



LESSON 5

Our Ally: The Conscience

“Conscience is the internal perception of God’s Moral Law.”

OSWALD CHAMBERS

Kirk’s Comment

I have seen in my personal experience how the Law can awaken a person’s conscience—even when it has been dead for many years due to sinful living. The Law is like a jolt of electricity powered by the Holy Spirit that shocks the conscience back into life, causing it to shine its light upon the sinner’s heart.

QUESTIONS & OBJECTIONS

“You are trying to make me feel guilty by quoting the Ten Commandments.”

Ask the person which one of the Ten Commandments makes him feel guilty. Simply state, “The Bible says, ‘You shall not steal.’ If you feel guilty when you hear that, why do you think that is? Could it be because you *are* guilty?” God gave us our conscience so we would know when we break His Law; the guilt we feel when we do something wrong tells us that we need to repent.



We live in a hostile world that is at war with God and with those who represent Him. It is therefore a great consolation to the soldier of Christ to know that he has a faithful ally right in the heart of the enemy. That ally is the sinner's conscience. The dictionary defines the conscience as "the human faculty that enables one to decide between right and wrong acts or behavior, especially in regard to one's own conduct." This is what the Bible is speaking of when it says that God has given "light" to every man (John 1:9). The word "conscience" (*con + science*) means "with knowledge." Whenever we sin, we do so "with knowledge" that what we're doing is wrong.

The problem is that sin is so enticing to the lost that they prefer to live in darkness rather than remain in the light of the conscience. To the lost, the conscience is a "party pooper." Many people snuff out the light and abandon themselves to the dark world of sin, not realizing the terrible consequences of their actions. As A. W. Tozer wrote, idolatry (making a god to suit ourselves) leads to a dulled conscience:

God's justice stands forever against the sinner in utter severity. The vague and tenuous hope that God is too kind to punish the ungodly has become a deadly opiate for the consciences of millions. It hushes their fears and allows them to practice all pleasant forms of iniquity while death draws every day nearer and the command to repent goes unregarded. As responsible moral beings, we dare not so trifle with our eternal future. (*The Knowledge of the Holy*)

How true are his words. As long as the voice of the sinner's conscience is silenced, he will readily embrace iniquity and will not flee from the wrath to come. We must therefore do all we can to awaken this ally so that it can do its intended work. Thank God that He has given us something to do the job—it is the rousing sound of the ten cannons of His Law that stirs the sleeping conscience. Charles Spurgeon said, "The conscience of a man, when he is really quickened and awakened by the Holy Spirit, speaks the truth. It rings the great alarm bell. And if he turns over in his bed, that great alarm bell rings out again and again, 'The wrath to come! The wrath to come! The wrath to come!'"



Walter Chantry wrote, “The absence of God’s holy Law from modern preaching is perhaps as responsible as any other factor for the evangelistic impotence of our churches and missions. Only by the light of the Law can the vermin of sin in the heart be exposed. Satan has effectively used a very clever device to silence the Law, which is needed as an instrument to bring perishing men to Christ. It is imperative that preachers of today learn how to declare the spiritual Law of God; for, until we learn how to wound consciences, we shall have no wounds to bind with gospel band-ages” (*Today’s Gospel: Authentic or Synthetic?*).

It’s been said that the conscience is the headline warning of sin, while the Law is the fine print. The spiritual nature of the Law gives the details to what the conscience already knows. When the Law is preached, the conscience affirms its truth. You can see this verified when using the Law, as the sinner’s head nods in affirmation of each Commandment.

Unfortunately, in modern evangelism, few believers address the sinner’s conscience as we should. Spurgeon said, “In many ministries, there is not enough of probing the heart and arousing the conscience by the revelation of man’s alienation from God, and by the declaration of the selfishness and the wickedness of such a state.”

It was the use of God’s Law, when applied to the conscience, that was the key to great revivals of the past. Martyn Lloyd-Jones noted this fact:

The trouble with people who are not seeking for a Savior, and for salvation, is that they do not understand the nature of sin. It is the peculiar function of the Law to bring such an understanding to a man’s mind and conscience. That is why great evangelical preachers 300 years ago in the time of the Puritans, and 200 years ago in the time of Whitefield and others, always engaged in what they called a preliminary “Law work.”

The preaching of the Law was also the great key used by John Wesley to open the hearts of men and women to the gospel. He said,

It is the ordinary method of the Spirit of God to convict sinners by the Law. It is this which, being set home on the conscience, generally breaks the rocks in pieces. It is more especially this part of the



Word of God which is quick and powerful, full of life and energy and sharper than any two-edged sword.

Consider these wise words from Charles Spurgeon:

When once God the Holy Spirit applies the Law to the conscience, secret sins are dragged to light, little sins are magnified to their true size, and things apparently harmless become exceedingly sinful. Before that dread searcher of the hearts and trier of the reins makes His entrance into the soul, it appears righteous, just, lovely, and holy; but when He reveals the hidden evils, the scene is changed. Offenses which were once styled peccadilloes, trifles, freaks of youth, follies, indulgences, little slips, etc., then appear in their true color, as breaches of the Law of God, deserving condign punishment.

Never forget that the sinner's conscience is your ally. Rather than fight against you, it will work with you. It is independent of his sin-loving will. Sin, however, has the conscience tied hand and foot and its voice gagged. You must cut the ropes with the sharp edge of the sword of God's Law and untie the gag. Don't be afraid to appeal directly to the sinner's conscience: "God gave you a conscience; you know right from wrong. Listen to the voice of your conscience. It will remind you of sins that you have committed." You will be encouraged in battle when you hear the voice of conscience coming through. It is the work of the Law written on the sinner's heart, and it will bear witness with the Law of God (Romans 2:15).

QUESTIONS

1. What does the word "conscience" mean?

2. What is the function of the conscience?



Christian: “Can’t you see what you are doing? You are judging whether something is morally acceptable by when it gives you pleasure.”

Larry Lustburger: “But . . .”

Christian: “God gave you a conscience. You know right from wrong. Isn’t that true?”

Larry Lustburger: “No.”

Christian: “So if someone steals your wallet, you don’t mind because you have no idea what’s right and what’s wrong?”

Larry Lustburger: “Okay. So I know right from wrong.”

Christian: “You are like a man who has removed the batteries from his smoke detector because he doesn’t want it to alarm him. Listen to your conscience. It is trying to warn you of danger. Jesus said, ‘Whoever looks upon a woman to lust after her has committed adultery already with her in his heart.’ You are in big trouble. If you don’t repent and trust the Savior, you will end up in hell. On Judgment Day you will be without excuse.”

FEATHERS FOR ARROWS

An old drunk once stumbled along a sidewalk heading for his home. His faithful dog saw him approaching and watched his every move. As he entered his home, his dog joyfully followed him. When the drunken man collapsed on the floor in his living room, the dog snuggled up to him, waiting for his master to wake up.

Suddenly, in the middle of the night, the old drunk was roused by the dog’s barking. The last thing he wanted was a barking dog! He staggered to his feet, grabbed a chair and threw it at the dog, then collapsed again.

It the morning he awoke to a shocking sight. Thieves had broken into the house in the night and stolen everything he owned—everything, that is, except a broken chair and a dead dog. His faithful friend had been trying to warn him of danger and he had killed the best friend he had.



WORDS OF COMFORT

For some time, I was a regular guest on an interesting radio talk show called “Religion on the Line.” The two-hour program had a Catholic priest, a Protestant minister, and a rabbi as guests each week.

One day, as Sue and I arrived at the studio and were signing in, the security guard asked, “How was church today?” I told him it was good, and asked if he was a Christian. He said he was one once, but had fallen away from his faith. I suggested that what would get him back to the faith was a look at the Ten Commandments. I asked him if he had lied. He had, so I asked, “What does that make you?”

He hedged by saying, “A storyteller.”

I smiled and said, “Come on . . . what does that make you?”

He said, “A liar.”

He had also stolen, and was therefore a thief. But when I asked him if he had ever broken the Seventh Commandment by lusting after a woman, he said that he never had. I didn’t believe him, so when his eyes looked down in conviction, I put my hand on his to get back his eye contact and said, “Now, be honest.”

His eyes then sparkled as he said, “I’m gay.”

It was then that I lost eye contact. I was holding his hand! Sometimes things don’t go the way we plan.

Memory Verse

“Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.”

ROMANS 2:15

Last Words

John Wilhot, the second Earl of Rochester, lived a life of sin and infidelity. But God saved him from his sin and skepticism. Just before he died in 1680, he laid his hand on the Bible and said solemnly and earnestly:

“The only objection against this Book is a bad life! I shall die now, but oh what unspeakable glories do I see! What joys beyond thought or expression am I sensible of! I am assured of God’s mercy to me through Jesus Christ. Oh, how I long to die!”