



James warned, "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment" (Jas. 3:1). Likewise, Jesus also warned, "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment" (Matt. 12:35, 36). Facebook has unfortunately become the place where several think they can publish foolishness to the world and safely avoid scrutiny. Publications on Facebook are not off limits to investigation and criticism. It is treacherous for one to create smokescreens to cloud and confuse any issue of truth. Tobacco use is no different.

The Many Gray Areas In Religion?

I recently read one article, which was published on Facebook and sent to me by a friend, where Neal Abbott called down those who condemn smoking as being "modern Pharisees." His entire article is supplied at the bottom of this article, that the reader may have access to it. This also safeguards against the tool that many false teachers use to further confuse people. When they are exposed they often revert to, "I was taken out of context." His article serves as a typical example of taking something that is rather clear and confusing it with unqualified and poorly thought out idle words and arguments. Brother Abbott admitted that he was not saying that smoking is okay and prefers to call it a "gray area." Yet it is anything but "gray" for him to condemn those who believe it is not a "gray area." For Brother Abbott, the act which condemns smoking is actually worse than the act of smoking. While becoming addicted to a poisonous drug is only a "gray area," condemnation of such firmly places one in the camp that is altogether Pharisaical and, in the words of Brother Abbott, "dingbattery"! One wonders who gave him the authority to make this "gray area" ruling for the church as well as the clarity to judge that "there are plenty of gray areas and matters of opinion on religious matters." Is this not also an act of being Pharisaical? Ironically, many of those who, along with Brother Abbott, subscribe to many "matters of opinion on religious matters" have been guilty of advocating their "opinions" in a very loud fashion in the church and have been guilty of various dissensions, thus violating Titus 3:10, 11. Brother Abbott was not interested in answering the question, "Is it a sin to smoke tobacco?" Let the reader see that he never answered it and used no Scriptural framework to rebuke the writer but rather leaned on outlandish arguments.

Addicted To Air?

Nevertheless, in his post which condemns the condemner, he seeks to exonerate smoking by claiming we are addicted to air. Is this also only an opinion? One ought to wonder if this is not a case of "dingbattery." Perhaps our friend will explain how being created with the "breath of life" is dependent upon smoking drugs (Gen. 2:7). How exactly does air equate with nicotine? I've only seen it relate by the restriction of air (in causing lung cancer and emphysema) and not the promotion of air. It has obviously not occurred to him that simply because something can be consumed or smoked doesn't mean it is permissible or even wise to do such. The tree of knowledge, which God created, was edible, but that doesn't mean it was permissible to eat from (Gen. 2:9, 17). I wonder if Adam and Eve could have used the "air" argument to God to justify their consumption of what was illegal.

Coffee And Sodas?

The author further justifies smoking by seeking a feeble attempt to parallel coffee and sodas. Does our friend not understand that coffee and soda are not lethal and do not come with a Surgeon General's warning that consuming such "Causes Lung Cancer, Heart Disease, Emphysema..."? Is this "dingbattery"?

Christianity Also Shortens Your Life?

Likewise, in justifying the abbreviated life expectancy which smoking causes, our friend further goes in the defense of "King Nicotine" by asserting, "Being a Christian can shorten your life..." Really? Should the New Testament also have a Surgeon General's warning that becoming a Christian causes Lung Cancer, Heart Disease, etc. Is this really comparing "apples to apples"? Is it not rather altogether insulting to equate smoking a filthy weed—which was never designed to be consumed and one that corrupts the faculties of the body—with the decision to give full allegiance to the word of God and to follow Jesus Christ? Is this an argument of "dingbattery"? Does living for Jesus require that we practice rules and follow sound judgment? "Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts" (Rom. 13:13, 14). Living for King Nicotine is, on the other hand, making provisions for the flesh to fulfill its lusts!

Your Body Is Not The Temple Of God?

It was also asserted by Brother Abbott in his Facebook post that what is done with the physical body is of very little concern. He wrote, "Listen closely, our physical human bodies are not temples. The body which is the temple is the body of believers...the church." He then makes the suggestion that if Christians are temples, arguing against "harming the body" would make smoking not a sin for non Christians. The logic is twisted, to say the least, and would result in the possibility of defiling the temple only if every single Christian in the church engaged in sin. "Who would believe it?" Yet the teaching of Scripture is clear. The phrase "your body" along with the "your spirit" in 1 Corinthians 6:19 is referencing our physical bodies as it is tied to "his own body" and the sin of fornication in 1 Corinthians 6:18. The church is the temple, but our bodies are also temples of God as well as living stones of His temple, and we are to seek to keep them blameless (1 Thess. 5:23; 1 Pet. 2:5). Even if we concede the argument that "only the church is the temple," it doesn't help his position to justify smoking. In talking about the church/body, Paul said, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are" (1 Cor. 3:16, 17). Paul warned the individual in speaking of the collective body, "If anyone defiles the temple." Yes, *one* can defile the temple. This is why the church at Corinth was to practice discipline upon the guilty fornicator, so that he and his influence would be "taken away," for a "little leaven leavens the whole lump" (1 Cor. 5:2, 6).

Many Modern Pharisees Are Among Us?

What then about the charge of being modern Pharisees? We do not find ourselves depressed when men speak evil and assert false charges against us (Matt. 5:11). Rather, we wear such as a badge of honor. But who is the Pharisee of Holy Scripture?

1. It is the Pharisee who honored God with his mouth but not his heart (Mk. 7:6). Parading love by saying "I love you" is not the same as loving (Jn. 14:21; 2 Jn. 1:6)! The Pharisees actually lived in duplicity by saying and yet, not doing (Matt. 23:3). People often say how much they love God and love others, but what is their manner of obedience and service? Is sarcastically mocking a brother as "a real genius" or referring to him as a "dingbat" an act of love?
2. We also see the Pharisee taught the commandments of men and laid aside the commandments of God, making the word of God without effect (Mk. 7:7, 8, 13). Is reducing Biblical teaching against sin to a "gray area" not making the word of God of no effect?
3. It is the Pharisee who also condemned the innocent while justifying the guilty (Matt. 12:7). If smoking tobacco is as innocent as eating the heads of grain, then condemning its use would be Pharisaical (Lk. 6:1, 2). However, if the recreational use of this drug (or any drug for that matter) is a sin, then who is

the real Pharisee? Is it the one who exposes it as a work of the flesh by relating and applying the Spirit's word "*φαρμακεια*" (pharmakeia, see Gal. 5:20)? This word is defined by scholars such as Joseph Henry Thayer as "the use or the administering drugs" and also "poisoning" (Gal. 5:20).¹ Is the real Pharisee the one who condemns the innocent or the one who exposes the sin? Was Paul writing as a Pharisee or as an apostle of Jesus Christ when he penned Galatians 5:19–21, in listing the works of the flesh and reminding us to denounce even the things that were "like" infractions?

Dear Reader, this material is made available in the hopes that if you are given to the consumption of tobacco that you would soberly consider this material and your soul. Your health, influence, and eternity are not worth losing over this habit-forming drug. While it can seem nearly impossible to break away from such an addiction, please know that many have overcome this evil. With prayer, godly determination, and surrounding yourself with godly influence, you can break away too.

—Steven J. Wallace

Extra material may be found here: www.revelationandcreation.com/tobacco_use.html

Neal Abbott's "Smokescreen" on Facebook

Is it a sin to smoke tobacco? I just read something by one of today's many modern Pharisees who like to make up rules for others and then try to find something in the Bible for it, of course, he condemned it. I'm not saying it's okay, but this is one of the many things it is up to the individual to study for themselves and live conscientiously. Believe it or not, there are plenty of gray areas and matters of opinion on religious matters.

The fella actually argued we can't smoke because Jesus never did. That's the level of dingbattery we're dealing with. He said it's addicting (note, not addictive, but addicting—a real genius). Uh, caffeine much? He won't condemn coffee or sodas, but tobacco because it is addicting. Did you know air is addicting? I can't live without it! The writer condemned smoking because it's costly. And outside every church meeting place there are pickup trucks three stories tall and German luxury cars. We spend more church funds on larger bathrooms and smoothing the parking lot than we do benevolence, and we want to condemn a smoker for how they spend their money?

The biggest argument seemed to be about life and health. It shortens your life, according to the arguer. Guess what? Being a Christian can shorten your life, especially in the first century Roman Empire or parts of the Middle East and Africa today. Will someone say being a Christian is a sin because it could shorten your life? Of course, he gave no proof than shortening your life is a sin, but said smoking is a sin because it shortens your life. And then the big one, it harms the physical body, which is the temple of the Spirit, and if you harm the temple, you sin (1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19–20). Listen closely, our physical human bodies are not temples. The body which is the temple is the body of believers, in other words, the church. But for those who say smoking is a sin because it destroys the temple, consider this. Is every person a temple or just Christians? Clearly only Christians could ever be called temples. So that means it is not a sin for non-Christians to smoke. Believe it if you can, but it's non-sense.

There are plenty of black and white issues in the Bible. There is no need to create laws on God's behalf. I'm not saying smoking is right or wrong, but that it is something we need to study for ourselves. And don't let these Pharisees bully you. They think they know what they're talking about, but it's all piffle. Remember, God loves you and so do I!

¹ See Strong's number 5331.