PA BIBLE TEACHING FELLOWSHIP

A Clear Conscience

Acts 24:16 | Tuesday Study Night | November 10, 2026

Theme verse: Acts 24:16. *"So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man."*

- **Felix and Paul – who is really in chains?** Paul is the prisoner; Felix has the power. But the man with the power had the troubled conscience, and the man in chains had the clear one.
- **Tonight:** what the conscience is, how it gets shaped, what cleans it, and what it produces: a life lived *coram Deo*, and the boldness that comes with it.

I. WHAT THE CONSCIENCE IS

Romans 2:15 (ESV) 15 ***They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them***

- **A co-knowing.** Greek *syneidēsis*, "knowing with." Latin *con* (with) + *science* (to know). Something in you that knows what you did, right alongside you. Your "heart of hearts."
- **Old Testament uses the word "heart."** "David's heart struck him" (1 Samuel 24:5). A tender heart is a sensitive conscience. A hardened heart (Pharaoh) is a conscience steeled against the truth.
- **A created faculty that can be changed.** A conscience is a standard, but it's not infallible. It can be calibrated to many things, and not all of them good. It must be set to something, and that something is God's Word and God's Spirit.

II. THE CONDITIONS OF A CONSCIENCE

1 Timothy 1:5 (ESV) 5 ***The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.***

- **Good / clear** - accuses rightly, excuses rightly, at rest before God. *Clear* (*aproskopos*) means not stumbling. Samuel: "*Whose ox have I taken?"* (**1 Samuel 12:3**).
- **Weak** - **1 Corinthians 8:7 ESV** – *7 However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.*
- **Defiled** - **Titus 1:15 ESV** – *15 To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled.*
- **Evil** - **Hebrews 10:22 ESV** – *22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.*
- **Seared** - **1 Timothy 4:1-2 ESV** – *1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, 2 through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared.*
    - *kaustēriazō*, cauterized. The nerve is dead – happens incrementally over time!

III. THE LIMITS OF THE CONSCIENCE

1 Corinthians 4:4 (ESV) 4 ***For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me.***

- **It can clear you when God doesn't.** Paul's conscience was clear while he was dragging Christians to prison (Acts 26:9). Sincerity is not the same as being right. The conscience only knows what it has been taught.
- **It can condemn you when God doesn't.** *"Whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart"* (1 John 3:20). A conscience that keeps accusing what God has forgiven is not humility; it hasn't acknowledged or accepted Christ's blood. God's verdict is greater than your conscience!
- **Two guardrails from Romans 14.**
    - *Don't go against your own conscience*: "whatever does not proceed from faith is sin" (v. 23).
    - *Don't bind someone else's*: "Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another?" (v. 4).

IV. ONLY ONE THING CLEANS IT

Hebrews 9:14 (ESV) 14 ***how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.***

- **The old covenant couldn't do it.** Built into every sacrifice was "a reminder of sins every year" (10:3). The system kept reminding. It never cleared.
- **The blood of Christ does.** "How much more." Hearts "sprinkled clean from an evil conscience" (10:22).
- **Cleansed first, then kept clear.** Remember, the accuser will still knock.
    - A clear conscience refuses to say "I never sinned," refuses to say "my sin will haunt me forever," and acknowledges and accepts what Christ did to fully cleanse us by His blood.

V. TAKE PAINS: THE MEANS OF GRACE THAT SHAPE A CONSCIENCE

Hebrews 5:14 (ESV) 14 ***But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.***

- **"Take pains"** is *askeō*: to exercise, to train. conscience is being trained by something: culture, family, friends, social media, etc. As Christians, we should take our "conscience training" seriously.
- **The Word** sets the standard:
    - *"I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you"* (**Psalm 119:11**).
- **Prayer** seeking the examination: *"Search me, O God, and know my heart"* (**Psalm 139:23**).
- **Fellowship** keeps us from hardening (Hebrews 3:13; James 5:16).
- **The Lord's Table** is the appointed examination (1 Corinthians 11:28).
- **Preaching** cuts the heart (Acts 2:37); the question is what you do with the cut.
    - A conscience tuned to Scripture and led by the Spirit sounds the alarm the moment we step away from truth. Then we act: *repent, confess, seek forgiveness, grow*.

VI. TOWARD GOD AND TOWARD MAN

Matthew 5:23-24 (ESV) 23 ***So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you,* 24** ***leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.***

- **Toward God: holiness and devotion.**
    - **2 Corinthians 1:12 ESV** – *12 For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you.*
- **Toward man: keeping short accounts.** "Do not let the sun go down on your anger" (**Ephesians 4:26**).
    - Have I done everything on my side to reconcile?
    - Is there bitterness or unforgiveness in me?
    - Is there something I need to confess and apologize for?
- **In the church:** don't bind a brother's conscience where God has left it open (Romans 14), and don't flaunt your liberty before a weak one (1 Corinthians 8).
- **1 Peter 3:16 ESV** – *16 having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.*
    - A good conscience and a good testimony go together

VII. WHAT A CLEAR CONSCIENCE PRODUCES

Proverbs 28:1 (ESV) 1 ***The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion.***

- **There is no magic formula for boldness.** It starts *coram Deo*, with a consecrated life and a conscience kept recalibrated (daily) to truth. From that comes a growing confidence that my life is in step with God's will, and in obedience there is boldness, whatever the situation.