

Conscience - Part 3

by Dai Patterson

The sermon delves into the complexities of conscience, using the Apostle Paul's transformation to illustrate the journey from misguided beliefs to divine truth and purpose.

Topics: "Evangelism", "Holy Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the concept of persuading others to believe in the Gospel. He questions how one can effectively persuade others and suggests that it is not through logic or argument, but rather through the work of the Holy Spirit. The speaker emphasizes the importance of ministering the Gospel in a way that commends it to the conscience of the listener, causing them to realize their need for salvation. He gives examples of how this ministry can be seen in large conferences or through the preaching of individuals like Evan Roberts. Ultimately, the goal is to see people's eyes opened to the truth of the Gospel and for them to respond and get right with God.

Transcript

I wonder if you're anything at all like me. I used to think as you got older, not that I'm suggesting that I'm old, but as you got older, you became more resilient and more, what's the word, you know, kind of you could handle things and deal with things. Do you know what I've discovered? I can cry at the drop of a hat.

It's the strangest thing. You kind of view yourself as being manly and, you know, you've got it all together and you've passed through the, to use the word that you use, sort of the central mental side of life and you're now somewhat more mature than you used to be and able to, it's not true at all, you know, it's not. I cry at anything.

And I've also discovered that it's not sentimentality. I don't do it because of sentimentality. I think there's something that happens as you get a little older and I never thought I'd ever say praise God for getting older, but I think something happens whereby you can identify in a way you could not before.

And I know that we need young men and young women in church life and all we do and I noticed back at home where I am, we have become a predominantly middle-aged fellowship. I'm so glad my son-in-law and daughter have come back from Australia and joined us and you've got Paul and Sarah with us, they're a young couple and another young couple have recently come and I'm so glad to see youngsters coming and joining us. But there's also something about getting a little older and greyer.

Somebody said to me, last time I saw you was 1980-something and you had black hair. What a cheek. What? That's what you thought too.

You'll have me crying in a moment, you know. I don't know why I said that but I just wanted to say it. I think there's something about being able to just be moved in your heart, not sentimentalising things.

I listened to people praying this morning. I'm aware of something. You and I cannot meet this need, the need of this world.

It's beyond us, it's too great, it's too vast. It's beyond us, beyond us, absolutely beyond us. And yet, I come across, as I read my Bible, there is a God-given ability whereby you and I can reach other men and women.

Let me begin this morning just by reading you something from the testimony of the Apostle Paul. I am going to continue talking about the conscience. This is from the 26th chapter of the book of the Acts of the Apostles.

And this is Paul's defence before King Agrippa. And he says things like this. Let me pick it up in verse 9. So then, I thought to myself.

That's conscience, you know. It doesn't use the word but that's just what it is. It is the thinking within oneself that leads you to a course of action.

And here is a man who declared, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Let me suggest to you that when Paul makes a statement like that, what he was doing, he was doing from a place of genuine honesty and believing that he was right in what he was doing. I say that because if you turn back into the 23rd chapter of this Acts of the Apostles, and Paul is again having to defend himself before the Sanhedrin, the council.

And in the opening verse we read this. And Paul looking intently at the council. I like that little phrase.

Don't you like that? He looked intently at them. I wonder what they did. I wonder if their eyes went up and down and all that.

But he looked intently at them. I remember so many years ago reading the journal of George Fox. If you've never read it, you should read it.

And Fox describes going into a city town somewhere in England. And he arrived on horseback dressed in his leathers. He'd have been a good biker.

He arrived in his leathers. And somebody was kind of walking somewhere in the street, spotted him. And this person ran and ducked under a hedge to escape having to look at him.

And as he ran under the hedge, he said to him, Don't you look at me with those eyes, George Fox. Boy, it must have been something about him that scared him half to death. But he looked intently at the council.

It's nice, don't you think? I wonder whether you ever look at people, really look at them. The eyes tell you an awful lot. The eyes have it.

He said, Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day. What about when you weren't a Christian? How about when you were hounding Christians into prison? How about when you were behaving as we just read, I thought to myself that I have to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus Christ. Let me suggest that he did it with a conscience that was ignorant of the truth, ignorant of the facts, ignorant of who Christ was.

And he did it out of good conscience in the sense that he believed he was doing right. And you know, you can do things which are wrong and believe that you are right. In the 16th chapter of the Gospel of John, Jesus said, There will come a time when they will put you out of the synagogues, they will do this and that to you, and they will think that they are doing God's service.

They're not going to be doing it out of evil motives, but they're going to be doing it to think that they're doing God's service. That's quite a remarkable statement to make, isn't it? And when you and I can understand that people can do things out of genuine motives, though they are utterly mistaken, it gives us the ability perhaps to understand and to love in a way that maybe we couldn't have done before. But Paul goes about, his intention is to do things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

We're back in chapter 26, and this is just what I did in Jerusalem. Not only did I lock up many of the saints in prison, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death, I cast my vote against them. A reference back of course to Stephen and Paul as chief witness, and as chief witness they laid all their garments at his feet, and as chief witness he was supposed to throw the first stone.

I don't know whether he did. And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme, and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities. Here is a man who is fanatical, who is absolutely convinced that he is right.

This is not a mad man, this is a fanatic. This is a fellow persuaded that he is right, and it's incredible to me that people can be so wrong, and yet think that they are so right. And I guess I would have to look back at times in my life, and think, boy I thought I was right, and discovered I was wrong, but I thought I was right.

While that engaged, as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven. I've been making reference to the light, and to the light that can only adjust and readjust the conscience. At midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun.

How wonderful to have something that absolutely obliterates everything else, that leaves you with no focus other than this one. And it shone all around me, and those who were journeying with me. And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me, in the Hebrew dialect, I remember when I lived in Scotland, a friend of mine said to me, Do you know that God has got a Scottish accent? And I said to him, Tell me, Charlie, how do you know that? He said, Well, he speaks to me with a Scottish accent.

I have not yet heard him say, But I'm waiting. And when he spoke to me in the Hebrew dialect, isn't that lovely? He comes to him in the most intimate way. There's no great voice.

It's not alien. It's not strange. He comes and speaks to him just as he can understand him.

Don't you think that's lovely? And he said, So, so. I wonder how he said it. Do you think, So! I woke you up, didn't I? You didn't think I could jump like that, did you? It's my past teaching experience.

It's amazing, you know, how you can talk like that, and you cry to me, and you just whisper, and suddenly you go, and you go, So, so why are you persecuting me? That must have been devastating to this man's conscience and heart, this man who was passionate for God, this man who believed that he was right. You know, it's the most devastating thing to think that you're right and suddenly discover that you're wrong. Boy, nothing breaks a man or woman quicker.

So why, why, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to tip against the goads, which means he had been, so there had already been intimations that God was moving in the conscience of this man and speaking and dealing and revealing and showing, but such was his vehemence and his determination to stamp out this cult that was opposing the very religion that God had established to the Jewish people that he could not hear it. Maybe this is the only way that God could stop this man. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? Of course, he couldn't say, Who are you, Jesus? Because at that moment, he didn't know who he was, did he? So he said, Who art thou, Lord? But he knew who he was.

He knew that he was the Lord. He was not concerned it was something demonic or something was interfering here. He knew this was God.

He said, Who are you, Lord? And then the Lord said, I am Jesus. What an absolute shock. What a devastating thing to suddenly be made aware that the very one that you are persecuting is the one who has come and talked to you.

What grace! What absolute love that this one whom I am opposed to, vehemently, angry, bitter, against, comes and talks to me. Why? I think there must have been a revelation of the love of God to this man at the very outset that utterly, utterly changed his whole way of thinking. He said, I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.

But listen to this. But arise. He didn't say, Well, you're going to have to stay down there for a month or two until you've got this out of your system.

I'm going to have to do some tough things with you, you so-and-so. You've got some things to unlearn. You've got some hard roads to go.

Arise. Stand up on your feet. Oh, isn't that wonderful? He can suddenly make a man of a man.

A man who thought he was a man and has been broken. And he immediately gets him back on his feet. There's no finger wagging.

There's no accusations. There's no trying to bring upon this man regrets for what he's done. He's not against him in the least.

And he says, Now, stand on your feet for this purpose. And how wonderful to have a purpose. I want God to give everybody in this room a purpose.

Some clear direction for my life and yours. And I don't care whether you're 60 or 70. It makes no difference.

It does not. When you get to 92, you can retire like Jim. But arise.

Stand on your feet. For this purpose I have appeared to you to appoint you a minister and a witness. And the word witness is the word martyr.

This is going to be your whole life, Paul. And we must all of us understand that we have called every one of us to be a martyr. That doesn't mean you're going to shed your blood.

It doesn't mean you're going to go to some far off country and there lay it down. But you're going to have to lay it down day in and day out and day in and day out doing the ordinary mundane things of life. Are you ready for that? And until then, God can't do anything with us.

We might come to a conference. We may sit in a meeting. We may say, Lord, do this with me.

I'm available. Do that with me. I want you to.

But listen, you and I have got to come to the place where we know, Lord, I've laid my life down. This is the calling of God upon my life. I've appointed you to death and to be a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen.

That's interesting, isn't it? What did he see? He was blind. He got off the ground. He couldn't see a thing.

What did he see? Well, I'll tell you what he'd seen. Somewhere in his heart, he'd seen Christ. He'd seen something of this wonderful Jesus who'd appeared to him.

You are to be a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you. Isn't that a remarkable statement? In all the changes and all the ways in which God led him, the thing that he was to see in all of it was Him in which I will appear to you. Whether it be in your ministering, in seeing churches established, in the difficulties and the persecutions and the hardships, in it all, you are to see Me.

And I have called you. Please note, this is not the set of a mind of a man determined as Paul was before the Lord met him. This is God promising, God declaring what He will do in the life of this man.

I have appeared. I have appointed you. I have called you.

I will appear to you delivering you from the people. Now when you read the word people in your New Testament, it's a reference to the Jewish people who of course were probably more than any other the greatest enemy that Paul had to face. Because like him, until God met with him, they were vehemently opposed to Christ and to the Gospel.

Not all of course, but as a nation. And now we read that I will deliver you from the people, from the Gentiles to whom I am sending you. Now will you please note, the next phrase is so important.

To open their eyes. Why? And Ron has already in his talks from John pointed out the word that in John's Gospel chapter 17. And in four verses we were told that the word that means so that.

There's something I'm going to do with a purpose so that. And need it is to open their eyes so that they may turn. Nobody turns, nobody until they have their eyes opened.

And that's a reference that I'm going to pick up and go back into Matthew's Gospel in a moment or two to look at something that Jesus had to say about conscience. But the thing that Paul was able, that God was saying to Paul was this. Listen, when I send you because I have appointed you, called you, equipped you, enabled you, you will do it.

This is not you're going to go and maybe, maybe, maybe something will happen. This will take place because I've called you. There will be an effect because of your ministry.

I remember driving the old Wally North who's now gone to be with the Lord from Lampeter up to Liverpool. And there was a time when I was going through some real kind of struggles and one of the things I struggled with and sometimes I still do and I've been glad that Ron in the comments he's made has warned those who are preachers to be careful. And I remember saying to him, tell me, when you preach, why is it that things happen? And when I preach, nothing happens.

And he said to me, well, he said, I tell you what, brother. He said, I have come to the conclusion because God has convinced me, he said, when I get up to preach, I expect something to happen. I expect it to.

So I said, well why do you? He said, because God has called me. And if God has called me, I expect Him to do something. Now he didn't suggest he was expecting that he would be able to influence the hearts and minds of people by his charismatic personality or something, but simply because God had called him.

I expect God to do something. And I thought, boy, now then, guy, what do you honestly expect? What do you expect? Some of you will not know, some of you will, but from 1966 until 1981, I was a school teacher. So I've been used to putting words together and standing in front of kids and in front of adults and talking and explaining and putting this together with this and trying to convey a concept that didn't say science or something.

So I've been used to it. So when it came to the preaching of the Gospel, when it came to declaring truth, I thought, how many people's eyes have been opened so now they can turn. It's no good you telling anybody, now repent! They can't do it until their eyes are opened.

When their eyes are opened, then they can. But you can't tell people to do something that's an impossibility to them. But now listen, the Lord said to him, I'm sending you, I'm delivering you and I'm sending you to do it, to open their eyes.

Now you might say, but surely that's a responsibility upon a man that's asking something that's impossible. And yet it is, unless it be that God has plainly said, I'm going to do this through you. And one of the things that we've all got to be careful of, and I heard somebody pray it just the other day, Lord make me the answer to the prayers I pray.

Am I available? Am I standing here, you sitting there, with a clarity in conscience and heart that says, I know that God can take me up and can use me anytime He wants because I'm available to Him. Or are we sitting here thinking, oh well I've got so many things to unlearn, I've been into this, I've been into that. Let me tell you, I don't suppose anybody in this room was a murderer, were they? Well Paul was.

Whether he did throw the first stone or not, I don't know. But his heart was murderous. He was out to kill.

But he was doing it out of ignorance and passionate about it. I guess he was one of the first inquisitors ever before the Roman church got round to it. Paul was at it, out to kill, out to destroy, out to bring down.

God says, I want you to open their eyes. Go on. Go and do it.

Right Lord, you're asking me impossible. No I'm not. And you might be sitting there but thinking to yourself, well it's impossible for me.

Well I want to tell you, it is not. It is not. This is the calling of God.

Now you will not do it in the way that Paul do it. Because you don't have the gifting, the calling, the ministry that Paul had. But you do have that to which God has called you.

And if you're sitting there running yourself down and telling yourself that you are an absolute failure and incapable of anything, then my friend, you are doing despite to God's grace. His grace is greater than your failures, greater than your paths, greater than your inabilities. And this is what we read, you are to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light, from the dominion of Satan to God.

Please do note, he's not talking to Paul and saying to him, I'm going to give you a ministry in demonology. Once their eyes are opened, they can turn. If there's anything hanging on and hindering, well then Paul, you deal with it.

And that's right and proper to do so. But he wasn't chasing devils. He saw if their eyes are opened, they can turn.

And the powers of the enemy will have no hold upon them. And I wonder where there's so much counselling and all the things that go with it in our day really don't do an awful lot of good. What's needed is for people to have their eyes opened and then God speak! And there is an intuitive, instinctive knowing that when I see like that, I can respond with everything and I can be freed from darkness, from the dominion of Satan.

And then listen, listen, listen, listen to the order in which it's said by God, not by man. This is not Paul's language. This is the Lord's word to him.

He said, in order that, there's the word again, they may receive forgiveness of sins. They don't receive forgiveness of sins at stage one. Their eyes are opened, they turn, then they receive forgiveness of sins.

Let's not preach forgiveness of sins at the start. And we talk about it by all means, but until the eyes are opened, nobody can see, I can be forgiven for everything. And if you're sitting in this room this morning and you've got a background of things that you regret, that have been the ruination of your heart, your life, your home, your family, listen, you can receive forgiveness of sins when your eyes are opened.

But don't go around quoting a verse and saying, I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven, if your eyes haven't been opened the moment your eyes are opened. And it all goes. Now, he says, not only forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in me.

So, when the eyes are opened, I can now believe. And that believing results in forgiveness of sins, justification. I stand right before God and all the past is gone.

And I'm sanctified. And do you know what I find? Listen, I find that there are so many people who are almost afraid to say it. Because they think, oh, I haven't attained it.

It's not an attainment. It is not. It is simply the consequence of faith in Him.

They've been sanctified by faith in me. That's what the Lord said to Paul. So, Paul didn't have to kind of set up a sanctifying you know, college to which to go where you could get some deeper holy life teaching.

He said, it's all yours when your eyes are opened. And intuitively, instinctively you'll know, what an inheritance, I'm forgiven, I'm sanctified. How about the sanctified me? I'm now set apart for divine use.

Okay, Lord, here I am. Now you can make use of me. Isn't that wonderful? But you've got to have your eyes opened.

And that's the first thing that God said to Paul. I'm going to send you to do that. Now, how do you do it? How do you do it? How do you open people's eyes? Well, you know, you give them John 3.16, whack them with Romans 5.12, come in from the side and you sweep their legs away with them, you know, with Revelation 1 something or other and you've got them! And everybody's jiggling, most of all, and you don't do it, do you? That doesn't work, does it? So how do we? Now, how do we? All right, now that's going to be the rest of my time.

I want to go into the second Corinthian epistle. And in chapter 4 and in verse 1, Paul says this, therefore, now the therefore takes us back into what's been said in the previous chapters. Okay? And the therefore refers to this, and this is not my subject, so I don't want to spend time on it, but the therefore refers to what he has said in chapter 3 where he tells the Corinthians to whom he's writing that they have become ministers not of the letter, because the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

And that's the eternal life that we have been reminded of. He speaks, draws a comparison between the old and the new. The old is written on tablets of stone.

The old is engraved on the outward. The old had a glory that faded away. And he draws the comparison and says now look, that's what it was like.

Now what about this new? He says this, if the ministry of condemnation, this is verse 9 of chapter 3, has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory. He says of Moses in the Old Testament that when that was read there was a veil, first of all over the face of Moses which hid the glory. Then he says there was a veil also upon their minds for their minds were hardened until this very day at the reading of the Old Covenant, the Old Testament, the same veil remains unlifted because it is removed in Christ.

Then he comes to this, for whenever a man turns to the Lord the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit. It doesn't say now the Lord is Jesus or the Lord is Christ.

The Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty. For what? What does liberty suggest? Freedom. Freedom for what? Oh, freedom from the past, freedom from bondage, freedom from, no please don't lay the emphasis on freedom from, but freedom for the Spirit thou to begin to do His work in and through you in the reaching of other men and women.

And when we come into the fourth chapter we come to this, therefore since we have this ministry, I'm so glad that Paul didn't say therefore since I have, as if he identified the ministry solely with him. I think one of the things that we have suffered from perhaps a little bit in fellowship circles for those of you who are used to fellowship circles is the idea that somehow we've got it and nobody else has. We are uniquely and wonderfully superior to all others.

It is not true. And if you've thought like that, stop it and ask the Lord to renew your mind and give you the ability to embrace brothers and sisters who may not quite think as you do, who may not dot their I's and cross their T's quite where you dot yours. Therefore since we have this ministry, oh this is the bit I like, this

does me the world of good, as we have received mercy we do not lose heart.

There have been times when I've been pretty close to it. Lord, why doesn't anything happen? Why don't you move? I thought you'd given me a ministry to preach and to teach but nothing seems to happen. So back then when I said to dear old Wally North, will you get up and preach? Why do things happen? I expect God to do it.

I expect God to keep his word. I expect God to fulfil his side of his calling upon my life. There have been times, I guess, I don't know whether this would be true for all the guys in this room who preach, but have you ever come to a time where you've almost lost heart? I'm pathetic.

What's the point of doing this again? I'm repeating the same old things and nothing seems to happen. I remember when I lived in the States, one of the men there, and I bless God for him, he came and spoke to me one day and he said to me, do you know what, Dai? He said, you are driving the sheep. Wow, I'm driving them.

He said, yeah, you're driving them. You're bashing them with sermons and you're whipping them with them. Come on, let's get on with it.

You've got to introduce them. And he said, all you're doing is you're just driving them. And I said, oh, brother.

And you know what? I didn't realise I was. Although, I suppose, when I look back at it, I probably did. But I needed someone to maybe pinpoint it.

And I remember going away and just saying to the Lord, Lord, if this is true, you've got to show me and if this is true, you've got to deal with me. This is awful. Please, if I blubber, I told you I'd blubber.

And I remember asking the Lord to deal with it. And the next Sunday I was preaching in this church in the States and a girl came up to me afterwards and she said to me, and I preached about God's grace and she came up to me afterwards and she said, you know what? I've just been born again sitting in my seat. And I thought, oh, boy.

God is good to us, you know. And as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. Will you always, always, always, always, no matter where you are, no matter what God's calling is upon you, just be a man or woman who can receive His mercies.

I beseech you by the mercies of God. You present your bodies. We touched on it last night.

Now listen to this. This is the bit. But we, he says, have renounced the hidden things because of shame.

Please note, renouncing is a clear declaration that I am done with this. When I first moved back to Lampeter, I went down and I was invited to speak at an Easter weekend. And I went down and I preached in John's Gospel, Chapter 5, about people receiving honour from men.

And the meeting ended and I went back home with the brother I was staying with. And it was about half past ten at night and the doorbell rang and this brother went to the door and he came back and said, yes, I want to see you. So I said, oh, OK.

So in came this man, a much older man, and he sat down and he had this real look on his face and he demanded to know what right I had to speak about Freemasonry because I made some comments about receiving honour from men and that's very much within the kind of thinking of Masonry. Anyway, I sat and talked with him and the more I talked with him the more he realised that I knew a little more than perhaps he thought I did. And he kind of said, oh, OK.

Anyway, off he went. And two years later I moved down to Lampeter and this man came to see me again. And the subject was still the same, the business of Masonry.

And he said, well, what do I do? So I said, you need to very clearly and publicly renounce it. So sometime later, I don't know how long, I've forgotten the time scale of this, this chap came to see me and he said, well, I've done it. So I said, oh, what have you done? He said, well, I've got rid of all my, you know, my stuff.

The apron and the book and the bits and the pieces and I said to him, I'm ever so pleased to do that, now that you've done that. He said, yes. He said, I've got rid of it all.

I said, I trust you burned it? He said, no, no. He said, I sold it. And he said, and I put the money into the church fund.

So I kind of said, that's not quite what I had in mind. But listen to this, his daughter, who has been affected of a consequence, she was the first born, seems to affect the first born, she publicly in a meeting, in the fellowship back in Lampeter, got to her feet and one day with her dad present, said, I want to publicly renounce all my connections with this through my father. And I tell you what, she came into a place of liberty that her dad had never come into.

Never. We have renounced the things hidden because of shame. Not walking in craftiness.

Can people in ministry walk in craftiness? Yes, my friend. You look out for them. Be sensitive.

Be alert. You only have to read John's first epistle to discover that they are out there. Many, many antichrists.

Those who will seduce you to use John's word. But we, he says, have an anointing within whereby we know. And we need to learn to know and learn to listen to the know.

And he says, yes, but we, he says, are not walking in craftiness. We are absolutely open. Wide open.

Nor are we adulterating the Word of God, but by the manifestation of truth. Now please will you note the way the language that the apostle uses. He doesn't simply talk about believing the truth, or holding the truth, or having correct doctrine.

You and I can be as orthodox as can be. Have everything perfectly right. You can hold all the articles of the faith and be as down the line as anybody else.

But that's not what he's talking about. He is talking about a manifestation, a clear demonstration. The word sort of pictures.

You know these great big billboards and you see slapped across them in huge great pictures, buy this cigarette or drink this particular brand or whatever. And you can't miss it. It's blaring at you, staring at you.

So that's what the word manifestation means. It is not, well I'm a kind of, you know, I'm a believer and I'm trying to sort of, you know, live my life the best I can. You're a manifestation of what? Of your knowledge? No.

Of what? Of your understanding? No. Of the truth. And who is the truth? There you go.

We've been reminded of it again this week by Ron. Time and again. It's the person.

And that's what he's talking about. I have to be a manifestation of the truth. Not my view of it.

Not an aspect of it. But the character, the person who is the truth. And he says by such a manifestation of truth, what happens? Now here it is.

I commend, we commend ourselves. Now, if you're one of these very, very, and I've got to be careful here, super spiritual people. Now listen, very super spiritual people say, oh no, it's not me.

I remember, I was a student here in Exeter and I remember a lady who was connected with the fellowship in Exeter. And I remember one day calling her because my wife Pay lived with Bob and all her love in Exeter and was Wendy's best friend. I went to the house one day and there was a cup of tea and a piece of cake and I was a student and all students are hungry because they don't eat too well otherwise.

So they tend to invite themselves out as often as they can. And I thought this is great so I got stuck into my cup of tea and very large piece of cake and there was the lady present who had made it, not all her love by the way. And I said, wow, that is good stuff.

Oh yes. Jesus made the cake and I thought you stupid woman. I didn't come from super spiritual backgrounds.

I was sort of a rugby playing, soccer playing foul mouthed individual that God had got hold of and I couldn't make him attain it. It was just sort of what nonsense it is. She made the jolly thing and I thought you've done a good job.

Listen, Paul says we're commending ourselves. Oh no, no, no, we've got to commend Jesus. But we're doing that by manifestation of the truth.

But we're commending ourselves. This is what the truth has done in me and I commend myself. There are many of us who do that.

Or not so, it smacks of pride, it smacks of self. Well I want to tell you it smacks of truth to me. I want my life to be a commendation to others and listen to every man's conscience.

That's not the word, it gets to their conscience. For those of you who've heard me say this before please forgive me, but do you remember the old song I've got you under my skin. I've got you deep in the heart of me.

You must be about my age brother, thirty five-ish. I've got you and that's what it is. Now please excuse me using a worldly song, but I used to listen to them.

I've got you under my skin. I've got you deep in my heart. It was a sort of a lovey-dovey Frank Sinatra if I remember rightly.

Was it? Yeah, yeah, yeah. All you blue eyed boys out there. How about that? To get into people's consciences.

How do you get into someone's conscience? How do you get into and affect their conscience? We tend to think, well you've got to preach the Gospel, preach it in the power of the Spirit and God will do something. Yes, of course, but He's going to preach that Gospel through you, through me. And the Gospel is powerless unless there is a manifestation of the truth of it in my life.

And I commend myself. Now I don't by that mean, and I don't think the Apostle means he went round saying, well I've arrived, you know, here I am, now I'm going to commend myself. It doesn't mean that, but His very life, the manifestation of what He was, it affected people.

It touches the demonic realm. You think of Acts chapter 19, the girl who had the spirit of divination. They went there into Ephesus and she said, these are the servants of the Most High God.

And He wouldn't have the testimony of devils and He told the thing to come out. But it provokes something, something happened in the heart, the mind, the conscience of that lassie. I would hope, it doesn't actually say, but I wonder, did she become the Lord's? I would like to think that she did.

Certainly she was delivered of a clairvoyant spirit that operated in her and enabled her to say and to speak and to be as she was, for she saw something and never before had her conscience been provoked as it was by the presence of these men. Now, what effect do I have upon the community where I live? Oh, I can go and talk to them about Christ, I can go knock doors, I can go to speak in open airs. We've done all those kinds of things just where we live.

Done Alpha courses, done all the things that you're supposed to do. This man says there is here within the workings of the Spirit of God there is the ability for us to commend ourselves to the conscience of another, to get in there until that conscience begins to see, now that's life that it's meant to be and this is not. This is not it, but that's it.

This is that. That's the thing, that's the real thing. I was telling somebody just the other day, we had a lady come to one of our meetings.

I was away, I'd never met her. She turned up at the door last Friday I think and she came in and wanted to talk to me. She had lost three members of her family within a very short time.

She is alone, she's been devastated by it all, had a belief in God, came and wanted to talk to me. She said, do you know what? I came into your meeting in Lampeter, she's a student at the university. I came into the meeting and she said, the people in the church began just to love the Lord and she said, I spent the whole of that meeting crying.

Couldn't help myself. Something took place, something happened. She couldn't explain it and I know that she's not in a place where she has repented, but I can see something beginning to happen and her eyes have been opened to something that she's never seen before.

She sat and she talked with me and we were together for about an hour, hour and a half and I was just talking to her, just like the same thing happened again. She said, I'm so sorry. She just broke down and left.

She said, I don't know what's going on here. And I thought, I do. Isn't it wonderful? But it's all that somehow something is commended to the conscience and the conscience of the man, the woman to whom you are speaking begins to realize I haven't got this.

Now this is the way that the gospel is to be ministered. Whether it's done, and I've seen it operating in a large conference where a man anointed by the Spirit can speak and you can see the consciences of men and women being enlightened, quickened, knowing I can respond to this. Yes! And that's what God said He would do.

By the sending of this man, I'm going to send you and by the ministry that I have given you, Paul, eyes will be opened. Oh, there's nothing more wonderful than to see somebody's eyes open and to see the light dawned. And they know that they can respond and they may have been caught up in things that have ruined them but they know that they can respond.

So He said this, It is by the commending of ourselves to every man's conscience. It's not that, is it? It's to every man. Every man.

And we can have the most profound effect upon every man's conscience. Now, I don't mean by that that you go around trying to sort of, you know, manipulate your way into it. I think that is what has happened so sadly in many evangelical circles we've come and we've sort of presented this gospel and we've bashed people with a Bible, bashed them with some kind of gospel message and we've said to them 50 times, no, no, come on, respond.

Here's your opportunity. Now, come on, there must be some more. Now, come on, come on, come and come to the front.

And you think oh, boy, oh, boy. I don't know whether you think like that but I think this is just awful. It doesn't mean for me but I know when I've heard the gospel preached and I've seen the manifestation of the truth in the life of the man or woman who speaks it, I know it touches something in me.

And I remember the very first time that I heard the gospel in the power of the Spirit. I heard a man preach about righteousness. And the thing that left its mark upon me was I saw it in his face.

I saw it in his life. I saw it in the way he looked. I saw it in the way he handled people.

And I thought that's what I want. How lovely. I want to do one more thing and then I'm going to come to an end.

Will you please just turn on into chapter five. In the opening ten verses of the chapter, Paul is drawing a comparison between what is temporal, earthly, passing, and what is eternal. And he declares in verse ten, for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body according to what he has done whether good or bad.

Then we come again to this word therefore. Please notice it as we did in chapter four. Therefore we've got this ministry.

Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade man. Now when I read a verse like that, I think to myself I don't know whether you do, but how do you persuade anybody? Do you do it with logic and reason and argument? No, you don't. You might gain a little ground.

You might be able to convince somebody that, okay your way of looking at something is perhaps better than theirs. Because of my science background, I've talked to lots of people about the whole evolution creation debate. And I've by talking about design and by talking about irreducible complexes.

That sounds very imposing, isn't it? By talking about such things you can perhaps bring people in their mind to see okay, well there's some ground to this argument. I've got to consider this. But that doesn't persuade anybody, does it? It certainly doesn't persuade them in terms of the Gospel.

And no amount of human reasoning ever can. It's only when their eyes are opened that they can turn. But this is what he said, we persuade men.

But we are made manifest to God. Now, notice that we are made manifest to God, and I hope that we are made manifest also in your conscience. Please note a similar kind of line of thinking as in chapter 4. We are made manifest.

We, we we are made manifest where like a great open advertisement, there it is stuck on this great board to be seen and known and read of all men. To go back into chapter 3. But there we are set up, plainly to be seen we are made manifest also in your conscience. Our life, our lifestyle our living is such that we have somehow got into that conscience.

The conscience of the Corinthian church, the conscience of those amongst whom Paul went and preached and ministered. He sought no one's goods, his own testimony in the 20th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles when he was at Ephesus. I've sought no man's goods, I've not taken anything from you, I've not coveted anybody's whatever.

He said I have simply come to present the glories of this gospel and he kept that into the conscience. But what does he mean when he says we are made manifest to God? I think very simply this, that everything about our living is laid bare. We are an open book.

We are known and read by all men and we are known and read by God. There is no dark, secret, grey, undiscovered, undisclosed hidden area. We are open before God.

I don't know whether it would be true of you, but I would have to recognise as I look back in my life, there have been times when I have quietly hidden things that I've not been prepared to face up to. Partly because of the shame that's connected with them. And we noticed in the fourth chapter he talked about having renounced the hidden things because of shame.

And shame can keep us silent and closed up. But the moment our eyes are open to see that we're laid bare before him, manifest before God, there's nothing that we can hide from him. That's a tremendous place of freedom where I can just come and say Lord, here I am and you can adjust, readjust, you can restore, you can put back together those parts of me that have been out of order and make me a whole man.

Put me right. And he declares, therefore knowing the feet of the Lord, we persuade men we're clear before God. And it's great to know that you are clear before God.

And able therefore to be a means of getting into the conscience of others. I believe that that is how conviction of sin really comes. I know you would say, but John 16 says that when he the spirit of truth has come, he will convince the world of sin.

But how does he do it? Does he operate in the ether? Does he kind of operate in the sort of, you know, floats around somehow? I come across people who do. Have you ever come across people who've been in a meeting and they say, did you feel the anointing? You're there, stand up on the back of your head. Well, are you all sent to stay? Do you get those kinds of things? I don't get those kinds of things.

Except when I'm listening to a thousand male voice Welsh. How does it, what's this anointing thing? It's not meant to be this sort of feeling thing, but to know, Lord, I'm absolutely open here and my life you can take hold of and operate in and through me so that there is something that takes place in the conscience of the one to whom I'm speaking. Something can touch the one amongst whom I'm living and their conscience has somehow been, let me use this word, infiltrated.

Something's got in that had never got in before that makes them realise, man, I want what he's got. I want what she's got. Now then, that's how conviction comes.

Of course it can come on the individual basis as you talk to somebody. It can come in a conference. It can come in a meeting.

It came a hundred years ago because God raised up a young Evan Roberts and young Evan Roberts preached the Gospel. He preached a very simple, ordinary Gospel. He was not a great Bible teacher but God got hold of him and the conscience of multitudes in the land of Wales was got into, was infiltrated and men knew exactly where they were and they had to get right with God.

Just as I close, one of the things that Evan Roberts did, he had five kind of particular emphases that he had and one of them was always to make a clear public renouncing of sin. And he insisted that there was to be a clear public declaration of faith in Christ. I like that.

I'm all for that. Let's then shall we this morning as we close how about it asking the Lord to come and so get hold of us that we will be a means of reaching the conscience of our day. You'll not do it if you're sitting in this room with a guilty conscience, an unclean conscience, a defiled conscience, you'll not do it.

You'll not be able to do it until you know that your conscience has been cleansed and you have intimacy with the one who can enable you to be a means of speaking to the people of our day. We'll come back to the cleansing perhaps tomorrow. How about asking the Lord to come just now.

Lord come and get hold of my life. Make me to be a means of speaking to the conscience of my day. Amen.

Lord we're ever so glad that we're all different. We're all so very very different. Thank you that you can come and readjust and restore and renew and heal up all that's been in the past and make us to be men and women who can commend ourselves.

Afraid almost, Lord, seems the smack of self-centredness and pride and yet we see that under the inspiration of the Spirit we can commend ourselves to the consciences of others that they might see that Lord we are men and women of truth. We are reminded of John who said of you, I beheld him, we beheld his glory and he was full of grace and truth. You could have said so many other things or he could have said so many other things about you Lord full of power, full of miracles, full of great teaching but he identified these two things, full of grace and full of truth and we pray for ourselves Lord that we might be such men who receive grace upon grace, men in whom truth is increasingly revealed.

Lord take hold of us, take hold of our lives and make us, we pray, a people who can be a real voice in our day. Take out of our thinking Lord that we will do great things for you, that's not the important thing, that's entirely up to you, you must decide those things. But Lord whether it is that we speak to a neighbour, we speak to a friend, we speak to whoever, oh that we might be effective in getting to their conscience.

Lord deliver us from being able to quote our Bibles and simply present something to people's minds. Lord we need to get so, so far, far deeper than that until the very foundation of their living is challenged, is broken up and they realise there's something beyond what they have known, something so glorious, because they see it at work and outlived in people like us, ordinary people. But we ask you for it Lord, because if we don't have it and if it doesn't happen, what's going to happen to the generation in which we live? They will drift further and further into the ever spiralling downward darkness that sin must always produce.

And we want them to see Lord that there is one who has come to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God. To give them forgiveness of sins and an inheritance amongst those who are sanctified. And we thank you this morning Lord that here is our inheritance, that we are to be men and women of grace and truth.

Help us then we pray Lord. Amen.

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