

What Is Conscience

by J. Edwin Orr

J. Edwin Orr explores the nature of conscience, its role in moral decision-making, and its impact on human behavior.

Duration: 54:43

Scripture: Psalm 139:23-24, John 8:7, John 16:8, John 16:13-14, Acts 24:16, Romans 13:5

Topics: "Revival Theology"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by sharing that he is teaching rather than preaching due to his recent health issues. He mentions his gratitude for the extra years given to him by the Lord and his desire to continue serving Him. The speaker then recalls the launch of the first satellite, Sputnik, by the Russians and reflects on the meaning of the word 'Sputnik' which refers to accompanying one when it goes along. He goes on to discuss the importance of conscience and shares personal anecdotes to illustrate its role in making moral decisions. The speaker emphasizes that conscience is not part of the intellect, will, or emotion, but it is something that belongs to each individual. He concludes by mentioning an initiative by a university to invite foreign students to Thanksgiving dinner and how it reflects the wholesome nature of the American holiday.

Transcript

Tonight I'm going to do a little bit of teaching rather than preaching, but I'm going to take it easy. This is my first time speaking since coming out of hospital in February. I had a problem with my heart.

Of course, I'm seventy-four now, so I'm thankful to the Lord that he's given me the extra years and I just hope that he'll give me more to do some more work for him. The other day, I'm living out in Ventura County now, the other day a rocket blew up at Vandenberg. I understand it was supposed to put a satellite into orbit.

This is such a young congregation here. I'm sure you don't remember the first satellite that was put up. You'd have to be maybe over forty years of age.

It was about thirty years ago, the Russians put up a satellite called Sputnik. The word Sputnik means accompanying one, one that goes along. I was in Australia at the time, and I saw that satellite.

Some people look at me blankly, you've seen a satellite? Oh yes, I've seen a satellite. You've seen those big dishes, you know, that pick up the broadcast television from a satellite. But when the first Sputnik was put up, we were all watching the sky, and we could see that little dot of light going across the sky.

I was in a bus in Adelaide, Australia, and an Australian lady said, oh by the way, I forgot to say, the first satellite that we saw was one that carried a dog called Laika. Let's see, is there anyone old enough to remember that here? You remember the dog called Laika that was in the sky? All the Australians were talking about that little satellite with the dog up there. One lady said to me in the bus, you wouldn't catch me riding in a Sputnik, I'm just terrified of dogs.

Well, we've got so many satellites today, the sky is full of them, that we forget the very original one, the moon. The moon is the satellite of the earth. The moon is the earth's Sputnik, the accompanying one.

Now, it comes as a great surprise to all my audience when I tell them that every human being has his own satellite. A student at UCLA said to me, we have two cars in the garage, we've got television in the front room and in the den, but we don't have a helicopter on the roof yet, and I doubt if we'll ever have our own satellite. But I insist, every human being has his own satellite.

Now, of course, you want me to explain that. In the New Testament, there is the word sunaidesis. Now, I don't expect you working people to have learned New Testament Greek.

It's a New Testament Greek word, sunaidesis, accompanying knowledge. The Latin is more familiar, and those of you who speak Spanish will jump to it right away. The Latin word for sunaidesis is consciencia.

So now I think you've got it. It's the word conscience, con, accompanying, science, knowledge, conscience. Maybe you never thought of that.

Every human being has a conscience. Well, let's see, is there anyone here who doesn't have a conscience? Even the Mafia have a conscience. There are certain things they will not do because their conscience won't let them do it.

They don't mind shooting somebody in the back and wrapping them up in concrete and dropping them in a river. Their conscience doesn't bother them about that, but they must not make a pass at the boss's wife. No, no, they mustn't do that.

Now I think you'll agree with me, every human being has a conscience. The word conscience occurs many times in the New Testament. This is good Bible teaching.

I asked a Jewish rabbi, what's the Hebrew word for conscience? He said, we don't have one. I said, you don't mean that Jews don't have a conscience? Oh, he said, we use a different word. We use a word, sometimes it's translated heart, and sometimes it's translated mind.

But he said the Greeks had a special word for it, and they used that word, sunaidesis, accompanying knowledge. Now, while you're thinking about this, I'm going to ask some questions. A man puts his shoes on his feet, he puts his watch on his wrist, where do you keep your conscience? You say you've got a conscience, where do you keep it? Now, somebody said to me, well, it's part of my mind.

Would you say it's part of intellect? Would you say that a professor at a university has a better conscience than the janitor of the classroom? No. It's not part of intellect. Then is it part of the will? Would you say that

a man with a strong will has a better conscience than a man with a weak will? The answer is no.

Hitler had a strong will, but a miserable conscience. Churchill had a strong will, but a pretty good conscience. Well, it's not part of your will, then, then is it part of your emotion, your feelings? Would you say that a person with a warm heart has a better conscience than a person with a cool head? Now the warmest hearted people in the world are the Brazilians.

Does anyone here from Brazil? Ah, como vai? They're the warmest hearted people. After a meeting in Brazil, they not only shake hands with you, but they give you a big hug. They call it the abraço.

If they like what you said very much, they kiss you on both cheeks. If they're very pleased, they lift you off your feet, set you down again. Now it's not like that in Scotland.

A professor at the University of Edinburgh said to me, well, Mr. Orr, we're not averse to having you in Scotland. That was as much as he could say without blowing a fuse. The Scotch people don't show their feelings.

But now on the other hand, I'd rather leave my suitcase in a bus station in Scotland than in Brazil. Because there's some down there, they might kiss you on both cheeks while they're taking your suitcase. So you see, conscience is not part of the intellect, not part of the will, not part of the emotion.

Do you think that a student who gets straight A in every subject has a better conscience than a poor guy who has to work hard to get a C average? The answer is no. As far as will is concerned, I read a little item in the papers, I wonder if you've ever done it, called Peanuts. Little Lucy Van Pelt held up her fingers to Charlie Brown, she said, Charlie Brown, these five fingers don't mean very much by themselves, but combined into a fist they're going to make you do what I want you to do.

Now which would you say had the stronger will? Lucy. Charlie. Which do you think has the better conscience? Charlie.

So you see, conscience is not part of your will, nor is it part of your emotion. You may be a very warm-hearted person, but that doesn't mean you've got a good conscience. You can be warm-hearted and have a good conscience, you can be cool-headed and have a good conscience too.

So you see, conscience is not part of the intellect, not part of the will, not part of the emotion, yet it's yours. We lived about a mile from UCLA, we've moved since, and the university notified the neighbours that they'd very much appreciate if we would invite foreign students to Thanksgiving dinner. Now the American Thanksgiving is one of the most wholesome festivals in the world, it's a great family occasion, but the trouble is all the American students take off for home and leave the foreign students there.

So the university thought it'd be nice if the neighbours in Westwood would invite them. We invited six. They all came except the Hindu from India.

After all the preparation my wife went through, she was a little peeved, well he might have telephoned that he wasn't coming, as he was too embarrassed. Well what is there to be embarrassed about Thanksgiving dinner? As if he were a conscientious Hindu, he would not come to Thanksgiving. You see, Hindus have been taught a doctrine called the transmigration of souls.

Not merely reincarnation, which is such a fad nowadays, but reincarnation into lower animal forms. In other words, if you behave yourself, maybe next time around you'll be born a princess or a millionaire. But if you don't behave yourself, maybe you'll come back next time as a cockroach, and somebody will tramp on you.

So you better behave yourself, that's their religion. No Hindu would come to Thanksgiving dinner if he believed that doctrine, why if he were to eat turkey, that might be his grandmother. He would never do a thing like that.

So what you think will affect your conscience. In other words, conscience is not part of your thinking, but what you think will affect your conscience. What you will will affect your conscience.

A man may say, I'm going to make a million dollars and I don't care how I do it, he becomes a rogue. What you will will affect your conscience. Some student may say, I'm going to get through this course, don't care how I do it, he becomes a cheat.

And even emotion will affect conscience. When I was a chaplain in the Air Force, World War II, a girl came to me and said, I can't help my feelings, I love the guy. I said to her, you have no business loving the guy.

When you first dated him, you knew full well that he had a wife and four children at home. Now you want me to persuade her to give him a divorce so that you can go through a form of marriage. I don't know what will happen a year from now.

Maybe you'll find somebody else when you go overseas. But her feelings twisted her conscience. So there's an interesting thing.

Conscience is not part of the intellect, not part of the will, not part of the emotion. Yet it's affected by intellect and will and emotion. Just as the moon is not part of the earth.

Yet the moon belongs to the earth. It doesn't belong to Jupiter or Mars. It's the earth's satellite.

So that's what I'm saying. The best way I can describe it is that you have a conscience that acts like a satellite. And as I said, the New Testament words are words to my thesis.

Now I hope I'm not going too fast for you. I want you to follow up what I'm saying, because I'm going to ask some other questions. I've asked you where do you keep your conscience.

Well, it's not in your mind, it's not in your will, it's not in your emotion, but it's yours. Your conscience doesn't tell your neighbor what to do. You couldn't go along to someone and say, my conscience won't let you do that.

No, your conscience won't let you do that, but your conscience won't affect somebody else. Now, the next question I'm going to ask is this. Is your conscience your friend or your enemy? I'm going to give you a verse of scripture, Romans 2.15, I'll quote it anyway.

Their conscience will either accuse or excuse them. It either accuses or defends one or the other. In other words, your conscience can be your friend, but it can also be your enemy.

Now, is conscience your friend? I was having breakfast one morning in a pancake house in Tempe, Arizona. I noticed when I stepped out onto the sidewalk, the first thing I noticed was it was about 118.

Arizona is hot in the summer.

But the second thing I noticed was the girl had given me too much money in my change. In fact, 50 cents too much. Now my first inclination was, well, not often that happens.

That will make up for other times that I get it the other way. But then my conscience said, no, no. So I went back into the pancake house.

I looked the girl straight in the eye, and I said, you gave me the wrong change. The temperature dropped a couple of degrees. She said, did I? I said, yes, you did.

She said, can you prove that? I said, yes. You gave me 50 cents too much, and I handed her two quarters. The temperature went up again.

She said, oh, thank you, sir. Thank you very much, sir. And as I went, I said, God bless you, she shouted.

I had made her day. But when I got out again, my conscience said, good for you. My conscience was my friend.

And when you do what you know to be right, especially when it's at some cost to yourself, your conscience will pat you on the back. Your conscience will say, good for you. But can your conscience be your enemy? Let me give you this verse of scripture, 2 Corinthians 1.12. If you want to jot it down, do so.

Our boast is this. The testimony of our conscience that we have behaved in this world with godly sincerity. In other words, if you behave with godly sincerity, your conscience is your friend.

But can your conscience ever be your enemy? Surely you know the story from the New Testament of the woman who was taken and sinned. The Pharisees dragged her before the Lord. They said she was caught in the act.

There's no question about it. Now the law says she should be stoned to death. What do you say? I'll say quite frankly, I don't like that double standard.

In other words, if somebody's going to penalize a prostitute, they ought to penalize her customers as well. That's the way I feel about it. I don't think the Lord liked this either.

He didn't answer then. He stooped and wrote on the ground. Has it ever occurred to you, do you ever wonder what he wrote? I always thought he sort of, you know, doodled with his finger in the dust.

Then one day it struck me, when the devil tempted the Lord, the Lord replied, it is written. And he quoted scripture. And the thought struck me, maybe the Lord wrote scripture on the ground.

That left me with the big question, what scripture? I think I found it. It's Hosea 4.14. I will not punish your daughters when they play the prostitute, nor your wives when they commit adultery, for you men are doing the same thing. Now it says that, you may find different in different versions, but that's the gist of it here.

When your daughters play the harlot, your brides commit adultery, for the men go aside with harlots, and they sacrifice with cult prostitutes. Now what happened? Could you imagine those Pharisees looking over his shoulder to see what he was writing on the ground? Then he stood up and said, whoever is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone. What does the scripture say? It was just as if the Lord had

summoned a hundred hornets and had said, sting these men.

They were so busy beating off the stings of their own conscience, they had no time to bother the woman anymore, and it says, being convicted of their own conscience, they went out one by one. Conscience had become their enemy. And when you do what you know to be wrong, your conscience takes sides against you.

Now how do you account for the independence of your conscience? I knew a fellow in California who was a determined Democrat, but his wife was a registered Republican, and this bothered him. Every time we go to the polls, we cancel each other out. I said to him, you can't help it, she's yours, but she's not you.

And this never struck you before, your conscience is yours, but it's not you. It takes sides against you. On the other hand, when you do right, it pats you on the back.

How do you account for the independence of your conscience? That's why I say, and don't you think maybe it's the best illustration, your conscience is like a kind of satellite. Now don't take me too literally, I don't mean that it's running around your head, or anything like that. But it's like a Sputnik, an accompanying one.

That's what the Greek says, sunitis, an accompanying knowledge. God gives every human being an accompanying knowledge. Could I ask you some more questions? What do you think is the business of conscience? In a meeting not too long ago, I asked the question, does anyone know a verse of scripture about conscience? A man shot up his hand and said, I said yes, he said, let your conscience be your guide.

That's not in the scripture. But somebody else said to me, well, your conscience tells you right from wrong. Does it? Always? The scripture doesn't teach that.

The scripture speaks of a pure conscience, it also speaks of a rotten conscience. You see, if conscience is your guide, if it's fixed, why don't the people next door to you have the same kind of conscience that you have? You know, sometimes people say, those people next door, they would do anything, you know, somebody across the street or something like that, they don't seem to have any conscience about that. Why don't you have an identical conscience with the non-Christians across the street? Well, you can't say, let your conscience be your guide, because conscience can be changed.

But what's the business of conscience? What does conscience do? Now, if you're looking for a street address, and you turn right instead of left, will your conscience tell you? No. Conscience doesn't mind if you wander all over Covina. If you turn south off the freeway instead of turning north, conscience never says a word.

Well now, if you're learning French, and you have difficulty with the irregular verbs, will your conscience help you? No. If you're playing chess, and you make a wrong move, will your conscience tell you? No. Will your conscience help you with a mathematical problem? Yes.

But only if it's your income tax return. You can add up your check stubs all wrong, your conscience won't bother you, you can look at it, how does the bank get this and how do I get that? Your conscience doesn't help you. But make a mistake in your own favor on your income tax return.

Only two parties will criticize you, one's your conscience, the other's the IRS. Now why doesn't conscience help people find street addresses, or learn French, or play chess, or add up their check stubs? It's not the business of conscience. Supposing some young fellow here takes his girl out on a date, and she refuses to kiss him goodnight.

Not much good calling the police. In fact, you try it, and the police will get very annoyed with you. They say, attend to your own business.

Waste my time. The police have got enough of a job to prevent crime without trying to help young fellows persuade their girlfriends to kiss them goodnight. You see, conscience is not concerned with these things.

Conscience is concerned only with the moral law. You say, now what do you mean the moral law? Well, take the social commandments in the Ten Commandments. Thou shalt not commit murder, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not commit adultery.

Conscience goes to work on those only. There was a very famous German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, he was not a Christian, but he made a very wise statement, he said, the test of morality is its universal application. In other words, it should apply everywhere.

When you go to university here, or even in high school, they teach you a kind of relativity. They say, it may be wrong for us, but it's okay for them. Like, for example, cannibalism is wrong in Canada.

It's still practiced in some obscure parts of the world. You can't say it's wrong in Canada, but it's okay for them. I don't know if anyone here has ever met a cannibal.

I was on patrol in New Guinea, in a jungle so dense I didn't see the sky for about three days, just like walking under the roof of a cathedral, big trees interlaced. You can imagine, you've seen pictures sometimes of things like that. It was so dense that I couldn't see the man in front of the man in front of me.

I just had to follow the man in front of me, who was a Dutchman, and in front of him was an Indonesian, and in front of him was a Papuan. We had five savage Papuan bearers, wild men, that we picked up as guides. So I asked the Dutchman in English, ask the chief why are they called cannibals.

This was translated by the Dutchman from English into Dutch, from Dutch into Indonesian, from Indonesian to Papuan, and traveled all the way up the line. It took some time coming back. Finally the Dutchman said to me, the chief says, call cannibals because we eat people.

I said, but not now, I mean, he means his grandparents ate people. That went all up the line, down again. He said, the chief said he ate a Japanese officer five weeks ago.

I meditated for a while, then I said, ask him, do they ever eat any Americans or Australians? The answer came back, never eat any Americans, we'd rather have Spam. That night I took inventory, and with enough Spam to last about 15 days, so I slept that night. Yes, but you can't say that's okay for them.

You see, what about the poor guy who is being eaten, does he have any say in the matter? It must be wrong everywhere. Sometimes it's called situation ethics, as if it changes according to your situation. There are certain absolutes.

That's one of the biggest fights we have as Christians against the rest of the world. We believe there are certain absolutes. The scripture says, thou shalt not commit murder, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not

bear false witness, thou shalt not commit adultery.

You see, as far as murder is concerned, I remember when I was in the Philippines, I found there were four times as many murders per head of population as in the United States. But before we congratulate ourselves, I should point out there are twice as many murders in Houston, Texas, as in England, Scotland and Wales, put together, with 50 million populations. So although there are different attitudes in different countries, murder is always wrong.

You check up for it yourself. Is there anyone here who would like to be murdered? No. That's basic morality.

It's wrong to murder. It's wrong to steal. I was traveling in India when some train robbers from Bengal robbed the passengers.

But there was another gang of train robbers, Gujaratis, and they were furious with these other men. They said it was their train, and they robbed the Bengalis of the loot, and they were angry in the big fight. A lot of people don't mind stealing, but they hate to be stolen from.

Have you ever met the sort of person who will tell you a lie without blinking? I've met that sort of person, but they hate to be deceived themselves. Now most kids in college and high school say, that makes sense. But they want to argue about thou shalt not commit adultery.

They say, with the modern knowledge of sex, it's a new ball game today, and the rules have changed. No, no. The rules haven't changed.

Now how could I deal with this subject tastefully in a Sunday evening service? Well a man said to me in university, we're talking about polygamy, and he said, it's OK for them, meaning some other people, but it's wrong for us. I said, but how could you say it's OK for them and wrong for us? Now I've travelled in Afghanistan. Not many people have travelled there, but I've travelled in Afghanistan, and in Afghanistan the law says a man may have four wives, but the Prophet Muhammad also said, he must love them equally, and he must be able to afford it.

That would disqualify me in both counts. But supposing 25% of the men in Afghanistan had four wives each. That would use up 100% of the eligible females in Afghanistan.

What would the other 75% do? Would they apply to United Nations for aid? No, it doesn't make sense. Mathematics disapproves of polygamy. Just pure mathematics.

You might say, well now couldn't there be times, oh yes, in Germany, after the Thirty Years War, there was a Thirty Years War in Germany in which nine out of every ten men were killed. So some of the German states allowed polygamy, but only for one generation. Why? Because even in polygamous families, there's an equal number of boy babies and girl babies.

And you're back to the old proposition again. There are 101 boys born for every 99 girls in every civilization. 101, a little more for boys, but more boy babies die in the first two years.

And more old men die than old ladies. Go to any old people's home and you see more old ladies than old men. After all, face it men, we are the weaker sex.

But because God made us that way, with equal numbers of boy babies and girl babies, monogamy is the answer. One man for one woman. And adultery is wrong.

So conscience goes to work on these things. Now, I did give you some verses of scripture, but I want to give you some more. I said to you that conscience is not fixed.

A lot of people seem to think that conscience is something that you can't change. Conscience is not fixed. The Bible speaks of a clear conscience, an obedient conscience, a mistaken conscience, a fussy conscience, a weak conscience, a seared conscience, a corrupt conscience.

All the way from pure to rotten. So how could you let your conscience be your guide? What kind of a conscience do you think this fellow Ramirez has? Well, he's got a conscience, but it's not like Jim Sheets' conscience, is it? How can you say that conscience is fixed? The Apostle Paul said, I've tried to behave with a clear conscience towards God and man. Your conscience can be clear.

In fact, you are born with a clear conscience. That's Acts 24.16. If you want to jot down the verse, look them up afterwards, it's Acts 24.16, if you want to jot it down. But in Romans 13, it speaks about an obedient conscience.

It says, not for the sake of avoiding punishment only, but also for conscience' sake. Supposing you go to pick up some dry cleaning, and you can't find parking, so you drive around the block. You hope somebody will have moved by the time you get around again, but nobody has moved, so you go around the block again.

Nobody has moved. You go around the block the third time. Then you think, well, I've only got to pick it up and run away with it.

Maybe I could get away with double parking. Before you double park, what do you do? You look this way, and you look that way. Why? If there's a cop or a meter maid coming by, you decide to drive around the block again.

Why? Because you're afraid of being punished. This verse says, don't do it only for the sake of avoiding punishment, but do it because it's right. I can't help but say this, but I have seen a man parked on the Anya Gabao in Sao Paulo, with four lines of cars parked outside him, blowing his horn for an hour and a half, trying to get out.

It's a dangerous thing. It could cause bad accidents. So don't double park for conscience sake.

In other words, be obedient to your conscience. You can have a mistaken conscience. The Apostle Paul says, this is Acts 23.1, I have lived in all good conscience to this day.

You say, that's since his conversion. Oh no, before he became a conscientious Christian, he was a conscientious Jew. Yet he was responsible for the murder of Stephen.

He said, I'll take responsibility. He held her close while they stoned him to death. But he was conscientious.

He thought that the man had committed blasphemy. So the Apostle Paul made a mistake. I was speaking to a girl who told me, my teacher in high school is a committed Christian.

But she said, she accused me of smoking between classes. She said, I don't smoke. She said, some of the other girls in the girls room were smoking.

But when I tried to explain, she said, don't say another word, I can smell it on your clothes. Now that teacher was conscientious, but quite mistaken. Therefore, it behooves you always to ask questions before you pass a judgment.

Have you ever talked to the sort of person that says, I don't want to hear another word? Not another word! Well, when they say that, you don't get a chance to explain. And you can make a mistake, even conscientiously. You can have a fussy conscience, if eating meat causes my brother to offend, I will not eat meat.

Well, that's not our problem today. Our problem today is the cost of the thing. But in those days it was a problem.

Well, what's the problem today? If drinking a cocktail may set some boy off on the road to alcoholism, then I won't touch the stuff. I'm happy to say that I've been a total abstainer all my life. Therefore, I'm glad to do that.

But some people can be too fussy. I was speaking at a conference overseas. I spoke on the movement of revival in Brazil.

I spoke on the Billy Graham crusades. I spoke on encouraging things. Then I said, any questions? A fellow raised his hand, he said, is it true that Mrs. Billy Graham uses lipstick? So I said, yes, it's true.

Is she a Christian? I said, a very good Christian. But you just said she uses lipstick. I said, so I did.

Then how could she be a Christian? She became a Christian by putting her trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. He was getting angry. He said, what's your attitude to cosmetics? I said, I never use them.

But he kept on after me. Finally another man hit him with his elbow and said, would you leave Billy Graham alone? Don't you remember that John Wesley had a bad wife, too? I told Billy and Ruth this up in their home in Montreat. I often visited them there.

And they laughed heartily. Well, it's not a fussy conscience, somebody fussing, well, you might say, what is your attitude? Well, I have a wife, a daughter, a granddaughter, and my attitude would be if they want to use beauty aids to make them look what they should look like. I don't mind.

But I don't like to see a woman paint her face like the back of a bus. But it's not a matter of conscience with me, you understand? It'd be too fussy. You might find it rather hard to believe that maybe thirty years ago you ladies wouldn't have dared come to church without a hat, but very seldom do you see a lady without a hat in church.

Generally when you do, she'd come from the East somewhere. Things do change, but those are not matters of conscience. At least you'd be too fussy about them.

You can have a weak conscience, I've mentioned that already. But it says you can have a seared conscience, that's an old Anglo-Saxon word for burned, a burned conscience. It says there are consciences, 1 Timothy 4.2, there are consciences that are seared.

Supposing one of you ladies puts on the iron to do a little bit of ironing, then the phone rings. And after a short feminine conversation of fifty-five minutes, you come back to the iron and you've forgotten whether it's on or off, the little red light's not working, so you take your finger and you wet it and you put it on the iron. Was it hot? It was hot.

You feel it. But the funny thing is, next day you can't feel anything with that finger. You can put that finger on the point of a pin, you don't feel it.

It's seared, the nerve endings are burned. Sometimes they renew themselves, but in a bad burn, they're never renewed. Well this verse really means this, if you keep doing what you know you shouldn't do, you lose all feeling in your conscience.

You can do, now just think for a moment, is there anything I do now that I didn't used to do? Now, it may be you're better educated today, for instance at one time I didn't believe in tithing until I found scripture for it. You see what I mean? But on the other hand, sometimes people compromise, and if they keep on doing it, they lose all feeling. But surely the worst warning of all is in Paul's word to Titus, Titus 115, unto the pure all things are pure, but to the impure and unbelieving nothing is pure.

Their very minds and consciences are defiled. Sometimes it says corrupt. Their very minds, they can't think straight anymore, and their consciences are corrupt.

Their conscience lets them do terrible things. That's the only way I can account for the wickedness that we have to put up with today. These people don't want to listen to the voice of God.

They keep on doing what they know they shouldn't do, and finally they make excuses for it. Imagine for instance, there's a magazine circulating in the United States, to teach people how to seduce little children. Do those people have a conscience? Well, they've kept on doing wicked things for so long, they can't think straight anymore.

Their minds and their consciences are corrupt. Now if you can have a clear conscience, and if you can have a corrupt conscience, how can you say, let conscience be your guide? You have to check your conscience. I find in Hebrews chapter 9, verse 9, it says, gifts and sacrifices repeatedly offered cannot cleanse the conscience of the worshipper.

Sometimes it says, cannot perfect the conscience of the worshipper. What does that mean? You can join the Boy Scouts and do a good turn every day, but it won't clean your conscience. You can support the Red Cross and build a hospital in Bangladesh, but it won't clean your conscience.

You can join a church and give admissions, but it won't clean your conscience. Why? Because doing right doesn't make up for doing wrong. If you want to put that to the test, go to the chief of police and say, I'd like to murder my wife.

Would it be all right if I built a hospital in Bangladesh first? He would say, certainly not. And if after you murder your wife, if you went down to Bolivia and built a clinic, you still have to stand charges of murder. A lot of people seem to think, as long as I do a few good things, that will make up for the other things.

No, no. It also says in chapter 9, verse 14, how much more shall the blood of Christ purify your conscience from dead works? You might say, how can the blood of Christ, shed nearly 2000 years ago, clean my conscience? That's part of the mystery of the atonement. Christ died for us, and through his atoning death

we may be forgiven.

I bought a watch that had a seconds hand, a minute hand, an hour hand, and an alarm. It got very dirty in India, there was a lot of dust in the air at certain seasons, and the watch stopped. So I didn't want to give it to any watchmaker.

He might have taken the good works out and put some poor ones in instead. So I enquired very carefully, who was the manufacturer. They said, well, it's Omega, and they've got an agency in Calcutta.

So I took my watch there. And when I got my watch back, I said, is it running okay now? The man said, better than new. I said, how could it be better than new? Well, he said, we've cleaned it, and we've checked it, and it is better than new.

In other words, they had it all checked up. If we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive us our sins, that's not the end of the promise, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If you'll just humble yourself to confess your sins, God will give you a spring cleaning as well.

Now, I have one other question to ask, and that is, is conscience the Holy Spirit? The answer is no. Conscience can make mistakes. The Holy Spirit never makes a mistake.

Conscience can be corrupted. The Holy Spirit can never be corrupted. Conscience can be fussy.

He's not fussy. But the Holy Spirit uses conscience. In fact, when people get so wicked that they burn their conscience and can't feel anymore, he breaks right through and convicts them of sin.

It says, when he is come, who said this? The Lord Jesus himself. When he is come, he will convince the world of sin. Have you ever tried to convince anyone of sin? You stop some man in the street and try to convince him of sin, he'll tell you where to go.

It's hard to convince people of sin. He'll turn around and say, I'm not a hypocrite like a bunch of hypocrites in your church wherever you go. No, it's hard to convince people of sin, but the Holy Spirit knows everything.

Like, for instance, you might say something to a man like that, are you sure things are all right in your life, and he might swear at you, but the Holy Spirit would shut him up by saying, what about the money you embezzled last year? What about the time you cheated? The Holy Spirit knows everything. It's the Holy Spirit who convinces of sin. He will convince the world of sin.

He will lead you into all truth, as believers. He will glorify me. He glorifies Jesus Christ.

So all we need to do is to turn to God, and ask the Holy Spirit, search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, see if there will be any wicked way in me, then lead me in the way everlasting. He'll do it. And he'll straighten your conscience out fast.

Let's see, do any of you know that hymn, Search me, O God, and know my heart today? Some of you do. I don't know whether to ask our guitarist to play it for you. You don't have a hymn book there, so I wrote that hymn in 1936 in New Zealand, 50 years ago this month.

And it's in most of the hymn books now. But I'm not a singer, but I don't know if we could manage to sing it. I think we could start.

Let's try it, those of us who know it. Search me, O God, and know my heart today. Try me, O Savior, know my thoughts, I pray.

See if there be some wicked way in me. Cleanse me from every sin and set me free. That's in quite a number of languages.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/0/SID0187.mp3>
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