

## I. Introduction to Romans 9-11 and Israel's Unbelief

Last week, we started Romans chapter 9 and saw it as the great section that deals with the perspective we need to have of God's dealing with the nation of Israel. I do not know of any other book that, in the course of what it lays out in its doctrinal sense, defines so many things within its context of laying out God's dealing with the nation of Israel. Almost verse after verse, we find something else that God explains to us that not only has something to do with the nation of Israel but also has to do with us.

We know that chapters 9, 10, and 11 focus on God's dealing with the nation of Israel. Chapter 9 deals with the fact that God has put them away, showing why: because of their unbelief. Chapter 10 then shows how the Gospel went to the Gentiles, which is where we are now. Chapter 11 is probably one of the greatest chapters, if not the greatest, that ties all the Old Testament references together as fact regarding God restoring the nation of Israel.

You remember we looked at eight concepts that Paul lays out in these passages that should have kept the nation of Israel on track. We now know there was absolutely no reason for the nation of Israel to miss the first coming of Christ. They missed it because they lost sight of these eight things that Paul brings to our attention, as we saw last week. I also showed you that those are the same eight concepts, in a spiritual sense, that keep us from missing the Second Coming of Christ.

When I talk about missing the Second Coming of Christ, and Israel missing the First Coming of Christ, I am not talking about the fact that He came and they did not know it. I am talking about He came and they were not ready. God has an inheritance for them physically, just as He has an inheritance for you and I spiritually. Just as Israel, because of the hardness of their heart and the blindness that prevented them from seeing the principles God was giving them through the Old Testament prophets, they not only missed the First Coming of Christ but also the blessings that go along with their inheritance. Many of us, many of God's people, will miss the blessings and the millennial inheritance that God has for them at the Second Coming of Christ.

But today, I want to look at another great area laid out by Paul's opening remarks, and I think this will really help you. We find that in Christianity, and I say this all the time, one of the problems we have today is that so many concepts in the Bible are badly defined. Pastors do not know the Bible; people in churches do not know the Bible. After generation to generation of people redefining or making up their own definitions of biblical terms, the church is in a bad state today regarding the understanding of many intimate things we need to know. We are going to look at another one today, and Paul makes reference to this. I want to begin reading in Romans 9:1-5 again.

Here is what he says:

*Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We love You today, Lord, and we ask You to take this passage again and teach us again today. Help us to understand the truth and the*

*depth of this great passage and all the things we can learn from it as we unearth these great truths You have put in this great book. We thank You for those who are here today. We thank You for this church You have provided for us, Lord. We thank You, Lord, for the men and women who love Your Word, men and women who would not miss anything about the Bible. They desperately want to learn that Bible, and help us always to teach them and give them what they need. We will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.*

## II. What is Conscience? A Biblical Definition

Now, look at verse one. It says this:

Romans 9:1 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,

I want to talk today out of this passage about our conscience. I think it is something that most people hear all the time. We talk about, "My conscience really bothers me," or "You have no conscience," or all that. But I want to talk to you about it from the Bible's standpoint. What exactly is our conscience? If you have a bad conscience, can you go to the doctor and a doctor says, "You have a really bad conscience; we have to operate"? If he cuts you open, where does he find the conscience? You can have a diseased liver or kidney. You can have heart problems. You can have a problem with your intestines. You can have a problem with your eyes. You can have a problem with your brain. You can have a problem with your muscle. A doctor can cut you open and find that appropriate problem and deal with it one way or the other. What about your conscience?

I know we all know what we have heard all our lives and what we have talked about all our lives. But how does the Bible define our conscience? I said earlier, we use a host of terminology every day in life, but they are very nebulous. People talk about, "I really love that person with all of my heart." Really? Are you talking about the heart that is in here that pumps blood through your body? We talk about somebody having emotional problems. Really? Where exactly is the emotion inside you? How would you tag that if somebody were to say to you, "She is a very emotional person," or "He has emotional issues"? In your mind, what do you think of? Besides somebody going around screaming, yelling, and crying all the time, what do you think about? What is emotion? What is your heart? Somebody says, "Once you get something in your mind, you never change your mind." What is your mind? Is it up here in your brain that pumps all electrodes and everything to your body and tells you what to do? Is that where your mind is? We use those terms all the time, and unfortunately, we get so used to them that we really do not understand from a Bible standpoint how they all fit together.

Somebody says, "We are really kindred spirits." Really? What does that mean? What does it mean when somebody has a bad spirit? What does it mean when somebody says, "I just get a bad spirit from that person"? What does that mean? Is that like a bad check you cannot cash? What is a bad spirit? What is the mind? What is the spirit? What is the emotion? What is your heart? And how does your conscience fit into all of that? That is what we want to find today.

Paul, in his writings throughout the Bible, and really the Bible itself—I do not know if you have ever noticed it—says so much about our conscience. In Acts 23, when Paul was being brought before his accusers, he says:

Acts 23:1 And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.

In Acts 24:16, when he is brought before Felix, the Roman governor, he says:

Acts 24:16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men.

There, he talks about a conscience void of offense toward God. In the other place, he talks about having a good conscience toward God. In 1 Timothy 1:19, Paul told Timothy that he was to hold the faith and have a good conscience, "which some have put away concerning faith, have made shipwreck." Evidently, you can put away your conscience. Paul makes reference to it over and over. He told Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:2 that false teachers had seared their conscience with a hot iron. Not only can you put it away then, but now he is talking about somebody searing their conscience. How do you do that? He told Titus in Titus 1:15 that the conscience of an unsaved man was defiled. And then he says in Romans 9:1 that his conscience was bearing witness with the Holy Spirit of God on something.

1 Timothy 1:19 Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck:

1 Timothy 4:2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

Titus 1:15 Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.

Add to that, remember when we came through Romans, chapter one? I told you the great chapter in Romans 1 is God dealing with the Gentiles before the law. God has a whole dispensation from Adam right up to Moses, where the law starts, where He deals primarily with the Gentiles. The Bible tells us that in that period of time, He deals with man by their conscience. All through the Bible, you find a phrase or terminology talking about a man's conscience. We saw in Romans 2:15 that as God was dealing with man, the Bible says, "He wrote the Word of God on their heart." Really? I hope if I ever get a heart transplant, I get one that somebody has the Word of God written on it. If I took your heart out right now, is the Word of God written on that? What hearts are you talking about? These are the things I am talking about. We use the terminology, but we do not know how it works. Because we do not know how it works, many times we wind up getting into situations that we would not need to get into if we really understood what the Bible says. So, when I come down through these things in Romans, I think it is very important to lay those out. There was a whole dispensation, a whole period of time, where God dealt with man based on his conscience.

Romans 2:15 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)

You would think that if you wanted to learn the Bible, once you knew that, you would want to find out what that conscience is. He told the church at Corinth in 2 Corinthians 1:12:

2 Corinthians 1:12 For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.

Your conscience has a testimony. All through the Bible, he talks about it. Everywhere you go, you will find it. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:1-2. 2 Corinthians is the greatest book in the Bible on ministry, here we are going to find. Here is what he says:

2 Corinthians 4:1 Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;

2 Corinthians 4:2 But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

Do you know what the job is if you are ministering in this church? Do you know what my job is as pastor? Your job, if you are working with somebody or you are in some ministry or responsible for some ministry, the Bible says your job is to commend yourself to every man's conscience. What does that mean? How do you do that?

If that was not enough, in that great chapter in John 8, the story of the woman taken in adultery: they are trying to shut the Lord Jesus up, and they bring this woman to Him and say, "This woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. What are You going to do about it?" We know the Bible says that He <sup>1</sup>kneels down, or stoops down, and writes something on the ground with His finger. We do not know what He wrote, but I guess it was probably out of Deuteronomy 24, something to the effect that under the law, the woman and the man are supposedly brought together. The Bible says in verse 8:

John 8:8 And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.

John 8:9 And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

There is another reference to the conscience. As we can see, conscience is pretty important in the Bible. That is something we should probably understand. As Paul brings it up today and talks about having his conscience bearing witness with the Holy Spirit of God, and then he talks about having a good conscience toward God or a conscience void of any offense toward God, and we who want to minister are now told that we ought to commend ourselves to every man's conscience. Maybe we had better figure out what it is. Maybe we ought to see what we have to do here.

### III. God's Creation of Man: Body, Soul, and Spirit

To better understand this, we are now going to have to go back and talk for a moment about how God made you and me. We have been through this in great detail when we came through Romans 4, 5, and 6, but the bottom line is we have a lot of new people here, and as I have said many times, the price of learning is repetition. In Genesis 1, we are told that when God made man, when God made Adam, He made him after His likeness and after His image. We know that the image is the spiritual part of man. We know that the likeness is the physical part of man. We also know that God is a Trinity. Despite what the Jehovah's Witnesses say, we know that He is a Trinity. God manifests Himself in a triune form: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We know that. It can be very easily proved in the Bible; there is no problem with that. So, God used Himself as a pattern when He made man in His own image and His own likeness. It is no great mystery that God would make man in a trichotomy sense. When God made man, God made man to have a body, He made man to have a soul, and He made man to have a spirit.

If you are here this morning and you are a saved person, you have a body, a soul, and a spirit. If you are here this morning and you are an unsaved person, you also have a body, a soul, and a spirit, but there is a difference between the two. Let me explain very quickly, very basically, so you get a context for this. Take an unsaved man. An unsaved man does have a body, a soul, and a spirit. But here is the problem: in an unsaved man or woman, the body and the soul—the physical and the spiritual—are stuck together; they are one. The flesh is sinful. When you put the soul to that and stick it to that, then the soul becomes sinful. That is why the Bible says in the Old Testament, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." An unsaved man has a body and a soul, but remember, they are stuck together. Then he has a spirit. That spirit is his breath of life. It gives him the ability to walk around and to talk, to feel things, to see things, to experience things. But his spirit is dead in the sense that his spirit can have no connection or fellowship with God whatsoever. Have you ever tried to explain the Bible in any depth to an unsaved person? Have you ever wondered why you see somebody who claims to be a religious person, but they are obviously lost, and you try to have a conversation about God and the Bible and what you are learning and what you know? They look at you like you are a tree full of owls. They cannot follow you along. An unsaved man cannot grasp the things of the Word of God because his spirit is dead. Because his spirit is dead, he has no ability to have any kind of relationship with God whatsoever. So, an unsaved man now has a body and a soul; they are stuck together. Then he has a spirit that gives him human life, but because it is devoid of a spiritual relationship with God, he is dead in his trespasses and sins.

Now, a saved man. We have talked about this before, so this is old hat, but it is always good to hear it again. We know that for a saved man, when you got saved, your body and your soul were stuck together. We know what happened in Colossians 2, with an operation made by God without hands. It is called spiritual circumcision. What did He do? He put off the flesh from the soul. He spiritually separated you. He cut you apart. Then what happened is this: your flesh is over here, and the Holy Spirit of God, the moment you got saved, once He separated you out, came down into your soul and sealed you. That is where God is now going to fellowship with you, not in your flesh, but in your soul. At the same time, that took place instantaneously: your spirit came alive, and now your spirit has the ability to lead you and guide you from this point on. Once you

got saved, once you trusted Christ as your own personal Savior, your soul and flesh were separated. Your spirit now becomes alive. This is what makes you a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Colossians 2:11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

I was driving somewhere in Lee's Summit the other day, and there is a big billboard there about a church. They have, I guess, a TV program called "The Steve and Kathy Show." I have never seen it, but it is a big billboard, and underneath it says, "Come to our church and let your spirit become alive." We use terminology like that, and it sounds good. Who does not want their spirit to be alive? You get the idea, "If I go to church, maybe my spirit will become alive." Of course, we use terminology like that, which is totally void of any Bible doctrine whatsoever. But because it sounds good and spiritual, and Steve and Kathy are such a nice couple and they make us laugh, and they are in a church, we just automatically buy into the terminology sometimes because we do not investigate to find out for ourselves.

Where is my buddy Darren? The thing I love about Darren back here is that Darren got saved four or five weeks ago, and they come over, and I am discipling him and Kim. Lovely couple, I love Kim, I love Darren. The first thing Darren did when he started coming through the Bible and saw things he did not understand, he went and got himself a dictionary, one of those 1811 dictionaries. He said, "I am going to," and he looks up... In fact, last week when we were talking about something, he had already looked the word up. That is what you have to do. Do not just listen to me or anybody else and take what I tell you. Though I would never lie to you, I may have an off day; I am not right all the time. The bottom line is you have to find out for yourself, and the only way you do that is to explore these things. It is not a fact that you go to church—this church, my church, or their church—and your spirit comes alive; that is not the way it works. The moment you got saved, your spirit came alive. See the difference? You go around propagating that bad stuff, and next time somebody says, "If you really want a spiritual awakening, come to our church," you got all the spiritual awakening you are ever going to get the day you got saved.

Then it goes from there: "We have a Sunday morning worship service." Or the pastor gets up and says, "We are going to worship God now with our tithes and our offerings." Do you realize that you could not worship God with your tithes and your offerings if you wanted to? Do you realize that there is no such thing as a worship service? But this is what happens when you get things like this messed up. Let me tell you something. The Bible says in John 4 that "he that worship God must worship him in spirit and in truth." It has to be your spirit and God's truth. Now, I am just going to play the devil's advocate here. What does that do for Christians in churches that may be saved but do not have God's Bible? Worship is not a service. We do not say, "Come on, 10:30, we are going to worship God." Thursday night Bible study. Have you ever heard me say, "Come on, let's worship God at Thursday night Bible study"? Worship is something that takes place inside you, with your spirit and your soul, that should go on in your life 24/7. You do not go to a worship service; you live worship in your life and your relationship with His Spirit and your soul. That is why that sign should not say, "Come, let your spirit be alive." It should say, "Come and cleanse your spirit, get the filth out of it so you can have fellowship with God in the

right way." That is the proper thing because you and I have to constantly cleanse that spirit. Your soul is saved and sealed. Your body is trash. Paul says, "In my flesh dwelleth no good thing." But your spirit is not saved either. We are going to talk about this and find out this thing about conscience.

John 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

Romans 7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

## IV. The Spirit as the Rudder of Life

Now, let us identify; let us find within us our conscience. Take a saved man. He has his flesh; that is his old nature. I have already told you that flesh is totally corrupt; nothing good is in it. Then you have his soul; that is his new nature. That soul is sealed and indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God. It is very easy to understand: your flesh cannot do anything right; your soul cannot do anything wrong once you are saved. We are going to find out what the conscience is by the process of elimination. Conscience cannot be in your flesh because there are some things your conscience can do that will bring honor and glory to God. There is nothing in your flesh that will bring honor and glory to God. Your conscience or your spirit cannot be in your soul because your soul is perfect; it never does anything wrong. You are told from the Bible in 2 Corinthians 7:1 that we are to cleanse our spirit from all filthiness of the flesh. So, it cannot be that. This whole thing has to revolve around understanding your spirit, and your spirit is quite an interesting study in the Bible. Your spirit and my spirit. Your spirit is totally something else. Your flesh is totally corrupt. Your soul is totally perfect, and there is the difference. God separated you out, but you have a spirit. To me, the spirit has just been like this, and this is the easiest way to understand it if you are just somebody grasping all this: you have your flesh over here, and it is terrible. When you got saved, God separated it, and He puts your soul over here and sealed it. Now, this part of you is corrupt. This part of you is perfect. This part of you is called the old nature. This part of you is called the new nature. Now, what you have in the middle is your spirit. Do you know what your spirit is like? This is the way I understand it because I am a very simple person: your spirit is like the rudder on a ship. Have you ever seen a rudder on a ship? Have you ever seen a ship in dry dock, and the ship is huge, and the rudder is such a small part back there? We know what that rudder does. If you turn the rudder this way, the ship goes one way. If you turn it this way, it goes another way. That rudder is connected up through the ship to a wheelhouse where the captain is, and the captain decides which way that ship is going to go. He says, "Hard to port," they turn that rudder, it goes to port. "Hard to starboard," turns it the other way, it goes to starboard. The rudder is what dictates which way that ship goes, and your spirit is just like that rudder.

2 Corinthians 7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Once you get saved, you are saved over here; your new nature. Your old flesh, with all your problems, is totally corrupt. You know as well as I do that once you make the decision to get saved, that is the great decision. But then, basically, it should not be this way, but it is: you have

another decision you have to make. Do you know what that decision is? It is the decision: are you going to give it all to God or not? Do you know what determines that? Your spirit. And do you know what determines your spirit? What determines your spirit is what you are going to lend yourself to. I am just like you; you are just like me. My spirit is the rudder in this ship. If I take this spirit and I put it with things that are corruptible in the world—I hang out with the wrong crowd, I start doing the wrong things—that spirit then is going to be the conduit by which the things of the world go back, and it is going to bring that flesh into my life, and I am going to become a worldly Christian. At the same time, if I take that same spirit and I put it toward the things of God—I lend my spirit to the right music, I lend my spirit to the right things I read, I lend my spirit to the right things I look at, I lend my spirit to the right things that I think—now we have covered the heart, the mind; all of these things lie within that spirit. Also, within that spirit, you are going to see in just a moment, lies your conscience. We are going to talk about that in just a minute. When I lend my spirit to the things of the world, then I am worldly. When I take my spirit and put it toward the things of God, then I am godly.

Let me give you a little secret in dealing with people. If you know what I am telling you and you use that in working with people, people think that sometimes I am clairvoyant, that I can tell when somebody is having a bad time or somebody is doing really well. You do not have to be clairvoyant. Do you know why? Because your spirit is the first thing that reveals something outwardly that something is wrong inwardly. Do you know what God said to Cain? Remember Cain back in Genesis? Remember what happened? Cain and Abel were supposed to bring offerings. Abel brought one of the firstlings of the flock, and Cain went out and got his vegetables out of the garden. They were good vegetables, but it was not what God wanted. The Bible clearly says that God had respect unto Abel's offering, but He did not have respect unto Cain's. Cain got an attitude. The first thing God says to him is the key when you want to deal with people and find out where people are. Do you know what He says? He says:

Genesis 4:6 And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?

Do you know what that tells me? When something goes wrong on the inside, it shows on the outside. When I see a Christian—any Christian who loves the Bible, loves the Word of God, talks about getting people saved, trying to get people saved, has the joy down in their heart, has that sparkle in their eye about the Bible and God—and then one day you see them, and the sparkle is gone, the joy is not there, that old worldly countenance is back in place. It does not take a rocket scientist to figure out what is going on. You have ceased lending your spirit to the things of God, and now you have turned your spirit back to your old buddies, back to the things you used to do.

Do you know what life really is? Do you want to talk about simplifying the Bible like we did yesterday? Let me simplify life for you. Life is you being two people: an old person and a new person—a new person in Christ Jesus and an old person in your sin. All day long, 24/7, the world, your friends (good or bad), try to pull your spirit one way or the other. You are driving down the road, listening to the radio, and something comes on, and it moves you. Have you ever listened to good Christian music and felt how good you feel after you listen to it, that maybe it

just strikes some spiritual tone in your heart, and tears begin to flow down your face because that song you heard meant something to you and ministered to you? Do you know what it ministered to? It ministered to your soul, but you know how it ministered to your soul? Through your spirit. When you get that spirit ministered to, it brings the emotions out because your emotions are within your spirit. When you take that spirit and you lend it to the things of God, then you are always conscious of the things of God. Oh, conscious. Conscience. We are going to get the definition of the word "conscious" in just a moment, but keep that tucked away. When you become aware of those things, you become conscious. I am going to come back there in just a second.

If you try to do right, and your old friends call you up on the phone and say, "Hey, let me tell you about this one," and he tells you a dirty joke, and you laugh at it because you do not want them to know you are a Christian. Or you go back to work, and after you are done working, your buddies say, "Come on, let's go get a beer," and you say to yourself, "Well, I will go, but I just will not drink the beer because I do not want to let them know that I am a Christian, and I am going to try to be a secret agent." It does not work. Do you know why? Because there is a pull on your spirit, and the pull is to draw you toward God's way or back toward the world's way. We call it conscience. Do you know why we call it conscience? Let us say you are driving down the road on the way home from church, and you see a bad accident: two cars are crashed, and they flip off the road; one is upside down. You are the first one there, and you pull the person out of the car because they start to get on fire. You are sitting there, and nobody is coming. You get out your old trusty cell phone, you call 911, and you say, "I am here at the scene of an accident. We need an ambulance down here, and I have two people, and I have pulled them out, and they are pretty bad. I need help." Do you know what they are going to ask you? Probably they are going to ask you, "Are they conscious?" Conscious simply means to be aware. You hear me use the term a lot, "God consciousness." I use the term "God consciousness" in my own life and try to put it into your life, which simply means that you are always aware. You are conscious of what God and God's Word are doing in your life. Do you know why the nation of Israel did not fulfill those eight things we talked about last week? Because they became unconscious to them. Do you know why some of God's people will never get everything they have with the Second Coming of Christ? The same eight things, it is because they go unconscious when it comes to the things of God. Your job and my job is to stay conscious of the things of God. How do you do that? Through your conscience.

## V. The Conscience and the Law Written on the Heart

Now, let us talk about what that is. Let us talk about how the word "conscience" fits into your spirit of you staying conscious with what God wants you to do. Awake to something. Here is the deal: Romans 2:15, going back to that, says that when God made man, He wrote the Word of God on his heart. And then it says, "their conscience also bearing witness." 2 Corinthians 3:3 says:

2 Corinthians 3:3 Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

Do you know what God did to every man when He created him? He put the Word of God in his heart. The part of your heart within your spirit which contains your emotion and your decision-making process, your mind. The thing that governs what you do, even as an unsaved man, is your conscience. Because the conscience is built on the law that God wrote in man's heart. This is why when you go to Africa, to Aborigine tribes, to the Congo, or any place in this world where there is absolutely no societal structure as you and I know it, where there is absolutely nothing that works the way you and I work in our society, you find that in those indigenous cultures, they have laws. They have moral laws. They have penalties for things you break. If you steal something in some of those African places, they cut your hand off. If you steal something a second time, they cut your other hand off. If you steal a third time, they kill you. How do they know, "Thou shalt not steal"? How do they know, "Thou shalt not murder"? How do they know the things that you and I know when they do not have a Bible? Because the Bible says God wrote the Word of God on the tables of their heart, and that is what forms our being conscious. Our consciousness is that we are conscious of the fact of the Word of God because God wrote it in our heart, and we cannot deny that, and we live by it even when we do not understand it. That is your conscience.

That is why in John 8, remember the story I read you a little bit ago where they are trying to set the Lord Jesus Christ up, and they bring this woman taken in adultery and say to Him, "This woman was taken in adultery. We know what the law says. What sayest Thou?" They are not interested in what the law says; they want to see if they can trap Him into not doing what the law says. What He does is not answer them. He goes down and writes on the ground, and we do not know what He wrote, as I said earlier, but probably from Deuteronomy 24, something to the effect that under the law, the woman and the man are supposedly brought together. The Bible says that at that point, they were convicted in their own conscience. Do you know why? Because God used the law. They had that law written in their heart, and the Holy Spirit of God took what He wrote, took what He had put in their hearts, and convicted them in their conscience, and they said, "We are wrong," and they left. Your conscience is what keeps you conscious of the things of God and the Word of God, even in an unsaved man. An unsaved man may not be able to have a relationship with God like you and I have. An unsaved man or woman may not be able to have the emotional relationship with God and the ongoing relationship with God, but he will feel things. He will feel things about his family. He will feel things about society. He will hear this party or the Democratic Party or the Republican Party, or whatever side he is party to, he will feel disdain toward one and association toward the other. He feels emotion; he feels things because inside him he has a spirit. It may be dead, but it is there for the things of the world, but it is dead in his relationship with Christ. The only thing he can get out of that conscience that brings him on any kind of moral line is the Word of God that God wrote in his heart when He made man, and that is the moral compass that every man has inside. When God begins to deal with a man, before anybody gives him a tract, long before he goes to hear a pastor, preacher, or somebody witnesses to him, long before someplace in his life, the Bible says that He is "the true

Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." When God reaches down and touches that man and lights that man and first introduces Himself to that man, maybe it will be about an issue that the guy is pondering whether it is right or wrong, and God will come down and touch on the tables of his heart, his conscience, and what was written in his heart. God will take that and start the process.

John 1:9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

Do you know what Proverbs says? Here is another great verse on your spirit and your conscience. It is in Proverbs 20:27. It says:

Proverbs 20:27 The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.

Do you know what that verse says? When God starts to deal with a man, He deals with his spirit. When God's Holy Spirit walks down and deals with a man or tries to convict him about being saved, He does not deal with his flesh, which is totally corrupt. He cannot even deal with his soul. Why? Because it is stuck together to his flesh and it is totally corrupt. He has to go after the one thing that is by itself: the Word of God, in a very basic way, is engraved on the tables of that heart, and He deals with his conscience. He takes the Word of God that He wrote in his heart and deals with him on that issue right there. Then, as the man goes forward, he gets more light. If he goes forward, he gets even more light. If he keeps going and questioning with an open heart, God gives him more light, and at some point, God gets him what he needs, who he needs, or whatever to make the right decision.

Somebody raise your hand now and give me the greatest example of that in the Bible that we know. The Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8. Classic example. If you read that story in Acts 8, here is exactly what I mean. In Samaria, they are having a great revival. Philip is the key evangelist, and hundreds of people are getting saved. But over there on Gaza, on the backside of the desert, an Ethiopian eunuch is on his way up to Jerusalem to worship. Somewhere along the way, somebody gave him a copy of Isaiah. I do not even know if it was a copy of Isaiah; it may have just been a page or a chapter of Isaiah, but he got the right chapter: Isaiah 53. He is sitting on the back of that chariot, reading Isaiah 53, but he cannot understand it. Why? Because "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." But God saw his heart, and in his heart, God saw a man who was responding through his conscience to what God had given him. Here he is, 800 miles away, out in the middle of the desert. God reaches over and pulls Philip out of Samaria, jets him all the way over, and puts him down about 100 yards from that guy's chariot and says, "Now, go join thyself to that guy's chariot." Philip goes up. He says, "What are you reading? Do you understand what you are reading?" The guy says, "How in the world do I understand this? Some man should guide me." Philip, the Bible says, sat down and opened up the same scriptures and preached unto him Jesus. Do you know what happened? He got saved. Did you ever backtrack the process? Here is a man that somebody gave the Gospel of Isaiah to. Here is a man that, before that, wondered in his heart about God, somewhere, in some form. God

touched him. God lighted him in his spirit, in his conscience. At that point, the man said, "I want to know more." So somehow, we are not told how, he picks up a copy of Isaiah 53.

1 Corinthians 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

I had a missionary many years ago who was in the interior of Africa. He had a mission station; it was way out by nowhere with this tribe. He said one day a man came in, and they had these little yellow tracts that they used to pass out in Swahili. They used to give them to the church. One day, a guy from another tribe that nobody had ever seen came in and said, "This tract says that if I got saved or I did this, I could have a Bible, a copy of the Word of God. I would like to have that Bible. Are you the one that gives it to me?" The guy looked at him and said, "Where are you from?" He talked about a tribe that was 60, 70, 80 miles away. The guy said, "How did you get that tract?" He said, "We were walking out in the desert, coming back from filling water or doing whatever we were doing, and I looked up, and out there about 100 yards, I saw something catch my eye. It was blowing across the desert floor, and I walked over and picked it up. It was this tract that told me about Jesus as my Savior." He says, "Now, can I have my Bible?" In his heart, he wanted to know about God; no missionary, no nothing. He looked up at the stars of the sky. I do not know. That is how God dealt with Abraham. He said, "There must be something more to this." And God is up there saying, "Yes, there sure is." So he is out there. How in the world did a tract get 80 miles from the mission station out in the desert and happen to blow there? I do not know that any more than I know who gave the Ethiopian eunuch Isaiah 53. But that is God's business because He is "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." When He lights him, He lights him through the candle of the spirit. The spirit He uses is the conscience that has the Word of God already written on it, and God just takes that thing and uses it where it works. That is the way it works. Of course, the Ethiopian got saved, and that is how he did it.

You see, I do not believe for a moment—you have heard me say this before in Bible study—I do not believe this for a moment: Do you ever stop and ask yourself what in the world is going on? Here is Jesus' First Coming of Christ. He is over in Jerusalem, going around, and people are getting saved, meeting people, healing the sick, giving eyesight back to the blind. He gives the twelve disciples their marching orders, but He and they only go to a small group. Then it is probably two or three hundred years after that before missionaries really start going out in any basic form. Let me ask you a question: What happened to all the American Indians over here during that time? Were they just born in the wrong dispensation? Was it, "Sorry about you, tough luck, cannot help you, you should have been on the other side of the hemisphere"? Do you really believe for a moment that all the American Indians and all the Eskimos and all the people down in Central America and South America, wherever the case, do you actually believe that while Christ was coming to this planet and before that, they were just doomed to hell and there was no way to be saved? There was no missionary. There was no Bible in that interim period called "the times of the Gentiles." Do you really believe that God just let them all die and go to hell? I know He did not, based on that verse in John. I know He did not. I know that if God does not have a Bible as His witness, if He does not have you as His witness to declare the glory of God, the

Bible says, "The heavens declare the glory of God," and He will use that. What happens is that American Indian looked at those stars or some natural thing that God did, and he got thinking in his mind that there has to be something more to this, and God dealt with his conscience. He may not have had a Bible in his hand, but in his conscience, in his heart, he had the Word of God written, and that is what God used.

Psalms 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.

I know this: when the Pilgrims first came in the 1600s to this country, they were not here 15-20 years before a tribe of Indians came over to them, having come all the way from Washington State. They came across because they heard the white man was here, and they wanted to get the book that the white man had that talked about the Great White Father's Son who died for their sin. How did they get that? I know this: the American Indian talks about a Great White Father. That may not be the terminology we use, but if you know anything about Revelation 1, that is about as close as you can get to God in a good Bible definition: "white as the light." He talks about the Great Spirit. He may not be a Holy Ghost, Holy Spirit, or whatever, but he is talking about a great spirit. I will tell you something else: when an old Indian went out there and shot that deer or shot that buffalo, and that animal fell down on the ground, the first thing he did was go over there, put his arrows down, kneel down on the ground, and give thanks to the Great White Spirit and the Great White Father for bringing the buffalo to him. That is more than some of God's people do. You sit down and eat that hamburger, eat whatever, and do not even thank your Father for giving it to you, and there is a heathen. See how it works? God always has His way of getting it done, and the fact that I cannot understand it does not mean it did not get done. When it does get done, it gets done through his mind, his heart, his conscience, which is in his spirit, because "the spirit of man is the candle of the LORD." It is the first flickering light when God lights that man with the light of the Gospel, and if that candle pursues it and goes after it, it goes into a great bonfire that will set the whole world on fire. When you got saved, God lit your fire. My job is to get it into a forest fire and get you to blaze up the world. Like a guy said one time, "All we need is a preacher. If we had a preacher that would get on fire for God, the whole town would come watching him burn. If we had Christians get on fire for God, everybody would want to stand around and watch you burn." That is our problem.

Revelation 1:14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;

## VI. The Saved Man's Double Awareness and Good Conscience

Now, once a saved man's spirit becomes alive through salvation, he now has a double awareness of God. We have a double awareness of God in a double sense of right and wrong. We have our conscience, which is basically the Word of God written in our hearts, and then we have the Holy Spirit of God on top of that, which bears testimony and witness to what we do and in the Word of God. So, we have a double whammy. The Word of God is written in your heart, the Holy Spirit of God lives on the inside, which is the Word of God, and what you feel in your heart is lining

your life up through your conscience of what you know. The Holy Spirit of God is the Word of God, and you know when you do something wrong and you do something right. There is no question about it. This brings us right back to what we have harped on: the absolute necessity for you learning biblical principles in your life. The conscience of the saved man is built around biblical principles that start with the writing of the Word of God in his heart and in you building biblical principles into your life, so that your spirit bears witness with His Spirit. Now, the principles of the Word of God provide the guidelines, the moral compass for your conscience through the Holy Spirit of God. When we do not do that, what do we do? We grieve the Holy Spirit of God because the thing that is the key to your fellowship is not your soul. Your soul is Jesus Christ; He is not going to fellowship with Himself; He is in you. It is not your flesh because "in my flesh dwelleth no good thing." The thing that is the key to your fellowship is your spirit, and in that spirit is your mind, which is what you choose to do. In that spirit is your heart, who you give it to—her or him, God. In your spirit is your conscience, which makes you decide and gets you the feeling of the Holy Spirit of God through the Word of God and what is right and what is wrong in your life. A good conscience toward God. We see it over and over again, Paul remarking over and over that we are always to have a good conscience toward God, a testimony of our conscience. Let us talk about how we do that for a moment.

## VII. Commending Ourselves to Every Man's Conscience

One of the greatest verses for us in ministry—for me personally, for you if you are ever going to do anything for God in ministry—is the one we looked at briefly in 2 Corinthians 4:1-2. I do not know of another verse in the Bible that sums up the Christian life in dealing with people and being used of God to the point that it shows you what will work and what will not, and why it does not and when it does. He says this:

2 Corinthians 4:1 Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;

2 Corinthians 4:2 But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

We have a ministry. You want to minister to people, you want to work with people, you want to help people. You want to come to me and say, "So-and-so has some needs, and I want to help them. I want to get involved in this. I want to take a bite out of this thing. I want to do something before God comes back. I want to be used of God. Put me to work. Let me disciple somebody. Let me work with somebody. Let me help in the marital situation of the young couple's ministry. Let me work with people." Okay, you want that? Then here is the verse for you: "Therefore seeing we have this ministry," whatever your ministry is, "as we have received mercy, we faint not, but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully." The three things that are the downside of ministry are right there.

1.) *Dishonesty: not being honest with what you are trying to do in somebody's life.*

*2.) Walking in craftiness: that is an ulterior motive; that is, you have some private agenda other than just doing what God wants you to do.*

*3.) Handling the Word of God deceitfully.*

I put those things out to you, but I want to say also to you that I think most of you, if not all of you, when you work in a ministry here, these three things are not an issue for you because I think you do it here anyhow because of the love that you have in your heart and you want to serve God. That does not mean you do not make some mistakes, but the bottom line is, at the end of the day, you are giving everything you have. But how that verse and those three things smack right in the face of our 20th and 21st century churches today, with pastors who are dishonest about what they are doing in the ministry, who walk in craftiness, who always have an ulterior motive (and you are going to pay for it, by the way), and the most damaging thing: handling the Word of God deceitfully—not giving you the truth out of the Bible, giving you what you want to hear versus not what you need to hear, taking a stand on the Word of God and preaching it.

I had a couple of people this week we had talked about, and they were talking about a couple of churches that they had visited, and they were wanting to know my opinion on it. I do not really give my opinion, but I like to hear what people say. They were saying that these two churches, neither one of them, believe the King James Bible is the Word of God. One person had come to me a while ago and said, "We think we are going to try this church. What do you think?" I said, "Well, personally, I do not think it is a King James church." They went and talked to the pastor, and the pastor said, "No, I preach out of the King James Bible." They came back and said, "No, we talked to the pastor, and he uses the King James Bible." I said, "Let me tell you something: I know the guy. He may preach out of a King James Bible, but he does not believe the King James Bible is the Word of God any more than my dogs do. But go do what you have to do." So they tried his church, got their kids involved in Sunday school. Now, these people were pretty strong King James people, and the point was that about two weeks ago, their daughters came out of Sunday school. On the way home, their daughter said to both of them, "Hey, Mommy and Daddy, will you buy us an NIV?" They said, "What do you mean by an NIV?" She said, "We want to be like all the other kids in our Sunday school class, and we have King James Bibles. Nobody else in our Sunday school class uses it, and we cannot understand what is going on, so can you go out this afternoon or this week before next Sunday and get us two NIVs?" Here is the way it works; this is what is called deceitfulness, handling the Word of God deceitfully. Pastors know there are people out there looking for people who use the King James Bible, so the pastor will use it from the pulpit because he is a crook and he is deceitful. But he will never take a stand on it and teach manuscript evidence to his people why they should not use anything other than the King James Bible, and allow the people in his Sunday school classes to use whatever they want, and people in the church bring whatever they want. So he puts on a front that says, "Yes, we are. I am. I use... Are you a King James Bible Church? Oh, yes, I use the King James Bible when I preach." Yes, and everybody else in the church brings what they want, and in your Sunday school class, everybody uses the NIV. Why? Because he may preach from it, but he has never taken a stand and said, "There will never be a Sunday school teacher, there will never be a pastor, there will never be anybody in ministry that uses anything else than God's Word. Now, for

the next six weeks, let me walk you through manuscript evidence in church history and show you why." Nope, it will not work. That is where we are at.

All right, here is what we are supposed to do. You want a verse? You want to have a good conscience toward God? Here it comes, 2 Corinthians 4:2: "But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." Do you know what that verse means? Do you know what real ministry is? It is you taking, first of all, living the Word of God. Second of all, taking the Word of God and, through your ministry, openly and transparently commending to man the truth, that there is nothing hidden, that you can see everything there is, that you can ask any question you want to ask, that you feel free to dig into anything and say, "I do not understand this," or "Why do you teach this?" or "Why do you believe this?" And you will never get back, "You need to be quiet, son; there are people here; this is the Bible stuff." You get the answer that you are looking for and that you need because a ministry, as your life and my life, needs to commend itself to every man's conscience. In that conscience is the Word of God, and when you teach what is right, people know what you are teaching is right if they understand what they are looking for. A good conscience toward God and man is simply living your life by the principles of the Word of God in any given situation, doing what is right based on biblical principles and resting in that, and not allowing your emotions to dictate what you do. Following the Bible principles in good situations and bad situations, doing what the Bible says, brings about a good conscience toward God. Now, let me show you a great example of this in the Bible. Turn to 1 Peter 3:21. When we have our anniversary Sunday next week, we always baptize. We do not have a baptismal here; we have to do it when we can, so we do it every year on anniversary Sunday. If it ever gets to the point where we need to do it twice a year, three times a year, we will do it. But the bottom line is, why do we baptize? You have a lot of controversy about this. Some people say, "You do not have to be baptized to be a Christian." I understand that. Somebody says, "You do not have to be baptized to go to heaven." I understand that too. But the bottom line is this: let me show you what we have with baptism. Here is the thing you are up against. Somebody said, "I am saved, and I have never been baptized because I do not know if it is that important. I am saved; that is all I care about." Here is the principle: in the New Testament, the Book of Acts, and all the way through the books of the Bible, every man and every woman that was ever saved was baptized. In fact, it is such an important thing in the Bible that when God gave the church what we call the ordinances (this will be discipleship lesson number two), He gave them two ordinances: the Lord's Supper and baptism. Somebody says, "I do not want to be baptized because I do not know that I have to be to go to heaven." No, you do not. But the bottom line is, what do you do with the fact that everybody in the New Testament church recognized what it was and then got baptized? Here is what it is: sure, you can go to heaven without it, no problem. You can be a member of a church without it. But let me show you what you cannot do without it. I love the Bible. Look at this thing, 1 Peter 3:21:

1 Peter 3:21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

Now, I have to stop there because people like that verse: "See, see, see, baptism saves you! Baptism saves you!" No, no. What did we talk about yesterday? Context. Watch the context. Not every time you find the word "saved" in the Bible does it mean salvation. Let us see what this person is being saved from: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh—that is the day you got saved—but what does it save you from?) but the answer of a good conscience toward God." Baptism for a believer puts you in the mindset that you are in good conscience before God because of how important baptism is and what it represents in the Bible to God, why He gave it as one of the two ordinances. A person who refuses to be baptized or will not be baptized is not saved from having a bad conscience toward God. They have a bad conscience toward God, or God toward them, because they will not follow through with what the Bible says. That is the greatest example I know of in the Bible of having a good conscience toward God: not doing something when the Bible tells you to do it. You can take that not only with baptism; you can take it in your life, you can take it in dealing with people, and you can take it wherever you want to go. That is what consciousness does. I talk about God consciousness: always being aware of God and His principles in your life and everything you do, always doing what you know to be right. As a Christian, as a pastor, 2 Corinthians 4:12, you and I having a good conscience toward God comes from the fact that everything we do, we commend ourselves to every man's conscience. We are open and transparent with no hidden agendas, and basically, as the old term says, "What you see is what you get." When you do what is right with the Word of God in every situation in your life, then you have that good conscience toward God. That is how you have one.

## VIII. Searing the Conscience and Guilt vs. Conviction

Now, we need to see this because he mentioned this in 1 Timothy 4:2. An unsaved man—remember, an unsaved man has the Word of God on his conscience, which is in his spirit, which is in his heart, which is his mind—and that is what God uses to deal with him about his sin to get him to a place to either accept or reject Christ. Once you and I get saved, we have a double whammy of it: we get not only our conscience but the Holy Spirit of God, who is the Word of God, living inside me and bearing witness with all of it as it goes together. But now, an unsaved man, from 1 Timothy 4:2, and an unsaved man or a Christian, can sear their conscience with a hot iron. What does that mean? In the old days, before they had medical things the way they did, and I love the way he says this, "sear your conscience with a hot iron." I do not know, and you had to be a real man to do this, but if you got shot in the arm or got some knife cut back in the old days, and there are no hospitals around, here is what they did: you always saw it in movies, a guy gets an arrow in his shoulder, and they pull the arrow out, cut the arrow out. You know what is coming: they heat up a big hot poker, and they hold the guy down, give him something to bite on, and then they take that hot poker and stick that hot poker right in that wound, and they cauterize that wound. What it does is it seals up that wound, and it burns the flesh, and the flesh kind of cauterizes together, and it burns out the infection or whatever there. You burn that sucker in there, and after a while, when you take it out, you have burned that wound to the place where it cauterized it. That is what the Bible is talking about when it says "seared your conscience with a hot iron." You do the same thing. I have to tell you this: when you fix a wound that way, that is

man's way of fixing it; that was not God's way for it to heal. God has a process by which your body will heal itself, but when you are in a hurry and you do not want to wait for it, or you have to get something else done or whatever, you will take matters into your own hands, and you will cauterize that thing with a hot iron. That is exactly what people do with their own conscience. Let me just say this to you: sealing or cauterizing your wound with a hot iron versus letting it heal by itself will always leave a much bigger, uglier scar than if it was just healed by itself. I want to tell you something: searing your conscience with a hot iron to get out from under the conviction you are under, instead of just dealing with it the natural way and asking God to forgive you and make it clean and make it right, will always leave a worse scar than if you just take it to God. I love the way that he uses that: "sear your conscience with a hot iron"—the natural way of fixing it versus the unnatural way, man's way versus God's way. When a person sears his conscience with a hot iron, what he does is he rationalizes the situation. What he does is he finds people who agree with him. He will go around and tell people his side of the story. Do we find somebody that says, "Well, I agree with you," and then now he sears his conscience? "Well, see, I am right because so-and-so thinks I am right." I have even seen him go to the place where they go through the Bible and try to find a verse to justify it. He will rationalize, will justify, will come to the point that will get out from under the burden of the Word of God and us not doing what is right, and we will try to justify it and rationalize it and sear our conscience at a place where it does not bother us anymore. Do you know how you know this is true? When you were younger and you did something wrong that your parents—and this was maybe when you were still very innocent—you did, maybe the first lie you told, maybe the first time you stole something, and you know all of your life your mom and your dad told you that and had a set of standards, and you knew that was wrong. When you did it, you did it, but you really felt terrible about it. It really bothered you. It bothered you to the place where it just almost made you sick to your stomach. That is what the Bible says in Proverbs when God's Word is written in our hearts and our conscience: it is "the candle of the LORD." What did it do? It "searches the inward parts of the belly." That is your emotions. It has an effect on you. The second time you did it, it did not bother you quite as bad, did it? The third time you did it, it bothered you even less. It was not very long until whatever you were into, you were an old hand; it did not bother you at all. Do you know what you have done? You have seared your conscience from that point to this point. When it really bothered you, now it does not bother you. There are things in our lives, every one of us, that we can relate that to, that there were things in our life that are probably wrong and not right, and we justified and do what we want to do with it because that is exactly what we want to do. The best advice I could ever give you is to always do what the Book says in any given situation, and when found to be wrong, you fix it by the same principles of coming to God and asking His forgiveness, by the same principle that shows you it is wrong in the first place. You have heard me talk about latitude in life. The Bible says, "Give no place to the devil." Latitude in your life is what messes us up. Latitude in life is the distance between what the Word of God tells you to do and how much space you put between. When you do it, you give the devil two inches, and like I saw in the church thing, "You give the devil 12 inches of your life, and he will become a ruler." Yes, he will. Yes, he will. Yes, he will.

Ephesians 4:27 Neither give place to the devil.

Now, we have to look at this, and then we will be done here. Let us talk about how conscience and guilt go together, or maybe better, how they do not go together. What is the difference between your conscience and guilt? People like to put themselves on guilt trips. Sometimes people let other people put them on guilt trips. What is the difference between conviction, which comes from the Holy Spirit of God in your conscience, and guilt? Guilt many times will be used as a tactic to get what we want. Sometimes husbands will put their wives on a guilt trip about something so they get something back. Sometimes wives will put their husbands on a guilt trip so they get control of the situation. Sometimes your kids will put you on a guilt trip to try to manipulate you. Sometimes people just feel guilty about everything. I have had people that just drag around the burden of the world, and everything to them, they feel guilty about it. It is the difference between understanding how this whole thing works in a saved person's life. Let me just say this: in a saved person's life, there should never be guilt. Never be guilty. In an unsaved person's life, there is always guilt because an unsaved person has not had his sins forgiven yet, so he is guilty of everything, even if he has not done it. What does the Bible say? "He that keepeth the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." An unsaved man is guilty no matter what. But you and I have had our sins forgiven, so guilt or feeling guilty should never come into our life. That is an emotional expense; that is something that is in your emotions. No, the word that you and I are looking for is conviction. When you understand how the process works, that God, for a saved person, put the Word of God on the tables of our heart, it is in our spirit. We have a mind to make decisions. We have an emotion that makes us feel things. Inside my conscience, in my heart, is written the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit of God is sealed inside my soul, and the two bear witness one to the other. When I know that, and I know this is true of you, the moment I do something wrong, I know it is wrong. I do not think ever in my life I did something that I thought might be wrong and I said, "I need to pray and see if that was wrong." The moment I do something wrong, and the moment you and I do something wrong, we know it is wrong. The Holy Spirit of God taps us on the shoulder and says, "Thou art the man." You are guilty; you did it. He convicts us. He convicts us through the Holy Spirit of God, and that conviction leads to a process. Guilt should never come into it. I do not feel guilty when I do something wrong because there is a process that I just take it to God and confess it and get it right, and then it is forgiven and it is taken care of. There is no reason for guilt in your life, in my life. It is conviction. When you have the Holy Spirit of God living inside you, and it is in your conscience, and your conscience bears witness with the Holy Spirit of God in you that you did something wrong, that is conviction. Then there is a process to stop that conviction: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." He will right on the spot cleanse you and forgive you for it. There is no need for guilt. I will tell you something else: when you understand Bible principles in your life, you will not allow anybody else to put you on a guilt trip because people will do that. When you know conscience, good conscience toward God, when you know you are doing what is right in your life to the best of your ability, when you know in your heart you love God and are trying to be everything He wants you to be, even though we fail, when you know in your life that you want to give your life to God and you want to learn the Bible and you want to do what God wants you to do, that is your right, and there is nobody that should take that from you. Never let somebody put you on a guilt trip just because they do not want you to be in the Bible, because it

happens a lot. There are people who say to you, "Do not go do this because let us go do this." They have no intention of doing that; they just do not want you to go here and get what you want. You have to know the principles involved, and when you understand the principles involved, you realize that you are right, and someday you are going to be held accountable for it. To be everything God wants you to be to God and give God everything in your life you possibly can and be everything for Him you can. There will be people in this world who do not like that. There will be people in this world that will look at you trying to do what is right with God. They know they should, but they do not want to. You make them feel convicted, so they are going to try to mess you up so they will feel better. If you do not know that is true, you have some things to learn about life. This is where your conscience, based on the principles of the Word of God in your spirit, keeps you from wavering when somebody tries to knock you off your course. As long as you know you are doing what is right in any given situation, and you know you have done everything that God could ask you to do, and you are open and doing whatever God wants, do not let anybody put you on a guilt trip because you are staying in a good conscience toward God, and that is your conscience or the testimony of your conscience. It is just that simple. Bible consciousness produces conviction based on a violated biblical principle, and when you stabilize that in Bible principles, then you are exactly where God wants you to be.

James 2:10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

## IX. Conclusion: Living by Biblical Principles

So, when Paul makes his reference to having a good conscience in Romans 9:1, his conscience bearing witness with the Holy Spirit of God, he is simply showing us the function and the working of our conscience. Your flesh is separated from your soul, and it is dead in trespasses and sins; never anything good in it. Your soul was sealed by the Holy Spirit of God, but your spirit is that rudder of your life, of the ship. It is not saved; it can go either way. What you decide to live. If you give your spirit to the ungodliness of this world, then that is the way your heart will go, your mind will go, your spirit will go. Your conscience will resist, but in time, you will sear it, and you will be just like the world. When I give my spirit to the things of God—keep in mind now, when I give my spirit to the things of God—that will be my mind, and in that case, Philippians 2:5, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." My heart within my spirit, Psalms 119:11, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." My spirit, 2 Corinthians 7:1, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." And then my conscience: when I put my mind in the right place through my spirit, when I decide to put my mind in the right place, my heart in the right place, when my spirit is based on the principles of the Word of God, then my conscience is built on the principles that form my Bible compass of life, and that is based on God's principles and His Holy Spirit bearing witness with me, and then I have a good conscience toward God in everything I do. The reason why I can

stand and preach when people do not like what I preach, the reason why I can pastor a church when people look at us like we are 300 monsters because we believe the Book, is because it does not matter to me. No one in this sense will ever put me on a guilt trip because I understand the principles involved, and I realize, and I can stand in the pulpit as you can stand in ministering to people with a good conscience toward God that is based on the principles in the Book. You are doing the right thing, the right way, at the right time, before Jesus comes back. There is no greater feeling in the world than that, and that is why Paul could write what he wrote to the pulpit that he wrote to deal with the circumstances that he did and tell young Timothy, "You need to always have a good conscience. You need to be before God in your conscience without offense," knowing that everything that we do is dictated by the principles of the Word of God to lead and guide us.

Philippians 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

Psalms 119:11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

2 Corinthians 7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

This message ends right where it always begins, and I say it all the time: the importance of learning biblical principles, getting them into your life, merging them into your spirit, and building them into the conscience that you have that forms up that moral compass, and then living your life based on the fact that by the Book, you know you are doing it the way God wants you to do it. There are 5,000 people out there, Bob, that do not like you and do not think what you are doing is right. It does not matter what they think; all that matters is what God thinks. When I have a good conscience toward God and a good testimony toward God, that is all I need in this life, and that is all you need in this life. But make sure you are doing it by the Word of God. Next week is anniversary Sunday. We will have a good time in the Word of God. If you want to be baptized and you have not already seen me yet, please take care of that today, and I will get you all set up. Make sure you take care of your tickets back there as quick as you can for the ball game. If you have not signed up yet, today will be the last time you can sign up for anniversary Sunday because we have to order the food; we have to know how many people we have.