

# The Voice of Conscience

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June 28, 1953

Let me read a very unpleasant and very wonderful passage of Scripture, and take one verse, the ninth, as a sort of start for our talk tonight. The eighth chapter of John, the opening verses. Jesus went out onto the Mount of Olives. And early in the morning, he came again into the temple. And all the people came on to Him and sat down and He taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto Him a woman taken in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they say unto Him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now, Moses in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. What saith Thou? This, they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So, when they continued asking him, He lifted up Himself and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

And again, he stooped down and wrote on the ground. And to they which heard it being convicted, by their own conscience went out one by one beginning at the eldest even under the last. And Jesus was left alone. I'd like to have seen that parade wouldn't you? Dignified old boys with gray beards, clear down to the youngest kid. And Jesus was left alone with a woman standing in the midst.

When Jesus had lifted up Himself and saw no one but the woman, He said unto her: woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? And she said, no man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin no more. Verse nine, and they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the youngest. Now, tonight I am to speak on the voice of the human conscience.

Now, hell, hell by means of pseudo, learned propaganda, has brought into disrepute many of life's verities; and among these is conscience. When conscience is mentioned now in learned circles, it is mentioned only with a smirk; and where it is used seriously, it is necessary that we must defend the whole concept of human conscience. That seems almost unbelievable, but it is true.

But tonight, I will not defend and I will not ignore. I cannot ignore that which the universal wisdom of the race has approved. The universal wisdom of the human race has approved the idea of there being a conscience within the heart of a man and I will not ignore that which the universal testimony of all peoples in all ages have agreed to a lot. Neither will I defend that which the Christian Scriptures take for granted mostly, and in some instances teach flatly. If you will go through your concordance you will find that conscience is mentioned very many places. And the

idea which the word conscience embodies, is mentioned throughout the entire Bible not once or 10 times or 100 times but underlies the whole structure and is part woven into the entire Bible.

Now I want to tell you what we mean by conscious, as I am able; and then point to this Bible example of its operation, and then show that it is a voice which is calling and then show what it's done to people. It sounds like a big order, but it won't take too long. Now, what we mean by conscience is that which always refers to right and wrong. Conscience never deals with theories about anything. Conscience always deals with right and wrong, and the relation of the individual to right and wrong. You will notice a strange thing here, that conscience never deals in plurals. It always deals in singulars.

There is only one place in the entire Bible where conscience is used in the plural. That is when Paul is talking and says that He commends himself to their consciences. Everywhere else, it is made to be singular as when it says, they, being convicted by their conscience, not consciences, but conscience. They been convicted by their conscience went out. And always it is so that conscience in the Bible refers to right and wrong and is individual and personal and singular.

Now, it is individual, and it is exclusive. I say that it never permits plurals. It excludes everybody else. If those dozen or two dozen, however many there were, that had ganged up there. If they could have thought of themselves as a group, they could have drawn courage from the idea, and they might have been able to brazen it out. But conscience never let you lean on anybody else. Conscience singles you out as though nobody else existed. The Bible doesn't say that when they went out, they went out in a mass. They went out one by one. Each one went out driven by his own conscience.

Now, the word conscience here, means, a moral sight. It means to see completely. It means an inward awareness. It means to be secretly aware of. Now that's the psychological definition for it. But there is a ground of conscience. And that's what we're concerned with here tonight, not its psychological definition, but with the ground of human conscience. And that ground of human conscience is the secret presence of Christ in the world. Christ is in the world. And the secret presence of Christ in the world is the ground of human conscience. It is a moral awareness. A verse that I very often quote for it is a verse very basic in my theology, is John 1:9, that says that that is the light, Jesus, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. And that Light in the world, that Secret Presence in the world, which lights every man that comes into the world, that is the ground of moral conscience. However, it operates, that is its ground. That's why it's here. That's what put it here, that the living, eternal Word, is present in the world, present in human society, present here, secretly present here and giving to humanity a secret awareness of moral values. A secret awareness

Now I know there are some who tell us that when the Bible says that we are dead in trespasses and sins, that it means that we are dead in a very literal sense of the word. And being dead therefore we have no moral awareness. But I think that kind of exegesis is so bad and so confused and so confusing, that it should be ridden out of town on the first rail that could be commandeered from a farmer. It just has no place at all in the Scripture, it has no place there, because the Bible says that I am dead in sin, therefore, that I am like a dead man. I can't be talked to nor persuaded nor argued with nor convicted nor convinced nor pleaded with nor frightened nor appeal to. I'm just a dead lump.

Now, here we have a Bible example. In John 1:8-11. They were very strict moralists, those Jews. That is, they were when nobody was looking. There were, when they could get away with it. And they found a poor, wretch of a woman. And they didn't give any care whatsoever about the woman. Neither did they care anything about the broken law. Neither did they care anything for the Jewish church, or as men say, the Society of Israel. They only had one thing in mind. They were going to take this religious teacher that was embarrassing them, and they were going to silence Him for good. They were going to get Him to commit Himself to a statement that they could use against Him and take the hide off of Him and drive Him out with loss of face, discredited forever. That was their business. The woman was a pawn, a cat's paw, no more. They had no love for her. They had no hatred of her sin. They hated Jesus and they would do anything to get at Jesus. So they dragged this poor, miserable woman into His presence. And they said, here a harlot. Here she is.

And God in His sovereign mercy raises me from the dead, gives me the new birth, regenerates me, and then I am prepared to listen. It's all wrong brethren. When the Bible says we are dead in trespasses and sins, it means that we are cut off from the life of God. And that's all that it means. But that in itself, I suppose is so bad, that it's impossible to think of anything worse. But that same man that is cut off from the life of God, and so dead in sin, that same man has a moral awareness. That same man has a secret inner voice that is always talking to him. It's the Light, that lightet every man that cometh into the world. It's a singular voice in the bosom of every human being, accusing or else excusing him, as Paul put it. Now, that's what I mean by conscience.

Now the law of Moses said we are to stone her to death. What do you say? And if he had said stone her to death, and they had stone her to death, the Romans would have put Jesus in prison and that would have been the end of him. If Jesus had said, let her go, they'd have said, we always knew you're against the law of Moses. And that would have been the end of Him. They would have discredited Him before the law. But I admit, ladies and gentlemen, that I get considerable personal, private, highly individualistic delight out of the way He handled that bunch. He knew them. He knew them. He knew that bunch of hypocrites. He knew they didn't have any love for that women. He knew they didn't have any love for the law. He knew they only hated Him. And he knew this whole thing was a frameup.

Not only that he knew those old boys, their phylacteries, their long robes, their sanctimonious look, their pious, nasal breathing and all that pseudo spirituality and artificial godliness, He knew the whole business and He knew what they had done down the years. And they said, alright, we're supposed to stone her. What do you say? And I think there was a twinkle in the heart if not in the eye of Jesus. He looked those old boys over and He said, fellows, let the one of you that never sinned, get the first rock. And immediately being smitten by that inner voice, they sneaked out. One went out and he was ashamed to say anything to the other one.

And each one slipped out quietly by himself, all alone, because it is in the power of conscience to isolate the human soul and take away all of its hopes and helps and encouragement; isolate it and hold it alone in the universe before the bar of God. Each one of them sneaked out. Some of those pious old boys thought because they were old, and they had forgotten their early sins that God had forgotten them. But as soon as the voice of Jesus aroused them within, they remembered, and they sneaked out. And they sneaked out afraid to look up for a fear that God would start throwing stones at them. For they knew they were just as guilty as she was.

That law that thou shalt stone the wicked woman was meant for holy people who weren't wicked. It was not meant that a wicked man could stone a wicked woman. It was never meant that one sinner could put another sinner to death. It was never thus meant, and Jesus knew it. And these old hypocrites, when they ran into Jesus, brother, it was like a cat running into a mowing machine. And they came away each one of them licking his wounds. I don't know whether they went straight home, or just how. They didn't dare look at each other. Because each one was ashamed. Now, that's how this conscience business works.

It smites the inner life. It touches the heart. It isolates it. It sets us off all by ourselves. You know, to my mind, I don't want to anticipate next Sunday night's sermon. But to my mind, that is going to put the hell in judgment; that each one of us must go alone. If twelve men are led away to be shot, they can get some moral support from each other. And the very fact there's another fellow one on each side of you that's sharing your tragedy, gives your moral support. But isolate them and lead them one at a time not knowing that there is another, and that moral support is all taken away. It will be the cosmic loneliness of judgment that will put hell in it.

Gangsters can meet together after dark, a dozen of them and take courage from each other. And wicked classes everywhere can meet and shout and work up steam and take courage from each other, but the lonely soul, lonely in a universe with only that soul and an angry God. That's the terror of a conscience. And that's exactly what the conscience does. It singles the man out. So God has then given us a faithful witness inside of our own hearts.

Now, I believe that. I preached one time up in Minnesota on the conscience. I don't remember what I said exactly. Maybe it was pretty bad. But one old fella said he got a great burden, a great

burden. He said he had the Holy Ghost burden because of my sermon, it was so terrible and unscriptural. He didn't believe in conscience obviously. And the Bible School bigwig was there. He called me aside and told me he didn't believe in it either, or words to that effect.

What has happened when we no longer believe in the human conscience? That the conscience is pushed aside. I say that hell has done that by her propaganda. She has used the bubble-headed dreamy-eyed boys with pseudo learning who know just enough to be pitifully ignorant. And just learn long sesquipedalian words in order to cover up their own pitiful lack of knowledge. And they have laughed conscience out of court. And the church is afraid to admit the conscience. The Bible isn't afraid to admit it. It says bluntly, being convicted by their own conscience they went out one by one; conscience stricken, smitten inside, struck by a stroke from heaven, they walked out of there, each one of them, down the steps and out onto the sidewalk and sneaked away. That's what conscience does. It's that inner voice that talks inside of you?

Now, one way the devil has of getting rid of things is to make jokes about them. I want to warn you brother, look out for the corruption of your mind by the papers and magazines and radio jokes; watch out for the corruption of your mind. There's legitimate humor and we all admit that. And I think it's in us by the gift of God. But whenever that humor takes holy things for it's object, that humor is devilish at once. One of the slick jokes you hear is the conscience is set in you which makes you sorry when you get caught. Now, that's supposed to be funny. I tell you that it is not funny. It's tragic that anybody can yield so to the propaganda of hell as to joke about that which is no joke. There are some things ladies and gentlemen that are just not joke-worthy. They just don't belong in the field where you can joke about it.

I respect that old New Englander who would never allow anybody to joke about love or death in his presence--Emerson. Anybody that started to crack a joke about love, and he saw that love was going to be the object of a joke, any kind of love, he frowned them down to shut them up. And if they joked about death, he frowned them down and refused to allow them to joke about. There are some things that are not the proper objects of humor, and one of them is conscience. That power that God has set in the human breasts, suddenly to isolate a soul and hang it between heaven and hell; lonely as if God had never created but one soul. That's not a joking matter. The Light that lighteth every man that comes into the world is not a joking matter. The eternal universal presence of the luminous Christ is not a joking matter. That's too serious to be dealt with lightly. Joke about politics if you must joke. They're usually funny anyway, but don't joke about God. And don't joke about conscience nor death nor life nor our love for the cross nor prayer.

We have become in our day the greatest bunch of sacrilegious jokesters in the world. I've even seen pictures in magazines and newspapers of people who had taught their dog to pray. They thought it was a very humorous thing to show a little spotted dog with his paws crossed and his eyes shut bowing in a bed. The Bible says beware of dogs. And I might add beware of the fools who

teach dogs to pray. Beware of any who take lightly that which God takes seriously. God will give you a whole world of pleasant things. The birds will sing in your backyard and the kids will romp over your lawn if you have a lawn. And a thousand things will happen in the day that can be dismissed with a pleasantry. So, your sense of humor won't die. There's plenty to laugh at in the world. Be sure you don't laugh at something that God takes seriously. Conscience is one of those things. And remember that the conscience is always on God's side. Always on God's side, and He judges conduct in the light of the moral law. And as the Scripture says, excuses or accuses.

Now, this is one voice that we've all heard. There's a little song that says, I think when I read the sweet story of old when Jesus was here among men, how he took little children as lambs to His fold, I should like to have been with Him them. And I understand that, I think it's a very pleasant little song. But oh, it couldn't be further from the truth. For you wouldn't have been better off if you had been here when Jesus was on earth. Not a bit better off. You're better off now. It's expedient for you that I go away, He said. So, you're better off now than if you had been here when Jesus was on the earth. And that same little fallacy would say, if I had heard Jesus; if I had just heard Jesus, do you know that there were thousands who heard Jesus that had no idea what he was talking about. You know that some of His own disciples had to wait for the Holy Ghost at Pentecost to know what Jesus was talking about. If I had only heard Jesus, we say. No, no, my brother, you would have heard a voice, as far as you're now personally concerned, equal to that voice of Jesus, and that's the voice of the inner conscience. For it is the voice, It is the Light, that lighteth every man, changed from light; for that's what it means--moral illumination. It's there. Some say, if I could have heard Paul. Others will say, if we could only have heard so and so.

They're now doing this little thing. One more thing I'm against. They're taking the big preachers and putting them on tapes and taking them to churches where they haven't got anything, only little preachers, so that the congregations won't have to be starved, they say by listening to little preacher. They can hear the big preacher. They take somebody like Graham or some other of the big preachers of the day. And they will put him on a tape and bring him to church. And then the little preacher can sit around twiddling his thumbs while the big preacher preaches to the congregation.

Fallacy, brethren, fallacy, thousand times a fallacy. If we could have Paul on tape recording and let him stand here and preach, he could do no more for you than the Holy Ghost can do with the Book and the human conscience. If I had only heard Simpson. You've heard a truer voice than Simpson and a more wonderful voice. You've heard the first voice and the last voice. You've heard the voice of the Light within the heart. You've heard that which the accusers of the woman heard. You've heard that inner voice always preaches to each man singly.

That which follows and goes on and tracks and traces it through, and there's a nemesis on our trail. You've heard that voice. And it's sheer hypocrisy to say, If I only could have heard Moody or

some great preacher. A congregation of half-saved Christians will sit and pay no attention to the Light that lighteth of everyman and ignore the voice that sounds within them. And then say, now, we'll have a tape recording of Paul Reese or Billy Graham. Sure, we'll get somewhere. Oh, my brethren, not to detract from those great men; only to say, that's not what that church needs. That church needs to listen to the inner voice and do something about it.

Don't forget Paul had his hypocrites, Peter had his Ananias and Sapphira. Jesus had His very Judas. And the history of the great preachers and great evangelists has not been 100% history. All always they had men who heard their voices and didn't know what they were hearing. You're hearing a more eloquent voice than mine, my brethren/ You're hearing tonight a voice that's more serious than any preacher you've ever listened to.

I once entered a little gathering in New York City. It's a small group and I heard a minister there talking to a noonday crowd and he said something I'll not soon forget. He said, we assume that if a man has heard the gospel, he's been enlightened. But it's a false assumption. Just to have heard a man preach the Scripture doesn't mean necessarily that you have been enlightened. No. It's the voice that enlightens, brethren. It's the Holy Ghost, the point of contact. The Spirit of God speaking soundlessly within. That's what illuminates a man. That's what brings him, makes him accountable to God. Just the falling of the words of a text on the human ear may not mean anything. But that inner voice means everything. And a man has not been illuminated until that Voice begins to sound within him. And that Voice is the voice of conscience, the voice of conviction, the Holy Ghost talking inside of a man.

Now, I want you to notice what men do to their consciences sometimes. 1 Timothy 1:5, it tells us here, now, the end of the commandment is love out of the pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned, from which some having swerved, have turned aside unto vain jangling. Now, here we have it, some people have had a good conscience or have turned away from a good conscience like a stubborn horse, they have turned aside and wouldn't listen to it. And they will religion has become mere, vain jangling.

They are the careless living Christians. There is a penalty for careless living, ladies and gentlemen, whether we know it or not. There is a penalty for careless living. And we see these victims who are now vain janglers. They talk just as loudly as ever about religion, but it's empty jangling, because they have put away a good conscience. All the sermons in the world will be wasted if there is not a conscience, a clean void conscience to receive the truth. 1 Timothy 4:1, 2, we read there, the Holy Ghost tells us about certain ones who speak lies and hypocrisy having their conscience seared with a hot iron. Now there, we have this seared conscience. Before, we have the conscience that's been turned aside here we have the seared conscience. And I want you to know brethren that these who had this seared conscience went into false doctrine.

We wonder how it is that it's possible for a man who wants was brought up in the word of truth, suddenly to turn away from it into some false religion. To say his mind got confused. No, no, let's be honest about this. False doctrine can have no power upon the good conscience. A false doctrine falls harmlessly on a good conscience. But when a conscience has become seared, when a man has played with the fire and burned his conscience and seared it and callused it until you could handle a hot iron and sin without shrinking.

Then there's no longer any safety for the man. He can go off into Christian Science. He can go off into Unity. Go off into Jehovah's Witnesses. He can go off into any one of 50 varieties of false religion. Kenneth Banghard who was one of the leading newscasters of the day, I heard him say the other night in a newscast that Buddhism is growing in America, and that there are more than 100,000 Buddhists in the state of California alone. Why are there 100,000 Buddhists in the state of California? Because there were at least that many people whose consciences went hard under the preaching of the Truth. And because their consciences were seared and they could no longer hear the voice of the Spirit, God let them believe a lie that they might be damned. If there are 100,000 in California, it must run into the millions when you take in the rest of the 47 states.

They're not Arabs. They're Americans. Some few, of course, may be Orientals But they are converts being made by the hundreds and even thousands, for the Swamis and Yogi's had come to this country. Why will a man who went to a Methodist or Baptist Sunday school when he was a boy, learn the 10 commandments and part of the Sermon on the Mount and the story of Christ's birth and death and crucifixion and death and resurrection from the dead? Why should he turn to Buddha or Mohammed? The answer is, he fooled with the inner voice and he wouldn't listen to the sound of the preacher within him and God turned from him and let him go. And with a seared conscience, he wandered into the arms of Buddha, or the arms of Mohamed. Titus 11:15,16 says that even their conscience is defiled, you see there. We have a seared conscience and a defiled conscience. Now, these are the ones who are corrupt inwardly. Their thoughts are impure. And their language is often soiled. I am just as afraid of people with soiled tongues as I am of a man with a communicable disease. For a soiled tongue is evidence of a deeper disease.

When we were bringing up our boys, they were always, of course, anxious as all parents are about the various diseases. And one of them got something or other and I dashed off to the library and went to the medical section. And I was afraid it was scarlet fever. I don't know why I didn't call a doctor. Anyway, I went to the library. And it said scarlet fever has one invariable symptom. Many of the other symptoms can be duplicated and overlap other diseases, but there's one invariable symptom that you can always tell it's scarlet fever. There's the strawberry tongue. So, I went back home and examined the boys tongue and found it wasn't strawberry. And he didn't have scarlet fever. But I was frightened. And there was the symptom. And that strawberry tongue is evidence of the presence of a million destructive microbes within the system. And when I find the defiled tongue in a human head, I don't care if he's just finished a sermon. I don't care if he's prayed a half

an hour on his knees. If he can go around the corner, to the drugstore and over a soda can utter defiled language; I'm afraid of him. He's got a disease. Even their consciences are defiled.

Now, these end up reprobates says the Holy Ghost. I'm afraid of that word reprobate, terribly afraid of it. Something that's been washed up, a moral shipwreck. Something that has been washed up on the beach and beaten with the sand and baked with the sun and whipped to the winds until nobody wants it anymore. It is no good anymore, a derelict or reprobate. And I'm afraid of it. And even Paul said, let men think of us what they will and explain it as they may. Paul said, I watch my Christian life, lest when I preach to others I myself should be reprobate. Paul said it.

Now, I only close by saying that it is or may be fatal to silence the Inner Voice, the voice of the human conscience and to silence it. For instance, when that voice is protesting outrage protests at the plain habit of lying. When it is eloquently pleading against the habit of dishonesty. When that inner conscience is taking us to task for our jealousies or some other sins, it's always perilous to resist that conscience and to pay no attention to that Inner Voice. It's a perilous thing to do.

So, I want to ask you tonight friends, I'm deliberately letting God do the talking. I want him to talk to your spirit, your inner deep heart. Even in this small congregation tonight there's a conscience here. That strange conscience that can't lean on anybody. It can't share the blame with anybody. That conscience that singles us out and isolates us and makes us stand alone, and says, thou art the man and makes us lower our heads and sneak out one at a time. That he's here and I'm grateful for it. You see, if there wasn't anything like that here, or in the world, we would all become beasts in very short order. We would all degenerate morally. And in hell, where that Voice is not and where the conscience no longer exists; it is written, he that is filthy, let him be getting filthier still. That's the Holy Spirit talking to you. That voice is there. That inner preacher, that preacher that won't preach to a crowd, but only the single individual soul is there.