

PRONOUNCEMENT

Tobacco

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INTRODUCTION

Nicotine is the substance found in tobacco. This substance can be addictive if used constantly. In this paper we shall look at the Christian perspective on the abuse of this substance, but we are also going to look into the social and medical implications.

This will require critical investigation into textual evidence in relation to this discussion. We also need to be critical of positions that are assumed as right. Ultimately we will have to come to a conclusion of the results of this investigation.

TOBACCO: BIBLICAL EVIDENCE

No biblical evidence can be found that rejects the use of tobacco as sinful. Pentecostals tend to turn to I Corinthians 6:19 for help in this regard. However, there is no direct reference to tobacco in this text. One will have to look elsewhere for help.

SOCIETY

Society itself is one of the avenues to turn to with regard to smoking. Pollution and health risk forced governments worldwide to review their policies on smoking. This is especially true of the promotion of tobacco products, in which case advertisement of the products should go hand in hand with health awareness programs on the side of advertising agencies.

Donald A Read, in his work, the concept of health, says that smoking causes lung cancer, chronic bronchitis and emphysema (p123). These conditions are caused by the tar and nicotine in cigarettes. It causes inflammation and the lung tissues lose its elasticity and become overstretched. Evidence also exists, according to Read that smoking in pregnant women leads to the baby being born with less weight than average (p124 - 127).

This clearly illustrates that the society in general realised the sinfulness of smoking in the sense that it is deadly and suicidal. The church as such will have to listen to the plea of society and science and declare smoking sin. But how do we do this? This question leads us to our conclusion which constitutes as hermeneutical possibility.

HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH

With regard to the lack of Biblical evidence regarding tobacco, we can turn to an article by John Christopher Thomas for a possible hermeneutical framework. Thomas, in dealing with controversial question of women, Pentecostals and the Bible, offers a hermeneutical framework based on Acts 15: 1-29:

- In this text the Community of believers struggled with the idea of Gentiles and the Community of God.
- James stood up quoting Amos 9: 11-12, and pointed out that God had chosen the Gentiles to hear the Gospel.
 - The text
 - The community
 - The Holy Spirit

The interesting thing about the choice of a text is that this text was chosen amongst other texts that are negative toward Gentiles. The Community realised that the Holy Spirit worked amongst the Gentiles and this determined the acceptance of the Gentiles into the Community of God.

Amongst the conflicting evidence on the matter James chose a text which was progressive in its outlook to the situation of the Gentiles. The community should also testify to the progressiveness of such evidence and this must be confirmed by the Holy Spirit.

CONCLUSION

In the case of tobacco, the outcry of society against the use of tobacco cannot be ignored by the church. The use of such substance should be declared sinful on textual, social, medical and ethical grounds.

It is clear that moderation is not the solution. Abstinence is clearly the wiser option. The church should treat the biblical evidence in a manner that will see the total uprooting of this evil from society.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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