

Conscience

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Loved ones, so that you'll remember when we start again in the Fall, what we've been dealing with in these Sunday evenings is the spiritual life. And we've been concentrating really during these past eight months of this academic year on the spirit, our own human spirit, and the functions that that spirit has. And we've talked really of communion, and of intuition, and tonight really finishing on what is the center of the whole spiritual personal life, the function of conscience.

Now, you remember that in connection with these two we did spend a lot of time talking about what it is to be born of the Spirit because it seemed to me as God was leading us that many of us had difficulty with communion and even with guidance because we were not really settled in our New Birth experience. And so we spent a lot of time talking about the New Birth in the Spirit, and then about being baptized with the Spirit, and then the whole issue of walking in the day-by-day.

So that's really what we've been talking about during these eight months. Next fall we'll begin probably in October and we continue with the laws of the Spirit. And so we'll talk more about our own human spirits. Now, maybe if I could just zero in on that for a moment and point out for you the centrality of it. I don't know if you have ever seen anything more paradoxical, or anything more unbelievable, than the homosexual community in, I think it was San Francisco, attacking the city offices because the judgment that had been meted out to a person who had murdered two of the officials of the city was too light and too mild.

It was like something out of "1984" [novel by George Orwell], it really was. I think that loved ones who are homosexuals require our love and often they've fallen into extraverst homosexual practices because of lack of love. But, homosexuality is plainly in scripture wrong and yet here you found loved ones who are opposing God's law about sexual relationships on one side attacking the legal system because they had given a manslaughter verdict on a person who had murdered two of the city officials.

And it just seemed that we weren't even waiting until 1984 to get this double think going, it seems that already we're in the middle of it. And you know the same week you remember I saw the argument over the execution of the murderers in Florida. And I don't know if you saw it but there was one dear one called Varden, a black guy who was interviewed on national television and he had murdered someone and he was on death row. And he said, "Well, I don't think that you should carry out the death punishment because it's wrong to take anybody's life."

And I just wondered, are we all talking the same language or are we not? And loved ones, I don't want to get into the argument about whether it was right or wrong, it just seems to an ordinary logical mind there's something strange here and there's something that doesn't make sense. And it really does bring home to you that in the last days, men and women will cease to even know right from wrong. They will call evil their good and good their evil.

And you know I'd test you yourselves because we all kind of laugh at that and think, "I'm glad we're settled on this." Because of course, we all know that if you want any kind of self respect you do need the recognition and acknowledgment of your peers. Don't we know that? And it is just strange,

isn't it, how we slip it in, "Well of course we need it." And it is plain that if you need any sense of security in your life, you have to have a job of some kind and a reasonable regular salary don't you? And we, "Well, yeah." And it is plain that if you want to be happy, you do need circumstances that are fairly reasonably pleasant. Isn't that true?

And the difficulty you're all in as you hear me saying this is of course no, it's not true at all. Jesus had none of those things and yet he was utterly happy in his own heart, and he felt utterly secure with his Father taking care of him, and he felt completely satisfied with his position and his self respect. But it is amazing how we ourselves are becoming brainwashed with this stuff.

And when we share as we have over the past eight months, no you've to die to what people think of you. If you're at the mercy of the recognition of your peers and the acknowledgment of your friends you can be whipped to and fro with everyone who wants to criticize you. No, it's God's opinion of you that alone counts. And no, if you're dependent for your happiness on favorable circumstances you're always going to have flats on the freeway, you're always going to lose your job, you're always going to be coming up against situations that aren't pleasant and if your happiness depends on what happens to you, you're going to be continually sad.

And it's the same with security. If your sense of security depends on how much money you have then you could end up like Howard Hughes [American billionaire] with apparently all the money in the world and feeling so insecure and so scared that he died in the misery that he died in, as we all know. And yet, it is a kind of subtle thing, isn't it, the way we're encouraged to believe, "Well, yes you do need the recognition of your friends for some sense of self worth, and value, and importance. You do. And you do need some decent job and reasonable salary for a sense of security. You do. And you do need circumstances that are reasonably pleasant to be happy. You do." And yet, we sense that wasn't the way Jesus lived.

So loved ones, do you see that even we ourselves have difficulty with being absolutely sure about what is right and what is wrong. Now loved ones, that's why this is the key to all our relationship with God. This conscience is the key to everything and it is our conscience that will lead us safe home at the end, you know. "Tis Jesus the first and the last, whose Spirit will lead us safe home." And finally, it's our conscience that keeps us safe from spiritual deception. And loved ones, it's good that we're ending this academic year on this function of our spirits because the conscience is the key to everything.

Now, I'll show you of course why it is. When I mentioned to you the old heresies or the old doubts that we have about what you need for your sense of significance, and your sense of security, you know how often we've talked about this kind of presentation of our inner lives, or our personalities. You know how often we've said that we're meant to live like that [pointing to diagram of body-soul-spirit] from the inside out. We're meant to live from God -- getting our security, and our significance, and our happiness from him -- from our communion with him through the Holy Spirit. And how we of course have refused to do that and we've begun to look to things for our security, and to other people and their opinions of us for our sense of significance and self esteem and self worth, and looking at circumstances for our happiness. And we've begun to live the other way completely.

Now loved ones it is amazing that even though because of that our spirit has ceased to depend on God and therefore our spirit has gradually decayed until it's dead, even still the conscience is the most alive part of our spirits even when we're far from God. It's incredible but the conscience is

like a gyrocompass. It's as if everything else is turned upside down, this whole thing is going the wrong way, but the conscience somehow remains upright and keeps getting to us and saying, "This isn't the way to live. It isn't the way to live."

And the conscience picks out the anger that we feel because somebody is not giving us the sense of worth and value that we think they ought to and the conscience witnesses to us that anger is wrong, there's something wrong with it. And even though we receive all kinds of brainwashing saying, "No, anger is good. It's good to express your feelings." Yet the dear conscience keeps pricking us and saying, "No, not the anger is wrong." And even though we read books on how to win through intimidation and we're encouraged in our office to try to overcome other people by our own shrewdness, and by our own power, and by our own forcefulness, yet the conscience still seems to say inside us, "Yes, but it's not right. Look what you're doing to that loved one. Look what you're doing to the person who has to obey you because you're above them in the office."

And it's incredible, loved ones, that even the deadest person in the whole world has some sense of conscience inside and the conscience is incredible in that it still seems to be the most alive part of our spirits. I don't know why it is. I suppose it has something to do with the fact that we continue to be concerned about right and wrong. You remember the fall in the Garden of Eden brought us into a submission to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

So I suppose we still want to be right, we want to be right and so we're still concerned with what is right and wrong and somehow that helped the conscience to stay alive. But the conscience, loved ones, is the center of the whole personality. It's the conscience that links up the spirit with the soul and with the body. It's the conscience that makes the spirit sense it should dwell on God's power and live off his life. It's the conscience that makes us feel that our minds and emotions should obey our wills. It's the conscience that makes us sense we should be GIVING to the world security, and significance, and happiness that we get from God rather than draining that from the world and from other people.

So the conscience is a precious gift to us from God. And it's the conscience that is always the beginning of conversion in a person, do you see that? What the Holy Spirit does is to get home to a person that you're not meant to be like this. Usually, the Holy Spirit does it through bringing the word of God home to them. The Holy Spirit brings a word of God to us about anger: "If you're angry with your brother you're guilty of the judgment." Or, the Holy Spirit brings a word to us about purity in our lives, or about adultery, or fornication. And the Holy Spirit brings to our conscience a sense that we are doing those things and we ought not to do them.

So the conscience often is the very beginning of real conviction of sin in people's lives and that's what the Bible says. You remember, if you look at John 16:8 Jesus explains that that's how the Holy Spirit first begins to make people aware that their lives should not operate like this from the outside to the inside. John 16:8, "And when he comes, he will convince the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment." And you see the "x" footnote at the word "convince" and you look up the footnote because the Greek verb is the verb "convict" and that's what the King James has, "And when the Holy Spirit comes he will convict the world concerning sin." And that's what happens, loved ones.

The Holy Spirit at the beginning of a person's desire for God begins to enliven their conscience and make them aware that they are doing things that God's word says are wrong and that they should not do. Now, at the beginning those are usually sins, they're outward things. They're unkind words

that you're speaking to somebody, or they're unclean actions that you're doing, or they're stealing, sarcasm, something obvious that is plain that you can see. And the Holy Spirit first makes you aware of that and that's the beginning of the move towards regeneration.

Loved ones, do you see why the soft sell "charismania" evangelistic type of thing is wrong? Do you see when you say to a person, "Now, would you rather go to hell and have a miserable life on earth or would you rather go to heaven and have a great time here on earth?" Well, obviously you're appealing to their mind and emotions and they're no fools. They say after a moment's thought, "I'd rather go to heaven and have a good time here."

So every time you present that soft sell kind of Christian appeal you're not touching the spirit at all. Do you see that? You're not touching the spirit -- you're just touching the mind and the emotions. It's the same whenever you deal with a loved one just on the basis of Francis Schaeffer or Paul Little -- both of which are great apologists and the truths that they present are excellent. But if you deal only with the truthfulness of God then you're only dealing with their mind. And if you deal only with their desire to be happy, and to be joyful, and to have an uplifting life then you're dealing only with their emotions.

But you only begin to touch the spirit or God only begins to be able to touch the spirit when the appeal is made to the conscience. And so that's why it's so important to deal with God's good word of the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, the things that describe the kind of life we should live if we're depending on God. The Holy Spirit first of all enlightens the conscience.

Now, it might be good, loved ones, to see how the conscience is affected in regeneration. You'll find it there in Hebrews 9:14: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." You see that? "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God."

Now some loved ones think, "That's it. You plead the blood of Jesus on your conscience and the blood of Jesus sprinkles your conscience clean." Now those words, I want you to note, make no sense at all. I mean they're all imagery. You can make no sense out of that at all. That is, how the blood of Jesus can sprinkle the conscience and cleanse it. I'll tell you what you get loved ones doing, what I did myself, I prayed, "Lord, sprinkle your blood on my conscience and cleanse it." I didn't bother with my sins, I didn't bother with repentance, I didn't bother with changing my life. I read that verse and I prayed, "Lord, sprinkle your blood on my conscience so that it will be cleansed."

I kept on doing the things that my conscience told me was wrong but I felt that wasn't the issue at all. I felt, "No, somehow miraculously if I believe in Jesus the blood of Jesus is sprinkled on my conscience and cleanses it." Loved ones, I'd like to show you the verse in 1 John that shows you how the conscience is affected and how the blood of Jesus does cleanse us. 1 John 1:5, "This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth."

Then here's the secret, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin." In other words, our

conscience is enlivened by the Holy Spirit to see that we are doing some things that God does not want us to do. We allow our conscience to exert power and influence over our will, or in fact, we go back to the way God meant us to operate. Our will obeys our conscience and does what God has shown us that we should do. It directs our mind, and our emotions, and our body to obey him.

And then we go before God and we suddenly find that we sense that the death of Jesus has enabled us to be accepted by our Father. Why? Because, we are walking in the victory that the death of Jesus has brought. The death of Jesus has crossed out that inturnd life and made available this outgoing life. And because our will has obeyed our conscience we are making real the victory that Jesus won for us on the Cross and so suddenly we have no problem pleading the blood of Jesus.

But I'll tell you when you have absolute impossibility in pleading the blood of Jesus. It's when you're shedding the blood of Jesus. Now that's true, loved ones, if you're shedding the blood of Jesus in your life, if you're in some way disobeying the directions of your conscience and you're going before God and you're trying to plead the blood of Jesus over your conscience you'll find it impossible to do it. The Holy Spirit will not let you do it, he will not sprinkle your conscience clean with the blood of Jesus because you are not walking in the victory that that blood was shed to bring.

So loved ones, the only reason that the blood of Jesus sprinkles our conscience clean is if we are obeying our conscience. But if you retain an unclean conscience all the blood of Jesus that he shed can never cleanse it. So it's important to see that, because I think some of us feel somehow miraculously by a little trick in our thinking we plead the blood of Jesus and we kind of imagine that the conscience is being cleansed as the blood flows through. And we get very strange ideas. I never felt that was strange -- that idea of the blood of Jesus -- until a loved one here from Catholic background heard me saying, "Oh there's a fountain filled with blood. It flows from Emmanuel's side." You know William Cowper, an English poet, wrote it.

And she said, "Ah, terrible, horrible." And for the first time I saw, "Yeah, yeah. I have always thought it was beautiful but I can see that there is a sense in which many evangelicals think that the blood of Jesus kind of washes your conscience clean." Well no, the blood of Jesus stands for the death of Jesus and God allowed his son to die so that our inturnd personalities would be completely changed and turned the other way and when we walk that way God says, "You've accepted the death of my Son and you've walked into the victory that he died to bring you. Come in and inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

But it's in that sense that the blood of Jesus cleanses our conscience. But loved ones, it cannot cleanse it in some magical metaphorical way. It is applicable and it is something that is real to you if your will obeys your conscience. That's why there's so much emphasize on repentance in the New Birth. So it might help you in some of your own prayer lives you know, to see that.

Now, if you look at Hebrews 10:22, God's word explains that in regard to prayer and intercession. Hebrews 10:22, and it explains why many of us have problems getting through to God in prayer. "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." Now, do you see that is the direction for approaching God in prayer? "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience."

You can't have full assurance of faith unless your hearts are sprinkled clean from an evil

conscience. You can't. You can't go before God and pray for a loved one who has cancer, or pray for some guidance in your own life with full assurance of faith unless your conscience is clean. You can't. And you see, I think some of us feel, "Oh, but as long as our conscience is sprinkled." So we can go before God, and you know we've done it, we've gone before God and it's not wrong to plead the blood of Jesus but to plead the blood of Jesus while you're shedding the blood of Jesus is mockery.

And some of us have gone into God's presence and said, "Lord we plead the blood of Jesus over our lives. We come to you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in his name we ask you," and somehow we wonder why we can't have full assurance of faith as we ask. It's because our conscience is not clear and clean. Now, a human illustration would be if you go to a friend that you've criticized behind his back and then you go to him to ask him for the loan of something, or for some help. You know the flutter inside, I mean you kind of feel dirty and you feel, "Oh, this isn't right but I need his help, and I can't undo what I've done. And if I tell him about it it's going to spoil what friendship we have." And so you kind of ask him. But you can't ask him with the full assurance of an open relationship between you.

Now it's the same with the Father; the conscience is our guide. Loved ones, pay attention to your conscience. If your conscience is speaking to you about tithing, then tithe. Tithe; you'll have no peace until you tithe. You'll have no power or victory until you tithe. If the conscience is speaking to you about your quiet time and your prayer time each day, get up at four o'clock, three o'clock and pray -- because you'll have no peace, and you'll have no victory, and you'll have no power with God until you get that thing right because the truth is that as you move on in the spiritual life the Holy Spirit draws your conscience more and more towards himself.

You see that? You see a cannibal can eat people because his conscience is far from the Holy Spirit and his mind is filled with all kinds of information that's wrong. So a person who is far from the Holy Spirit has a conscience that is very coarse but the more you walk with the Holy Spirit the more your conscience draws close to the Holy Spirit. Now, you'll see that clearly if you look at 1 Timothy 4:1-2. "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith by giving heed to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, through the pretensions of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and enjoin abstinence from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth."

And Paul warns through God's inspiration that in the last days there will be liars whose consciences have become seared and yet who in God's name bring all kinds of legalism into personal life. Who, "Forbid marriage and enjoy abstinence from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving." Now loved ones you'll find that your conscience will often trouble you about things that you were never troubled about before. And you ought to walk after that. You ought to walk after your conscience.

The conscience gets closer and closer to the Holy Spirit and gets finer and finer in its directions to you. And I would testify that I've noticed that in my own life that God will often have a new step for you to move onto. You know, a whole new place with himself and you keep missing, you know, and you have another few shots at it and you miss. And he has another whole place for you to move into, a higher place, and yet you won't step onto it because your conscience is telling you something that is new to you, giving you some new light, and you're saying, "No, no I've always been able to do that. I've always been able to do that and it hasn't done any harm to my relationship with God."

But, the Holy Spirit is gently taking you deeper into Jesus and bringing you into more and more sensitivity in regard to your conscience. Now, Paul mentions the same if you look at it in Romans 9:1. And you can see it working in his life there the way he expresses it. Romans 9:1, "I am speaking the truth in Christ, I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart."

That's interesting you see because we're great saints you know, big saints we are, and we have a tremendous burden for the world but it's interesting how Paul puts it, isn't it? That, "My own conscience testifies that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish of my heart. I'm not just spewing out some rhetoric here to try to get over to you Romans that I am concerned about you. It's my conscience; I believe that I cannot say this unless I mean it with all my heart and unless it is real in my life and my conscience bears witness that it's real." Now, that's what happens.

The Holy Spirit so sensitizes your conscience that you become more and more concerned with simple honesty. The simple honesty in your words, the simple honesty in your actions, simple transparency in your life, loved ones. And if you say to me, "Oh, well should we not find out if somebody else is being led the same way?" Well loved ones, there's only room for two on the Calvary road, for you and Jesus. Indeed, there's only room for one and it's him, and you in him -- but there isn't room for a whole army of you asking each other how you should walk it.

It's a personal walk that you carry on with Jesus your Savior and he's going to give you all kinds of personal commandments and directions in your life you need to follow, and you need to follow in confidence in him without having all kinds of committee meetings, and all kinds of reinforcement societies to decide if you're in a good broad road. The broad road leads only to one place. The narrow road is the place that leads to Calvary and it's the place where your conscience will be faithful to you if you obey it.

The more of course you respond to it, the more it will tell you. You can see that. The more responsive you are to your conscience, the more sensitive your conscience becomes and then the clearer and easier guidance becomes. Now, there are good verses about our attitude to our conscience in 1 John 3, and how we should treat it; 1 John 3:20. These are difficult verses, loved ones, and they've been interpreted in exactly the opposite way but the commentators and Watchman Nee, and Oswald Chambers, and men like that are clear about it.

1 John 3:19, "By this we shall know that we are of the truth, and reassure our hearts before him." "Heart" stands for "conscience" there. "Whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything." Now, you see the way that sentence runs, "By this we shall know that we are of the truth, and reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him."

Now loved ones, the only sense you can make of those verses is to see the truth written in Verse 21, and then in the light of that to read Verse 20, "Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God." And that's true, if your conscience doesn't condemn you, according to that verse you remember in Hebrews 10, you can have full assurance of faith. And then do you see Verse 20, "Whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything." So if your conscience condemns you, you can be assured that that is a reliable witness, and a

reliable confirmation, and a reliable human monitor of what God's own attitude is.

So don't go along this line, "Oh, we're not just being kind enough with ourselves. You know, God is kinder to us than we are. So my old conscience is condemning me but oh, that conscience is far too sensitive. God's conscience isn't half as sensitive as that." Well now, that's not the case. Our conscience is God's human monitor inside us to let us know what he thinks about things. And so if our conscience condemns us you can be assured that God himself is displeased with what we're doing.

So when you hear your conscience speaking, don't rationalize it. Don't pretend, don't say to yourself, "Oh, these aren't really sins." Don't rationalize like that, or don't rationalize and say, "Oh, no God doesn't object to this." If your conscience is working, check up in scripture and see, "Is my conscience saying something to me that is scriptural? If it is, I better take notice of it." Now loved ones, I'd just say one more word about that old chestnut that is so popular in our day and this is the "Me Generation" so remember that and it's the old chestnut of false condemnation.

Now, I really do plead with you, do you see the egotism, the tremendous presumptive egotism, if I sense that something is not right in my life and then I come to you and say, "But of course I know it's just false condemnation." I'm obviously saying to you, "I'm too saintly to have done anything wrong here. This is obviously false condemnation. I know I'm right, I know I'm pure, I know I never error, I never sin, and this thing that's troubling me is obviously false condemnation."

Now loved ones, do you see the tremendous presumptive pride of that? Now, I'm with you, you know, if you're washing your hands 25 times a day and you feel condemned because you're not washing them 30 times, well I'm with you -- I don't think there's anything in scripture that backs that up and I think that could be false condemnation -- though I suspect it's more than that really. So I can see extremes, excesses, where Satan gets in and deceives the loved one, but brother and sisters it's pretty easy to check out those things, isn't it? It's pretty easy to check it out.

If you're troubled about an attitude that you have to a certain person as not being a loving attitude, you can check in scripture where it says you're to love everybody, and love is patient and kind, and not jealous or boastful, and not irritable or resentful. You can check up in scripture and see, "Well, is my conscience saying something to me that scripture condemns?" If it is, then I ought to condemn too. But let's be slow to immediately jump into this egotistic claim to saintliness when everything that we hear is false condemnation.

Loved ones, I would testify again what I testified to you before, that every time God's Holy Spirit has convicted me I've said, "Lord, you're right and I'm wrong." I've refused to say, "Lord, you're wrong and I'm right." And I've refused to say, "Oh, this is just false condemnation." Or I've refused to lay under it and say, "Oh, my poor self -- I'm being condemned." I've thanked God that he has not forsaken me and that he's continued to tell me and point out to me where I'm not in the center of his will and loved ones, that's the attitude that the Father wants us to have to conscience.

There's just one more verse that you might look at, in Titus 1:15, and then we'll just close. Titus 1:15, describes those who will be apostate and those who will rebel against God in the last days. Titus 1:15, "To the pure all things are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure; their very minds and consciences are corrupted." And you remember there are other verses in Timothy

that talk about the last days and the terrible searing of conscience that will take place where men will not even realize that they're doing things that are wrong because their consciences will have been so sinned against.

Loved ones, I would urge you to see that the key to walking forward in Jesus is obeying your conscience. It's such a simple way. You just make your will obey your conscience. That's it. If you make your will obey your conscience you'd find the Holy Spirit making all of the promises of the Bible real to you. And I know there are great numbers of you that wonder, "Oh this is such a difficult way to walk, I don't know how simple people walk this way." Well, that's how they walk that way, you don't need to be brilliant and you don't need three degrees, you just need to see that when your conscience says you're to do something your will should do it. And if you do that the Holy Spirit opens the very gates of heaven to you.

And you know, as you want to walk into victory over not only outward sins but you want to walk over into victory over conscious inward sin -- over anger, and envy, and jealousy, and impatience, and uncleanness -- as you want to walk into the crisis experience of Jesus' death -- obey your conscience. You don't need all kinds of complex directions from me or from somebody else, obey your conscience. Keep moving after your conscience. Refuse to rationalize away what your conscience is saying; keep moving that way.

And then as you come through the crisis experience of the cross, and you begin to walk into the process experience of the cross walking in the Spirit and your soul beginning to come under the control of your spirit so that those human traits that are just inexpedient for the ministry of Jesus' life begin to fall away, it's the same. Your conscience will say, "Don't you laugh at the wrong time?" Or, your conscience will say, "Don't you talk too much?" Or, your conscience will say, "Aren't you being over intellectual in this situation?"

In other words, your conscience is a faithful gyrocompass to you not only in matters of outward sins like stealing, and fornication, and adultery -- not only in matters of inward sin like anger, and envy, and jealousy -- but also in matters of inexpedient things, human traits that need to be changed so that people will be able to see Jesus through you. So loved ones, it is good that we're ending on this simple note, because maybe that's the most precious thing we could share with each other if we were to die at this moment, obey your conscience. If you obey your conscience then you'll suddenly find that the blood of Jesus does cleanse you from all the other sin as well in your life and makes you feel clean before God.

Now loved ones, any questions on that?

Question: Is it uncorruptible?

Reply from Pastor O'Neill:

I think it isn't brother. From what Titus says, you know, that consciences are corrupted and it seems that your conscience can get to the point where it is so seared that it seems in a person like Hitler almost dead completely.

Question: How do you tell the difference between following your conscience and following emotions? If you can't use your mind to verify if you're going on feeling -- both of them seem almost like a premonition type of thing. How do you differentiate?

Could you give me an example there because I'm trying to think of an example myself? I know situations where loved ones, I'll talk so you can get thinking, I know situations where loved ones have said something to a person in a conversation and then they've got home and they've thought, "I shouldn't have said that." And they're really not clear whether this is something that is just emotional, maybe they're being over sensitive to what this person thought or felt, or maybe it's something that the conscience is troubling them about.

In that situation, which I have been in, I've confessed it before God -- not argued whether it was sin or what it was -- but confessed it before God and said, "Lord, I'm sorry that in that way I did not let Jesus show himself to my friend and I apologize and I confess it." And then Dave, I've felt it possible for God to guide me having done that, as to whether I should apologize to the person or not.

What I do think is a problem is when loved ones don't get right before God first and then they lack the guidance about what they should do with the other person and they go around and make all kinds of apologies that are just silly and aren't appropriate. Is that it?

Question: I guess way in the back of my mind I still have this question?

Pastor O'Neill: Oh, about disregarding God's word? By disregarding God's word.

Question: In the Jim Jones scandal [an immoral cult leader] didn't people get in to it kind of with a flow and an exuberance, following emotions instead of conscience?

Response from Pastor O'Neill:

Well, I would repeat God's word, brother. Jim Jones had so many things in his life that were not consistent with Christian living. If you think of the dear fella himself who actually had his secretary line up ladies to have intercourse with him. I mean, that doesn't bear even thinking about and you have to admit that that sort of thing is so plainly contrary to the laws about fornication, adultery, purity in the priests of God. Everything that a loved one who was prepared to compare Jones Town [cult community created by Jim Jones] with scripture could not really excuse themselves on the ground of conscience.

Now, Dave you cannot tell the little ones that didn't know that kind of thing was going on and therefore we have no right to judge the loved ones in Jones Town but you would have to say that if a person was aware of those things, and surely there were other things that they were aware of, that they would have to sear their own conscience to take part in them. I would think brother, right?

Question: You know from where I sit I see it differently. And I realize that you have to do that to drive across your point.

Pastor O'Neill: No, because Titus does.

Question: Okay, but that's my point, is that it seems to me that you don't have to look any further than your own conscience to know that your conscience is corrupted because your conscience is always telling you different kinds of things. And you read in Titus, you read 15 that their consciences are corrupted and I think you should have read the last verse because it says, "They profess to know

God, but they deny him by their deeds; they are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good deed.” And those are cancelable kinds of things and they’re intellectually discerned and so when you listen to your conscience you look at it in terms of deeds [inaudible 47:05] where the word conscience is coming from right or wrong.

Pastor O’Neill:

Well brother, that’s good. I think you’re saying the same thing as I’m saying; that I’m with you completely that if you’re disobedient to God’s word then it shows that your conscience has either been seared or has been corrupted. Yeah, yeah, I’m completely with you that the Holy Spirit lights up your conscience and if you’re ever in difficulty or in doubt about whether your conscience is telling you the right thing or not, the Holy Spirit also wrote this dear word. Yes.

But brother I think maybe I’ve seen that one of the great dangers of us as Christians is to fail to see that the conscience is part of our spirit and is affected by the enlivening that the Holy Spirit brings and the conscience is therefore an important instrument that God uses to keep us in the right way. And I think that many of us can wrest even scripture to our own purposes unless we see that there is a monitor within us that will testify that yes, this is the right way to go or no, this is the wrong way to go.

Yes, so I think maybe when you’ve been maybe as long as I have I would dare to say, trying to help loved ones into Jesus, I think you’ll begin to see how vital it is to respect conscience and to lay emphasis on it. I would say that most of us here would not get into trouble with Jesus if we would obey our conscience rather than arguing, “Well, well, my conscience is not completely reliable.” No, that’s why you have scripture to confirm it but your conscience is more and more reliable as you walk under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Question: It’s the question of how – be angry and sin not and then if you’re angry with your brother you’re guilty of the judgment.

Pastor O’Neill:

It seems to me what we’ve often said was the wrath of God is an anger that is controlled and is on behalf of His values, and His beliefs, and His standards. And sinful anger is selfish uncontrolled wrath. And so it seems that that is a pretty good distinction that if our anger is selfish on behalf of ourselves and is uncontrolled, is bad temper, then it is the anger that is sin -- but if it is a controlled reaction against something that is opposing God’s will then it is the kind of wrath that Jesus expressed in the temple with the money lenders. But maybe it takes a fairly holy person to be angry like that and we should be careful when we call a thing “righteous indignation”.

Question: Should we be satisfied with merely following our conscience? That sounds to me like a law oriented life where we should go from there into a walk with – you have Jews in the attic and we have Nazi’s at the door and Nazi’s are going to say, “Do you have Jews in the attic?” And you know if you say, “Yes, I do” the Nazis are going to shoot them. If you lie, then you’re breaking God’s rule.

Pastor O’Neill:

Brother, let me not get into the philosophical stuff okay, because there are no Jews in our attics and it's too tricky to get involved in things that we're not facing. But, it seems brother that we need to see that the conscience becomes part of the enlivened spirit and it then becomes an instrument by which God can speak to us through his Spirit. And it's important for us to see that the Holy Spirit does use the makeup that he has given us in creation and that we do need to listen to our conscience and obey him.

Now, where your mind comes into the picture, your mind obviously depends on the information it has because the conscience often acts in the light of that and that's where a renewed mind is important and a mind that is really saturated with God's word and God's values. So all this presupposes that this is a person who is living under the control of Jesus' Spirit and with a love for Jesus and a desire to please him and obey him and a mind also that is being filled day-by-day with scripture. I think what's happening is some of us are coming in in the middle here and you're not aware of maybe the buildup, you know.

[QUESTION INAUDIBLE ]

Pastor O'Neill: Whether we're born again or not, I'll go with that one. What I think brother is I could simplify it because the blood you remember, in the Old Testament it said, "The life is in the blood." And when Jesus shared his blood he poured out his life for us and that's the important thing. It's not argument about which blood but rather that it was Jesus' life poured out for us and because that life was poured out for us and our life was poured out in it and renewed in it, it's possible for us to be born of the Spirit.

Question: My own personal feelings I guess is I know within myself as the scripture has told me, that God when his son came into my life, placed his voice in me that tells me what I'm supposed to do. I know within myself. I can't say for my wife who sits next to me what she's supposed to do but I know within myself when I burn somebody or when I've lifted them up, when I've done something directly wrong, or by what I say, or by what I do and anybody around me can probably –

Pastor O'Neill:

Brother is saying that the conscience is personal to each of us and that it is God's voice to us and that he explains different things to different ones of us and we need to listen in that way. And it isn't in some sense the same standard necessarily at every time to everyone which is what I tried to share when you remember, I said that as we walk on in Jesus' spirit so the conscience guides us into finer and finer areas; places where we thought we could go before, we can't go now. And so it is a personal, alive and dynamic thing.

I think what some of the brothers are having trouble with is a philosophical idea of conscience that is not within the concept of our discussion of spirit, soul, and body and that's the difficulty. But loved ones, when we talk about conscience we're talking about a function that everyone has but that is transformed and enlivened by the Holy Spirit of God and becomes an instrument of his mind and his will for us.

Question: I'd like to go back to one of the first questions of how do you know if it's your emotions or your conscience.

Pastor O'Neill:

Oh loved ones, do pay attention. I plead with you to pay attention. Otherwise you will be in a Jones Town [followers of a Jim Jones type cult] really. I mean the whole world will become a Jones Town, won't it? The whole world will become a "1984" [George Orwell novel] where people don't know right from wrong because they've ceased to respect God's word and they've ceased to obey it in their own lives.

And I plead with you, don't move into an emotionalism apart from conscience. Obey our conscience and respect your conscience, especially as you read God's word and as you seek him daily, your conscience becomes more and more a mirror and a window for the Spirit to speak through to you. So do respect the conscience because it's so plain, the scripture is so full you know, of the declarations that people will sear their consciences and will make shipwreck of their faith because they refuse to obey the monitor within.

So don't be deceived and don't get into philosophical discussions that allow you to ignore your conscience. No, don't. Respect it. Now, if you see yourself seeing some more light, if you don't want to call that conscience you want to call it say, "Conscience is what stopped me stealing candy from the grocery store but the thing that is now telling me that I ought to pray for an hour every day is the spirit." Okay, okay, it's not really, it's your conscience. The Spirit is enlivening your conscience and giving you that direction.

But call it anything but obey it. Obey it. You know, it's still true that the only way in Jesus is trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey. So do. And through this summertime do what he tells you especially in regard to these evening services. I would point out to you that it is a remarkable opportunity for us to be used by God to bring two or three thousand people like ourselves into the Mall of the University. But I'll tell you this, there are already spirits working in you to get you interested in doing all kinds of other things this summer, or to get you involved in purely philosophical discussions about what Christianity is.

Satan hates to see loved ones being used by God's Spirit and so I ask you to realize that you will be targets for Satan's deception. He'll want you to get out and do anything but be used to bring people to Jesus this summer. But I really do plead with you to obey God's Spirit as he speaks to you and let's look forward to this summer being a time when Jesus will grow in people's hearts that have not known him up to this moment.

And there are thousands of little ones, you know high schoolers and college people all around the Twin Cities who really this summer can just waste another four months as they always do or can meet Jesus. But, it will depend on some of us here taking leaflets around, sticking them in windshield wipers, beginning to call at fraternity houses and talk to people. It will depend on us. It will not happen without us.

And I'd urge you this again: the final proof of a spiritual man is the fruit of his life. And I'd ask you, what is the fruit of your life like? Now, are you bringing people to Jesus or are you just playing around with the deeper waters, as you call them, of the spiritual life? But the key is, what is your life counting for Jesus? And I do encourage you to think seriously about it this summer.

The older people would testify what I would say at this moment, that after all the talk and after all the endless discussion, and after all the books that have been read, and after all the bright

little remarks, at the end of the day as the years pass you yearn for somebody to live their life the way they say they believe. You do. You just die not for bright little theologians, or bright little preachers, or bright little philosophers, but as the year's past by you yearn more and more for people who live like Jesus. People who prove by their lives that they care about Jesus and they care about other people.

And I would plead with you, this summer again God will be watching for your response and I would pray that it will be such that at the end of the summer you'll be able to see some souls saved, and be able to thank God for them.

Let us pray.