

Always Obey Your Conscience

Proverbs 28:13-14

- I. **Resisting** the conscience leads to curses (13a, 14b)
 - a. **Rationalizing** sin leads to guilt (13a)
 - b. **Desensitizing** sin leads to condemnation (14b)

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- II. Obeying the conscience leads to blessings (13b, 14a)
 - a. Repenting of sin leads to mercy (13b)
 - b. Calibrating against sin leads to joy (14a)

- 1. Always obey your conscience.**
- 2. Never force someone to submit to the rules of your conscience.**
- 3. Never abuse your Christian liberty.**
- 4. Welcome those who disagree with you.**

- 5. Be patient with the weak.**
- 6. Entrust judgement to God.**
- 7. Evaluate your motives.**

I. SBTS

This morning we are going to take a break from our series in Joshua and turn to the book of Proverbs. So please turn with me to Proverbs chapter 28 verse 13-14. If you don't have a Bible, simply raise your hand as our ushers walk by and they will be more than happy to give you one to use or to keep.

What is a proverb? A proverb is a short pithy statement – a saying of the wise that requires some thought to understand. The meaning doesn't always jump out at you from a quick read and the even when it does, a lot of time can be spent thinking about its application. One author described them this way, "Proverbs are like popcorn. They are tight little kernels that seem to be difficult to crack. Yet by applying the correct type of hermeneutical heat, the meaning-packed kernels pop open with delightful insights."¹

In other words, when we apply the right principles of biblical interpretation to a proverb (taking things like grammar, context, and style of writing into account) then we will reap a great reward from our proverb this morning.

The whole book of Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings that Solomon compiled, many of which he wrote himself,² while searching for God's wisdom.³ He put it together for his son so that he would contemplate 1) the fear of God, and 2) how to live by God's wisdom.⁴ This means that our text this morning, with the help of the Holy Spirit, will help us learn and experience these things too.

With that in mind, I'd like to have you stand with me, if you are able, in honor of the reading of God's Word as I read Proverbs 28:13-14.

"13 Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

14 Blessed is the one who fears the LORD always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity." (Proverbs 28:13–14 [ESV](#))

This is the brief reading of God's Word, you may be seated. Let's pray.

II. Introduction

Well it should be clear from the title of the message and from the outline that we are going to be talking about the conscience because it's what this passage is all about. These two verses compare and contrast the outcome between someone with a hard heart or a soft heart - that's Old Testament language for the conscience.

The Bible has a lot to say about the conscience. It's mentioned 31 times in the New Testament⁵ and many times in the Old.⁶

Pop culture portrays it as the little angel on one shoulder and a little devil on the other who are trying to persuade you to do good or evil. Perhaps you think about Pinocchio and his conscience represented by the friendly and wise Jiminy Cricket.

¹ Ted A. Hildbrandt, *Cracking Old Testament Codes – Proverb* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 233.

² 1 Kings 4:32

³ 2 Chron. 1:8-12; 1 Kings 4:29-34; Eccl. 1:12-13

⁴ Prov. 1:7, 9:10

⁵ E.g. Rom. 2:15; 9:1; 13:5; 1 Cor. 8:7, 10, 12; 10:25, 27-29; 1 Tim. 1:5, 19; 2 Tim. 1:3; Heb. 9:9, 14; 10:22; 13:18

⁶ 1 Sam. 24:5; 25:31; 2 Sam. 24:10; Job 27:6

That's certainly what it feels like when our conscience is active. But what does the Bible say about the conscience?

The Greek word describes it as “the inner faculty of distinguishing right and wrong – a moral consciousness.” It’s “the soul reflecting upon itself.”⁷ One author defined it well saying “The conscience is your consciousness of what you believe is right and wrong.”⁸

Romans 2:14-15 describes it this way:

“14 For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. 15 They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them”

Just from these verses alone we learn a couple of things about the conscience:

1) *Every person has been given a conscience by God* – whether believer or unbeliever. It’s part of what it means to be made in the image of God and it’s one of many tools necessary for godly living.

2) *The conscience gives us a moral awareness of our standing before God.* Dr. Joel Beeke [*Bee-key*] wrote, it “impresses a man’s mind with the moral authority of God, and as a result produces a sense of anxiety and misery, or peace and joy, that anticipates eternity...it binds a man with such authority that no created thing can release him from it.”⁹ It’s like the check engine light on the dashboard of your car. If it lights up, it could be a serious issue or a minor issue. If you ignore it, it could lead to engine failure.

3) *The conscience leads us to act a certain way.* It draws you to do what you believe is right and restrains you from doing what you believe is wrong.

None of us like the feeling of guilt or the trouble of wrestling with our conscience. There is always a temptation to silence it. It’s also troublesome when we find ourselves disagreeing with other Christians on matters of conscience. On top of that, our conscience isn’t always an accurate judge between right and wrong. This makes it feel more like a curse than a blessing from God.

But the main point of our passage is that “Your conscience is a gift from God to guide you away from sin and toward mercy.” Just like pain is a sense that God gives you to keep your body safe, the conscience causes spiritual pain to keep your soul safe.

Look at the blessing in the verses:

“13 Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

14 Blessed is the one who fears the LORD always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity.”

⁷ <https://biblicalcounseling.com/resource-library/podcast-episodes/the-war-on-guilt/>

⁸ Naselli, Andrew David; Crowley, J. D.. *Conscience: What It Is, How to Train It, and Loving Those Who Differ* (p. 42). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

⁹ <https://www.challies.com/reading-classics-together/the-christian-conscience/>

These two verses are essentially saying the same thing, but just stated a little differently for added nuance. Proverbs, like the Psalms, are written using a style of Hebrew poetry called “parallelism” which means you put two or more lines together that somehow match each other. They might contrast, emphasize, build upon, or illustrate each other. We are used to English poetry that rhymes with sounds, but Hebrew poetry rhymes with ideas.¹⁰

So what that means for our verses is that the person who hides his sin, is the same as the person who hardens his heart. On the flip side, the one who confesses and repents of his sin, is the same person who is joyful and fears the LORD.

The meaning of this proverb is simple. You could rephrase it this way: “a tender conscience leads to repentance and forgiveness, but a hardened conscience leads to more guilt and destruction.”

This proverb teaches us that the difference between these two outcomes is determined by the way you respond to and train your conscience.

III. Resisting the conscience leads to curses (13a, 14b)

The first way you can train your conscience is by resisting it. ***“Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper,”*** If you cover up or hide your sin you are resisting your conscience and you won’t prosper.

At worst, if you are not a believer, it means you won’t be forgiven of your sins and will be condemned to eternity in hell. For Christians it means you won’t enjoy the blessing of ongoing intimate fellowship with God and a conscience free and clear of guilt until you confess. God offers this mercy only to those who confess and forsake their sins.

1 John 1:9 reminds us of the ongoing blessing of confession: ***“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*** In this verse the apostle John is talking to believers, which means they are already judicially forgiven because they trust in Jesus. They are justified. Nothing can change that.

Even though Christians are forgiven judicially once-and-for-all, we still struggle with sin. When we sin, it means we aren’t aligned with God’s will and aren’t able to enjoy our fellowship with him. But confession restores that. It simply means you tell God that you have sinned in a particular way. Confession is by nature an agreement with God’s law and His judgement of your sin. When we confess, God promises not only to forgive, but also to cleanse our conscience from guilt.

Christians should regularly ask for forgiveness as part of their sanctification, not their justification. We don’t regularly confess because something is incomplete and salvation is at stake. Jesus taught the disciples to pray for forgiveness regularly¹¹ and in John 13 while in the upper room, he taught that they still needed to wash off the spiritual dirt as necessary even though they have been spiritually bathed.¹²

But if you choose to conceal sin instead, you’ll be burdened with guilt which will take its toll on you spiritually and physically. Resisting the conscience will lead to curses.

¹⁰ *Believer’s Bible Commentary*, <https://www.olivetree.com/blog/poetry-bible-parallelism/>

¹¹ Matt. 6:12

¹² John 13:10

In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve hid themselves after eating the fruit God told them not to and they suffered a curse for it.

David wrote in Psalm 32, “*3 when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. 4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.*” He experienced spiritual and physical suffering instead of blessing because he didn’t confess his sin.

a. Rationalizing sin leads to guilt (13a)

One of the ways we resist our conscience is by rationalizing sin. We do this in a lot of different ways.

We can *downplay* the seriousness of our sin. “It’s just a lustful thought, no one else knows.” “I’m not envious or jealous, I just think I deserve some credit for my hard work.” “Yes, he lacks self-control, but he’s young. He’ll grow out of it.”

Or maybe we *relabel the sin* to make it sound better: “I wasn’t angry, I was just frustrated.” “I didn’t lie, I just didn’t tell you everything.” “I’m not gossiping, I just want you to be aware so you can pray.”

We can *blame shift*. Adam did that in the garden. He blamed Eve first - threw his wife under the bus and then proceeded to blame God himself (“It was the woman YOU gave me”)! We do it too. If I have a conflict with my wife or children, I can blame them for my sinful responses. “If you hadn’t done A, B, or C, then I wouldn’t have been angry.” “I wouldn’t be so anxious if things were a little less stressful at work.”

Our culture likes to blame shift by ignoring the spiritual realm and blaming the biological realm. Instead of talking about sin they’ll talk about society and biology.

If someone gets drunk it’s because of alcoholism. If I look at pornography or self-gratify it’s because I have a biological need. Those who struggle with anxiety, depression, or struggle with sitting still and paying attention have disorders. The solution is medicine because it’s biological.

The currency of today is the victim card. The victim mentality seeks to avoid all responsibility. If someone robs a store, it’s not their fault, it’s society’s fault. They were oppressed or it’s the way they were raised. If someone shoots up a school or mall then it’s the gun manufacturer’s fault. Abortion is not murder, it’s the choice of a woman who is the victim of her partner and her biology.

The problem is that this thinking leaks into the church as well. We would rather believe that we are victims than deal with our sin. We want self-pity, not guilt. “You don’t understand, if God hadn’t given me this suffering, then I would obey Him.” But when we rationalize our sin, it doesn’t solve any problem, it just creates more.

b. Desensitizing sin leads to condemnation (14b)

The other way we resist our conscience by desensitizing ourselves to sin. Proverb 28:14 says “*whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity.*” To harden the heart is to silence your conscience *by ignoring it* or by *searing it* so that you don’t feel or hear it anymore.

Many of us recall Disney’s *Pinocchio* where he often ignores Jiminy Cricket’s warnings and then winds up in all sorts of trouble. But in the original book published in the 1880’s, Pinocchio actually throws a hammer at the cricket and kills him.

Every time you feel guilty but *ignore* those feelings you start walking down the path of desensitizing. You can do this by thinking about the good things you do, or all the bad things you don't do, to turn down the volume on your conscience. Or maybe you might try to convince yourself that your conscience is wrong.

In 1984, a plane from Avianca Airline crashed in Spain killing 148 people. The two black boxes were recovered and revealed that the computer's automatic warning system had been warning the pilots in English "Pull up! Pull up!" But the pilot thought the system was malfunctioning, yelled "Shut Up Gringo!" and he turned the system off. Minutes later the plane plowed into the side of a mountain.¹³ Similarly, training your conscience to ignore the warnings is dangerous.

When you ignore it, you will continue to desensitize yourself even further by acting against or searing your conscience. The Bible makes it very clear that if you act against your conscience you are sinning.

Romans 14:23 says, "***But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.***" In context, Paul is talking about what to do if one Christian believes eating meat is wrong, but another one doesn't. If you believe something is wrong, but you do it anyways, it's a sin. Even if your conscience is ill-informed on an issue like eating meat.

If you habitually overrule your conscience you will condition yourself to reject it. The Bible refers to this as a "***seared***" your conscience.¹⁴ Just like developing callouses or suffering from a sever burn wound where you lose feeling, a seared conscience occurs over time and through repeated acts that wound it. Desensitizing the conscience leads to condemnation.

Proverbs 29:1 says "***He who is often reprov'd, yet stiffens his neck, will suddenly be broken beyond healing.***" Cain hardened his conscience when he was angry and jealous of his brother Abel. Even though God warned him, he killed his brother.¹⁵ Pharaoh continually hardened his heart until his entire nation was economically devastated, he lost his son to the Angel of Death, and his elite army was swallowed up in the Red Sea.¹⁶ These serve as warnings that God is very gracious and slow to anger, but if anyone desensitizes themselves to any kind of sin, it will lead to condemnation and destruction.

So why do we resist our conscience and hide our sins? One reason is because ***we are proud***. We don't want to be held accountable to God. We want to be the ruler of our own life. So instead of confessing, we just hide it. But this is foolish since there is no such thing as a secret.

Someone working in the intelligence community once said, "there are no secrets, only delayed disclosures."¹⁷ God always knows everything even if you don't say anything. Hebrews 4:13 says that "***no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account***." According to this verse, there is nothing safe about secret sin.¹⁸

¹³ <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1985-02-20-mn-306-story.html>

¹⁴ 1 Tim. 4:2

¹⁵ Gen. 4:4-8

¹⁶ Ex. 8:15

¹⁷ Matthew Braun, "A Book on the Enhanced Interrogation Program That Tortures the Truth," October 4th, 2019, The Federalist, <https://thefederalist.com/2019/10/04/a-book-on-the-enhanced-interrogation-program-that-tortures-the-truth/>

¹⁸ Cf. 1 Cor. 4:5

God opposes the proud¹⁹ but we can be thankful that He will discipline those he loves when we are blinded by our pride.²⁰

Another reason we hide our sin is because ***we are ashamed***. We are embarrassed by what people will think about us if we confess. Like Adam and Eve covering themselves with leaves hoping God won't notice, we hope that time will cover up our sin and if we keep quiet about it, that no one will notice, and then our conscience will eventually be quiet too.

But this is foolish for two reasons:

First, everyone knows you are a sinner. The Bible says so. You're not fooling anyone.²¹ But you may say, "Yes, but you don't know how bad of a sinner I am" to which I would say, "Yes, I do. Your sin and my sin are so vile and disgusting that it required the crucifixion of our perfect Savior."

I would also remind you of the hope that you are not the only one who has struggled with a particular sin. 1 Corinthians 10:13 which says there is ***"no sin that has overtaken you that is not common to man."*** That means you're not the only one with shame, your shame is not somehow the worst in the world, and that there is no sin that cannot be forgiven and guilt washed away.

Secondly, Jesus died to take away your shame, so why do you want to hold on to it? Romans 8:1 declares, ***"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."*** If you confess your sins and put your trust in Christ then there is no more guilt and condemnation. If Jesus doesn't condemn you, who else can? Jesus died not only to save you, but to give you a clean conscience – to wash away the guilt.²² God's mercy is what draws and motivates us to confess.²³ It calls you to lay down your shame at the cross and hold it no longer.

IV. Obeying the conscience leads to blessings (13b, 14a)

While training your conscience by resisting it leads to curses, training your conscience by obeying it leads to blessings. Verse 13 says,

***"13 ... but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.
14 Blessed is the one who fears the LORD always...."***

a. Repenting of sin leads to mercy (13b)

The first way to obey your conscience is ***by repenting of sin***. Repenting is more than just confessing. It's more than feeling sad for your sin. There are lots of people in the world who will readily confess they are sinners, but don't repent. Judas Iscariot felt sad for betraying Jesus, he confessed it, and threw the blood money at the Pharisees feet. But he didn't repent. He didn't love Jesus. He didn't seek mercy from the LORD. He silenced his conscience through suicide.

Verse 13 says the one who ***"confesses AND forsakes"*** his sin obtains mercy. To repent means you abandon the sin and obey God instead. Throughout the Old Testament the word you would see for

¹⁹ 1 Peter 5:5

²⁰ Hebrews 12

²¹ Romans 3:23; 6:23

²² Heb. 9:14

²³ Rom. 2:4; Ps. 51:12-15

repentance is “turn” or “return” like in Isaiah 55:7 “*let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*”²⁴ If someone turns away from sin, but doesn’t turn to God in faith and obedience, then they are not repenting.

Repentance, like faith, is not a single, one-time act performed by a Christian. It’s a lifestyle. This means that if you commit the same sin again it doesn’t mean that you’ve failed to truly repent. If a sin has become a pattern in your life that you continually run back to without any effort or signs of stopping, then you have cause to evaluate your repentance.

True repentance is an attitude that is documented, over time, more and more consistently as a 180 degree lifestyle change. It’s not just sorrow over sin, but a sorrow over sinning against God that leads to change in your heart.²⁵

Those of you who have been Christians for a long time will understand the correlation that as you grow in holiness, you will also grow in awareness of your sinfulness. As a Christian grows they will sin less, but they will feel it more. Even the apostle Paul called himself the “chief of sinners”²⁶ and a “wretched man.”²⁷ This at first is very discouraging and usually leads a believer to question their salvation and wrestle with assurance. But as your awareness and sensitivity to the awfulness of sin grows, so does your awareness of grace and beauty of the cross.²⁸

Those who confess and forsake their sins obtain the mercy of God through the cross of Jesus Christ. This makes training our conscience to obey so important. We want to ensure that our conscience is working precisely and is not weak.

b. Calibrating against sin leads to joy (14a)

This is why the second part of training your conscience to obey is by *calibrating it against sin*.

Sometimes you need to make sure a tool is working precisely by calibrating it. I was recently using a voltage testing pen while doing some electrical work in my basement. Even though I turned off the breaker, I still used the tester to make sure it was safe to work. But before I could trust the tool I had to be sure it was working accurately so I calibrated it on a wire that I knew was hot. I couldn’t trust the tool to be the standard of what is hot and what is not by itself.

In the same way, the conscience is also insufficient by itself to judge between good and evil. It’s a skylight that lets light into the soul and reveals what’s there, but it’s not a light bulb. It doesn’t produce its own light. It needs to be calibrated in order to detect sin properly.

Most people use their own feelings as a standard to determine good and evil. It’s called “Whatever feels right.” But this leads to the justification of all sorts of terrible and evil things. Many men and women participate in abortion by desensitizing their conscience to the murderous act, by dehumanizing the baby, and by justifying it as women’s reproductive rights and healthcare. They believe that those who are pro-life are evil.

²⁴ Cf. Jeremiah 3:22-4:2

²⁵ 2 Cor. 7:10-11; Eph. 4:22-24

²⁶ 1 Tim. 1:15

²⁷ Romans 7:24

²⁸ 1 Tim. 1:16-17; Romans 7:24-8:1

Christians can easily allow our own feelings or even our traditions to become the standard of calibrating our conscience. We can form convictions over parenting, theology, or what godly behavior looks like based on the wrong source.

So what is the Christian's standard for the conscience?

Proverbs 28:14 says, ***"14 Blessed is the one who fears the LORD always,"***

This tells us that the standard is ***"fear of the LORD."*** To fear the LORD means you know His will and submit to Him because of who He is. It doesn't mean you are terrified of Him, but that your awareness of who He is heightens your senses and motivates you to act with sobriety.

It's a similar feeling to handling a firearm. Even when you follow all safety precautions in handling the weapon, your senses are still sharpened and your mind is sobered because of the destructive power and lethality of what you are holding. Those who know how to handle a gun aren't terrified, but they have a healthy fear of it. It's the same with those who fear the LORD because they are safe in Christ. Those who fear Him are "blessed" which means "joyful."

Proverbs 9:10 tells us that ***"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight."*** It's another way of saying that our conscience is calibrated by knowledge of God's Word. Your pastors are not your conscience, nor your spouse, your parents, or friends. God can certainly use them as vehicles to communicate God's truth to you, but the Word of God alone is the standard we must calibrate to.

When you're faced with a decision and you aren't sure what's right, educate yourself with God's Word. Psalm 119:105 says ***"your Word is a lamp unto my feet and light to my path."***

David says in Psalm 19 that God's Word revives the soul, makes us wise, brings joy to the heart, gives understanding. In verses 11-12 he says, ***"Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. Who can discern his errors?"*** Who can discern? The answer is rhetorically "no one." God's word is the only standard that calibrates our conscience to discern error. The Holy Spirit works in tandem with His Word to renew our minds continually.²⁹

As we educate it, we must be willing to submit to the LORD of our conscience. Peter is a good example. In Acts 10, Peter saw a vision where God commands him to eat the meat of unclean animals. We're talking BBQ pork here. You can imagine the moral quandary Peter is in since the Old Testament law forbid eating this kind of meat and he had never broken this law.

So Peter conscientiously objects. God tells him that under the New Covenant this meat has been made clean.³⁰ But Peter still struggles. God works with Peter three times before Peter calibrates his conscience.³¹ This shows us that God is the LORD of our conscience, but it also teaches us that God is gracious and patient to help us when our conscience is weak.

As you calibrate, you will most certainly find areas of weakness in your conscience.

²⁹ Col. 3:1-5; Rom. 12:2

³⁰ Cf. Mark 7:18-19

³¹ Acts 10:9-16

A conscience can be weak because you were missing something. This is true for all new believers. They will be calibrating as they read God's Word for the first time. This kind of calibration requires adding commands to your life. Sexual immorality is a sin against God and others. Being under the influence of anything other than the Holy Spirit is sinful. Gossip and lying are a sin... and son.

But a weak conscience can also be one that is oversensitive and packed with too many commands. Weak consciences tend to be legalistic, or even unhealthily troubled. It can believe it's wrong to eat meat, that it's sinful to participate in Halloween, to work on the Sabbath, to drink alcohol, or get a tattoo. The weak conscience would say you're unloving if you didn't wear a mask during COVID pandemic – or that you were sinning if you did wear a mask!

As a weak conscience is calibrated by God's word you'll see a subtraction of rules and traditions that had wrongly been elevated to the level of a command from God.

One thing is clear, no two people have the same conscience on every issue.

So what do we do then when your biblically informed conscience comes into conflict with someone else's biblically informed conscience?

Let me run through seven principles found in Scripture for navigating these inevitable situations:

- 1) *Always obey your conscience.* We've already established that it's a sin to go against your conscience.³² We must be willing to submit our conscience to the LORD who reigns over it and change when needed, but don't ever sin against it.
- 2) *Never force someone else to submit to the rules of your conscience.*³³ Your conscience is for you and you alone. This doesn't mean that you can't try to help someone change if you think they are stumbling in sin. We have a biblical responsibility to do so.³⁴ But the changing of the conscience in submission to God's Word is God's job – not yours.³⁵
- 3) *Never abuse your Christian liberty.* Just because we have differences in our conscience doesn't mean there isn't a right answer. Paul himself said that there is nothing wrong with eating meat.³⁶ But he never used his freedom to eat meat to keep him from loving others who struggled. Those who have a strong conscience shouldn't be arrogant toward the weak. All things should be done for building each other up and pursuing peace.
- 4) *Welcome those who disagree with you.* Romans 14 reminds us that God loves and welcomes us even though none of us have a perfect conscience. So we should be accepting of each other too.
- 5) *Be patient with the weak.* Walk in love and do not live to please yourself but to serve and build up others just as Jesus does with us.³⁷
- 6) *Entrust judgement to God.* Romans 15 makes it clear that we are not to judge one another for our differences in conscience. God will judge each of us for our good deeds at the Bema seat of Christ.³⁸ As we build on top of the foundation of the gospel, God will test our own works and motives to see if they are good or not.
- 7) *Evaluate your motives.* Your motives in your conscience should always be to please God and not to boost your self-esteem and ego.³⁹

³² Romans 14:23

³³ Romans 14:21; 1 Cor. 8:7-10

³⁴ Gal. 6:1; Jude 22-23

³⁵ 2 Tim. 2:24-26

³⁶ Romans 14:14

³⁷ Romans 15:1; 1 Cor. 9:19-23

³⁸ 1 Cor. 3:10-15; 4:5

³⁹ Romans 14

Your conscience is a gift from God to guide you away from sin and to His mercy so always obey your conscience and the LORD who rules over it.

We all must continually grow in listening to, training, and obeying our conscience in order to please and glorify the Savior who purchased us with His blood.

At the end of the day, remember this: “be troubled by sin, find peace by trusting in Christ, and resolve to please God in all things.”

Communion

As we prepare to take communion together, Paul reminds us of the importance of the conscience in 1 Corinthians 11:27-32. He wrote:

“27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. 30 That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. 31 But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.”

(1 Corinthians 11:27–32 [ESV](#))

In this passage he warns against taking communion in an ***“unworthy manner.”*** This refers to living hypocritically - to profess belief in Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection and all of its implications without living it out in your life. It’s taking communion without confessing and forsaking ongoing sin in your life.

If you do that, you are ***“guilty concerning the body and blood of the LORD.”***

If you threw the American flag on the ground and stomped on it, you would be guilty of dishonoring the United States because the flag is a symbol of our country. In a similar but far more serious way, taking communion in an unworthy manner is dishonoring Jesus through the symbols which represent His sacrifice which created the New Covenant.

Paul says that many have suffered judgement in the form of illness and even death. The Greek word for judgement does not refer to damnation to hell. He makes that clear at the end that even those who have died were “disciplined” so that they would NOT be condemned. God takes communion so seriously that he will take you out of this world in order to keep you from profaning the name of Christ.

While communion is a joyous celebration, it’s also one that should cause us to examine our hearts and fear the LORD. If you have unreconciled sin, I would encourage you to take a moment and confess that to the LORD before you take the elements. If you need to make something right with someone, then I would encourage you to abstain from taking communion until that can be done.

At this time, please remove the cellophane and get the bread.

As we take communion we remember the Lord's sacrifice that saved us from the penalty and power of our sins and washed our conscience white as snow. Paul wrote in verse 23:

“23 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” Let us eat together.

Now please remove the lid from the juice.

25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.” Let us take and drink.
(1 Corinthians 11:23–26 ESV)

Let's pray.

Benediction

Proverbs 2:4–9 ESV

“4 if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures,

5 then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.

6 For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;

7 he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity,

8 guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints.

9 Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path;”

“Always Obey Your Conscience”
Proverbs 28:13-14 - *Pastor Tysin Smith*

Main point: Your _____ is a gift from God to guide you away from sin and toward mercy.

Outline:

- I. _____ the conscience leads to curses
(v. 13a, 14b)
 - a. _____ sin leads to guilt (13a)
 - b. _____ sin leads to condemnation (14b)

- II. _____ the conscience leads to blessings (13b, 14a)
 - a. _____ of sin leads to mercy (13b)
 - b. _____ against sin leads to joy (14a)

Application: Always _____ your conscience and the LORD who reigns over it.

Your responsibility by God's enabling is to consistently apply the divine principles and truth you've heard (Phil. 2:12-20, 1 Tim. 4:7-9, James 1:22-27).

As you meditate on this message, ask yourself:

- How does God want my beliefs/actions to change?
- How can I accomplish this change?
- What is the first step toward bringing about this change?

Recommended Resources:

Conscience: What It Is, How to Train It, and Loving Those Who Differ by Andrew Naselli and J.D. Crowley

The Vanishing Conscience by John F. MacArthur

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Is it ever ok to disregard your conscience? Why or why not? (Rom. 14:23)
- 2) Why are our consciences sometimes weak and misguided?
- 3) What are some different ways we resist our conscience?
- 4) What does it look like to accurately train and calibrate your conscience?
- 5) What temptations do we face with people who differ in their conscience?
- 6) What does it look like to love those who have differ in their conscience from us? (Rom. 15:1-7)
- 7) What should motivate us to love others who have a different conviction than we do on any particular issue? (cf. Rom. 14:12-13, 18)
- 8) What's the difference between inducing someone's conscience and instructing someone's conscience (cf. 2 Tim. 2:24-26)?