

(First Baptist Church) #2 - Conscience

by J. Edwin Orr

The sermon explores the concept of conscience and its relationship to our thoughts, actions, and moral principles, using the analogy of the Sputnik satellite.

Duration: 52:54

Scripture: Psalm 139:23-24, Isaiah 1:18, Hosea 4:14, John 8:7, Romans 2:1, Romans 3:23, Hebrews 9:14

Topics: "Conscience"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in convicting and convincing the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He discusses the importance of working on one's conscience and being willing to repent and seek deliverance from sinful practices. The preacher also mentions a conversation about the AIDS epidemic and the need for personal responsibility. He highlights the significance of having a clear conscience and behaving with godly sincerity. The sermon encourages listeners to let their conscience be their guide, but also acknowledges the need for obedience to God's Word.

Transcript

Not many people realize that directly after the American Revolution, there was a moral slump in the country. Drunkenness became epidemic. There were reported to be 300,000 drunkards in a population of 5 million.

They were burying thousands of them each year. Immorality was gross. There were infidel clubs.

Women were afraid to go out for fear of assault. Bank robberies were a daily occurrence. Perhaps the worst conditions were in Kentucky and Tennessee.

That was the frontier. Congress discovered that in Kentucky, there had only been one court of justice held in five years. They couldn't bring the criminals to justice.

The decent people formed what we would call vigilante regiments and fought the outlaws in a pitched battle and lost. You say, what were the churches doing? The largest denomination in those days was congregational, but the church was in decline. The pastor of the Lenox Congregational Church in Massachusetts said he hadn't taken anyone into membership for 16 years.

It was like being chaplain to an old people's home. They were dying off. The Presbyterians met in General Assembly to deplore the ungodliness of the country.

The Episcopalians were even worse off. The Bishop of New York, Samuel Provost, not having confirmed anyone for a number of years, decided he was out of work, took up other employment. The Methodists were the most aggressive at that time, and they were losing more members than they were gaining in spite of emigration.

The Baptists said they had had their most wintry season. Now, you know, the 1960s were bad times for the churches in this country, but I never heard anyone suggest that the church would be wiped out. But in the 1790s, that was the case.

Walter said, Christianity will be forgotten in 30 years' time. And Tom Paine gleefully repeated this in the newly independent United States. Now, there were men of God.

George Washington prayed. But Thomas Jefferson was a deist. He was a noble man, but he didn't believe that God was interested in us.

When he wrote the Declaration of Independence, the first draft didn't have any reference to God. Some Christians worked on him, and finally he said, All right, we'll say our Creator, nature's God. That was the only concession he would make.

On the other hand, Tom Paine was a blasphemer, died in disgrace. Conditions were bad. They took a poll at Harvard and discovered not one believer in the whole student body.

At Prince, in a much more evangelical place, there were only two believers, and only five students who didn't belong to the filthy speech movement of that day. Now, this may be news to you, but of course the sequel was wonderful. Some Scottish Presbyterian ministers wrote what they called a memorial.

They addressed it to the people of Scotland and elsewhere. I thought that was a very neat division of the world's population. And they urged the Christians to set aside one day a month to pray for revival.

The churches knew they had their backs to the wall. A copy of this was sent to Jonathan Edwards, the great New England theologian. It deeply moved him.

He had seen the earlier revival, 1734, 1740, when Whitefield came. So he wrote a response, and it got longer and longer until finally it was published as a book. My sister writes letters like that.

The title of the book, by the way, was A Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of All God's People in Extraordinary Prayer for the Revival of Religion and the Extension of Christ's Kingdom According to Scriptural Promise and Prophecies Concerning the Last Days. That was just the title, not the book. He sent copies across the Atlantic, and a minister published the original memorial, and Jonathan Edwards replied, and sent it to Mr. Baptist, the editor of the Baptist Register in Bristol, in England.

He was a busy man, one of these busy executives. His name was Don Ryland. He's never heard of him.

You've heard a story about William Carey, when he pleaded with the Baptists, sent out missionaries. The moderator said, sit down young man, when God decides to win the heathen, he'll do it without any help from you. That was Dr. Ryland.

But he didn't want to throw away books on prayer, his conscience wouldn't let him do that, so he sent them to two praying men that he knew. One of them, Andrew Fuller, took leave of absence from his church, and traveled the length of England, Scotland, and Wales, urging the Baptists to set aside one day a month to pray for revival. The other man, John Sutcliffe, didn't travel for domestic reasons, but he was a layman in his church who was a ball of fire.

He was a teenager, his name was William Carey, shoemaker. Between them they started what they called the Union of Prayer. Soon the Congregationalists joined them, then the Methodists, then Evangelicals in the Church of England and the Church of Scotland, until Britain was interlaced with a network of prayer meetings.

The Christians were praying for God to intervene, and the revival came in 1792, the year after John Wesley died. I'm not going to describe that to you, it was a wonderful time. But in 1792, conditions were deplorable in the United States.

In 1795, a Baptist minister called Isaac Backus in Massachusetts adopted the same idea, he called it a concert of prayer. In other words, let's pray concertedly for revival. And within a short space of time the revival came.

It swept the country. It began in the Connecticut Valley, spread throughout New England, into New York, down into the South. Completely transformed the country.

The country was going to the dogs, and yet after that revival it completely turned the country around. That was the Second Great Awakening. I'm not going to take any more time, I'm just giving you a little appetizer.

You see, the Owens have been singing Lord Bless Us again. What do we want them to do again? Just to bless us? Lord Bless Us? There was a Scotsman who prayed Lord Bless Us. My son John and me, his wife and my wife, just us four.

That's not a prayer. Do you want God to bless us only? What about the rest of the country? We live in terrible days. So we can sing Lord Do It Again.

By the way, I don't know where John Cramp got those books of mine. All my books were out of print. I wrote about ten of them in the 70s.

He's managed to get one, The Eager Feet, which describes the revivals of the 1790s and 1830s. Well, that's just a little appetizer to give you an appetite for what to pray. Now, I wonder how many people here tonight are over the age of 35.

I'm not going to ask you to raise your hands. I just want to alert you. Can any of you remember what happened in 1957? How old were you then? See, it's no good asking anyone under 35 to remember 1957.

Well, I was in Adelaide, Australia, when the Sputnik came over. A satellite with a dog called Laika. Do you remember that? Those of you who are over 35? We saw that little bright light going straight across the sky.

That's what alarmed the United States and got her into the space program. Young people today have never seen a satellite. Isn't that strange? The sky is full of them, but they've never seen one.

But do you remember in 1957? Everyone was naked-eyed. We could see that little dot of light going across the sky. I was in Adelaide in a bus sitting beside an old lady, and she said, You wouldn't catch me riding in a Sputnik.

She said, I'm just terrified of dogs. Well, it comes as a great surprise to most of my audiences when I tell them that every human being has his own satellite. Now, you know, there are so many satellites in the sky, we forget the original one, the moon.

The moon is the satellite of the earth. You know, the word Sputnik is the word they use. The word Sputnik in Russian means accompanying one.

Nik means one. And the moon is the Sputnik of the earth. As I say, most people don't know that every human being has his own Sputnik.

A student at UCLA said to me, Well, we have television in the sitting room and in the den. We've got two cars in the garage, but I doubt if we'll ever have a helicopter on the roof. And certainly we'll never have a Sputnik because we're out of light.

But he misunderstood. The New Testament word, I don't know how many of you understand Greek, because I'm giving you the clue, is sonidesis, accompanying knowledge. The Latin is more familiar, conscientia.

Now you've got the idea. The English word is conscience, conscience con with science knowledge. Everyone has a conscience.

I don't think anyone would stand up and contradict me and say, I don't have a conscience. Every human being has a conscience. But it's a kind of satellite.

You say this is entirely new to me. All right then, I'm going to ask you some questions. By the way, my little grandson came back from school and he said, my teacher sure is dumb.

She's always asking questions, doesn't know anything. I'm going to ask some questions, but this is what we call the Socratic method. A man puts his shoes on his feet, his watch on his wrist.

Where do you keep your conscience? Well, you have one, haven't you? Where do you keep it? It's part of my mind, is it? Would you say that the conscience is part of the intellect? Would you say that a student who gets straight A has a better conscience than a poor guy who has to work hard to manage an average C? The answer is no. Would you say that a professor in a university has a better conscience than the man who looks after the classrooms? No, it's not part of intellect. Well then, is it part of your will? Would you say a person with a strong will has a better conscience than a person with a weak will? I read an item in the paper, I wonder if you've ever seen it, called Peanuts.

Little Lucy Van Pelt held up her five fingers and she said, Charlie Brown, these five fingers by themselves don't mean very much, but combined into a fist are going to make you do what I want you to do. And Charlie Brown capitulated. Which had the stronger will? Charlie Brown.

No, Lucy. She had the stronger will. But which had the better conscience? Charlie.

Conscientious little fellow. In fact, so conscientious sometimes he's afraid to do anything. Well then, is conscience part of your emotion or feeling? Would you say a warm-hearted person has a better

conscience than a cool-headed person, or vice versa? Now the warmest-hearted people in the world, without a doubt, are Brazilians.

Anyone here has ever been in Brazil? Well, you've missed it. You should go and preach in Brazil if you want encouragement. They not only shake hands with you and say, I enjoyed that, or whatever you used to hear, but they give you a big hug they call the abraço.

If you've done well, they'll kiss you on both cheeks. And if they're really enthusiastic, they'll lift you off your feet and set you down again. I have never met people as warm-hearted as the Brazilians.

Now, it's not like that in Scotland. I was speaking at New College in the University of Edinburgh when the principal said to me in a burst of Scottish enthusiasm, Well, Mr. Orr, we're not averse to having you in Scotland. That was as much as he could say without blowing a fuse.

In the north of Ireland, it's very like Scotland. Nobody comes up and says, I enjoyed that. They might, in enthusiasm, say, that wasn't bad.

But on the other hand, I'd rather leave my suitcase in a bus station in Scotland than in Brazil. They're such warm-hearted people, but even though they may swipe your suitcase, the Scots are very honest. Now, you see, it's not part of emotion.

It's not part of intellect. It's not part of will. Adolf Hitler had a strong will but a miserable conscience.

On the other hand, Winston Churchill had a strong will but a pretty good conscience. So, you see, what I'm telling you is this, that your conscience is not part of the intellect, not part of the will, not part of the emotion, yet it's influenced by your intellect and your will and your emotion. What you think will affect your conscience.

What you want to do will affect your conscience. How you feel will affect your conscience. We lived for 36 years about a mile west of UCLA.

The university notified the neighbors. They'd very much appreciate it if American families would invite foreign students for Thanksgiving dinner. Because come Thanksgiving, all the American students take off for home.

And they leave a bunch of foreigners rather lonely and wondering what's going on. Now, Thanksgiving is one of the most wholesome of American institutions. However, we decided we'd invite six.

My wife made preparations. We got plenty of turkey and so forth. They all came except a Hindu from India.

My wife was a little peeved. She might have phoned to say he wasn't coming. I said, he was too embarrassed.

She said, what is there to be embarrassed about? I said, if he were a conscientious Hindu, he would not come to a Thanksgiving dinner. Hindus not only believe in reincarnation, which is such a fad these days, but they believe in reincarnation into lower animal forms, as called transmigration of souls. Their idea is this.

If you behave yourself, perhaps next time around you'll be a multimillionaire or a princess. But if you don't behave yourself, you may come back as a cockroach and get tramped on. So you better behave yourself.

That's their religion. No Hindu would come to a Thanksgiving dinner. That turkey might be his grandmother.

You see, his conscience wouldn't let him come to a Thanksgiving dinner. What you think will affect your conscience. A man may say, 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. There are such people, so determined, they'll break any rule.

They may try to avoid jail. Sometimes they don't escape it. And then as far as emotions are concerned, I remember when I was a chaplain in the Air Force, a girl coming to me with tears.

She said, chap, I can't help my feelings. I love the guy. I said to her, you have no business loving the guy.

You knew when you dated him first, he was a married man with three little children. Now you want me to persuade his wife to give him a divorce, to marry you? I don't know how he'll feel about you in a year's time, or if he goes overseas. So, there's a strange thing.

Conscience is not part of the intellect, the will, or the emotion, yet it's affected by what you think and what you want to do and how you feel. Just as the moon is not part of the earth, but it pertains to the earth. What we call the moon is not the satellite of Jupiter.

So I say everyone has his own little satellite. Sputnik. Now, I expect you to think that over.

I mean, I'm not asking you to agree with me right away, but I think you'll see. I'm going to ask you another question, if I may be so dumb. Is your conscience your friend or your enemy? This is quite scriptural.

Romans 2.15 Their conscience will either accuse or excuse them. That's what it says. Your conscience can be your friend, and it can also be your enemy.

How do you account for the independence of your conscience? Can your conscience be your friend? 2 Corinthians 1.12 The apostle says, Our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in this world with godly sincerity. What's that really mean? If we do what we believe to be right, our conscience is our friend. I was having breakfast in a pancake house in Tempe in Arizona.

I stepped out onto the sidewalk when I noticed the young lady had given me too much money in my change. Fifty cents too much. So I went back.

I looked her straight in the eye. I said, You gave me the wrong change. She said, Oh, did I? The temperature had dropped a couple of degrees.

I said, Yes, you did. She said, Can you prove that? I said, Yes, I can. You gave me fifty cents too much, and I gave her two quarters back.

What a change in climate. She said, Oh, thank you, sir. Thank you very much, sir.

God bless you, she said as I went out. And when I got out on the sidewalk, my conscience said, Good for you. Down in Australia they would say, Good on you.

My conscience was my friend. I had done what I thought was the right thing. Have you ever had that experience? Of course you have.

But can conscience be your enemy? Surely you know the story of the woman taken in sin. The Pharisees dragged her before the Lord. They weren't interested in justice.

They wanted to embarrass him, but they were willing to sacrifice a woman to do it. They said, The law says she should be stoned to death. She was caught in the act.

Now what do you say? Our Lord stooped, wrote with his finger on the ground. Have you ever wondered what he wrote? Did he just doodle? They must have thought, What's he doing? I think he wrote scripture on the ground. When the devil tempted him, he said, It is written.

But this time he wrote it. And I remember going all the way through scripture, looking for what he might have written. This is only speculation, but I think this would certainly suit the circumstances.

I think what he wrote on the ground was from the book of Hosea. I will not punish your daughters when they play the prostitute. Nor your wives when they commit adultery.

For you yourselves are doing the same thing. That's Hosea. If you want to look it up sometime, not now, but it's Hosea 4.14. You know, this double standard has been a curse of civilization.

That a man can get away for anything, and a woman is punished. What happened? He stood up and he said, Whoever is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone. It was as if our Lord had summoned a hundred hornets and said, Sting these men.

They were so busy beating off the stings of their conscience, they forgot all about the woman, they beat a hasty retreat. Have you ever seen anyone running away from bees? Or angry wasps? And what does the scripture say? Being convicted of their own conscience. They went out one by one.

Conscience had become their enemy. Now tell the truth. Has your conscience ever given you a bad time? Well, it's your conscience.

Why didn't it take your side? Down in Brazil, there's one of the funny punchline jokes they have. A couple of Brazilians went out hunting jaguars. Sometimes they call them tigre, tigers.

It's one of the cat family, you know. In Brazil it's called the onça. And one of them shot an onça.

But when they're back telling about it, every time he described it, the onça got bigger and bigger and bigger. Until his friend said, Now, just a moment. And the Brazilian other fellow turned to him and said, Whose friend are you? Are you my friend or are you the tiger's friend? And you could say to your conscience, Whose friend are you? Your conscience can become your enemy.

I remember asking in a meeting, Anyone remember any verse of scripture about conscience? One man raised his hand right away. Let your conscience be your guide. Well, that's not in the scripture.

But I could ask you the question, What do you think is the business of conscience? If you're looking for a street address and you turn right instead of left, will your conscience prompt you? No. If you're learning Spanish and you have difficulty with the verbs, will your conscience help you? No. If you're playing chess and you make a wrong move, will your conscience help you? No.

Will your conscience help you with a mathematical problem? Yes. But only in your income tax returns. You can make all sorts of mistakes in your check stubs.

Well, I might as well tell the truth. My wife sometimes has quite a job trying to find out why my balance isn't the same as the bank's balance. So she'd go over all those check stubs.

But make a mistake in your own favor and your income tax return and your conscience says, uh-oh. Why is it that conscience is not concerned with street directions, learning Spanish, playing chess, or mathematical problems? Because it's not the business of conscience. If a teenager takes a girl out on a date and she refuses to kiss him goodnight, not much good calling the police.

They'll warn you. They'll be very much annoyed. They'll say, you tend to your own business, wasting our time.

So conscience is not concerned with these other things. Well, what is conscience concerned with? Moral law. You say, what do you mean by that? Well, just take what we call 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 that. Now one of the troubles today is that professors in our universities and teachers in our high schools tell our kids that there is no such thing as morality as far as absolute morality is concerned.

They say it's just what we arrange in our society. As one guy put it to me, cannibalism is wrong in Canada, but it's okay in New Guinea. How can I illustrate this? Well, Immanuel Kant, the great German philosopher who was not a Christian, said the test of morality is its universal application.

In other words, if it's wrong in Canada, it must be wrong in New Guinea and vice versa. And if it's not, then it's not a moral question. There are such things as mores.

You know, in Argentina, a young man wants to take a girl to a concert. He has to buy three tickets. One for himself, one for the girl, one for her grandmother or her aunt, a chaperon that goes along.

That's the custom, but it's not a moral question. It would not be immoral to take a girl to a concert without a chaperon. One fellow asked me in university, he says, in certain countries a man can have four wives.

That's okay for them. It's wrong for us. I said, what do you mean it's wrong for us? Well, he said, it's just okay for them.

That's their way of doing things. I said, look, I know Afghanistan. I've travelled in Afghanistan.

I remember asking the governor of Herat, one of the provinces, do you have more than one wife? He said, people misunderstand what the Prophet taught, the Prophet Muhammad. He said, a man may have four wives if he can afford it, and second, if he can love them equally. He said, I can't afford it, he said, and I don't think I could love four women equally.

So I'm quite satisfied with the girl I married. But it's the law in Afghanistan, a man may have four wives. It's interesting in South Africa, in the cities, a black man can only have one wife, but in the home territories, he may follow the local law and be a polygamist.

What I said to the university student, supposing 25% of the men in Afghanistan have four wives each, that would use up 100% of all the eligible females in Afghanistan. What would the other 75% do? Would they

apply to the United Nations for aid? No. Mathematics features monogamy.

Now there have been occasions in history when polygamy was practiced. After the Thirty Years' War in Germany, the number of German males was decimated. It meant about nine women to every man.

So some of the German states permitted polygamy for one generation only, because you see, in polygamist families, you may have a man and four wives, but you have equal numbers of boys and girls. So you see, it makes sense. Thou shalt not murder.

There are many more murders in Mexico than in the United States per population. But in case we congratulate ourselves too soon, there are more murders in Houston in one year than in England, Scotland, and Wales put together. You say, well, that's not proving anything.

That shows there's a different attitude in different countries. Ah, but I've traveled very widely, and I've met people by the hundreds, thousands, if not by the millions, and I've found this. I've never met anyone who liked to be murdered.

There's your Brissett morality. And in the Declaration of Independence, among these rights, inalienable rights, the right to life, even before liberty. Not much good giving a member vote than executing him.

So you see, there's some basis. I have known of places where they steal right and left, what nobody likes to be stolen from. I remember in India, a gang of train thieves from Bengal murdered the passengers.

But the train had been boarded by a gang of Gujarati train thieves. And they robbed the Bengalis, train thieves, who were furious. Nobody likes to be stolen from.

Have you ever met somebody who can look you straight in the eye, they've trained themselves to do it, and tell you a blatant lie? But they don't like to be lied to. They don't like to be deceived. And then when it comes to murder of sex morality, see, our young people say, well, I love my old folks, but they're old fashioned.

They don't know what we know. It doesn't change things. There's a basic morality.

Now, when that man said to me, let your conscience be your guide, I said, you can't always let your conscience be your guide. I can't go into all the details, but the scriptures speak of a clear conscience. The apostle said, I have a clear conscience towards God and towards men.

An obedient conscience. It is not for the sake of avoiding punishment only, but also for conscience sake. If you're going to pick up some dry cleaning, and when you get down there, you find a new parking space, so you drive around the block, hoping that someone will move.

Nobody has moved. You drive around the second time, nobody has moved. The third time, you think, I wonder if I could get away with double parking.

Before you double park, what do you do? You look this way, and you look that way. What are you looking for? To see if there's a cop. And if a police car comes by, do you double park? No, you drive around the ground.

Why do you do that? To escape punishment. That's a good motive. But not for the sake of escaping punishment only, but also for conscience sake.

Double parking is a hazard. Down in Latin America, I've seen not only double parking, but treble parking, and quadruple parking, and some poor guy in a circle, blowing his horn for an hour and a half, trying to get out. Accidents happen through double parking.

You can have a mistaken conscience. Paul said, I've lived in all good conscience to this day. Yet he was guilty of the murder of Stephen.

He said, I'll take the responsibility. Well then, how do you dare say I always had a good conscience? He was a conscientious Jew. And the law said that a man could be stoned to death for blaspheming.

I mean, he thought he was right, but how mistaken he was. I wonder what Paul would have to say to Stephen in the hereafter. You can have a weak conscience.

If eating meat causes my brother to offend, I will not eat meat. That's not our problem so much today, although sometimes it is, you know. But I would say, if drinking a cocktail would set some boy off on a road to alcoholism, then I won't touch the stuff.

You can have a seared conscience. Seared. That's an old Anglo-Saxon word for burned.

Any of you womenfolk have ever put on the iron to do a little bit of ironing? Then the phone rings, and after a short feminine conversation of 55 minutes, you come back again, and you wonder whether the iron is on or not. So you take your finger and you grab it, and you put it on. Oh, it burned.

Did you feel it? You felt it. But you don't feel it the next day. As a matter of fact, if you take your finger and put it on the point of a pin, you can't feel it.

You've burned the nerve endings. You've lost feeling. And I'm saying this.

It's worth remembering. If you keep on doing what you shouldn't do, you lose all conviction. That's one of our problems today.

You know, they talk about alternative lifestyles, but they never discuss them, because nature would tell you what's right and what's wrong. The sex relationship was designed by almighty God with primary purpose of companionship, primary purpose of companionship and offspring. But what goes today as an alternative lifestyle, Mother Nature abhors.

Surely the worst warning of all is the word to Titus. To the pure, all things are pure. But to the impure and unbelieving, nothing is pure.

Their very minds and consciences are defiled. To put it in colloquial English, their minds and consciences are rotten. All the way from a good conscience to a rotten conscience.

How can you say, let your conscience be your guide? Now that brings us to a question that some people have asked me. Is conscience the same as a conviction of the Holy Spirit? The answer is no. See, your conscience can be mistaken, but the Holy Spirit cannot be mistaken.

Your conscience can be disobedient, but the Holy Spirit, of course, couldn't permit disobedience. But conscience is the mechanism the Holy Spirit uses to convict you. He'll bring things to your remembrance.

But where you've been used to excusing it, then he breaks in conviction the crust of resistance and resentment. I'm Irish by birth. What are the Irish noted for? Good humor, bad temper.

I had my share of both. I had such a bad temper when I was a boy. I remember trying to commit suicide at the age of eleven.

You say, wasn't that young? Well, mother had thrashed me. My father died when I was ten. Mother had to be father and mother.

She thrashed me when I thought they wouldn't appreciate me around here. I'd throw myself in the river. It was all over some trivial affair.

Mother thrashed me for taking two pennies out of her purse and buying a box of matches and trying to set fire to two other boys. So I went down to the river to commit suicide, but the water was too cold. Oh, I've told people in the Middle West, some people commit suicide by jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge.

I've never heard of anyone committing suicide at Duluth, Minnesota, because the water there in midsummer is 35 degrees Fahrenheit. Well, I didn't commit suicide after all. That's obvious.

But I had a bad temper, but I excused it. I went to work in an office, and sometimes the girls there said, ha ha, look at the Christian nine. Temper, temper, temper, temper.

I'd say, it's not bad temper, it's righteous indignation. But the Holy Spirit once said to me, it spoils your testimony. It's bad temper.

It's out of control. I had to repent of it, and confess it. Seek deliverance from it.

You see, the Lord Jesus himself said of the Holy Spirit, and when he is come, he will, sometimes they say, convict the world, but sometimes convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. That's his job. If a man has been practicing evil for years, how can you work on his conscience? He'll argue with you.

For instance, if I were on television, and someone asked me about this AIDS epidemic, and boy, I don't always agree with Jerry Falwell, I hardly agree with him when he says, if you don't want it, don't do it. But what would my interviewer say to me? Well, that's your set of values. Doesn't somebody else have a right to have an alternative lifestyle? But they won't go into the details of it.

Because if you went into the details of it, you'd see how wrong it was. But you see, they go to work to defend themselves. If a person is practicing, lying in business, for instance, or stealing, or whatever, he makes excuses for himself to live with himself.

And it takes the conviction of the Holy Spirit to break through that. This happens on a large scale in times of revival. One of the marks is that the Holy Spirit convinces believers of things wrong in their lives.

And then he begins to convict complete outsiders of the wickedness in theirs. That's his work. I started with a good conscience, and concluded with a corrupt one.

But I can give you a verse of scripture that's encouraging. What can you do if your conscience convicts you? Now, on a Tuesday night, as was said already, we take it you're all believers here. You say, well, we're just average Christians.

We're not engaged in murder. We're not hitmen. We're not bank robbers.

We're not making our living by misrepresentation. We're not living in adultery. But we do fall short.

Sometimes our conscience accuses us. What can you do about an accusing conscience? It says in Hebrews 9.9, When gifts and sacrifices repeatedly offered cannot cleanse the conscience of the worshiper. What does that mean? You can join the Boy Scouts and do a good burn every day, but it won't clean your conscience.

You can join the Red Cross and help build a hospital in Bangladesh, but it won't clean your conscience. You can join a church and be a heavy tither, but it won't clean your conscience. Then what will? Same chapter, How much more shall the blood of Christ purify your conscience from dead works? All that you've been doing has been, I heard the phrase used here, playing church.

Unless it's going to work out in your life. Therefore, I'd like to conclude, if we may, by singing, we're not ready just for a moment, the first verse of that hymn, Search me, O God, and know my heart. He's the only one who can search us.

But I'm going to make a proposition to you first. I'm not going to ask anyone to stand up or to come forward or raise a hand, but I'm going to just put it to you, as speaker, to hearers. You tell me that you're interested in seeing revival in this congregation, throughout the denomination, worldwide.

If God should show you something in your life that's not right, are you willing to put it right? Now, if you're a spiritual person, you'll say, of course I'm willing. If you're not quite concerned, you'll say, well, let me think about it. But if you've got something to hide, you'll probably say, I don't want to get involved.

But if you carry the burden of spiritual life in this church, if you share in concern for the spiritual well-being of everyone here, this is a family. Are you willing to say, if the Lord should show me something wrong in my life, I'm willing to put it right? If you're going to say, no, I'm not willing to say that, well then, we're wasting our time. But if you say, yes, if God should show me something wrong in my life, I will put it right.

That's what I want to talk to you about this week. I'm so glad that this church is called a discipleship institute. There's a continuity of teaching here.

It's not like the usual quote-unquote revival meeting, where they have pack-a-pew night and youth night and senior citizens night and so forth. That's all right for evangelism. Get different crowds to be evangelized.

But our business is the spiritual life of the people who belong here. And I'm sort of putting you on the spot. Are you willing to say, yes, if the Lord clearly shows me something in my life that needs to be put right, I'll put it right.

By His grace. All right then, Ron, would you lead us? You'll find the hymn, only one verse, 266 in the Baptist hymnal, but we'll sing it to the Maori melody that people know so well. Just one verse.

You can sing it twice if you like, but just one verse.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/j-edwin-orr/first-baptist-church-2-conscience/>

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