cancer? Will you be just one more sad statistic in someone's annual report?

As I point out in other articles, the Apostle Paul was by no means a stranger to these personal battles between the flesh and the spirit. It is not surprising then that in the very next chapter he writes the following:

"For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."
Romans 7:14-25, KJV

Does that sound familiar? Is that how you feel? Do you tell yourself "I really need to stop smoking", and then just do the exact opposite? In his own rhetorical question, Paul then asks "who shall deliver me?" Are you asking yourself the very same question? "Who shall deliver me from this smoking habit that is slowly killing me?" Paul provides us with a clear answer when he writes "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Please go to part two for the conclusion of this article.

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Light Up and Die! : The Smoking Addiction - Part 2

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Smoking Does Not Mean That We Are Not Saved, Our Salvation Is Based On God's Grace And Faith In Jesus And Not On Good Works, Sin Unto Death, All Sins Are Forgivable Except For Blasphemy Against The Holy Ghost, Role Of Holy Spirit, Sins

Worse Than Smoking, God Does Not Seem To View All Sins The Same, Different Punishments For Different Sins In The OT, Being Poor Christian Examples, Don't Stumble And Offend The Brethren By Your Selfish Habits, Be Christ-Like Instead, Poor Choices And Digging Our Own Pit, We Reap What We Sow, Fight For The Victory, Spirit Of Repentance And Desperate Prayer, Confess Sins, Get Your Heart Right With The Lord, Conviction Of God's Spirit, Renewed Relationship With God, Lifelong Battles Against The Flesh, Desperate And Humble, Satan's Web Of Addiction, Ye Have Not Yet Resisted Unto Blood, A Choice Before You, Closing Remarks, Reading List

A few hours after I sent a brief, private response to the person who had messaged me on my Facebook page, he posted a message on my timeline. In it, he expressed concern that he might not be truly saved, or a real Christian, because of the fact that he smokes. As I briefly pointed out to him, it is my belief that whether or not a person smokes has absolutely no bearing on the status of their Salvation. After all, as I amply explain in other articles, our Salvation is not based upon our own works in the flesh; it is based on our faith in the Atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Being as this topic is discussed at length in these other articles, I will not be addressing it fully here. However, allow me to share just a few verses for your consideration:

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."
Ephesians 2:8-9, KJV

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;"
Titus 3:5, KJV

"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."
Romans 11:6, KJV

In short, it is my view that to add any other conditions or requirements to our Salvation other than simple faith in the Atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, is to convert it from a faith that is based solely on the Grace of God alone through faith in Christ, to a religion and faith that is based on personal supposedly "good" works. This is wrong, and likewise contrary to what the Scriptures actually teach us. Either the Blood Sacrifice of Christ is enough, or else it isn't. If it is not, as some people erroneously believe, then truly, Jesus died in vain. This I do not believe or accept. Please refer to some of my other articles for a more in-depth explanation regarding this topic.

As we have already seen, an individual who smokes is indeed sinning against their own body, and displeasing the Lord as well. Quite possibly, they may likewise be shortening their own life span. However, personally, I am not convinced that smoking can or should be classified as what the Apostle John refers to as "a sin unto death". Consider these verses:

"If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death."

1 John 5:16-17, KJV

It is evident from the Scriptures -- and particularly from Jesus' own teachings -- that all sins -- including smoking -- are forgivable, except for one. That one sin is what the Lord refers to as blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Consider the following verses:

"Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men."

Matthew 12:31, KJV

Exactly what is meant by blasphemy against the Holy Ghost? As I explain in such articles as "The Judgment of Angels, Demons and Men", "Beholding the Evil and the Good" and "Love, Mercy, Forgiveness and Chastisement", it is my personal belief that the Holy Ghost -- or Holy Spirit -- is the extension of God the Father Himself. I believe that it is the very essence of His Being. It is His Presence in some intangible form. It is a Creative Force and a Power which proceeds from the Central Throne of God Almighty, which miraculously creates, heals and empowers those people who are touched by, or filled with it.

The Holy Spirit is the same Force and Power which was present at the moment of Creation, and it is the same Force and Power which resided within the very body of Jesus Christ during His Earthly Ministry. Furthermore, it is also the same Force and Power which can dwell within a saved Christian, according to God's Divine Purposes. The Holy Ghost is also our Comforter and Teacher. Consider the following verses which confirm all of these points:

"And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

Genesis 1:2, KJV

"The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life."

Job 33:4, KJV

"And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

Luke 1:35, KJV

"And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:"

Matthew 3:16, KJV

"For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him."

John 3:34, KJV

"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."
Colossians 2:9, KJV

"But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you."
Matthew 12:28, KJV

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."
John 14:26, KJV

"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:"
John 15:26, KJV

"For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ."
Romans 15:18-19, KJV

So, because the Holy Spirit is an extension of the Father, it is my view that to blaspheme the Holy Ghost is the same as blaspheming the Father too. But exactly how is it that a person blasphemes against the Holy Ghost? Because it is the Spirit of Truth, it bears testimony to the fact that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God who was born in the flesh, and who died for the sins of the world. To call this truth a lie is to blaspheme against the Holy Ghost, and thus call God a liar. In my view, this is why Jesus informs us that it is the one unpardonable sin.

While smoking is an ugly, distasteful habit, and likewise a sin against one's own body which can ultimately lead to a premature death, I do believe that there are other worse sins. For example, the Bible very much condemns pride and arrogance, stubbornness, homosexuality, adultery, causing division amongst the brethren, etc. Some people erroneously believe that all sins are viewed the same by God. They say "Sin is sin". However, personally, as I have just pointed out, I am not convinced that this is so.

While I can agree that all sins are wrong, God in fact makes distinctions between different kinds of sins. If, as this doctrine states, all sins are the same to God, then it does not make sense that God would have Moses prescribe different punishments for different sins in the Mosaic Law of the Old Testament. In other words, the Israelites would have simply had one universal punishment for all sins, if all sins are truly viewed as being the same. Obviously, this is not the way it was whatsoever. The fact that Jesus states that all sins are forgivable except for blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and John writes that there are sins which are not sins unto death, proves this very point.

While I honestly do not believe that a person can lose their Salvation because they smoke -- as my friend feared -- I do believe that in addition to being destructive to our own bodies, and potentially harmful to other people due to the secondhand smoke, another reason why the Lord would find it offensive is because it is being a very poor example to our Christian brethren, as well as to the children of the world. How can we claim to be yielded servants of the Lord when we are openly and blatantly defiling and polluting the temple that He gave us to live in? In Paul's first Epistle to the Thessalonian brethren, he writes the following:

"Abstain from all appearance of evil."
1 Thessalonians 5:22, KJV

While you may possibly disagree with this point of view, it seems to me that smoking could fall under the jurisdiction of this verse. An even more applicable set of verses would be the fourteenth chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, where he discusses eating certain foods, observing certain feast days, and doing other things which certain brethren might find objectionable, and thus cause them to stumble and fall away from the faith. Paul's overall advice is that if we are truly motivated by love, and are being led by the Lord's Spirit, then even if we believe that it is acceptable to do a certain thing, we should not do it if other brethren will be offended by it. Consider the following key verses which summarize these thoughts:

"Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin. We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me."
Romans 14:19-15:3, KJV

As you can see, even though we may believe that we have the spiritual freedom to do certain things, Paul emphasizes that for the sake of the brethren, we should not do them, and "not to please ourselves" but rather "please his neighbour for his good to edification. As Paul concludes, "Christ pleased not himself". Clearly then, even if you personally believe that it is okay for a Christian to smoke, nevertheless, it is a selfish act if others are offended by your actions. It is not being Christ-like.

As I explained earlier in this article, if you are a smoker, then you must be willing to admit -- at least to the Lord and to yourself -- that you are in your current predicament as a result of your own poor choices. Therefore, because you repeatedly chose to ignore the Lord's warnings regarding the dangers of smoking cigarettes year after year, He may not be

too eager to provide you with an easy, painless victory, and a quick, supernatural deliverance as you now desire. I am reminded of the following verse that is found in the Book of Proverbs:

"Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him."
Proverbs 26:27, KJV

The lesson which is revealed in the previous verse finds its companion in the following verse that is found in the Apostle Paul's Epistle to the Galatian brethren:

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."
Galatians 6:7, KJV

Thus, because of your rebellion against the Lord; because you willingly and knowingly polluted your temple for such a long time, the Lord may want you to really fight in order to obtain the victory. You need to demonstrate seriousness and conviction in your heart that you truly desire to be freed from your smoking habit. If you are viewing this as just a smoking problem as any worldly person would do, then you may not get anywhere. You need to let God's Spirit convict you of sin. You need to realize that you have offended the Lord by your foolish behavior, polluted the holy temple of your body which He has given you, and done great harm not only to yourself, but possibly to others as well. In other words, you need a true spirit of repentance. You need to truly be desperate with the Lord, and cry out to Him for His Help. That is what the Lord wants to see. Consider the following verses which demonstrate examples of desperate prayer:

"In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live. Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, saying, I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore. And it came to pass, afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying, Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the LORD. And I will add unto thy days fifteen years; and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake."
2 Kings 20:1-6, KJV

"And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die. And Nathan departed unto his house. And the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick. David therefore besought God for the child;

and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth. And the elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead? But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead. Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat. Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."
2 Samuel 12:13-23, KJV

"In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live. Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, And said, Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore. Then came the word of the LORD to Isaiah, saying, Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years. And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city."
Isaiah 38:1-6, KJV

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."
Psalms 51:10, KJV

"Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."
Luke 18:10-14, KJV

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your

hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."
James 4:7-10, KJV

As the previous verses demonstrate, one of the first steps to obtaining victories in our lives is to get our hearts right with the Lord. We need to confess our sins before Him and repent. As I said earlier, you cannot be double-minded about this. You need to really get desperate, and be serious about wanting a victory over your smoking habit. You simply cannot approach this problem and sin half-heartedly, because it could end up meaning a shortened life. Once you actually experience the conviction of God's Spirit working on your heart, and realize the gravity of your sin, it may be easier for you to stop smoking and obtain the victory, because you will have the right motivation to do so. It won't be just about trying to stop smoking; it will be about renewing your relationship with the Lord, and regaining His favor.

While I obviously do not know the Lord's Will for your life, it is possible that He could give you a quick victory. This is not to say that you will never be tempted to smoke again, but God will give you the strength and the Grace to resist it. After all, fighting against the sins of our flesh is a lifelong battle. They are what help to keep us humble and desperate before the Lord. As we also read in Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians:

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."
1 Corinthians 10:13, KJV

Just remember that old habits die hard, and the old man of the flesh is not going to surrender so easily, exactly as the Apostle Paul points out in his Epistle. Neither is that demon of addiction who has afflicted you for so long. As I mentioned earlier, Satan purposely makes it easy to become ensnared in his web of addiction. It doesn't matter whether our sin is smoking, drinking, doing drugs, pornography, or anything else. It is only when we decide to rid ourselves of these vices that we discover that getting out is not nearly as easy as it was to become involved with them in the first place. Our appetite has become perverted, and we only want more. I am reminded of the following verses that are found in the Epistle to the Hebrews:

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin."
Hebrews 12:1-4, KJV

Paul writes that we must "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us", and that we must keep our eyes on Jesus so that we do not become "wearied and faint in [our] minds". But notice how he concludes those verses: "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." Jesus strove against sin all the way to the Cross. He shed His own Blood for our sakes. Your personal battle against your smoking addiction is rather minimal by comparison, even though it may not appear to you that way now.

Perhaps this is the message that the Lord wanted you to hear today. Perhaps it will give you the motivation that you need in order to get serious with the Lord. He has a victory for you, but you must reach out and take it. You have a choice. Either you can continue to be stubborn and rebellious; you can continue to light up and eventually die; or else you can get smart, begin to yield yourself and your will to God, and live. The choice is really up to you. He won't force you to do this. If you do obtain a victory over your smoking habit, and if the Lord does give you more years as He did with King Hezekiah, I pray that you will truly use your extra time for His glory. Otherwise, they will have been a waste of the Lord's efforts.

Before concluding this article, allow me to emphasize that while it has dealt with the issue of smoking, the points and lessons I have shared here can also be equally applied to any other dangerous and addictive behavior; whether it is drinking alcoholic beverages, taking drugs, watching and reading pornography, or any other activity which is harmful to the mind and body. As I said, it does not matter to Satan what form our addictions take. All that matters to him is that we are addicted, and that the addiction eventually kills us, or at least prevents us from effectively serving the Lord. As I point out in one of the graphics I made for my Facebook timeline, Satan's offer is "Choose your poison":

<http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=370647249678239&set=a.110266195716347.16212.100001989026091&type=3&theater>

In conclusion, my earnest hope is that you have made the wise choice to stop smoking. In so doing, not only are you helping yourself, but you will be helping your loved ones as well; particularly if you are married and have children. With these thoughts I will bring this article to a close. I hope that you have found it informative, and I pray that it has been a blessing and an inspiration in your life.

If you have enjoyed reading this article, please consider sharing its URL with your online friends. If you have an account with Facebook, Twitter or Google+, I would also appreciate if you would take the time to click on the corresponding link that is found on this page. Thanks so much, and may God bless you abundantly!

For additional information, you may want to refer to the list of reading resources below which were also mentioned in this article, or which are related to this article, and which are likewise located on the Endtime Prophecy Net web server:

Beholding the Evil and the Good
Fulfilled Prophecy: The Beginning of Sorrows
Love, Mercy, Forgiveness and Chastisement
The Battle is Not Yours Alone!
The Judgment of Angels, Demons and Men
The Lord Will Lift You Up!

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