

The Case for a Good Conscience

by Warren Wiersbe

A good conscience is essential for living a life that's pleasing to God, and it brings consistency in our walk and confidence in our witness.

Duration: 40:44

Scripture: Psalm 34:12-16, 1 Peter 3:8-10, 1 Peter 3:12, 1 Peter 3:15-17

Topics: "Christian Living", "Evangelism"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having a good conscience as a believer. A good conscience enables consistency in one's walk with God and promotes unity and compassion among fellow believers. The speaker also highlights the significance of witnessing to the unsaved with meekness and respect, rather than engaging in arguments. Lastly, the speaker discusses the benefits of having a good conscience in dealing with criticism and maintaining a positive outlook on life.

Transcript

1 Peter chapter 3, verses 8 through 22, deal with the subject of the conscience. 1 Peter chapter 3, verses 8 through 22. Some of you have read Ogden Nash's poetry.

Not very edifying, but sometimes rather interesting. He has a cute little poem that says, when called by a panther, don't anther. But his little poem on conscience is interesting.

There is only one way to achieve happiness on this terrestrial ball, and that is to have either a clear conscience or none at all. A lot of theology in those words. H.L. Mencken, who used to wake up the United States with his scathing editorials in the American Mercury, defined conscience as that inner voice that is warning you that somebody may be watching.

Not a bad definition. And yet each of us has to live with conscience. Conscience is that inward monitor, that inward judge, that accuses us when we do wrong and commends us when we do right.

In fact, conscience is so important, it is mentioned 31 times in the New Testament. You don't find the word in the Old Testament, but you find the idea there. When Adam and Eve ran and hid, that was conscience.

When it says David's heart smote him, that's conscience. Here we have a whole section in the New Testament dealing with this matter of conscience. You'll notice in verse 16, having a good conscience.

Verse 21, but the answer of a good conscience. You see, there's more than one kind of conscience in the Bible. If somebody were to invent a conscience machine, like an EKG machine, and if we were to put the straps on our arms and plug it in and push the buttons, and it somehow told us what kind of a conscience we had, you'd have several different kinds of reports.

There is such a thing as a good conscience, that's one that functions. A good conscience is one that, when we do wrong, accuses us, when we do right, commends us. When a person has a good conscience, he's not afraid for the phone to ring, he's not afraid for the mail to arrive, he's not afraid to look somebody right straight in the face and talk to them.

I came to Spurgeon one day and said, Mr. Spurgeon, we want to write your life. He said, you may write my life in the clouds, I have nothing to hide. That's a good conscience.

The Apostle Paul was slapped in the face for saying, I strive always to have a conscience void of offense before God and men. And a good conscience is one that enables me to come right to God without fear, or to come to men without fear. A good conscience is one that enables me not to be afraid.

But the Bible talks about a defiled conscience. Titus chapter 1 verse 15. That's a conscience that's starting to get dirty.

And things that used to bother us don't bother us anymore because conscience has been defiled. You must remember, conscience can be educated. It's possible for us to commit certain sins and live in certain ways and do it so often that we get used to it.

If there are sins in our lives tonight that a year ago would have kept us awake, our conscience has gotten defiled. You see, conscience is something like these windows up there. These windows do not manufacture light.

They let the light come in. Conscience is that window that lets the light of God's truth come into the heart. But if the window gets dirty, the light can't get in.

There's a defiled conscience. Hebrews 10.22 talks about an evil conscience. You know what that is? An evil conscience is one that accuses us if we do good and commends us if we do evil.

There are people walking the streets of Chicago who would be bothered if they did something good because their conscience is evil. An evil conscience is one that's turned completely upside down. Instead of being commended, the person is condemned when he does evil.

Instead of being approved, the person is accused when he does good. That's an evil conscience. And an evil conscience starts with a defiled conscience.

A little more dirt gets on the window until no light comes in at all. And that's what Jesus meant when he said, when the light that is in you becomes darkness, watch out. The Bible also talks about a seared conscience.

You've all had some kind of a callus on your hand or perhaps your foot, or perhaps you've had a burn, a serious burn, and as a result that whole area was deadened and hard. That's the word, seared, cauterized. I have on occasion had to have cauterization to stop bleeding.

That's what he's talking about in 1 Timothy 4.2. Their conscience is seared as with a hot iron. There are those who have so lived in sin that their conscience no longer bothers them. I think I've told you about the man I visited, an old railroader, worked on the railroad.

And I sat in his living room and talked to him about the Lord and about what it meant to die and go to hell, what it meant to be lost forever. And he said to me, Preacher, if this floor opened up and I dropped into hell right now, it wouldn't bother me one bit. That is a seared conscience.

Someone says let conscience be your guide. Let a good conscience be your guide, not a defiled conscience, not an evil conscience, not a seared conscience. And Peter is talking about a good conscience.

Now, Peter knew something about a good conscience. We sometimes like to criticize Peter because he occasionally fell, but did you notice that when Peter fell he got straightened out again? Peter denied the Lord three times, but he went out and he wept bitterly. That's a good conscience.

Peter got into trouble with the Gentiles, and so he pulled away and just fellowshipped with the Jews. And Paul came and rebuked him and Peter got straightened out because Peter had a good conscience. A good conscience does not prevent you from occasionally doing something wrong because you can sin against your conscience.

So can I. But a good conscience makes it possible for us to be so miserable we don't want to stay out of God's will too long. Read Psalm 32 if you want to find out about David's conscience when he tried to cover up his sin. Now this paragraph, 1 Peter 3, 8-22, simply spells out to us the blessings that come to your life when you have a good conscience.

When you can get up in the morning and not be afraid. You can look in the mirror and not be ashamed. You can look anybody straight in the eye and not wonder what do they know about me.

A good conscience. Now what are the blessings of a good conscience? Well, verses 8-12, a consistency in our walk. A good conscience enables the believer to be consistent in his walk.

Look at it here. Finally, be ye all of one mind. A unity of mind.

Having compassion. Literally that means being sympathetic one of another. So you not only have the same mind, you have the same heart.

Oneness of feeling. Love as brethren. Be pitiful.

That means be full of pity. Be thoughtful of others. Be courteous.

Be humble minded. Not rendering evil for evil or railing for railing. Somebody hollers at you, you holler back.

But on the contrary, blessing. Knowing that ye are called to this, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life and see good days.

Here he is quoting from Psalm 34. Let him refrain his tongue from evil, his lips that they speak no guile. Let him eschew evil, turn away from evil, hate evil and do good.

Let him seek peace and pursue it. And that word pursue means you strive after it. You don't wait for it to come, you strive after it.

For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous and his ears are open unto their prayers. But the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good? Peter is telling us we can live on three different levels.

Now the lowest level is to return evil for good. He talks about that in verse 13. Who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good? Most people won't.

But there are some people who are so evil that they return evil for good. That's the level the devil lives on. The lowest level, the satanic level, is returning evil for good.

Now the next level is the human level where most people live. They return good for good and evil for evil. You scratch my back, I'll scratch your back.

Love me, love my dog. That's the level most people live on. If you're good to me, I'll be good to you.

If you're mean to me, you just wait, I'll find some way to get back. Now Christians aren't supposed to live on the satanic level. We never should return evil for any reason.

Nor do we live on the human level of just returning good for good or evil for evil. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said even sinners can do that. We live on the highest level of verse 9 where we return good for evil.

And brothers and sisters, that ain't easy to do. By nature, when somebody sideswipes me or you, we want to sideswipe them back. There's something in human nature that is volatile.

There's enough poison down there that when somebody starts criticizing us, we turn right around and criticize them. And so Peter says, look, if you've got a good conscience, and somebody tears into you, you'll be calm. You're not going to worry about it.

Why? The Lord's watching over you. If you really love life, and I'm amazed at how many people don't love life, they just endure it. If you really love life and you want to see good days, have a good conscience.

Now, what is a good day? Well, for the average person, a good day means no trouble, no heartache, no difficulty, no problems, everything going beautifully. That could be a bad day. What is a good day? A good day is a day in which we enjoy the blessings of the Lord, and we have a good conscience.

Now, if someone says, boy, I had a good day today. I snuck out of this, and I cheated on that, and I was able to lie my way through. That's not a good day.

It's a bad day. The devil ran that day. A good day is not necessarily one that we are delivered from troubles or difficulties or responsibilities or problems.

He says if you love life and you want to have a good day, guard your tongue. Just be careful what you say and how you say it. Turn away from evil and seek after peace.

Really work for it. Pursue it. Don't just stand and wait for the dove to come flying down.

Go chase the dove with a net. Go after peace. Be a peacemaker, not a troublemaker, because God's eyes are watching over you.

That's where a good conscience comes in. No matter what the circumstances may be, no matter what the difficulties may be, there can be a consistency in our walk because we have a good conscience. You see, a good conscience reminds me, verse 9, that I've been called to get a blessing.

A good conscience reminds me, in verses 10 and 11, that God's commanded me not to do evil. A good conscience reminds me, in verse 12, that God's going to watch over me. The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous.

His ears are open unto their prayers. A good conscience is a clean window through which the light shines in. When the light shines in, it's so much easier to have a consistent walk, isn't it? Sure it is.

And by the way, it starts with the brethren. It starts with my getting along with the saints. In this first section, he's talking about getting along with the saints.

In the second section, he's going to talk about our problems with the unsaved. In the third section, our problem with the devil. If I can't get along with the saints, if my conscience doesn't allow me to have peace and joy and harmony with the saints, I haven't got a ghost of a chance of going out and fighting the world.

A good conscience gives us consistency in our walk. Now, dear friend, if any of us here tonight has been having a problem with his walk or with his talk, examine the conscience. Is there any dirt on the conscience? Does the window need cleaning someplace? In verses 13 through 17, he gives us a second blessing of a good conscience, namely confidence in our witness.

Just before the service started, I was walking around like I am wont to do and one of our Sunday school girls stopped me and said, I have to ask you something. I said, what's that? She said, sometimes I'm afraid to witness because I'm afraid people are going to hurt me. I said, you listen to my sermon tonight.

I'm preaching about that. And here it is. But and if you suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye, and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled, but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.

Let me rearrange that a little bit. Let me retranslate it for you. But sanctify Jesus Christ as Lord in your heart.

That's what he's saying. And be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you, a reason of the hope that is in you, but do it with meekness and respect. Having a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good manner of life in Christ.

For it is better if the will of God be so that you suffer for well doing than for evil doing. He's talking about our witnessing. Now, this first paragraph talked about our walking with God's people.

Now he's talking about witnessing to the unsaved. He's assuming that you and I are going to be asked why we live the way we live. Did you notice that? Sanctify Jesus Christ as Lord in your heart and be ready always to give an answer.

That word answer is our word apology or defense. A defense for the hope that is within you, the reason for the hope that's within you. Here is some Christian slave and he's doing his work and he's doing it happily.

He's not cursing, he's not grudging, he's not looking for some way to sneak off. And the boss notices this. And the master comes over and says, I want to talk to you slave.

Yes, sir. There's something different about you. What is it? Well, I'm glad you asked.

I'm a Christian. And he has an opportunity to tell of the hope that he has within him. You see, we Christians live in the future tense.

We don't live in the past tense. Our sins have been taken care of. We live in the future tense.

The reason we enjoy the present is because we are sure about the future. Now, a good conscience gives you confidence in your witness because the walk and the talk go together. I don't have any chance of having any power in my witness.

If behind in the back of my mind, I'm saying, I hope he doesn't know the truth about me. Peter's making a very practical application here. He's saying when your conscience is good, when you're right with God and right with man, anybody can ask you a question about you and your Christian life and you can answer it without fear.

Why? Jesus Christ is Lord in your heart. Peter quotes in verse 14, I'm sorry, in verse 15, but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts. He's quoting from Isaiah chapter 8. It'd be worth us to turn back and see the original of that.

Isaiah chapter 8, verse 13, listen to it. Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself and let him be your fear and let him be your dread. Now, if we fear man, we're going to fail.

If we fear what people say, we're going to fail. But if we fear the Lord, we'll never have to be afraid of the face of men. Look at the next verse, Isaiah chapter 8, verse 14.

And he shall be for a sanctuary. What is he saying? Don't be afraid. If you sanctify Jesus Christ as Lord in your heart, the only fear you have is disobeying him.

You'll have a good conscience. And if you fear God, you need fear nobody else. You need not fear the face of men, the arguments of men.

By the way, you can usually tell when a Christian does not have a good conscience, he lacks those two things that Peter talks about at the end of verse 15. When he witnesses, there's not meekness and reverence. There is a pugilistic attitude.

There's an argumentative spirit. And Peter says, that's not necessary. You have unsaved neighbors, you have unsaved employers, your boss is an unsaved person, he asks you about your Christian faith.

He's not asking for an argument, he's asking for an explanation. This is no place to start a fight, this is a good place to open a witness. Peter is reminding us that we are not prosecuting attorneys, we're witnesses.

And we should witness with meekness. Now, meekness is not weakness. Meekness is strength under control.

We as Christians, if we have a good conscience, can just quietly tell people what the Lord means to us with reverence and with meekness and God will bless it. A good conscience gives us consistency in our walk and a good conscience gives us confidence in our witness. But there's a third blessing that comes.

In verses 18 through 22, we have one of the most difficult passages in the New Testament. Doctoral theses have been written on these verses. Whole books have been written on these verses.

Get the connection now. The first word in verse 18 is for. That takes us back to verse 17.

It is better if the will of God be so that you suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing. Here are these Christians and they aren't disobeying God. They have a good conscience, they're walking with the Lord.

But they're going through difficulty, they're suffering for doing good. Now remember, I said there are three levels on which we can live. And there are people in your life who live on that basement level, that lower level.

They return evil for good because your good conversation, your good behavior convicts them. And so here were these saints of God that Peter is writing to, and they were suffering not for doing evil, but for doing good. My friend, you have reached a new level of Christian living when you're suffering for doing good.

Now he says, Christ also went through this. Don't think it's something strange. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, not His, somebody else's, the just for the unjust.

Now our suffering is not vicarious. I mean by that, because I suffer, it can't help you. I cannot suffer for somebody else's sins.

My suffering cannot atone for anybody's wickedness. But our Lord's did. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but made alive by the Spirit.

Now in the original New Testament, the Greek New Testament, there are no capitals. No capital G for God, no capital S for Spirit. Our translators have capitalized the word Spirit there, and there are some who believe it is the Holy Spirit.

Now there's no question that the Holy Spirit of God did help in raising Jesus from the dead. Made alive by the Spirit, by whom also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, who at one time were disobedient, when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing, in which few, that is eight souls, were saved by water. The like figure, notice the word figure, he's talking in symbolism now, the like figure unto which even baptism does also now save us.

But lest somebody thinks water washes away sin, he puts a parenthesis in here, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer, and that word answer is really the word pledge, but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. Now let's leave out the parenthesis and go back. The like figure unto which even baptism does now also save us by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who's gone into heaven and is on the right hand of God.

Angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him. Now these angels and authorities and powers that are mentioned in verse 22 are the satanic angels and authorities and powers, and the spirits that Jesus preached to in verse 19 are not the spirits of saved people or lost people in hell. These are evil

spirits.

You see, when Peter wants to talk about people, he talks about souls, verse 20, in which few, that is eight souls, were saved by water. Now what's he talking about here? What's this all about? Jesus through the Spirit went and talked to some spirits. What in the world is he talking about? Let me mention first of all what he's not talking about.

He is not saying that anybody has a second chance after death. He's not saying that at all. Peter knew better than that.

It's appointed unto men once to die and after that to judgment. My friend, you get saved in this life. There is no second chance after death.

Nor is he saying that any of us who are alive today can help those who are dead. He's not talking about prayers for the dead. He's not talking about services for the dead.

He's talking about an experience that Jesus Christ had between His death and His resurrection. Now there are many good men who believe that this is saying Jesus through His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, preached through Noah. This is possible.

You can interpret it that way. I prefer to believe that the word spirit in verse 18 should be a small s, that our Lord Jesus Christ in the Spirit went to that prison where those fallen satanic angels were confined who helped to pollute the world in the days prior to the flood. When Satan was unleashing all of his wickedness on this world and it got so filthy dirty, God had to wipe everything clean.

I think what Peter is saying is this. You don't have to agree with me, but the conclusion at least is there. Peter is saying this, that between our Lord's death and our Lord's resurrection, He in the Spirit went to this prison house where these satanic beings were held and He declared to them His victory.

He declared to the whole realm of the satanic His victory. This is why he ends this chapter saying, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him. Now why talk about this? Because these people Peter was writing to were fighting the devil.

The hosts of hell would soon be turned loose upon these people. There would be a fiery trial such as they had never seen before. That godless, demon-possessed Nero was on the throne and Christians were going to go through the furnace.

And so Peter is saying to them, you're going to suffer for doing good. But remember this, Jesus suffered for doing good, but in His suffering He won the victory. He has been raised from the dead.

He is seated in heaven and all of the satanic hosts are defeated. Therefore, when you face the enemy, you face the enemy in victory. Now if I didn't believe that, I'd get out of the ministry.

Here in the city of Chicago, Satan is having a heyday. There are demonic forces at work that are wrecking homes, seeking to wreck churches, ruin lives. People call us up and their minds are so confused and their lives are so torn apart.

It can only be the devil. If I did not believe that my Lord on the cross stripped off principalities and powers, then He went where they were and He heralded. That's what the word is, verse 19.

It's not preach the gospel. Nobody is preaching the gospel in the other world. There is no good news for the other world.

The only good news you'll ever hear is in this world or in heaven, but not in the realm of the satanic prison. And our Lord Jesus went and declared to Satan's hosts, He announced the victory, that's the word. He heralded the victory and then He arose from the dead and then He went back to heaven and all of the angels and authorities and powers are subject to Him.

You know what that means? That means that you and I don't have to fight for victory, we fight from victory. That means when you are confronted with the evil one, and He may be working through your landlady. He might be working through the person sitting next to you on the bus.

Oh, how subtle He is. When we confront that evil one, we can confront Him with confidence, if you have a good conscience. Now Satan loves a dirty conscience, because Satan is the accuser.

And if our walk has not been consistent, then our witness is not going to be confident and our warfare is not going to be courageous. But if our conscience is clear, if we can look up to God and say, God in heaven, my heart is clean, my life is given to you, my conscience is clean, then the Holy Spirit of God can give us victory and courage in our warfare. Now Peter brings Noah into this picture for an interesting reason.

He wants to talk about baptism. Some folks don't like it when you talk about baptism. But the Bible talks about baptism.

And you must remember that the people that Peter wrote to paid a price to get baptized. It doesn't cost a great deal to be baptized today. Now for some people it does.

I have baptized some Jewish people, some of our Hebrew Christian friends who trusted the Lord. It cost them to get baptized. I have baptized people who came from different religious faiths and their family just wrote them right off when they were baptized.

It cost them. But for the average person, it doesn't cost anything to be baptized today. They say, oh how wonderful, he got baptized.

Isn't that great? But back in this day, it cost something to get baptized. And so Peter is putting together two subjects, their baptism and their suffering. Do you remember, says Peter, when you were baptized? Now when they were baptized, they were immersed.

Even those who teach baptism by sprinkling admit that in the New Testament, people were baptized by immersion. Peter said, do you recall when you were baptized? You went down under the water, death, burial, resurrection. That's what Jesus did.

You were identified with Jesus Christ in death, burial, and resurrection just like Noah. You say, what in the world does Noah have to do with baptism, death, burial, and resurrection? The rain came down, and the whole globe was immersed. God buried sin.

But that same water that buried sin lifted up the ark. Now Noah wasn't saved by the water. Noah was saved by the ark.

The ark is a picture of Jesus Christ. That's another sermon. I won't preach it tonight.

It's too hot for two sermons. But the ark's a picture of Jesus Christ. The only way of salvation in the whole world was the ark.

There's only one way of salvation tonight, Jesus Christ. That ark only had one door to it. Jesus Christ is the only way.

God called them into the ark. God didn't say, go. God said, come.

They came into the ark, and God shut them in. And God says, come to you tonight. Why don't you step into the ark of safety? Trust Jesus Christ.

And when you trust Him, God shuts you in. And no matter what the circumstances were, the noise, the thunder, the lightning, the rain, the judgment, they were safe in the ark. No matter what may happen, you're safe in Jesus Christ if you've trusted Him as your Savior.

Now God baptized the world. And there was death, burial, resurrection. Noah in the ark with his family were raised up and left on the mountaintop.

By the way, it's rather interesting to note that they landed on the mountaintop on the 17th day of the 7th month. Now the Jewish calendar begins with October. October, November, December, January, February, March, April.

You know what happened on the 14th day of April? Jesus was crucified on the cross. You know what happened on the 17th day of April? He was raised from the dead. Noah landed.

Noah was resurrected on the very date that Jesus was raised from the dead. So Peter sees a connection here. Noah was raised.

Noah was a witness against the wickedness of his day for 120 years. And they laughed at him. They said he was crazy.

Can you imagine preaching for 120 years and having only seven converts? He'd never be written up in Christianity today. They'd never invite Noah to run around and hold seminars on how to win souls. 120 years and seven people.

His own family got saved. When it was all over, was Noah a failure? No. Did Noah suffer for righteousness' sake? Yes.

How did he end up? On top. Did Jesus suffer for righteousness' sake? Yes. How did he end up? On top.

Are you suffering for righteousness' sake? Yes. Then you ought to end up on top. Do you remember when you were baptized? Yes.

Why were you baptized? God commanded it. It's the answer of a good conscience toward God. Nobody gets baptized to be saved.

Peter makes that very clear. Why are we baptized? It's God's commandment. We want to have the reply, the pledge of a good conscience toward God.

Now what do we pledge in baptism? When I was pastoring my first church, I had a lady who used to come and hear me preach, and about once every six months she'd say, I want to be baptized. So we'd make

arrangements for it, and she'd never get baptized. Six months later, I want to be baptized.

Her son was in my Sunday school class at that time. I thought, boy, there's something wrong here. I go to the home and visit.

Are you saved? Oh yes, I'm saved. But when the time came for her to take that step, she'd never do it. I found out later on why.

She never was saved. She had no desire to live a godly life. Now baptism is important.

Baptism is the answer of a good conscience toward God. I am saying I am identified with Jesus Christ. In death, burial, and resurrection, I'm going to walk in newness of life.

So Peter reminds them of their baptism and says, just live up to your baptismal promise. You told God, here I am, Lord. I want your life to be lived out through me.

So the whole paragraph, whatever problems anybody may bring up, the whole paragraph is saying this. Jesus suffered for righteousness. Noah suffered for righteousness.

Both of them were raised up. You were baptized. You were raised up.

You will suffer for righteousness. Yea, in all that will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But don't worry about it.

He's gone into heaven. That's where you're going to go someday. And he's at the right hand of God.

So you can pray to him. And all of the angels and authorities and powers have been made subject unto him. This is not the good angels.

They never had to be made subject unto him. They always were. The evil angels, Satan, made subject unto him.

That means that since you and I have a good conscience, we can come to the one who's at the right hand of God. And he gives us victory over the evil one. How do you maintain a good conscience? The book.

The blood. The blessed hope. The book.

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way, or an old man for that matter, by taking heed to thy word. Now are you clean through the word that I've spoken unto you. Hebrews 10 says let's come to the throne of grace, having our bodies washed with water and our consciences purified.

The book. I don't know about you, but when I read this book, God convicts me. And God says, hey, the window's dirty.

Let's wash the window a little bit. The blood. If we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive us our sins.

The blessed hope. Every man that hath this hope in him purifies himself. And a good conscience means we can have consistency in our walk.

And when there's consistency in our walk, a good conscience means we can have confidence in our witness, not afraid. And when you have confidence in your witness, people are going to fight you and you're going to suffer for righteousness sake. But a good conscience will give us courage in our warfare.

And so whether it be the flesh or the world or the devil, what difference does it make? A good conscience puts us in touch with the power of God. And I tell you, having a good conscience keeps your backbone strong. Having a good conscience keeps your feet on the straight and narrow.

Having a good conscience gives you discernment. And you say, no, that's not a part of my life. I don't want that.

No, that's not. Yes, that's the thing. It's a beautiful thing to live with a good conscience.

But oh, if you've got a bad conscience, an evil conscience, a defiled conscience, a seared conscience, the devil's got a foothold and he moves right in and there's trouble. Now, perhaps you've never been saved at all tonight. Maybe you don't even know the first thing about having your conscience cleansed, your heart washed, a new life down inside.

You ought to come and trust Christ. Perhaps I speak to some Christian who has been playing with sin. And as a consequence, conscience has gotten a little bit dirty.

Let me change the picture, if I may. Do you remember the story Dr. Ironside used to tell about the Indian? He had a lot of good stories because he worked with the Indians. And he was talking about conscience.

The Indian said, I know what you're talking about. Conscience is like an arrowhead down in my heart. And when the Indian does something wrong, it turns and it cuts me.

And Dr. Ironside said, but what if you keep sinning? Oh, he said it takes the corners off and it doesn't hurt quite so much. Good theology. Is there something in my life that a year ago would have kept me awake all night but now I can put up with it? Then there's something wrong with my conscience.

Let God do what he wants to do in your heart tonight, my friend. Having a good conscience. Gracious Father, I pray for those here who need to be saved.

You've brought them here and Jesus died for them and the Spirit speaks to them and we exhort them. I pray that you'll help them to come and be saved. Help that Christian who has given the devil a foothold to get a good conscience tonight.

For I pray it in Jesus' name, Amen.

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