

Charles G. Finney:

WHY DO YOU USE TOBACCO?

[continued in next letter--Ed.]

The practice of using tobacco is very general even among professing Christians. Have they any good reason for it?

Now, my Brother, my Sister, if you are in the habit of using tobacco in any way, will you consider yourself as personally addressed by me upon this subject? Please to consider what I now write as written expressly to and for you.

Why do you use tobacco?

In my last letter I showed that every thing is sin in a moral agent, whether he considers it as such or not, for which he has not in his mind a good, that is, a benevolent reason; unless in his honest view it is demanded by the great law of love to God and man.

My Brother, what reasons may I suppose you to have for this practice? In many instances when I have spoken to professed Christians and others, on the subject of their using tobacco, they have promptly replied, I do not consider it sinful. Now the question is not whether you so consider it, but whether it is sinful in fact. Sin is self-indulgence, and that too whether the sinfulness of self-indulgence is considered or not. Suppose I ask you in reply, do you consider the use of tobacco a solemn duty you owe to God and your neighbors? You are a moral agent; whatever you do intelligently must have some moral character. It must be either sinful or holy. It must be done for God, or for the gratification of self. Do you consider it as a duty you owe to God and your neighbor, and do you do it for the sake of promoting the honor of God and the good of the world? Do you think that God would be displeased with you if you should neglect it? If you do not do it as a work of love to God and your neighbor; if you do not act from a regard to the highest good of being in such a sense as to have the solemn conviction upon your mind that it would be sin and displeasing to God for you to neglect it, you sin in using it. Remember this, my brother! You cannot but be aware that tobacco is one of the most virulent and destructive poisons that exists in the whole vegetable kingdom. Do you think it a solemn duty to take poison habitually?

Do you think it your duty to promote by your own example the practice of using tobacco? If you are a Christian you not only ought but you actually do live for the good of the world. Now do you think the use of tobacco to be so important to the rising generation as to feel called upon to use all the influence you possess to extend and perpetuate its use and to render its use universal among men?

Do you desire to live and to die and go down to the grave with the reflection that you have exerted the highest influence in your power to entail this practice upon all future generations? Do you think that future generations will rise up and call you blessed should they read on your tomb stone, "Here lies a man who lived and died in the use of tobacco and did what he could to entail its use upon all future generations?" Will they say to you "Blessed man, how much the world is indebted to him for his self-denying labor of love in doing so much by his self-denying use of tobacco to entail this most blessed and indispensable practice upon all generations"?

Your Brother,

C.G. FINNEY