

The Battle Within : The Anguished Conscience vs the Answering Conscience

by Ian Paisley

The sermon emphasizes the importance of a quiet and clear conscience, which is a source of peace and joy, and can only be achieved through a right relationship with God.

Duration: 32:03

Scripture: John 8:1

Topics: "Guilty Conscience", "Repentance Needed"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of the woman accused of adultery in the Gospel of John, chapter 8, verses 1-11. The Pharisees bring the woman to Jesus and accuse her of being caught in the act of adultery. The preacher emphasizes the controversy surrounding Jesus' response of 'neither do I condemn thee' to the woman. He then goes on to discuss the consequences of a guilty conscience, using examples from the Bible such as Esau and Joseph's brothers. The sermon highlights the power of a wounded conscience and the need for repentance.

Transcript

We're turning to our Bibles, and you'll find an authorized version, the King James Version of the Bible in English in front of you in the pew. Pick it up, and turn with me to the fourth gospel, the gospel according to John, at the chapter 8. We're reading from verse 1 to verse 11, the first 11 verses. The 8th chapter of John's gospel, verse 1. Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives, and early in the morning he came again into the temple.

And all the people came with him, and he sat down and taught them. And the scribes and pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery in the very act.

Now Moses in the law commanded us that such should be stoned. But what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.

That's the only record of Christ's writing in all his ministry. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at you. And again,

he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

And when they which heard it being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself and saw none but the woman, he saith unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord.

And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin no more. And God will stamp his word with his own divine seal of approval and blessing.

Let us bow our heads in prayer. I take the promised Holy Ghost, the blessed power of Pentecost, to fill me to the uttermost. I take, thank God, he undertakes for me.

And the people of God said, Amen. You may be seated. In the 8th chapter of John's Gospel, and verse 9, we read these words.

And they which heard it being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. The scripture about the woman who was accused of being taken in adultery has caused great controversy.

And people say, Why did the Lord ever say, Neither do I condemn thee? But if you read this portion of scripture as it is written, you will understand that this woman was not answerable for this crime. Because they said to the Lord, they said, tempting him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery in the very act. Well, where was the man? The man taken in adultery was first to be punished, and then his victim.

But there was no man arrested. And so the Lord wrote. It's the only time he ever wrote.

I believe he wrote, Thou shalt be put his mark on the Word done. And these men were smitten in their conscience because they were liars. And one by one, the Lord Jesus said, Neither do I condemn thee.

So we should read the scriptures as they are, and not as we think they are. My message tonight is on the battle within. The conscience seer versus the conscience seer.

Could I refer you to two other scriptures? One of them is in the first epistle of Timothy. And it tells us there in that epistle that there is such a thing as having a conscience seared with a hot iron. 1 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 2. Speaking lies and hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron.

And then over in 1 Peter chapter 3, we have another statement about the conscience. 1 Peter chapter 3. And there we have these words. The words about the answer of a good conscience before God.

And you read that in 1 Peter 3 and verse 21. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience before God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The answer of a good conscience before God.

The great difference between mankind and all the other creatures God made is outstandingly simple. Man has a conscience, but the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air have no conscience. They have a God consciousness, which is entirely different from a conscience.

You say, why do you say they have a God consciousness? Because I've read the Bible. Balaam had an ass. That ass had God consciousness.

But it went along the road. It saw the angel of the Lord. Balaam didn't see the angel of the Lord.

The men that were with Balaam didn't see. They had a conscience. But only one had God consciousness.

And that was the presence of God. You as a human being are accountable to God. Accountable to God fully and firstly because He is your maker.

That important difference must always be kept in mind. There is therefore a battle going on in the human mind. The spiritual heart and the immortal conscience of each one of us.

That battle I have sought to define in my title, The Battle Within. The conscience seared versus the conscience sealed. We must always remember, Condemnation signifies the declaring of an evil doer that he is guilty.

Conscience, when you commit a sin, If it is awakened by God, Will shout, Guilty! Will shake you to your inner soul. When we are judged, We are chastened of the Lord. And we should not be condemned with the world.

We use those words of condemnation with a lighter meaning, In the words censure, disapproval and blame. But censure, disapproval and blame are not real condemnation. Real condemnation is the law of God, Acting in our conscience and reminding us with God's power, That we have forfeited His blessing, We have denied the truth of the gospel, And we have rebelled against.

Now both sinners and saints know the bitterness of the battle of a guilty convict. Lord Byron was a self-confessed chief of sinners. An evil, wicked and filthy man.

And one day as he neared the end of life, At the age of thirty, He wrote, My days are in the yellow leaf, The flowers and fruits of life are gone, The worm, the canker and the grief are mine alone. What was he suffering from? He was suffering from an awakened conscience. He was an unbeliever and a villain and a sinner of the deepest dying.

But there was another man called Charles Churchill. He lived about the same time as Byron, But he was a Christian. But he still wrote of his conscience, No, it is a tale which angry conscience tells, When she with more than tragic horror swells, Each circumstance of guilt, When stern but true, She brings bad actions forth into review.

And like the dread handwriting on the wall, Bids late remorse awake at reason's call. Armed at all points, Bids scorpion vengeance pass, And to the mind holds up reflection's glass. The mind which startling heaves, The heart felt grown, And hates that form she knows to be her own.

The Christian has a conscience. And when the Christian has a conscience awakened, What a sad and terrible thing it is To have an awakened conscience. Because as a child of God, You have erred and strayed like a wandering sheep.

Old Thomas Fuller said quite rightly, There are five kinds of conscience. There is an ignorant conscience, Which neither sees nor says anything, Neither beholds the sins of his own soul, And never reproveth them. Then there is the flattering conscience, Whose speech is worse than silence itself, Which though seeing sin, Soothes man in the committing of that sin.

Thirdly, there is the seared conscience, Which has neither sight, Nor speech, Nor sense in men that are past feeling. Fourthly, there is a wounded conscience, Frightened with sin. And fifthly, there is the last and best, It is a quiet, clear conscience, That has been sprinkled with pure water, And washed in the blood.

What sort of conscience have you tonight, As you sit in this house of the Lord? Is it an ignorant conscience? Is it a flattering conscience? Is it a seared conscience? Is it a wounded conscience? Or is it a quiet and clear conscience? Before you leave this house tonight, You can have a quiet and clear conscience. A conscience quieted for all eternity. And a conscience pacified in Christ Jesus, Giving you a clear conscience.

Happy is the soul, That has a quiet and clear conscience before God. Yes, a wounded conscience is rather painful than sinful. It is an affliction, And it is sometimes the start of a path, That brings you to the place, Where you can have a quiet conscience before God.

Now when we take up this subject in the Bible, We see how much the book of God, Has to warn men and women, About the battle within their consciences. Let me just take the Bible, And run down its history, And the various men and women, Who in their life on earth, Fought a great battle with their consciences. It starts with the first two in all the Bible, Adam and Eve.

And we discover that these two sinless creatures, Who never had a tinge of conscience unfollowed, But they were filled with shame and fear. So much so that God said, Who told thee that thou wast naked, Hast thou eaten of the tree. For of I commanded thee that thou shouldst, Those first two sinners, Eve and Adam, Felt the full scourge of a guilty conscience, That marked them out with shame and fear.

Go down the road, And you will have the same fear, And the same shame. Esau made a very bad bargain. He bartered a happy eternity, For fleshly gratification, With some lentil soup.

How cheaply he sold his never dying soul. What bitter tears he shed as a result. What fires of hell he kindled in his conscience in time.

And those fires still burn in his damned soul in eternity. Read Hebrews 12, 16 and 17. He found no place for repentance.

Though he sought it earnestly with tears. Tears cannot wash a guilty Jacob. He obtained his birthright and his blessing disequally.

He was shattered with both shame and terrifying fear. Twenty years later, As he prayed all night, Awaiting the dread meeting with his brother Esau. He had a wound in his conscience, Which refused to be healed.

What a difference was Jacob when he was caught up by leaving his father-in-law. Then he was a fearless man. Genesis 32, 7. But when he caught up by Esau, He fell to the ground.

He staggered faint before his brother. And what about Judah? Judah committed this sin, And he was paid back with his own signet, His own bracelets, And his own staff. The signet sealed his guilt.

The bracelets tied his own hand. The staff broke. In Joseph's brethren, We see the stirring of a wounded conscience, Avenging its possessor.

Thirteen years, They kept their poor father in wrecking affliction, And they kept their own souls on the live cold. Their cruelty to their father was in unpitting wickedness. The father was brought down quickly to the

grave, With his gray hairs, And they cared not for him.

They wouldn't confess their crime. But when they came to Egypt, And not knowing it was Joseph that they met, But it was the one they sought to kill, Then they felt a conscience that had weakened up, And brought a tongue in their souls. And after their father died, Where did they go? They went to Joseph's house.

And they said, Our father told us to come to you after he died, That you may not judge us for the deed that we have done. Do you remember Ahab? He went into the vineyard of Naboth, He killed Naboth, And seized his vineyard. But when Elijah found King Ahab in the vineyard, Ahab cried out in pain, Hast thou found me, O my enemy? Yes, the enemy had been found.

A fire was kindled in Ahab's corrupted spirit. It was lit with the unending flame of hellfire. Zimri was asked the stabbing question of the wicked Jezebel, Have Zimri peace who slew his master? You cannot commit sin without trouble.

And one of the troubles will be that of a troubled conscience. If you go to 2 Kings chapter 9, 22, You'll find there the story of Joram's question and Jehu's answer. Think of Herod.

He heard about Christ in Mark 6, 26. His conscience refused to be silent. He was an atheist, an unbelieving Sadducee.

But his atheism could not quench the flames of his awakened conscience. Judas at the very height of his success With the thirty pieces of blood money in his purse, What did he find? Bitter remorse. Felix the judge trembled at the rebuke of Paul Because he was the person in the galley chains of a most bitter.

It was an old Puritan, Mr. Gernal, and he said, If our conscience condemns us justly, our case is sad. Because God knows more of us than we do ourselves. And can charge us with many sins that conscience is not even privy to.

Conscience is indestructible. There is no way to destroy. The rich man in hell still had his conscience.

Conscience lives on. Either to blesses in sweet memories in heaven Or to curses with the curse of the indestructibility of conscience. Many men today walk through this world with a troubled.

They try many things. I read about a man the other day, and he said he went to the booze shop. And he drank, and he drank, and he drank.

And they said, Why do you drink so much? He said, I want to drown, but I have found that it continues to float. You can't drown your conscience. You can't kill your conscience.

You cannot stop your conscience. But thank God, God can stop it. God can silence it.

God can give peace where there is unrest. God can give calm where there is a great storm. God can give silence when the voice of condemnation is spoken in the depth.

There is only one way to know peace of heart, and peace of soul, and peace of mind. It is recorded in the book of Hebrews. We need a heart that's cleansed and a conscience that's washed in pure water.

There is no need for you, my sinner friend, to go through life with a burdened conscience. You can find peace tonight. You can find a strange silence of joy as you confess your sins.

For if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all, all. Christ wants you to enjoy the cleansing from all unrighteousness. I trust this night.

You will take Him as He offers Him. And you'll know the peace and the joy and the satisfaction of a conscience cleansed forever. And silenced forever from condemnation through the blood of the Lamb.

May it be so for Jesus' sake. Let us pray. Father, write Thy holy and powerful Word on all our hearts.

And, O God, this night make us men and women of God who enjoy the sweet peace of sin's forgiveness. Cleanse us in the blood. Silence the voice of conscience and the voice of sin and the voice of the world and the voice of sin.

And may we hear the sweet words of Christ. Son, Daughter, Thy sins be forgiven Thee. May it be so for Jesus' sake.

And everybody say, Amen.

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