


A PRELUDE TO *BIBLICAL* EVANGELISM



A large, ancient tree with thick, gnarled roots growing over stone ruins. The tree's trunk is massive and textured, with roots spreading out across the ground and over the stone structures. The background shows more stone ruins and lush green foliage. The scene is set in a natural, outdoor environment.

THE FRUIT OF
THE RIGHTEOUS IS A
TREE OF LIFE,
AND HE WHO IS WISE
WINS SOULS.

PROVERBS 11:30 NASB

**PRINCIPLES
FOR
BIBLICAL
EVANGELISM
FOUND IN
JOHN 4, “THE
WOMAN AT
THE WELL.”**

TAKE

- TAKE THE INITIATIVE! JN. 4:6-9

OFFER

- OFFER GOD’S MERCY! JN. 4:10-14

IDENTIFY

- IDENTIFY SPIRITUAL NEEDS! JN. 4:9-10

CONFRONT

- CONFRONT SIN JN! 4:16-18

REJECT

- REJECT FALSE WORSHIP! JN. 4:19-24

REVEAL

- REVEAL CHRIST! JN. 4:25-26

A WORKING CONSCIENCE

- **A WORKING CONSCIENCE** is one that's free from the burden of **unchecked sin** and **unaddressed guilt**. It's not weighed down by impurity or dulled by neglect. In a word, **IT'S CLEAR**.
- But how can we keep our consciences clear? How do we properly respond to guilt feelings in a way that keeps our consciences soft, sharp, and strong? Here are some simple, practical principles to keep in mind.
- **CONFESS AND FORSAKE KNOWN SIN**. Examine your guilt feelings in light of Scripture. Deal with the sin God's Word reveals. **(Prov. 28:13)** says, ***"He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion."***

STRENGTHEN YOUR CONSCIENCE

- **THE SMOKE DETECTORS** in your home or office are there to make you aware of a specific, imminent threat to your safety. But what good is a fire alarm that constantly misfires, sending you false warnings of nonexistent danger? A malfunctioning warning system can be as bad as having no alarms at all—worse if you get in the habit of ignoring it altogether.
- In the same way, a weak conscience can do more harm than good.
- A **WEAK CONSCIENCE** is not the same as a **SEARED CONSCIENCE**. A **SEARED CONSCIENCE BECOMES INACTIVE, SILENT, RARELY ACCUSING, AND INSENSITIVE TO SIN**. By comparison, the **WEAK CONSCIENCE IS HYPERSENSITIVE AND OVERACTIVE**.

SHARPEN YOUR CONSCIENCE

- Just like any other *emergency warning system*, your conscience needs to be properly *programmed* and *calibrated* in order to function correctly. An uninformed, untrained conscience will be unstable and unreliable, consistently misfiring and misleading, or even *altogether useless*.
- But just as dangerous as an *untrained conscience* is the conscience that's tied to the *wrong standard*.
- The conscience is informed by *tradition* as well as by *truth*, so the **STANDARDS** it holds us to are not necessarily **biblical** ones (**1 Cor. 8:6-9**). It can be needlessly condemning in areas where there is no biblical issue. In fact, it can try to hold us to the very thing the Lord is trying to release us from (**Rom. 14:14, 20-23**).

SOFTEN YOUR CONSCIENCE

- **YOUR CONSCIENCE** is like the nerve endings in your fingertips. Its sensitivity to external stimuli can be damaged by the buildup of callouses or even wounded so badly that it loses feeling altogether. **PAUL** wrote repeatedly about the grave dangers of a **CALLOUSED CONSCIENCE** (1 Cor. 8:10), a **WOUNDED CONSCIENCE** (1 Cor. 8:12), and a **SEARED CONSCIENCE** (1 Tim. 4:2).
- **Psychopaths, serial killers, pathological liars**, and other people who seem to lack any moral sense are extreme examples of people who have ruined or desensitized their consciences. But can such people really sin without remorse or scruples? If so, it's only because they have **RAVAGED** their own consciences through **IMMORALITY** and **LAWLESSNESS**. **THEY CERTAINLY WEREN'T BORN DEVOID OF ANY CONSCIENCE.**

- **THE CONSCIENCE** is privy to all our secret thoughts and motives. It is therefore a more accurate and more formidable **witness** in the soul's courtroom than any external observer. Those who gloss over an accusing conscience in favor of a human counselor's reassurances are playing a deadly game. Ill thoughts and motives may escape the eye of a human counselor, **but they cannot escape the eye of conscience. Nor will they escape the eye of an ALL-KNOWING GOD.** WHEN SUCH PEOPLE ARE SUMMONED TO FINAL JUDGMENT, **THEIR OWN CONSCIENCE** WILL BE FULLY AWARE OF **EVERY VIOLATION AND WILL STEP FORWARD AS A WITNESS AGAINST THEM.**
- **Rampant, unchecked sin** can temporarily numb and quiet the witness of your guilt. **BUT ONLY TRUE, BIBLICAL JUSTIFICATION CAN PERMANENTLY QUIET THE CONDEMNATION OF YOUR CONSCIENCE.**

- **CHRIST'S ATONEMENT** fully satisfied the demands of God's righteousness, so *forgiveness* and *mercy* are guaranteed to those who receive Christ in humble, *repentant faith*. We accept the responsibility for our sin and believe that in the death of Christ our sin is forgiven.
- But we continue to *confess our sin* so that the Lord can cleanse our conscience and give us joy. That is how *"the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse[s] your conscience from dead works to serve the living God"* (Heb. 9:14). In other words, **OUR FAITH COMMUNICATES TO OUR CONSCIENCE THAT WE ARE PARDONED THROUGH THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST.**

- A **SOUND CONSCIENCE** therefore goes hand in hand with **ASSURANCE OF SALVATION** (Heb. 10:22). The steadfast believer must maintain the proper focus of faith in order to have a conscience that is perpetually being cleansed from guilt: *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9).
- **WHAT A GIFT IT IS TO BE CLEANSED FROM A DEFILED CONSCIENCE! IN THE SAME WAY THAT A GRIEVED CONSCIENCE IS A FLASH OF HELL, SO A PURE CONSCIENCE IS A FORETASTE OF GLORY.**
- It’s the Christian’s high and holy duty to guard the purity of his regenerated conscience. **DON’T** let unchecked sin silence, stifle, or desensitize your conscience. **KEEP IT SOFT AND EFFECTIVE THROUGH FAITHFUL CONFESSION AND CAREFUL SELF-EXAMINATION.**

TRAIN YOUR CONSCIENCE

- In **1984**, an *Avianca Airlines* jet crashed in Spain. Investigators studying the accident made an eerie discovery. The “**black box**” cockpit recorders revealed that several minutes before impact a shrill, computer synthesized voice from the plane’s automatic warning system told the crew repeatedly in English, “**PULL UP! PULL UP!**”
- The pilot, evidently thinking the system was malfunctioning, snapped, “**Shut up, Gringo!**” and switched the system off. Minutes later the plane plowed into the side of a mountain. **Everyone on board died.**
- This tragic story on the news is a perfect parable of the way modern people treat the **warning messages** of their consciences. **The wisdom of our age says guilt feelings are nearly always erroneous or hurtful; therefore, we should switch them off.**

- But that kind of thinking betrays a deep misunderstanding of what the conscience is and how it works. Your conscience isn't the voice of God or the law of God. It's not an external force of any kind.
- As the Puritan **RICHARD SIBBES** wrote, the conscience is "the soul reflecting upon itself." *Put another way, it is the human faculty that judges our actions and thoughts by the light of the highest standard we perceive.* Like any warning system, **it needs to be programmed**—it needs to be taught and trained to discern right from wrong before it can be fully effective.
- That's why a **MORMON'S** conscience binds him to the ceremonies and rituals of the Mormon faith. It's why a **CATHOLIC'S** conscience binds him to the pope, the saints, and the sacraments of the Catholic Church. **YOUR STANDARD FOR MORALITY—WHATEVER IT IS—WILL SHAPE, GUIDE, AND DIRECT YOUR CONSCIENCE.**

-
- Therefore, it's absolutely crucial to establish **THE LORD'S HOLY STANDARD** for purity and godliness in your own heart. Anything less will lead you to have a **weak, shallow** conscience that regularly permits you to fall short of God's commands.
 - Or worse—it could lead you to **SIN**. If you subscribe to the world's no-shame, man-centered standard, your conscience can actually encourage you to sin. It can become so perverted and twisted that it makes you think you ought to be **lying, cheating**, and **gossiping**. It might even make you believe, as many people do today, that there is something wrong with you if you're not regularly getting **drunk, defrauding people**, and **having sex outside of marriage**.

- The fastest way to turn yourself over to the corruption of the world is to adopt its faulty, post-modern standard of morality and pervert your own conscience.
- Instead, you need to guard your conscience and protect it from the pollution of the world. You need to feed it regularly on the rich truth of God's Word, establishing His perfect law as the standard for your life.
- You do that through faithful *personal Bible study*, consistent intake of *quality teaching* and *exhortation from Scripture*, *godly accountability* and *persistent self-examination*.
- **THE LORD** gave you a conscience to help protect and defend you spiritually. ***BUT YOU'VE GOT TO PROTECT AND DEFEND YOUR CONSCIENCE IF IT'S GOING TO DO YOU ANY GOOD.***