

**The Believers (at LSU)
Campus Meeting
October 8, 2009
Crucial Points of the Truth in Romans**

THE HUMAN CONSCIENCE AS THE LAW TO THE GENTILES

Scripture Reading: Rom. 2:14-15; Heb. 9:14; 1 John 1:9; Psa. 103:12; Jer. 31:34; Psa. 32:1-2,

Romans 2:14 and 15 say, “For when the nations, who have no law, do by nature the things of the law, these, having no law, are a law to themselves: who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing joint witness, and their reasonings accusing or else excusing one another.” This is the human conscience as the law to the Gentiles. God gave the outward law to the Jews, so the Jews have to behave and act before God according to the God-given, outward law. God did not give the Gentiles an outward law, but in the nature of every human being there is a conscience, and that conscience is in the function of the law. The function of the conscience is just the same as the function of the law. The Jews are under the law condemned by God, and the Gentiles are also condemned before God according to their conscience. The conscience works to accuse you or excuse you. When the conscience accuses you it means that you are wrong, and when it excuses you it means that you are right. There is something within you by nature, in your nature, that condemns, accuses you or justifies, excuses you.

Man's Fall from God's Presence to Man's Conscience

The element of the conscience was within man from the time of his creation, but the function of the conscience was not developed until the time of the fall, until the time when Adam and Eve partook of the tree of knowledge of good and evil and their eyes were opened. Immediately, when their eyes were opened, the element of their conscience began to function. God is sovereign. He has foresight. In His creation of man, God made provision for the conscience. The element of the conscience was present in man, but its function was not in use until man had been seduced by Satan and had fallen. At the time of that fall, the conscience began to function.

It is a good thing that human beings are able to feel shameful. If I stole a certain thing and then was able to boast about it, that would be terrible. If I steal something, I should feel ashamed of it. But so many young people today have no feeling of shame. They are not ashamed of their evil doings. But shamefulness is a protection for fallen man; it is a part of the function of our conscience. If we have a genuine, good, clean conscience, it will always cause us to be ashamed whenever we do something unclean or immoral. This is an excellent protection.

The function of the conscience has preserved the human race throughout history. Simply trusting in the law, the courts, and the police force would not work adequately. There is the need of a fine, inner, and deeper work—the function of the conscience. The function of the conscience not only condemns us, but also causes us to have feelings of shame. But how the human situation has deteriorated in the past fifty years! Today there is open immorality. Some people even boast of their immorality without any sense of shame. It seems as if they do not have a conscience. They are like animals. What is the difference between man and the animals? Man has a conscience that causes him to have a sense of shame. Animals do not have such a conscience. This is part of God's sovereignty in His administration over man. In the first fall, man fell from God's presence to man's conscience. To fall from God's presence was really a sad thing. However, to fall to man's conscience was still a preservation.

Bribing the Conscience

Many times, our conscience tells us clearly through intuition what is God's will, where it lies, and what it requires of us. But we are reluctant in submitting to it! Since the mind of the flesh does not like God's decisions, it is naturally unwilling to obey them, and the conscience has to urge a person on. When the urging becomes ineffective, the rebukes of the conscience follow. This feels terrible! If one allows his conscience to work, his heart will become uneasy, and he will feel terrible! This is truly unbearable. In order to avoid the condemnation of the conscience and, at the same time, continue to disobey God's will, one has to bribe the conscience.

In this lies all the mistakes of a believer. He does not seek a solution that will deliver him from the condemnation of the conscience. Rather, he tries to confuse and mix up its voice with other voices in order to minimize its pricking power. But the best way to be free from the condemnation of the conscience is to remove what the conscience condemns and obey God's will in all things. Anything else will cause the believer to offend the Lord even more.

Believers behave this way because they think that if they can explain the reason for their actions to others and themselves, their disobedience to God's will, in turn, will become His will. Little do they realize that this can never happen. Nevertheless, realizing that the condemnation of their conscience is difficult to bear, they try every means to stop it. If they cannot obey God's will, they appease themselves by giving reasons for their disobedience to God, hoping to blunt the cutting edge of the knife and minimize their own hurt. On the one hand, the conscience condemns. On the other hand, the flesh is unwilling to obey. Consequently, the only solution is to use many reasons and explanations to quell the conscience, telling it that the way they have taken is the right way and that there is no reason for it to continue the condemnation.

Guilt in Your Conscience

Sins offend God on the one hand and defile us on the other. What is guilt? Guilt is the stain of sins on your conscience. When you are young, your conscience is only stained a little. But as you grow older, these stains accumulate. Like a window which is never washed, the conscience grows darker and darker until eventually little light can penetrate. No detergent, no chemical, no acid can wash the stain of guilt from your conscience. Not even a nuclear bomb can dislodge this stain; no, your conscience demands something more powerful than that. Your conscience needs the precious blood of Christ.

Hebrews 9:14 says, "How much more will the blood of Christ...purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" The blood of Christ is powerful enough to purge, or cleanse, your conscience from every guilty stain.

How does the blood of Christ purge guilt from your conscience? Suppose you receive a traffic ticket for parking on the sidewalk. You have three problems: first, you broke the law; second, you owe the government a fine; and third, you have a copy of the traffic ticket to remind you of the fine. Now suppose you are penniless and find it impossible to pay the fine. You cannot just throw away the ticket, because the police hold a copy, and they will prosecute you if you do not pay. You have a real problem.

This is a picture of what happens whenever you sin. First, you have broken God's law; that is, you have done something that offends God. Second, you owe God's law something. Romans 6:23 says that the wages of sin is death. This is a rather stiff fine, impossible for you to pay. And third, you have guilt in your conscience, like the traffic ticket in your pocket, as a nagging reminder of your offense.

Now here is the good news. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, His death fully met all the requirements of God's law for you. In other words, your debt of sin has been paid. Praise the Lord! Jesus Christ, through His death on the cross, paid it all!

So now, the first two problems have been solved: God is no longer offended, and the debt of sin has been fully paid. But what about your conscience? The stain of guilt, like the traffic ticket, remains as a record of your sin.

This is where the blood of Christ cleanses your conscience. Because Christ's death has paid the debt of sin, His blood may now wipe out the record of that debt. Just as when the fine is paid, the traffic ticket may be torn up and thrown away, so also any guilt on your conscience may be wiped out.

This is so easy to experience. Whenever you sin and sense guilt within, you may simply open to God and pray something like this: "O God, forgive me for what I did today. Thank You, Lord, on the cross You died for me and paid for this sin that I have committed. Lord, I believe that this sin has been forgiven by You. Right now I claim Your precious blood to cleanse my conscience from any stain of guilt." Remember 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." And as Psalm 103:12 says, "As far as the east is from the west, / So far has He removed our transgressions from us." Who can say how far east is from west? In the same way, when you confess your sins, God removes them infinitely far away from you. They are not associated with you anymore. Because of this, you may have rest in your conscience.

When God forgives, He forgets. Do not think that after God has forgiven your sins, He may one day come back and remind you of them again. No, when it comes to your forgiven sins, God has a very short memory. Sometimes you may have a better memory than God. Can God really forget? This is what Jeremiah 31:34 says: "I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." If God forgets your sins, you may forget them also. Don't remind God of something He has already forgotten.

Christ died nearly two thousand years ago. His blood has already been shed and is available twenty-four hours a day to cleanse your conscience. Whenever you sin, there is no need to wait. Waiting does not improve the power of the blood. The blood is all-powerful. Wherever you are, any time of day, if you sense guilt in your conscience, just claim the precious blood. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven;... / Blessed is the man to whom / Jehovah does not impute iniquity" (Psa. 32:1-2). Through the precious blood of Christ, the problem of guilt is solved.

Accusation from Satan

However, sometimes after you confess and apply the blood you may continue to have some bad feeling within. Does this indicate that your sin is not forgiven? Or that the blood of Christ does not work? Or that something further is needed? You must answer, "Absolutely not!"

Where, then, do these bad feelings come from after you have confessed and applied the blood? Their source is God's enemy, Satan. To understand this we must see who Satan is and what he does.

Satan is the "devil," which in the original language of the Bible means "accuser." So Revelation 12:10 refers to him as "the accuser of our brothers,...who accuses them before our God day and night." Satan, God's enemy, spends most of his time day and night accusing God's people. This is his job. Of course, God did not ask him to do this. Rather, he has taken it upon himself to accuse God's people incessantly.

Nothing cripples a Christian spiritually more than accusation. Whenever you listen to Satan's accusation, you are powerless. It is as if all the strength is drained from your spirit. A Christian under

accusation finds it hard to fellowship with others and even harder to pray. He feels as though he cannot approach God.

This is the enemy's subtlety. He never appears in a red suit with a pitchfork crying, "I am the devil! Now I am going to condemn you!" He is more clever than that. He accuses you inwardly and even tricks you into thinking that his accusations are God's speaking.

How can you distinguish between God's true enlightening in your conscience and Satan's accusation? Sometimes it is difficult, but there are three ways:

First, God's light supplies you, whereas Satan's accusation drains you. When God speaks concerning your sins, you may feel very exposed and wounded. Nevertheless, you are also supplied and encouraged to draw close to God and apply the precious blood of Christ. Satan's accusations, on the other hand, are totally negative. The more you listen, the harder it is to pray. You feel empty and discouraged.

Second, God's speaking is always specific, whereas Satan's condemnation is quite often (though not always) general. Sometimes you may be tricked into thinking that you are just tired, or that you have had a rough day. Other times, you may just have a general impression that you are not right with God. But when you search your conscience, you find no specific sin that would cause you to be separated from God. Or you may wake up with a general feeling of depression or a feeling of uneasiness toward God. All these general feelings of condemnation that have no apparent source in sin are of Satan and should be rejected. When God speaks, He is specific and positive. But when Satan speaks, he is often general and negative.

Third, any uneasy feeling which remains after you confess and claim the blood is of Satan. There is never a need to confess and claim the blood again. God's demand is at once satisfied by the blood. But Satan is never satisfied. He would like to see you confess again and again. Proverbs 27:15 says, "A continual dripping on a very rainy day / And a contentious woman are alike." Satan's accusations are like that—like a dripping faucet, or like a nagging wife—they will not let you go to sleep. But God's speaking is different. When you confess and claim the cleansing of the blood, God is instantly satisfied. Any further voice is Satan's

If you confess your sin and claim the precious blood, yet some uneasiness continues to tug at you within, you should stop praying immediately. Do not confess anymore. Rather, turn to the source of the accusation and say something like this: "Satan, I have confessed my sin to God. He has forgiven my sin, and the blood of Jesus Christ has cleansed me from it. This uneasiness that I sense right now is not from God; it is from you, and I reject it! Satan, now you must look at the blood of Christ. That blood answers every one of your accusations." Try speaking to Satan in this way. When you use the blood in this way, Satan is defeated and he knows it. Revelation 12:10-11 says, "The accuser of our brothers has been cast down....And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony." The word of your testimony is just your declaration that the blood of Jesus Christ has cleansed you from every sin and that this blood has defeated Satan. When you speak boldly in this way, Satan's accusations are overcome.

The Christian life is a kind of warfare. Satan, "your adversary...as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). For this warfare, you need the proper weapons. One important weapon which you must utilize is the blood of Christ.