

A Good Conscience

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding faith and keeping a good conscience, as it is the mark of true and genuine faith, and the goal of every true servant of God.

Duration: 59:30

Scripture: Acts 23:1, Acts 24:16, Romans 14:1

Topics: "Clear Conscience", "Faith Development"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of having true faith marked by a clear conscience. It highlights the significance of maintaining a good conscience before God and man, as it is foundational to building a life of faith and love. The speaker stresses the need to be sensitive to one's conscience, avoid judging others based on their level of faith, and to apologize and make amends when aware of wrongdoing.

Transcript

Praise the Lord. This is a day the Lord has made. And every day is a day the Lord has made.

So we rejoice and are glad in it. So today I want to begin a series on the marks of true faith. See, faith is a word on which most of us are risking our eternity.

It's like not being sure of the medicine you take. It's a matter of life and death. If your understanding of faith is wrong, your whole eternity is in danger.

So it's very important that our understanding of faith be right. That we are more careful about that than the medicine we take for some sickness. Because at the most, if your medicine is poisonous, it will kill you.

Just lose your life on earth. But faith is something that is going to determine your eternal destiny. And since that is the case, I'm not surprised that the devil has brought so much confusion on this matter.

Because he wants most Christians to be with him for eternity. I'll tell you that. He wants Christians to be happy that they read the Bible and go to church, go to meetings, and believe as they think they believe in a way that doesn't change their life.

And comfort them that you're okay. You know, every false prophet in the Old Testament preached that message. You're okay, don't worry.

It's peace. You're at peace with God when there was no peace. And that's why if you read the Old Testament, you'll see how God condemned those false prophets.

He rebuked them all the time. He said, you guys are only interested in money. You're immoral.

You're seeking honor. Same thing's happening today. But we have an advantage that those Old Testament people didn't have.

We have a printed Bible with us. In fact, nobody on earth had it until about 600 years ago. People in the Old Testament, they didn't have a printed Bible with them where they could go home and check up what this prophet was saying is right or wrong.

But today, what excuse do you have when you are given a wrong understanding of faith and you swallow it, that which your eternal destiny is dependent on? It's like taking a medicine without looking what's on the label. What's the label? Is this the real medicine? Did I get it from a good shop? Is this produced by a reliable company? We are far more careful about medicine than we are about faith. It's very, very important.

And you remember when the rich man and Lazarus, and the story of the rich man and Lazarus is not a parable. It's a true story that Jesus said about a real rich man who went to hell. And when he went to hell, we read that he looked up.

This is all written in Luke 16. He looked up at Abraham and said, will you please send somebody from heaven down to earth to preach to my five brothers? You know what Abraham said? They've got the Bible. Let them read it.

That means they had it in the synagogue. They were listening to it every Saturday. And if they wanted, they could hear it, what they were told there.

They could go to the priests of those days and ask them about something in scripture. But if they were not interested in finding out what the law of God said, then I would say Abraham was saying they deserve to go to hell. So I've come to see also today that if people are not interested in knowing what the Bible which sits in their house says about faith, and if they go to hell they deserve it.

You can't put them in the same category as that barbarian or non-Christian who never had a Bible. Completely different category. God may have mercy on them in some way.

But certainly not on somebody who has a Bible in their house, doesn't bother to read it, who's more interested in watching some television program than opening God's book and reading what God has to say. That television program is not going to determine your eternal destiny. And it's amazing how the devil gets people so occupied with temporary satisfaction and ignoring that which is eternal.

So my dear brothers and sisters, you know that to the best of my knowledge I've always spoken the truth to you, whether it hurts or doesn't hurt, whether it comforts or disturbs. It's the truth of God. It's not my truth.

I don't take any credit for it and I don't apologize for it. It's God's truth. So I want to share something about faith because this is the most important thing in the New Testament.

The Bible says in Hebrews 11.6 that without faith it is impossible to please God. It is impossible to please God without faith in Him. So that's why this is fundamental.

And when you compare it with the Old Testament I was looking at a concordance. The word faith comes in the Old Testament about four times. Four times.

In the New Testament it comes about 220 times. You see how important it is? Very, very important. There is a difference between even the little faith they had in the Old Testament and in the New Testament.

As you've often heard me say in the book of Hebrews in chapter 11, the faith of these Old Testament people was mostly related to external things. As you read in the whole of Hebrews 11, by faith they did certain things externally. They experienced miracles on the outside.

But the faith of the New Testament is superior. It's superior in that it deals with what is inside. The inside of the cup more than the outside of the cup.

Now when I go down to the villages to preach and I'm invited to some poor brother's house and he gives me a cup of tea and the cup is not very clean, I'm not much bothered if the outside of the cup is dirty. It's the inside. You know that.

The important thing is the inside. The inside is always more important than the outside. And the day you understand that in your life, that your inside is more important than your outside, I believe you will be on the path to knowing God truly.

The inside of your life is more important than the outside. What people think about you, the impression you give with your holy life on the outside, counts for nothing before God if it does not spring from the inside. It does count before God if it springs from the inside.

It counts for zero before God if it doesn't spring from the inside. That's the point. But it was not like that in the Old Testament.

In the Old Testament it did not have to spring from the inside. God was happy with what they did on the outside because they didn't have the Holy Spirit. He even permitted people to divorce their wives.

He didn't command it, but he permitted it. And when the Pharisees asked Jesus why he did that, why God permitted it, He said it's because their hearts were hard. What can you do? I mean you don't expect a two-year-old child to keep its diapers or underwear clean and dirty.

That's normal. But you don't expect that of a grown-up adult, and that's the difference between Old Testament and New Testament. So in the last verse of Hebrews 11 it says God has provided something better for us than all these people in the Old Testament.

God has provided something better for us today, far superior. And if you want to know how much superior, as much superior as heaven is above the earth, as much superior as Jesus Christ is above Moses. Moses was a man created by God.

Jesus Christ was God himself. What's the difference? That's the difference between the Old Covenant which Moses brought and the New Covenant which Jesus brought. The difference is immense.

God has provided something better for us and that is the faith of the New Testament and we are told in Hebrews 12 too that Jesus is the author of this faith and the finisher or perfecter of this faith. So today I want to speak about one aspect of that and that is found in 1 Timothy and chapter 1. 1 Timothy chapter 1, he's telling Timothy in the last part of verse 18 to fight a good fight, to fight a good fight that is a spiritual fight, a warfare in the Christian life and he says if you want to do that you've got to keep faith and a good conscience. Notice these two things are joined together.

Man has divorced what God has joined together. There's a word in Scripture which says when God is joined together let no one separate. Faith and a good conscience.

That is not true in the Old Testament. The word conscience appears in the Old Testament only once but it appears numerous times in the New Testament. Faith and a good conscience.

So here's one mark of a person who's got true New Testament faith. He's got a good conscience at all times. If you don't have a good conscience whatever faith you claim to have is garbage.

It's fit for the trash can. Faith and a good conscience. It's one mark of true faith and anytime you act without a good conscience you are acting in unbelief and as long as you live with a bad conscience you're living in unbelief.

Living cut off from God. And notice it says that here. Keeping faith and a good conscience.

Now remember Paul is not writing to a new believer. Now some of us think yeah yeah yeah we know all that hang on. Paul was writing this to Timothy who was his finest co-worker and who had already been a believer for maybe 25 years.

Imagine writing to a man who's been a believer for 25 years was a whole hearted radical full time Christian worker who's out and out for serving God whom the Apostle Paul considers the finest of his co-workers. What is he telling? Timothy I want to tell you something. Keep faith and a good conscience.

We've got to be pretty arrogant to think that we can go beyond that. We need it brother and sister. We need to hear that word.

Keep faith and a good conscience and it says here. What happened to some people who rejected a good conscience? When they rejected a good conscience they suffered shipwreck of their faith. You know what shipwreck is? The whole ship is destroyed.

Did you see that? That if you don't keep a good conscience your whole ship of faith is destroyed. Faith is like compared here to a ship that's supposed to take us from the time we are born again all the way into God's presence one day. And this ship can be wrecked on the rocks if you don't keep a good conscience.

Yeah. He who has ears to hear let him hear because it's pretty serious because I know lots and lots of Christians who imagine they have faith but don't have a good conscience. And I'll explain to you in a moment what that means.

Today most preachers who preach about faith particularly on television never speak about a good conscience. They speak about faith to get money, faith to get healing, faith to get all the things which will perish when you die. Have you noticed that? They are telling you to have faith for things which will perish in a few seconds.

Do you know that your whole life on earth is only a few seconds compared to eternity? And they are telling you to have faith just for these few seconds and to be lost for eternity. Who are the stupid ones? The ones who believe these preachers. Because they don't read their Bibles.

If you don't keep a good conscience whatever faith you may have even if you experienced the greatest miracles your ship will be wrecked. Sure. Even if you did great miracles.

It's very clear that Jesus said in the last day many will come to him and say Matthew 7 verse 22 23 Lord we did miracles in your name. And Jesus said yeah you did miracles. People experience miracles.

People are healed. But you, you didn't keep a good conscience. Depart from me.

I don't know you. You workers of iniquity. Essentially he was telling them you didn't have a good conscience.

Even though you did miracles. Even though you cast out demons. Now don't ask me how that happens.

I just believe what Jesus said. It's true. That it's going to be like that in the final day that there are going to be people who are going to stand before him who actually did miracles in Jesus name who will be sent to hell for eternity because they didn't keep a good conscience.

If that doesn't make you serious about having a good conscience I don't know what will. I don't care if I never experience healing in my body in my whole life. Even once.

I don't care if I never heal a sick person. Never raise a dead person. Never do an external miracle.

If I keep a good conscience I will hear Jesus say to me well done good and faithful servant one day. That's more important to me than getting the empty honor of men that I'm a man of God. It counts for nothing.

So dear brothers and sisters if you're wise keep a good conscience. It's the mark of true and genuine faith. Paul tells Timothy about a fight here.

Imagine a man like Timothy who's been a believer 25 years. A whole hearted radical Paul's finest co-worker. He needs to fight to keep a good conscience.

And I'll tell you from my experience I've been a believer 50 years. It's a fight to keep a good conscience. It'll be a fight till the day Jesus comes.

And if some of you don't have a good conscience it's because you didn't fight the good fight. You just gave in to the devil. You gave in to the flesh.

What is Paul's word to Timothy? Fight the good fight. I command you. Verse 18.

What a word. This command. I entrust you Timothy fight the good fight.

I would say the same to all of you. This command I give you. Fight the good fight.

Keep a good conscience lest your faith becomes shipwrecked and all the 25 years you sat in this church became worthless. Just became an increase of knowledge and did not bring you into God's kingdom. That's a real possibility.

There's a real danger there. In 1 Timothy 1 the same chapter earlier on Paul says verse 5. This is a beautiful verse. I've often thought about it because like Timothy and Paul I'm also in the teaching ministry and every teacher must have a goal.

Just like when they play football or soccer they have a goal. They're seeking to put the ball into that goal. Everything.

They may kick this way that way this way sometimes even back but ultimately their aim is to get the ball into that goal. And so it must be with every true servant of God who preaches God's word. This must be his goal as Paul says to Timothy.

The goal of all our instruction is love. It's to get people to love Jesus with all their heart and to love others as themselves and love one another in the church as Christ loved them. And this love must come from a pure heart and a good conscience.

If it doesn't come from a good conscience all that love is useless. You can go and help people in the street and show a lot of love and compassion for the poor and the suffering and in the orphanages and the widow's homes and if you don't keep a good conscience it's useless. It says this love must come from a good conscience and a sincere faith.

It must come from this combination of a sincere faith and a good conscience otherwise all your love is useless. How many have understood that? The goal of our instruction is not love. The goal of our instruction is love from a good conscience and sincere faith.

And I'll tell you there's a world of difference between the two. In other words it's like saying we build a superstructure on a good foundation. The superstructure is love.

People must see. People don't see the foundation. They see the superstructure of a building.

The superstructure is love. People must see that we love Jesus fervently. That we're willing to lay down our lives for him.

And people must see that we love them even though they may not love us. We can love our enemies. We can bless those who curse us.

Because God has given us love in our heart. But that's a superstructure. What is this superstructure based on? Which foundation? A good conscience and sincere faith.

If it does not have a good conscience and sincere faith as a foundation, this whole superstructure is going to collapse one day. And you'll discover that. In the world today, if you show a lot of love and compassion to the poor and the sick you may even get a Nobel Prize.

You can get a lot of awards. You don't get any awards from the world for a good conscience. You don't get awards from the world for faith in Jesus Christ.

But if you want an award from God your love for others and all the compassion and goodness and service that you do to others must come from a sincere faith and a good conscience. That's God's Word. If you read the Bible slowly like I've been urging you these days, read the Bible slowly.

Don't rush through these verses. You would have discovered this the first time you read 1 Timothy. When was the first time you read 1 Timothy? 30 years ago? Did you notice this the first time you read it? It's possible that you read it for 30 years and you still didn't notice it till today.

This is the problem with believers I have found. They don't read the Bible carefully. If they get a court order, they'll read it carefully.

They'll go to a lawyer and ask him to explain every word. If they are signing a document they will go to a lawyer and ask him to explain every word. What about this one word? Does this one word put some obligation on me? I've got to be careful about every word before I sign it because it involves money.

They're not careful about God's Word. What a work the devil has done. I believe what the Bible says the devil is a deceiver of the whole world.

The whole world. The sad thing is that he even blinds the minds of some believers from knowing the full truth of God. Jesus said you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.

What we seek to do in this church is to proclaim the truth. We have never been interested in popularity. We've never been interested in increasing our numbers.

We're interested in giving people a true and accurate scan of their heart's condition free of charge. And also tell them how they can be cured of that wretched heart condition free of charge. Isn't that good? People get offended with the scan report and go to some other doctor who touches up the scan report.

It's like that joke I heard about a man said my doctor was so considerate when he knew that I could not afford the surgery he just touched up the scan report and gave it to me said you're okay. Yeah. There are lots of preachers doing that and there are a lot of foolish people listening to them.

So let's take these words of God's Word seriously. These are words inspired by the Holy Spirit. Fifty years ago when I was converted and I learned that there was only one book in the whole world among all the billions of books only one book that God Almighty had written I decided I was going to spend my life studying that one book I didn't mean I didn't do other things.

I read the newspaper I read other books. I had to in my profession when I was in the Navy. But everything was secondary to this one book Do you really believe that the Bible is the only book in the whole world written by God Theoretically you'll tick and say yes.

But if you believed it you would really study it. I believe it and that's why I study it because my eternal destiny is dependent on that not only my eternal destiny I don't want to just go to heaven when I die I want to live I'll tell you honestly I want to live the most profitable life that any human being can ever live on this earth not financially profitable I don't care about that but the most useful life as far as God is concerned I prayed prayers like Lord make me as holy as a sinner saved by grace can ever be on this earth as holy in my thoughts and my words, my deeds and my attitudes and my motives. I mean there may be upper limit to that I can't become like Jesus till he comes again.

Okay I recognize that but whatever is the upper limit possible for a sinner saved by grace I want to get there. Don't you want to get there? You know that for 5,900 years and 50 years nearly 5,900 years nobody conquered Mount Everest I was living in Delhi when I read in the newspapers as a young boy that this guy from New Zealand and this Nepali Sherpa had conquered the world's highest mountain and somebody

asked him what made you climb Mount Everest he said because it was there. What a word because it was there I had to conquer it.

Imagine if somebody asked you why are you so eager about victory over sin because it's there. Sin shall not have dominion over you because it's there in God's word. I want it.

So what if 5,950 years nobody conquered Mount Everest. Here's a man who said I'm going to get there so what if the believers around you don't believe that there is such a thing as an overcoming life so what if the believers around you don't believe that you can control your tongue 24 hours a day that you don't ever say the wrong thing so what if they don't believe. The point is does God's word say it's possible.

Is it there? If it's not there forget it I'm not interested in looking for things that are not there but there are a lot of things that are there which we don't claim. That's our inheritance and so a good conscience is one of them in Luke chapter 11 Jesus uses the eye, the human eye as an example as a picture of the conscience the eye is to the body what conscience is to the heart please remember this. Your conscience is the eye of your heart.

If you want to know what it is to be blind just shut your eyes. That's what it means to be blind. You can't see a thing around you you can imagine this wall is black and you may be absolutely sincere totally sincere and totally wrong that's what blindness causes.

I've had people argue with me about scripture. Usually some small unimportant thing and I ask them hey listen have you got victory over sin in your life? No. What in the world are you arguing about all these little things about some inconsistency they think they see in scripture and all these things and what all the devil gets people occupied with when they've missed the main thing it's really sad have you ever been to a shop and by the time you got there you forgot what you went there for? I think it's like that when a lot of people read the bible.

What's it meant for? Is it to find out some old lot of things which are not going to help me in my Christian life. Sometimes people ask me a question about some obscure Old Testament verse and I say is that going to help you to live a godly life now? Then that's not primer you can search the answer for that some other time but primer let's look for that what's primer. The devil has got Christians occupied with minor things they major on minors your eye is one of the most important parts of your body of your external body more important than your fingers and toes and all the parts of your external body.

Your eye is one of the most important and Jesus used the example of the eye here in Luke chapter 11 and verse 34 Luke 11 34 he said the eye is the lamp of your body and when your eye is clear, that is when your conscience is clear your whole body is full of light, your whole heart is full of light. You know what that is when people get what they call cataract the vision becomes dimmer and dimmer and they can't see so clearly, they can't read and you become gradually blind and you can't recognize people they just sort of seem to have a vague light they can see. A lot of people their Christianity is like that.

They can't see in sharp focus you know they can't read something there at a distance they are blind. They don't see the seriousness of that think if there is a warning on the road and you are driving your scooter down that road and you see there is a great danger, some pit in front of you and you can't read it. You just fall into the pit and have an accident because your vision was not clear.

Here is a warning sign on life's pathway where Jesus says if you lust with your eyes after a woman pluck out your eyes, better for you to lose one eye than to go to hell you can't read it, you can't see what it is and you keep going and you end up in hell. See the danger of having bad vision is written in the Bible. It's written in Matthew chapter 5 I mean even if you read only the New Testament you don't have to go five pages before you reach it.

It's there. I don't think any of you sitting here can say you missed it. No, you have read it and you have heard it many times from this book but how seriously have you taken that warning? How seriously do you take a warning on the road? Your eye is very important when your eye is clear the light everywhere comes inside your body you can distinguish colors.

That's white, that's black, that's pure, that's sinful. When your eye is not good, your color blind, you don't know which is black and which is white you don't know what is sinful and what is holy. It's tragic when you ignore your conscience your whole body will be full of light but when it is bad your body is full of darkness.

So watch out now listen to this word, watch out that the light in you doesn't become darkness. That's the first warning. How can the light in us become darkness? You know when we are born as babies all of us have a pure conscience.

The eye is clear very clear. All of us sitting here, you and I were born with a clear conscience a very sensitive one. Have you seen the bottom of a baby's foot, feet so sensitive.

You touch it with a pin feels it. The conscience is also like that but look at our feet now. You can scrape it with a knife and you don't feel it that's how the conscience also becomes over a period of time if you're not careful.

Watch out that that which started as light in you does not become darkness. How does it become darkness? By ignoring the little voice that tells you that's wrong don't do it. Don't speak to that person like that it's not righteous what you're doing.

There you're making money in a wrong way. All the time speaking you may ignore it but there's that preacher inside you which will always tell you. That's why little children, you know it's very difficult for them to tell a lie.

You ask a three-year-old something and a three-year-old tells a lie it's written all over its face and mommy I'm telling a lie. It's there on the face it cannot hide it but you wait another 15 years and it'll tell a lie so perfectly that you really believe it. Because it's, he has succeeded in killing the conscience which told him at three years of age that's a lie.

Killed it, killed it, killed it, killed it, killed it. Now he's 18 years old he can tell a lie with a straight face and so convincingly that other people believe it. But his conscience is dead.

He doesn't realize that he's lost something. Through lies we can gain many things on earth. People get married telling lies.

Oh how many cases I've heard of people who hid things when they got married. Told a lie and they expect to have a very happy marriage. And have a happy marriage based on a foundation of a lie.

You don't have a happy life and like someone said one lie leads to another. It's easy to tell one lie but it's very difficult to tell only one lie. Because once you're told a lie you have to say a few other things after that to cover it up.

So very easily the conscience gets spoilt in us. Maybe there was a time in your early, think of another area when you were first born again. Can you think back to the time when you first surrendered your life to Jesus and you were so thankful that he died for your sins and you saw the horribleness of sin and you thanked him and you were so careful about the books you read.

You wouldn't watch certain television programs. You wouldn't go to the movies. You were careful because you wanted to keep yourself pure.

But then time went on and you found that most of the Christians you mingled with even born again Christians were not serious. And you decided to become like them and not like Jesus Christ your master. That was your mistake.

Sometime in your life you decided to become like the believers around you instead of becoming like Christ. And there you took the wrong path. You've been going on that wrong path and see where you've reached now.

Think back to the day when you were first converted. You were actually holier than you are today because that day you were looking at Jesus. You were thankful for him.

One of the great main warnings I've had to give believers nowadays is don't look at other believers. Don't look at the way they live. Don't listen to the way they talk.

Don't be like them. Don't watch the programs they watch on television. Don't read the books they read.

Don't talk about the things they talk about. Do you think people listen to me? A few do. Thankfully.

And their lives are changed. That's what delights my heart. I praise God with all my heart that though there are not many there are a few who hear and who take seriously what they have heard and seek to live according to it.

They're a lonely crowd. I discovered very early in my Christian life that if I wanted to be a wholehearted Christian I would be a lonely person. But I think of Jesus.

Do you think Jesus was a lonely person walking in Nazareth even as a young man? How many people do you think were interested in talking about the things he was interested in talking about in Nazareth? People were filthy then just like today. But he walked a lonely road. He walked with his father.

He didn't become a hermit like John the Baptist. Go to the forest or anything. He lived in the midst of people.

Loved them. Served them. Talked to them.

But he would not allow himself to be polluted or defiled by them. He kept himself pure. And people considered him odd and made fun of him.

It didn't make a difference. He was here on earth to fulfill his father's will. This is what it means to be a true Christian.

To keep a good conscience. And further it says in verse 36 the first warning is watch out that your light doesn't become darkness verse 35. The next is verse 36.

If your whole body is full of light with no dark part in it. That's the thing that challenged me. I said Lord is it possible for me to have a heart with no dark part in it? That means everything is open.

Possible. With the whole of it illumined. As when a lamp illumines you with rays.

With its rays. I mean think of you lived in a city where the only type of electric bulbs they had were the zero watt bulbs. Every house they had only had zero watt bulbs.

The only shops had only zero watt bulbs. And you've grown up for 50 years in that city and you've seen zero watt bulbs and dim light in which you read and all that. And then one day you come to another country where people have thousand watt bulbs.

And you say boy what's this? I've never seen anything like this in my life. You don't think such a thing is possible. A light that can shine for such a big distance.

It's like that. When you live with Christians who are like zero watt Christians who just dim on a light. And then you come to God's word and see the brightness with which we can live if we want to.

If we surrender to be filled with the Holy Spirit. That's another life. And you know the thing that used to encourage me.

I used to live with a lot of zero watt Christians for many years. I still think most believers are pretty zero watt believers even today. But every now and then in my life as a young man I would come across suddenly one believer who was different.

He was like these halogen lamps. Bright and full of the joy of the Lord. He wasn't sitting and backbiting and complaining about anything on earth.

He was just so happy in the Lord. I would sit and talk to him and he would tell me that there was a time in his life when he was filled with the Holy Spirit. I mean that was the answer.

And he remained filled with the Holy Spirit. That's the answer. It's like the oil.

In those days they didn't have electricity. All the lights came through lamps. This challenged me.

But I didn't meet such people frequently. Only once in a while I would meet. Such people are rare.

You know like it says here. No dark part. Holy illumined.

When you read that. How many of you are challenged and say Lord I want to be like that. You find a challenge rising in your heart.

Lord I want to be like that. Because when your conscience becomes clear like that. Your faith will become stronger too.

The real faith. I'm not talking about the faith to make money or faith for some earthly thing that will perish when you die. I'm talking about faith for that which is eternal.

Which you can possess for all eternity. Look what the Apostle Paul said in Acts 23 verse 1. When he was taken to court. Accused falsely.

The thing he could say in court. Which is a wonderful thing if you can say this. When you're taken to court one day.

He stood in court. The first time we read of that in the Apostle Paul's life. Acts 23 verse 1. He says.

He looked at this council of priests. Jewish priests that were judging him. And he said I have lived my life.

Acts 23 verse 1. With a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day. That was the secret of his life. That doesn't mean that he had victory over all sin.

There's a lot of difference between a good conscience and victory over sin. You can have a good conscience the day you are born again. But victory over sin may take some years.

So what is Paul saying? I have kept a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day. We can understand it almost immediately in the next 2-3 verses. The high priest asked somebody to strike Paul on the mouth.

He said that's blasphemy. How can anybody live with a good conscience? This is the high priest. The leader of God's people.

Do you know who are the people who say that when we preach about victory over sin we are preaching heresy? The great preachers and leaders in Christendom. It's the same thing here. Strike that fellow who says that we can live with a good conscience.

Not possible. And Paul got angry. He was not exactly like Jesus here.

When they struck Jesus on the face he only said if I spoke from the truth, why are you striking me? But Paul, he said God will strike you you whitewashed wall. Do you think he was led by the Holy Spirit when he said that? To anybody. Particularly to a chief justice sitting on the judge throne.

You sit to try me according to the law and violation of the law. What that guy did was wrong. A chief justice has no right to disobey the law and tell a fellow to hit even an accused man on the face.

You got to listen and then punish him. What Paul said was right. That what he did was wrong but the way he said it was wrong.

To say, to call a fellow a whitewashed wall people call others by much worse names than that today. Even believers. The bus sender said how do you do that? Do you revive God's high priest? I said I'm sorry.

God's word says you shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people. That was Old Testament. In the New Testament Titus 3 says you shall not speak evil of any man because we are in the New Covenant.

In the Old Covenant the rule was you shall not speak evil of a ruler. Everything in the New Covenant is higher. The Old Covenant it said honor an aged man whose white hair.

In the New Covenant it says honor all men. Isn't it wonderful to be in the New Covenant? Where we don't just honor old people. We honor young people too.

And where we don't just speak evil of rulers. We don't speak evil of anyone. You got to be excited about this New Covenant life.

We want it. When you hear me say that you say ah well that's not a great thing. But you'll never get it.

You got to be excited about it. I'll tell you that. You'll never get something in scripture unless you're excited.

Lord it's tremendous. You mean I can live a life on earth where I don't just honor old people but I honor all people. Boy what a possibility.

You look at it like that. I mean we are living in a world where born again believers. I see a lot of young people who claim to be in CFC.

They don't even honor old people. Leave alone everybody else. I don't know how their parents brought them up but sad.

The Old Testament said that's a mark of the fear of God. So Paul, I believe there was an apology there. That's how he kept a good conscience.

As soon as he was aware that he did something wrong he said that's against God's word. I'm sorry. So I see there how this man kept a good conscience.

It was not that he never made a mistake. But as soon as he was aware he immediately said it right. Isn't that a wonderful news? The point is do you set it right immediately? That's the question.

Now turn to Acts 24. We see Paul speaking there in verse 16. This is again in a court.

This time he is before a heathen king. A Roman king. And now he tells Felix who is the sitting as a judge there.

Again the same thing. It's interesting that whenever Paul stood in a court the one thing he had to say is you guys can say what you like. My conscience is absolutely clear.

All these charges are false. You should be able to say that if you ever had to stand in a court. My conscience is clear.

Or if you did something wrong say yes I'm sorry what I did was wrong. We have a I don't know whether you know in the Indian you know the three lions that we have as a symbol of India. We have these words underneath in Hindi.

Truth prevails. We see very little of it in our country. But it's there.

But it's like a lot of Christians who talk about truth. There's very little of truth in their life. It's all words.

There's hypocrisy in the nation that we can understand but why shouldn't there be hypocrisy among a person who calls himself a child of God. Acts 24 16. I do my best.

Now the businessman would say to make money. But Paul says the scientist would say I do my best to discover something new in science. But the disciple of Jesus says I do my best to maintain a blameless conscience before God and before man.

He said I may not be perfect but I do my best to maintain a blameless conscience before God and before man. That's why he had faith. It's a mark of new covenant faith to keep a good conscience.

That's why Paul didn't make a shipwreck of his life. And how often did he do it? There's a very popular expression nowadays called 24-7. They say talk about it in the television news programs.

24-7 means 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. What did Paul do 24 hours a day, 7 days a week? Keep a good conscience. That's the meaning of all of this.

My dear brothers and sisters I want to urge you if you really want to have a living faith to take this matter very seriously. Even a victory over sin takes another 10 years. Fine.

You'll get there if you learn to keep a good conscience all the time. You saw Paul's example. As soon as he was aware that he had said a wrong word with his mouth, apologized.

He didn't say I'll think about it. That's how he kept a good conscience. As soon as he was aware.

It's like I ask people if you're walking barefoot on the road in your garden or something and a thorn gets into your foot. A thorn. How long are you going to meditate on when to remove the thorn? Are you going to pray about it and wait till the evening right before we go to bed? No.

A sensible person would take out the thorn immediately. Now I want to ask you one thing and I want you to tell me honestly, not tell me, tell yourself honestly the answer to this question. Do you believe a thorn in your foot can harm you more than a sin in your heart? Answer that question to yourself.

Do you believe a thorn getting into your foot can ruin you more than a simple action or thought or word or attitude towards someone in your heart? What about that little bit of jealousy? It's a million times worse than a thorn. That pride. That bitterness.

Bitterness is like cancer. What about ten cancers or one bitterness? Ten cancers. Any day.

I don't want one bitterness in my heart against a single human being. But we are spiritually illiterate. That's why we don't take these things seriously.

If you go to some illiterate, poor illiterate uneducated woman in the village, she comes with a pain in the stomach and the doctor says, you got cancer. Okay? She'll go to sleep because she thinks cancer is something like a fever or a little cold or cough. It'll go off in a week or so.

Why? Because she is illiterate. And when you tell a person today that a bitterness in your heart against one person can ruin you more than ten thorns in your feet, infect your feet, and you sleep peacefully, something's wrong. He is spiritually illiterate.

Dear brothers and sisters, this is, our eternal destiny is dependent on this. Faith and a good conscience. One of the primary marks of New Covenant faith is that you keep a good conscience.

It is on that foundation, on the foundation of a good conscience that we build a superstructure of love for God and love for others. This is so important. I want to say one last thing before I close.

It speaks in 1 Corinthians 8 about certain people who have a weak conscience. It speaks in 1 Corinthians 8 about certain people, in the last part of verse 7, their conscience being weak is defiled. And he says here in verse 9, don't take care that this liberty of yours does not become a stumbling block to weak.

He's saying, don't do things that will cause other people to stumble. His conscience is weak. You may be a strong person.

You take Romans 14 for example, which speaks about the strong believer and the weak believer. Let me just read you a few verses in Romans 14 from the Message Translation. Accept the one who is weak in the faith.

Why is he weak in the faith? Because his conscience is weak. How can he become strong in the faith? Keep your conscience clear all the time. So there are believers in the church who don't have such a sensitive conscience as we have.

I mean if you have, if you think of conscience like a weighing machine. Maybe you have a weighing machine that can only register every kilo. One kilo.

1.5, 1.7, it doesn't register. When it becomes 2 kilos, then the needle moves. And then you have other weighing machines that will register digitally even grams and milligrams.

Very sensitive. Maybe you've got a very sensitive conscience. Praise God.

Where you can register a little, small little thing. The needle flickers. That's wrong.

And here's another brother who can do something 10 times worse than you and his needle doesn't even flicker. Now the Bible says, don't judge him. Maybe his conscience has not come to the level of yours.

Maybe you're in the 10th standard and he's in the 1st standard. Don't call him a fool. If a 10th standard student calls a 1st standard student a fool for not understanding trigonometry, who is the fool? Definitely is a 10th standard student.

Without a doubt. And if you who have walked with God and you've got a very sensitive conscience look down on a weaker believer because you feel that he should have your standard of holiness and you judge him, you're the fool. You know what the Bible says to husbands? Recognize that your wife is a weaker vessel.

How many of you do that? That's in 1 Peter 3 verse 7. Recognize that she's a weaker vessel and give her honor as a weaker vessel. I mean if you can lift a 40 kilo suitcase and you ask her, why can't you lift it? You're a fool. It's because she's a woman.

And it's a wonderful thing. There are weaker believers in the church and you've got a weaker person right in your own home. Your wife.

And the Bible says give them honor. I'll just read a few verses in Romans 14 in the Message Bible. Welcome with open arms fellow believers who don't see things the way you do or your wife.

And don't jump all over them every time they do something that you don't agree with. Do you jump all over people when they don't do something you don't agree with? Even when it seems that they are strong in their opinions but weak in their faith. A lot of people are like that.

Strong in their opinions but very weak in their faith. Remember, they've got their own history to deal with. They've got a culture to deal with.

They haven't overcome it. They've got their background to deal with. They've got their community culture.

They haven't yet overcome it. Recognize it. Be patient.

And he goes on to say what's important. You know, in the last part of verse 7, none of us are permitted to insist on our own way in these things for himself. We are answerable to God.

So that's a wonderful chapter. I don't have time to read it but read it sometime. It tells you recognize that other people's conscience is not at your level.

The wonderful thing is God expects us to live according to the light of our conscience. Not somebody else's. I thank God for that.

Somebody who was more mature than me can probably see some things in my life which are not Christ-like. I say, maybe you're right, brother. But I can only live according to the light I have.

I may see something un-Christ-like in you. But you know what I say to myself? Maybe he or she is only in the third standard. How can I judge them for not knowing trigonometry? They will learn it.

Give them time. It's wonderful to have faith and a good conscience. As soon as you're aware of sin, confess it.

Go and apologize to the person, your wife or husband, immediately. Like Paul did. I'm sorry.

That was wrong what I said. That's great. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word that keeps us on the right path.

Help us to walk in the light of it all our days. Take seriously what you have written in your word for us. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/9JsoX-QIXJE.mp4>

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