

A Seared Conscience

by Charles Finney

A seared conscience is a state of insensibility to moral obligation and ill desert for moral delinquency, resulting from neglect of moral obligation, insensibility to moral obligation, and ill desert for moral delinquency.

Scripture: Psalm 32:3-5, Proverbs 28:13, Romans 2:15, Ephesians 4:19, 1 Timothy 4:2, 2 Timothy 3:1-5, Hebrews 10:22, James 1:22-24, 1 Peter 3:16, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Conscience", "Moral Responsibility"

Description

Charles Finney addresses the concept of a seared conscience, explaining that it is not merely a lack of knowledge of right and wrong, but a state of insensitivity to moral obligations and guilt. He outlines the characteristics and consequences of a seared conscience, emphasizing how it can develop through neglecting moral duties, indulging in sin, and resisting the affirmations of reason. Finney warns that a seared conscience leads to apathy towards moral issues and a lack of remorse for wrongdoing, ultimately distancing individuals from God. He encourages self-examination and a return to a sensitive conscience to restore moral clarity and spiritual health.

Transcript

TEXT--1 Tim. 4:2: "Having their conscience seared with a hot iron."

In this discussion I will show:

- I. WHAT CONSCIENCE IS NOT.
- II. WHAT IT IS.
- III. WHAT IS INTENDED BY A SEARED CONSCIENCE.
- IV. THE EVIDENCES OF A SEARED CONSCIENCE.
- V. HOW IT BECOMES SEARED.
- VI. CONSEQUENCES OF A SEARED CONSCIENCE.
 - I. What conscience is not.
 1. It is not the mere knowledge of right and wrong.

2. It is not the mere knowledge of whether we do or do not, have or have not done, or been, or said, or felt right or wrong.

II. What conscience is.

1. Conscience may be regarded, either as a power or as an act of the mind. In the former case, it is that power of the mind that affirms and enforces moral obligation, and that pronounces upon the desert of obedience or of disobedience. Conscience is not a legislator that makes law, but a judge that convicts of guilt, passes sentence, in respect to the past, and decrees and enforces moral obligation to obey law, in regard to the future. Conscience, as a judge, smiles upon obedience, and frowns upon disobedience.

As an act of the mind, conscience is an affirmation or testifying state of the reason, in respect--

(1.) To the agreement or disagreement of the will with the law of God.

(2.) With respect to the moral character of this agreement or disagreement of the will with the law of God.

(3.) With respect to the good or ill desert of this agreement or disagreement.

(4.) With respect to our moral obligation to obey in future. In short, it is the conscious affirmation or felt testimony of the reason upon these points. It seems sometimes to be used in the Bible as including that state of the sensibility, compunction, and distress on the one hand, or of conscious peace and happiness on the other, that is naturally connected with the emphatic affirmations of reason. The Bible is not given in philosophical language; but for the most part in popular language. And I am persuaded, that the popular understanding of the term conscience often, if not always, includes that state of the sensibility which we call remorse, or approbation. I do not, in this definition, intend to speak in strictly scientific language; and what I have said is sufficiently accurate for the purpose of possessing the minds of those who do not study metaphysics, of what is intended by conscience.

III. What is intended by a seared conscience.

1. It is the refusal or neglect of the reason, or that power of the mind, whatever you may please to call it, which makes the affirmations of which I have just spoken, to enter into judgment, and make these emphatic representations of moral obligation or of guilt.

2. A man may know his duty, without feeling impelled by an emphatic affirmation of moral obligation to do it.

3. He may know that he is or has been wrong, without the consciousness of being arraigned, convicted of guilt, and condemned. This state of mind clearly indicates a seared conscience.

4. The figurative language of the text implies, a state of insensibility to moral obligation, and of ill desert for moral delinquency.

5. A seared conscience may be general or particular; that is, the mind may become generally insensible to moral obligation and the ill desert of sin; or this insensibility may be confined to particular sins.

IV. What are evidences of a seared conscience.

1. A general apathy on moral subjects, is conclusive evidence of a generally seared conscience, and is a most guilty and alarming state of mind.
2. Apathy on particular moral subjects, is an evidence of a seared conscience, in respect to those particular subjects.
3. When questions that concern our own well-being, or the well-being of others, are not regarded and treated as moral questions. For example--when the Abolition of Slavery, Temperance, Moral Reform, Politics, Business Principles, Physiological and Dietetic Reform--when these, I say, are not treated as moral questions, and as imposing moral obligation, the conscience must be in a seared state.
4. When questions that respect our own usefulness, or the usefulness of others, are not treated as moral questions, it is because the conscience is seared with a hot iron.
5. When the choice of a profession, companion for life, or any thing else, that must increase or diminish, or in any way have a bearing upon the moral influence we are to exert upon the world, fails to be regarded and treated as a moral question, of serious and deeply solemn import, and as imposing moral obligation of awful magnitude, conscience must be seared with a hot iron.
6. When you can neglect to inform yourselves, on such subjects, without a sense of guilt; especially when the means of information are within your reach; and still more especially, if the subject be presented to your consideration, if, under such circumstances, you can remain quiet in ignorance, in respect to any question of usefulness or duty, without a deep sense of guilt, it brings out the demonstration that your conscience is seared with a hot iron.
7. When you can neglect any known duty without the bitterness of remorse, your conscience is seared with a hot iron.
8. When you can trifle with your health; go out in the snow or wet, with thin shoes and hose, or in any way inappropriately clothed, unless you are under the necessity of doing so, your conscience must be seared with a hot iron. When you can neglect to ventilate your room, see that you have not too little or too much fire--in short, when you can in any way trifle with your health, that precious gift of God, without conviction of guilt, your conscience is alarmingly seared.
9. When you can trifle with your time; spend it in reading plays, and novels, mere slang in newspapers, or in any other way, squander an hour or a moment of your precious time, without compunction, your conscience is already seared.
10. When you can hinder others and trifle with their precious time, without remorse, your conscience is seared. Suppose you have an appointment to meet others on business, and are behind your time, and hinder them; what an evil is this. If you can be guilty of it without remorse, your conscience is seared as with a hot iron. If you have boarders, and do not prepare their meals punctually, but hinder them by not having their meals in readiness at the specified moment; you have done them and the cause of God an injury. And if you do not feel condemned for this, it is because your conscience is seared.
11. If you do not feel condemned for coming late to meeting, and disturbing the worship of God's house, it is because your conscience is seared with a hot iron. Especially is this true, if you are a minister, and are in the habit of being behind your time.

12. If you can stand and talk with and hinder a man while at work, or in any way cause him to spend a moment's time in vain, without remorse, it is an evidence that your conscience is seared.

13. When you can squander your possessions in any way, and consume them upon your lusts, without remorse, your conscience is seared as with a hot iron. If you can spend God's money for tobacco, or any unnecessary and unwholesome articles of luxury or dress, without deep compunction, it shows conclusively that your conscience, upon those subjects, is seared with a hot iron.

14. When you do not feel that you are stewards, and absolutely and practically regard yourselves in this light, in respect to all the possessions you have, it is because your conscience is seared with a hot iron.

15. When you can in any way disregard the rights of others, in things never so trifling, it indicates a seared conscience.

16. When you can neglect to pay your honest debts, or when you can consider yourself as not to blame for being in debt, especially when your debts were not contracted under the pressure of an absolute necessity, it is because your conscience is seared with a hot iron.

17. When you can lay a stumbling block before a brother, without compunction or remorse; when you can indulge in any course of life that has a tendency to mislead him--when you can unnecessarily try his temper, say or do any thing that has a tendency to lead him into sin, it indicates a seared conscience.

18. When you can suffer difficulties between yourselves and others to remain unsettled, without using every Christian means to adjust them, it proves that your conscience is seared as with a hot iron.

19. When you can be in the habit of borrowing and using your neighbor's tools, without perceiving and feeling the injurious tendency of such conduct, and without realizing the pernicious principle on which such a practice turns, it is because you have a seared conscience. Many persons act as if they supposed that conscience had to do with but one side of this question--that it is the lender exclusively, and not the borrower, who is to look to his conscience, and see that he does not violate the principles of benevolence. But let us look at the principle contained in this. If you borrow money of a man, you expect to pay him interest, or at least to restore the same amount you borrow; but if you borrow a man's coat or tools, that are injured by wearing, it is the lender and not the borrower, that has to pay the interest, and often a very high rate of interest too. Many a man has lost his tools, and paid at the rate of twenty-five per cent for the privilege of lending them. Now suppose a man has a hundred dollars in money. Money is scarce, and a hundred men desire to borrow it, every one in his turn. And now suppose each one should wear a dollar out of it. The man's hundred dollars are soon used up. But suppose a man should come to you and ask you to lend him money, and insist upon it that you should pay him interest, instead of his paying you interest, and you should say, "Why, I never heard of such a request! Do you ask me to lend you money and pay you interest besides?" Now any man would be ashamed, and would have reason to be ashamed, to make such a request; and his naked selfishness would in such a case be most manifest to every one. And who would think of accusing the lender of selfishness, in such a case, if he should refuse to let his money go for nothing, pay interest besides, and finally take the trouble to go after it. And yet this involves precisely the same principle upon which many persons conduct, in the neighborhoods where they live, in continually borrowing and using up their neighbors' tools, and perhaps compelling them to go after them, and that too without compunction or remorse. Nay, so far are they from feeling compunction or remorse, and perceiving that they are actuated by the most unpardonable selfishness, that they would complain, and suppose themselves to have a right to complain of the selfishness of a neighbor who should refuse to

indulge them in acting upon such principles.

By this I do not mean to say, or intimate, that it is not proper and a duty, in certain cases, for neighbors to borrow and use each other's tools. But this I do say, that the practice as practiced, is unjustifiable. Borrowing should not be resorted to, except in cases where a man might, without any cause for blushing, ask a man to lend him money, not only without interest, but also ask him to pay interest.

20. When you can neglect secret prayer, without feeling condemned, and a great sense of guilt resting upon you, it is because you have a seared conscience.

21. The same is true when you can perform secret prayer slightly, with little or no feeling, faith, or earnestness.

22. The same is true, when you can indulge wandering thoughts, and use words in prayer without scarcely knowing what you say, and all this without deep compunction and remorse. This state of mind is a certain indication of a seared conscience.

23. When any duty is urged upon you, without your feeling the force of moral obligation to perform it--when truth and argument do not take hold of your mind, and deeply impress you with a sense of responsibility--and when, in such a case, you do not feel the impressive affirmations of conscience, impelling you to the discharge of duty, it indicates a seared conscience.

24. When you can satisfy yourselves with the outward performance of duty, while your heart is not right--when you can satisfy yourselves with the mere form of religion and duty, while your heart is not deeply engaged in it, and this without a deep sense of guilt, it indicates a seared conscience.

25. When you can neglect the means of grace, or attend upon them carelessly, in a prayerless, heartless manner--when you can indulge wandering thoughts under preaching or in reading your Bible; when you can go to and return from meeting, without earnest prayer, that the word may be blessed to you--when you can hear and soon forget what you hear, without solemnly laying it to heart, with a fixed purpose of entire obedience--when these things can be without deep compunction, it is because your conscience is seared with a hot iron.

26. When you can satisfy yourself with any thing, as a performance of duty, while you are not actuated by love, without compunction, it is because your conscience is seared, and become very superficial in its affirmations.

27. When light upon any subject does not cause your conscience to enter into judgment, strongly affirm moral obligation, and pronounce its sentence upon you, if you neglect your duty, it is because your conscience is seared with a hot iron.

28. When evidence makes but little impression upon you--when it does but little good to reason with you--when light, truth, argument, seem to pass over your mind, without lodging in it--when you are not convicted and converted, by a reasonable degree of evidence--when you do not feel yourself shut up to the necessity of yielding to a preponderance of evidence, or falling under deep condemnation, it is because your conscience is seared.

29. When the discussion of any important practical question can be postponed, and give place to matters of less importance--when you can lay up such a question for future consideration, and go on in courses

that are at least questionable, merely designing at some future time to examine and settle the question--when this can be done without a deep sense of guilt, it shows that the conscience is seared with a hot iron.

30. When any form of selfishness can be indulged, without compunction, it is because you have a seared conscience.

31. When you can transact business upon selfish principles, take advantages in business, that shall put money in your own pocket at the expense of another--when you can enrich yourself by any employment, without regarding the interest of those with whom you deal, as you do your own, your conscience is seared with a hot iron.

32. When you can complain of a want of conviction of sin, this is evidence of a seared conscience.

33. When you can neglect to make confession of your sins to those who have been injured by them, and thus persist in your injustice and wickedness, without remorse, your conscience is seared with a hot iron.

34. When you can make excuses for not confessing--when you do not feel impelled by a sense of duty to make full confession--when you can satisfy yourself with a heartless, constrained, or partial confession--when you can be satisfied with a private confession, when it ought to be public--when you can be satisfied with confession, without repentance--your conscience is seared with a hot iron.

35. When you can neglect to make restitution, to the extent of your ability--when you can retain in your possession that which in equity belongs to another--in short, when you can hold on to possessions that were obtained by a violation of the great law that requires you to love your neighbor as yourself--when you can hold on to them, without restoring them to their rightful owners, when it is in your power, it is a demonstration of a seared conscience.

36. When you have no sense of moral obligation in respect to those habits of life, that have an influence upon your brethren, your family, the community in which you dwell, and upon the world at large, it is because your conscience is seared. For example--if you have no conscience on the subject of retiring to rest in due season, and rising in the morning also at such an hour as best consists with health--if you can habituate or allow yourself, on any occasion, without necessity, to sit up late at night and rise late in the morning--if you can have no system in this respect, no principle, no conscience about it--if these things are left without consideration or reflection, to the neglect and injury of your own health, the injury of your family, and of course to the injury of the Church and the world, your conscience must be seared with a hot iron. If you have no conscience in respect to observing these things, for your family's sake; and if you do not require them and all under your control to have system, principle and conscience upon these subjects, from which they will no more depart without imperative necessity than they would go without their necessary food, it is because your conscience is seared.

37. When you have no conscience in regard to your modes of dress--if you can compress your chest with tight lacing, or in any other way expose your health, for the sake of personal appearance, without compunction of conscience, it is because it is seared with a hot iron.

38. When you can wear ornamental dress, consult appearance rather than utility, in your dress and equipage; can have regard to the fashion, rather than to health, utility, or Christian economy, without compunction, your conscience is seared.

39. When you can neglect cleanliness, in respect to your person, your dress, your house, or your furniture, your conscience is seared.

40. When you can neglect to attend to things in their proper season, or only transact your business in a careless and slovenly manner--when you can leave your tools where you use them, without putting them in their place--when you can leave them exposed to the weather, leave your barn doors open, and things around you in a state of confusion and disorder--when you can waste any thing--in short, whenever you can neglect to attend to every duty that belongs to you, at the right time, in the right manner, and in all respects as it ought to be attended to, without feeling condemned for this neglect, it is because your conscience is seared with a hot iron.

41. Whenever you can, through any neglect or carelessness, break any thing, injure the tools, furniture, or any thing else with which you are entrusted, whether it belongs to yourself or any one else, without compunction, your conscience is seared.

42. When you can neglect to ventilate your rooms, air your beds and clothing--neglect to exercise, labor, or rest, or to attend to any thing else that your health and highest usefulness demand, without a sense of guilt and condemnation, your conscience is seared.

43. When you can neglect to support the institutions of the gospel, to the extent of your ability, to pay your minister's salary, to aid in the support of the expenses of the church--when you can see the house of God lie waste, the doors and windows out of repair, the house in a filthy state, the stoves out of order, and things at loose ends--when you can suffer these things to be, without deep compunction of conscience, your conscience is seared with a hot iron; and when a church is in a state to suffer such things, without deep remorse and self-condemnation, the conscience of the church is seared.

44. But to notice again personal habits, if you have no system, no conscience, no principles in respect to the hours of eating and drinking, but allow yourselves to consult convenience rather than physiological law, taking your meals at one time many hours apart, and at other times within three or four hours of each other, thus recklessly violating the laws of God established in your own constitution, your conscience is seared.

45. If you have no conscience in respect to the kinds of food and clothing, with which you attempt to supply the physiological wants of your system, if you can neglect to inform yourself in respect to what your habits ought to be in order to secure your highest health and usefulness, if you can make your depraved appetites the guide and measure of indulgence, without deep remorse, it is because your conscience is seared with a hot iron.

46. When you can waste God's money in administering to your lusts, when you can buy tobacco, tea, coffee, and such like fashionable but pernicious articles without deep compunction and remorse, your conscience is seared with a hot iron.

47. When you can say you have no conscience on these subjects, when you can give countenance to these practices, and to the use of these articles at home or abroad, when you can use them yourselves, or furnish them for your friends, and thus countenance practices by which the Church is expending a hundred or a thousand times as much in poisons, and in the gratification of depraved artificial appetites, as it is for building up the cause of Christ and saving deathless souls from hell, when you can hear the wail of hundreds of millions of immortal beings coming upon every wind of heaven and crying out for the bread of

life, and still have no conscience on the subject of the use of these pernicious articles, by which the Church is poisoned, and the heathen robbed of the everlasting gospel of the blessed God--if you have no conscience on such subjects as these, it is because your conscience is seared with a hot iron.

48. When you can see the Church indulging in such things and not reprove them, at home or abroad, especially by the impressive lesson of your own example, you must be extremely hardened, and your conscience seared as with a hot iron.

49. When you can neglect to scrutinize your motives of action, and go on day after day without self-examination in this respect, when you can neglect to exercise a godly jealousy over yourself, without remorse, your conscience is seared.

50. When you can speak evil of a neighbor, when you can publish his real or supposed faults without necessity, and do this without remorse, your conscience is seared.

51. When you can suffer sin upon a brother without faithfully reproofing him and yet not feel compunction of conscience, it is because it is seared.

52. When you can feel contempt for the person or talents of any one without deep remorse, it is because your conscience is seared.

53. When you can think of sin without horror, something as they would feel at such a thought in heaven, it is because your conscience is seared. How think you an angel would feel if the thought should come over his mind--to-day I shall sin against God? How would a saint in heaven feel under the same impression? Why, it would come over all heaven like the shock of an earthquake. They would all stand aghast and grow pale, would hang up their harps, and wail out with pain at the thought that one of their inhabitants should sin against God. Now what state of mind must that be when you can expect to sin without the deepest horror, without feeling a chill come over you and your blood almost coagulate in your veins. What, sin against God! Why, if the thought does not shock and agonize you, if the expectation that you shall sin does not seem even more terrible to you than death, where is your conscience--in what state of mind are you? Have you any sympathy with heaven? No, indeed. And perhaps I might and ought to say that if you can think of sinning without the most excruciating agony, you are even more callous than they are in hell.

V. How the conscience becomes seared.

1. The conscience becomes seared by the will resisting the affirmations of reason. The conscience is now generally supposed to be a function of the reason. Whether it is regarded in this light or not, it is certain that it becomes seared when the will opposes itself and continues opposed to the decisions of the reason.

2. Especially does the conscience become seared, when the will persists in courses directly denounced or condemned by the conscience. In such cases the conscience soon becomes indignantly silent and leaves the soul stupefied to pursue its course of disobedience.

3. It is often seared by an individual's resorting to sophistry to justify any course of disobedience.

4. It becomes seared by breaking resolutions. When you allow yourself to break over or violate a resolution to do your duty, you have done much to sear and stifle your conscience.

5. When you violate your promise on any subject you have done much to sear your conscience. If you persist in this violation your conscience will become seared with a hot iron.
6. Conscience becomes seared by diverting the attention of the mind from the moral character of your own actions. If you suffer yourself to pass along without attending to the moral quality of your actions, your conscience will soon become seared with a hot iron.
7. Indulgence in known sin of any kind will greatly and rapidly sear your conscience.
8. Especially indulgence in presumptuous sins or those sins already put under the condemning sentence of conscience. Whenever conscience has called your attention to the sinfulness of any act or course of action and you still persist in it, this is a presumptuous sin, and such a course will soon cause your conscience to become seared with a hot iron.
9. By indulgence in that, the lawfulness of which is regarded as doubtful by you. In speaking on the subject of meats offered to idols, the Apostle says "he that doubteth is damned (or condemned) if he eat," manifestly recognizing the principle that whatever is of doubtful lawfulness, is to be omitted on pain of condemnation, and if persisted in, the conscience will soon become seared. Thus many persons indulge in things, the lawfulness of which they at first doubt; but directly their conscience becomes so seared that they no longer think with any degree of uneasiness whether it is doubtful or not, and they come to have no doubts about it, simply because their conscience has become seared with a hot iron.
10. By hypocritical professions conscience becomes seared--by insincere professions of friendship, or by any insincerity whatever, the conscience will soon become so seared that it can be practiced without remorse.
11. By holding on to hope already, and perhaps often, pronounced hypocritical by the decisions of conscience, it will be seared, and the hope, perhaps, grow firmer and firmer. Less and less doubt will be entertained of its genuineness in proportion as the conscience becomes seared.
12. By indulging the appetites and passions conscience becomes seared. When persons allow themselves to eat too much, at improper seasons, and improper kinds of food, merely to gratify their appetites, their conscience will soon become so seared, that they can indulge in such things without compunction. They can then go on and break down their health, and even destroy their lives by these indulgences, and then stupidly and madly ascribe their broken down health and premature death to a mysterious providence.
13. By indulging evil tempers, pride, vanity, envy, jealousy, ambition, prejudice, hatred, whatever unholy temper is indulged, will soon so sear the conscience as to leave the mind in a state of great apathy in regard to its moral character.
14. By indulging evil habits of any kind, using tobacco in any form, or intoxicating drinks, indulging in solitary sins or secret wickedness of any kind, the conscience becomes seared in an awful and alarming manner. How often do we find persons who can indulge in the use of tobacco, and sometimes even ministers of the gospel, can indulge themselves in that filthy abomination without remorse.
15. Conscience is seared by evil speaking. When you allow yourselves to speak unnecessarily of a brother's faults, or even uncharitably to speak of the wickedest man on earth, you do much to sear your conscience and blunt your moral sensibilities.

16. By self-justifying excuses conscience becomes seared. Whenever you resort to any form of excuse for sin, you not only harden your heart but sear your conscience, until by and by you may come into such a state as to be in a great measure satisfied with your own excuses, and fatally deceive your own soul.

17. By procrastinating the performance of duty. Whenever you defer the performance of present duty or decline or neglect to attend to that now which ought to be done at the present time, you sear your own conscience.

18. By attempts to defend error conscience becomes seared. How often men have begun only to attempt the defense of that which they knew to be error, and have ended in believing their own lie to the destruction of their souls. It is a fearful thing to attempt to defend error on any subject, and very few courses are more certain to result in a seared conscience, a hard heart and a ruined soul than this.

19. By watching for the halting of others, the conscience becomes seared. How many men by giving up their attention to the sins of others, have overlooked their own sins until their conscience has become seared with a hot iron. In this state of mind they can see enough to blame in others, but very little in themselves. They can become censorious and denunciatory, and wonder at the long-suffering of God in sparing others in the midst of their awful iniquity, almost insensible of the fact that they themselves are among the greatest sinners out of hell.

20. By neglecting to administer reproof to those whose sins are known to us. The conscience soon becomes so seared that we can indulge in the same things ourselves with very little compunction.

21. By resenting or resisting reproof when admonished by others, by calling it censoriousness and denunciation, caviling at the manner and spirit of reproof, instead of exclaiming with David when reproved by Nathan--"I have sinned against the Lord." This is one of the ways in which I have observed that ministers are exceedingly apt to sear their own conscience. You may have observed that they are particularly apt, at least some of them to resist and resent reproof, and sear their own conscience in a most alarming manner, while they are not ashamed to manifest a spirit under reproof which they would not hesitate severely to rebuke in any body else.

22. By mocking God in prayer and in other devotional duties. This also is one of the ways in which church officers, and especially ministers of the gospel, are exceedingly in danger of searing their conscience. If they suffer their religious exercises to become professional rather than strictly devotional, if they suffer themselves to pray and preach and exhort because it is their business, when their hearts are not deeply imbued with the spirit of devotion, then conscience soon becomes so seared that they are ripe for ecclesiastical denunciation, excision, opposition to revivals, and almost every species of reform. How often and how distressingly has this been manifest. And what is worse than all, the conscience becomes so seared, that for these things they will not suffer reproof if faithfully administered and with the utmost kindness, without manifesting great indignation and perhaps a spirit of revenge. O, with what pain do I say this of some of the ministers of the everlasting gospel.

23. By grieving and resisting the Holy Spirit many sear their conscience. Many persons stifle and quench conviction until they have very little more moral sensibility than a beast.

24. Again by neglecting and refusing to act up to light as fast as received.

25. By neglecting to reach after light on every question of duty.

26. By neglecting universal reformation. If reformation be not universal, it cannot truly go forward at all. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point he is guilty of all." The indulgence of any form of sin renders all obedience for the time being impossible. It is a state of mind the direct opposite of holiness. If in any thing therefore you neglect reformation, if you do not extend it universally over the whole field of moral obligation, your conscience will soon become seared with a hot iron.

27. By transacting business on worldly principles. No man can adopt the common business maxims of the world, and act upon them with a clear conscience. The law of God requires you to love your neighbor as yourself. Who then can adopt the principle of making the best bargain possible, consulting only self-interest, without deeply and rapidly searing his conscience?

28. By engaging in party politics. By this I do not say that all attention to politics will sear the conscience. For as human governments are necessary, politics are to be a part of every man's religion. But mark what I say. No man can go with a party as a party, vote for the candidates and support the measures of a party, without proper regard to the moral character of the candidates and measures, without rapidly and deeply searing his conscience. How many young converts have rapidly and ruinously backslidden by engaging in party politics and by transacting business upon worldly principles. Why it is as certain as that your soul lives, if you do these things your conscience will become seared with a hot iron.

29. By exaggeration, or putting a false coloring upon facts related by you, or a hypocritical covering up of the real truth, where truth ought to be known, conscience becomes seared.

30. By dishonesty in small matters, taking trifling advantage in weights and measures, little negligences in the transaction of business for others, coming late to labor, squandering scraps of time, by standing still or other inattention to business when in the employment of others, and by thousands of nameless little dishonesties, the conscience becomes deeply and ruinously seared.

31. By speaking evil of others, by receiving much good at the hand of others without any endeavor to repay them or do them good. I might pursue this part of the subject to any length, but must break off here.

I am reluctantly compelled to omit the remaining head and some remarks till the next.

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