

LESSON 11

FREEDOM FROM FLESHLY HABITS

Scripture Texts: 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; Ephesians 5:18; Galatians 5:16, 19-21; 1 Corinthians 10:31-32; 1 Peter 2:11



The body of a saved person is the temple of God, and it is his duty to care for it that he may use its strength to serve God. Today we look at three specific things to be shunned because of their harmful effect on the body and soul. All of these habits—tobacco, alcohol and drugs—are harmful to one's self and to others. They injure the body. They dull or derange the mind. They waste money. They destroy one's service to God. They wrong others besides the user. They defile the temple of God. Each of these counts marks these habits as sin.

MEMORY VERSE: *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

John 8:36

Not Our Own

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God—you were purchased by Christ; you are bought with a price (1 Corinthians 7:23; 6:19-20). You belong to Him. **The Spirit of God dwelleth in you**—God once dwelt in the Jewish temple; now He has no temple except men. **If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy**—it is as sacrilegious to defile the body as formerly to defile the temple—**for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are**—each one is held solely responsible for that which dwells in his temple. A Christian must not be a slave to vice. He is the Lord's free man.

Our Only Defense

Ephesians 5:18 And be not drunk with wine—Not only is it foolish to drink alcoholic beverages, it is breaking God's command. It is sin. **Wherein is excess**—excess in drinking more and more as the habit grows, excess in the uncontrolled actions alcohol sets loose. When drunk, people do terrible things they would never do if sober. Man cannot control alcohol; it controls him. It binds; God wants man to be free from all controlling powers but His. **But be filled with the Spirit**—here is the only defense against the outward foes which bind men to fleshly desires. When one is FULL of the Spirit of God there will be no desire to be brought under the power of alcohol (1 Corinthians 6:12).

Have But One Master

Galatians 5:16 We are servants to whatever is master to us. Some are servants to tobacco or drugs or sleeping pills or a number of other things. How can we remain free from these habits? **Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.** Here is complete freedom from all sin, including all habits. Read Romans 8:1-14. To walk in the Spirit means yielding to Christ (studied in earlier lesson). The lusts of the flesh from which we will be free are all sinful desires.

Galatians 5:19-21 Some are named here. Any one of them will keep one out of the **kingdom of God**. Note that

drunkenness is one. The Spirit of God never did, and never will, lead anyone to drink, smoke, or to take drugs.

To the Glory of God

1 Corinthians 10:31 . . . whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. There is no way, by any stretch of the imagination, that one can see God getting glory from his smoking tobacco, drinking alcohol, or using drugs. Any personal habit not glorifying to God must be given up; not slacked off on, or just used occasionally to be sociable, but stopped at once. God has ready help for all who desire to break with sinful habits, but the individual must lay them aside (2 Corinthians 7:1).

1 Corinthians 10:32 Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God. The question of others enters in. Whatever is offensive or injurious to others has no place in a Christian life. Romans 14:21 makes it plain to even a greater degree. The Bible does not mention tobacco, narcotics, and many other things, but it gives the principle to govern us concerning all of them. Galatians 5:21 mentions **and such like**. This covers all things not mentioned in this long list. Alcoholic beverage is mentioned many times in the Bible with warning of its dangers. We may think one drink, one cigarette, or such will not hurt us. This was the attitude of all who ended up bound by fleshly habits. Our example may start another on a disastrous lifetime of sin and sorrow. Or it may shatter another's confidence in us, never to be completely rebuilt. Then our influence for God would be weakened or destroyed. For a saint (who loves souls and God's work above self), this is reason enough to abstain from fleshly habits.

The Evils of Their Use

1 Peter 2:11 Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. Such are alcohol, tobacco, and drug habits; they war against the soul. They belong to Satan's kingdom, not to God's. It is a proven fact that their use shortens life, and we have no right to shorten the life God gave us with which to serve Him. Cigarette smoking makes one a more easy prey to the sellers of drugs. Most all drinkers use tobacco and a large percentage of smokers drink. Tobacco creates a craving that calls for alcohol. The use of strong drink is a worse evil than that of tobacco. Many crimes have been committed because of it. What a cry goes up to God continually from suffering children, ruined homes, and broken bodies because of alcohol!

It has been said many times, "The way I live is no one's business but mine." This comes from a deceived heart. People who use these vices affect all of us directly or indirectly. Tobacco, alcohol, and drugs are injurious to the expectant mother and her child. Some people are so under bondage to habits that they will deprive themselves and their families of life's necessities, or even beg, lie, or steal, to buy them. Alcohol and drugs are the cause of more murders and suicides than any other thing. One under the influence of these is liable to do anything. He has no sense of fear, no sense of right or wrong, no regard for decency. They have such binding power that people would rather die than be without them.

It is said that over forty million dollars a day are spent on cigarettes in this country. If the packages were laid end to end, they would go around the world about thirty times. The cost in extra court expenses, jails, extra police, added welfare expense, and other direct results of these vices is appalling. There is also the matter of fire losses caused by careless smokers, and the added auto insurance rates caused by drunken drivers. These affect all of our lives. These costs far surpass the revenue gained from the tax on alcohol and tobacco.

Worse than either tobacco or alcohol are drugs—often spoken of as "living death." There are many forms of drugs. People become addicted in various ways. Many are started on a downward path by doctors who introduce them to drugs in the form of painkillers or sleeping pills. What a sad ending awaits the great percentage of these dear souls! Drugs and alcohol destroy the reason, inflame the passions, and make beasts out of men and women. Smokers will smoke in the presence of others to whom the smoke is offensive with regard for nothing but their own sinful

pleasure. They carry a stench that rivals a billy goat and they are not ashamed. To be compelled to inhale second-hand tobacco smoke is proven to be as harmful to the nonsmoker as to the smoker. A Christian must not be a slave to anything. He is made free by the **Son**, and is **free indeed**.

The remedy is total abstinence through the power and grace of God. Leave them entirely alone. Keep the home free of them. The Church of God is set against every binding power and must cry out against them in a more effective manner.

JUST A THOUGHT

It is not the last drink or the last cigarette or the last use of drugs that is the fatal one. It is the first one.