

Loved ones, we're going to begin talking about a good conscience. And it might be good to remind you again what sin itself is. And that in the Bible there is a distinction made between 'sin' and 'sins'. I don't know if you've noticed that. But 'sins' are normally acts, and words, and thoughts. You might say they're sinful acts, and sinful words, and sinful thoughts. Now because many of them have been labeled immorality and vice, we tend to identify 'sins' with immorality and vice but that's not true.

'Sins' are 'sins' because they express the attitude of 'sin'. [Writes sins and sins on visual.] And 'sin' is the real problem. [On visual enlarges the letter 'I' in the middle of 'sIn'.] 'Sins' are just how 'sin' expresses itself to men, and woman, and to God. But 'sin' is the heart of the rebellion. And why I made that 'I' so big is that is the heart of sin.

And sin is found in Genesis 3 -- one good definition of it. Genesis 3:4, and it's Satan, you remember, speaking in the shape of the serpent to Eve, "But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'" And it's that clause there that describes the heart of sin, "You will be like God."

And sin therefore is an inner attitude towards God and towards the world. [On visual writes 'God' and 'world'.] And really the heart of it is that instead of looking to God for all that you need it looks to the world. Instead of looking to God's love it looks to the world's love. Instead of trusting the Creator it trusts the creature. And that's what sin is, it's an attitude of independence towards God and an attitude of dependence on the world. And 'the world' of course is not -- I used to think -- in Ireland we were taught that 'the world' was the terrible dance hall -- and I'm not saying that isn't 'the world' -- but we were taught that 'the world' is the dance halls, and Vegas, and casinos, and prostitution, and murder, and all the things we didn't do, and knew nothing about.

Now, that isn't a true definition of 'the world'. Those are just some expressions of 'the world'. But the heart of 'the world' attitude as opposed to God is independence of God. And it is depending on the things that 'the world' has, the material possessions that it has, the thrills and experiences it can give, and the people that are in it. And so sin, loved ones, is you right here [On visual writes 'you'. Then draws an arrow up and writes 'God' above. Then an arrow down and writes 'world'.] And instead of looking to God and to his love you look to the world and its love.

And so I'd have to point out plainly to you that when a dirty joke is told and you know that everybody is -- if not laughing at it -- supposed to be smiling or supposed to be at least listening to it, and you are so afraid of what your colleagues will think of you, and you're so afraid to be thought square or a religious fanatic that you kind of standby, too, and listen to it, then really you have to face it that you are looking to the world for your sense of significance. And at that moment you care more what the world thinks of you than you do what God thinks of you. And to that extent sin is lying at the very door of your heart. Indeed at that moment, is ruling your life. And so sin is looking to the world for significance.

I know you will think this very hard but when you lose your job, and anxiety grips your heart, and you begin to worry, and you begin to be anxious, and you begin to be uptight about the next interview, we can all say that that is just natural nervousness. But really it is an expression of your dependence on the world for your security. And to that extent it really partakes of the whole life of sin, because you're looking to the world for your security instead of to God.

And it's the same when God prompts you to go and visit someone who needs to know about Jesus, and someone whom you like very much has invited you out that same evening. And you make the decision to go out with that someone.

Or after service tonight, instead of looking around open hearted to Jesus for the person whom he may want you to love and be friendly with tonight, you look around for the people who are attractive to you, or whose company you would enjoy. And to the extent that you are looking to the world for your happiness, really you're partaking of the whole 'life of sin', because 'life of sin' is a life that depends on the world instead of God -- that trusts the world instead of God.

And of course we've been doing that for years so our personalities were meant to work from God's love [On visual writes 'God' with an arrow down to 'Us'.] and then through us ourselves, and then out to the world. [On visual makes another arrow down from us to the word 'World'.] Instead of that, they work back that way. [On visual draws arrow up from 'World' to 'Us', and draws 2 slashes between 'Us' and 'God'.] And we have cut ourselves off from God. And we have corrupted our whole personalities so that they operate the wrong way around. So that many of us, when we first receive Jesus into our spirits, have great trouble, because Jesus starts trying to love people through us, but the rest of our personality is operating the other way. And there's conflict inside. So that we cry out, "The good that I would..." -- now at least we want to do good and we can't do it -- "And the evil that I hate is the very thing I do."

And the reason is, of course, because our personalities have become corrupted, and perverted, and reversed. And our little eyes are so used to looking to others for approval that they cannot get free of that. That's what Paul means when he says we're enslaved to the body of sin. Do you see that? He says we're enslaved to the body of sin. The body of sin is a body that is used to operating inwards all the time. So that even when we're freed by Jesus' spirit coming into our spirits and enlivening us, yet our body is enslaved to sin. And so of course our outward lives are. And that results in the carnal life.

So a carnal Christian is one who has received Jesus' spirit into their spirits and they're alive and they want to do what God wants. But their personalities -- because the 'body of sin' in the Bible stands not only for the physical body but for the whole psychological apparatus -- it is all operating the other way and we're enslaved to it.

And so loved ones, what you do have is that kind of a situation where you have your spirit being energized by God's spirit. [Draws diagram of 3 concentric rectangles, and labels innermost 'Spirit'.] And really his plan is for that spirit of his to come through your soul, [On diagram labels the rectangle which is the next level out as 'Soul'. Then labels outer rectangle as 'Body'.] and to come through your body, and to fill the world.

But what you've got really is a spirit where communion exists with God and you do pray, [On diagram writes 'Communion' in the rectangle labeled 'spirit' as one of the functions of the 'spirit'.] and

there some sense of intuition and you do have some sense of what God wants you to do. [On diagram adds 'Intuition' and 'Conscience' as functions of the spirit.] But then the trouble begins at this level here, [On diagram indicates 'Soul'.] because your conscience connects up with your will. And your will is what directs your mind and your emotions. [On diagram adds 'Will', 'Mind', and 'Emotions' as functions of the 'Soul'.] And it's there where the trouble occurs because all of this here, [On diagram puts his hand across under the 'Spirit' box, above where the next level is labeled 'Soul'.] everything under that hand there, [On diagram that refers to the 'Soul' and the 'Body'.] is the body of sin and it is all operating that way [Shows direction in from the world.] while what is in your spirit is operating that way [Shows on diagram down from God's Spirit into our spirit and out to the 'Soul'.] and here [Conscience.] is where the tremendous conflict comes.

And of course, you can see that there is only one thing to do with that whole situation. Here you have a personality that is so corrupted that it works the wrong way around and so God determined that all he could do is destroy it completely and recreate it again. And you remember you get that -- and it would show you another little side to this verse that I know many of you know by heart. It is Romans 6:6. And you'll see the truth of the enslavement of the body coming out. "We know that our old self," that is the old personality, "Was crucified with him." Why? "So that the sinful body," or the body of sin -- this body, and mind, and emotions that have been used to operating on the basis of the world's love and the world's affections -- "So that this body of sin might be destroyed." It actually means, "Might be rendered inoperative." And that's what happened. The cross of Christ was planted across that whole old self. [On diagram shows a cross superimposed over the whole personality.] And it was crucified so that this body of sin might be rendered inoperative and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. That is, the 'life power' that lives independent of God. And so that is what happened on Calvary.

Now, what I want to say to you clearly is, your dear conscience continues to testify to that all the time. Your conscience is part of your spirit and your conscience is always testifying to what has happened to you on the cross with Jesus. Your conscience is always pulling you back to that. It's always pulling you up to that. And your conscience is continually bringing home to your heart, "But you have been crucified with Christ. You have been freed from this world opinion. You've been freed from depending on people for your security. You've been freed from that." And your conscience is all of the time urging you to live dependent on God.

Now loved ones, your conscience therefore is a very precious part of God's voice in your life. And your conscience will always testify to that.

Now, some of you come to situations where you can't believe God has forgiven you. Now, do you see the facts? God could not forgive you until he had found this great antidote for your corrupted personality [On visual lays an image of the cross over the whole personality.] because until he had provided that great antidote, if he had sent his spirit into your life, you with your intuned life, and your domineering life, and your parasitic life would have simply used the super natural powers of the Holy Spirit to spread that 'self' all over the universe.

So until God crucified you with Christ, he could not set the Holy Spirit free in the world. Once he did that he could set him free. God wanted nothing more from you than to crucify you and to recreate you in Jesus. That's all God wants. God doesn't demand anything more from you than that. He was satisfied when he did that, because that dealt with the corruption that sin had brought into the world which prevented him setting loose the Holy Spirit. So God doesn't want anything more from you than that.

So when a person says, "I can't believe that God will forgive me." Do you see it's an utterly irrelevant statement? God has done all to us in Jesus that he wanted to do. He doesn't want to do anything more. God is not some cruel god that wants to grind you into the dust. God wanted only to find a solution to the corruption that had taken place in our personalities. Once he did that that was him finished. From then on -- and that occurred before the foundation of the world -- from then on God's love was continual towards us.

So when a person says, "I can't believe that God has forgiven me," they are rejecting the fact that God allowed his own son to be crucified for us, and that he crucified us with him. And they are opting themselves out of Jesus.

Now loved ones, if we could take another step, when a loved one says they can't believe that God has forgiven them, the trouble is normally not in that area at all. Really! You'll agree that if it is in that area, they are simply blaspheming God. I mean they're simply saying, "No, no, I know the Bible says, 'He has dealt with sin in Jesus.' But I don't think he has. I think he's after me to grind me down and to make me suffer for my sins." So if the trouble is in that area, it's obvious blasphemy.

But loved ones I'd like to tell you something sobering and something sad. A person who has trouble knowing that they're forgiven is having that trouble -- not normally because they don't believe they've been crucified in Christ -- but because their conscience [Underlines 'Conscience' on graphic.] is testifying to their unwillingness to be crucified with Christ. That's true. Their conscience is testifying to their unwillingness to live this kind of God dependent life. [Shows on graphic life from God into the spirit, out through the soul and body to the world.]

And your dear conscience is faithful. And normally if a loved one -- and I testify in my own experience. If I've ever had trouble knowing God's forgiveness, loved ones, it's always been back there at 'conscience', always has been because in some way I was ignoring my conscience's appeal to what had been done to me in Jesus, and therefore to what way I ought to live in this present life.

In other words, what is needed when a man or woman doubts God's forgiveness is normally not more, increasingly more, assurances of forgiveness. Loved ones, I know that sounds hard to you.

Dear ones could I tell you that during the years between when I left the Methodist Church and we started Campus Church, I used to do evangelistic work? That is, I used to go to different churches and preach maybe for a week of evenings. And then those evenings we would have 'altar calls'. And loved ones would come up, sometimes to receive Jesus as Savior, sometimes to be baptized with the Holy Spirit, sometimes to be healed.

Could I say to you that never, never did a person find peace through my simply repeating some verses of assurance of forgiveness? Normally, when they had heard the word preached clearly and came up to the altar, their trouble was sin that they were holding on to. And the moment that sin was revealed to them, and they abided by their conscience, and they exercised their will according to their conscience's direction, they had immediate sense of God's forgiveness flooding their hearts.

Now do you see loved ones, the answer to a bad unclean conscience -- and I plead you to listen to this -- is not more blood. It's not more blood. It's not. Jesus has shed all the blood that needs to be shed. And it's not more blood that you need to plead over your conscience. And with most of

us it isn't simply a misunderstanding of the fact that the blood was presented to God, and that that's what's important, and therefore we don't need to feel it. For most of us it isn't even that problem. For most of us the answer to a bad conscience is a change of will. It's forsake your sin! It's go and sin no more! It's abide by the miracle that God has wrought upon you in Jesus on the cross. And the only way to get a clean conscience is to submit your will 'to' that conscience, knowing that God has so changed your personality that you are able to obey, and you are able to walk in the light that God has given.

And loved ones, that's the Father's word to us. The Father's work on Calvary is to enable us to walk free from sin, not to walk smothered in sin trying to pour more blood upon our consciences, to somehow assuage the guilty conscience. No, the guilty conscience is assuaged by the will that is now free, walking in obedience to what God wants in our lives.

And oh, I can't tell you that too much in my own life and in my own experience. Brothers and sisters after a person has heard John 3:16 once that is all the assurance they need that God is willing to forgive them. Then, they will know the personal application of that forgiveness to their own lives, when they exercise their will according to the conscience. So it's as if there's a wrathful side of God's face and there's a smiling side of God's face. And actually both of them are the sides of the one loving face, because the wrath is there to make us aware that something is not right, that we're not living depending upon him. And the forgiving side is there to assure us that he loves us and approves of the way we're living now.

And so we see the wrathful side while we're searing our conscience. While our will is not in obedience to our conscience all we can see is God's wrath. We can see ourselves going to hell. We can feel the pain of the flames of hell in our own hearts. We have doubt about our salvation. We are afraid of death. And then when we submit our wills to our consciences, suddenly the smiling side of God's face is revealed to us and we know he loves us and we feel the blood applied.

Do you see that loved ones? You don't apply the blood Jesus to your conscience by auto suggestion. You don't apply the blood of Jesus to your conscience by incessant repetition of the promises and of God's mercy. You apply the blood of Jesus to your conscience -- the blessed Holy Spirit does it. He applies it immediately. Immediately you submit your will to him, the blood of Jesus is applied to your conscience -- but loved ones, not through all the tears, not through all the assurances, not through pleading all the promises.

And I sympathize with your dear hearts. I know what you're at. I know what you think. But could I tell you as one who is not old, but is old enough to have dealt with at least hundreds, I would say, at an alter call; loved ones do not come through to an assurance of God's forgiveness through you repeating the promises, helter skelter, one after another. Not all the promises of God's mercy in the world will kill the activity of this precious gift that God has given us, our conscience. Our conscience will firmly, and reliably, and relentlessly testify to any failure on our part to abide in the death that God has brought to us in Jesus and therefore in a blessed resurrection.

Oh, I could tell you many stories, but think just of the dear man in prison. And there was one lady that visited the prison every month and brought little portions of the Bible. And she came to the end of the cell block and had only part of Esther remaining. And there are dear old books in the Bible that hardly mention God's name at all, and certainly talk very little about the gospel. And she thought to herself, "Oh, it just isn't worth giving it to him at all. How will he find the plan of salvation here just through this one little portion?" However, she gave it to him and she went

on home. And she came back two months later to that same area and there was singing coming from the cell at the end. And she looked in and this man's face was glowing. And he thanked her for what she had given him of the Bible because he had found that God was true -- that he forgave a sinner that came to him and confessed his sins and forsook them.

And loved ones, it's just proof that you don't need a whole lot of information to find that the God who made us and loves us is merciful to those who turn from their sins. And it's conscience, and our submitting to conscience that brings that assurance.

Now loved ones, would you just look at some verses that teach the importance of that? And you'll see one first of all, an interesting one, in 1 Peter 3:21. And I hope that one of the things the Holy Spirit will be able to do is make real to us some of these deeper verses of scripture. And, you remember, Peter is talking about the flood and he likens it to baptism. And of course baptism as you know is what the New Testament church did to bring people into the church and to signify that they had been baptized into Jesus' death. "Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him."

Now, do you see what the verse says? "Baptism," and you remember 'baptism' in Romans 6:3 is, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." Now, 'baptism' which corresponds to this 'flood' -- in other words, the last time that the world broke out in violence and corruption against God he just destroyed them all except one family with a flood.

Now in Jesus, and in his death, he destroyed all that ever lived in another 'flood' in Jesus. And that's why baptism into Jesus' death corresponds to the type of 'death with Jesus' that the 'flood' was in Old Testament times. "Baptism, which corresponds to this now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." "Lord, I accept my death with Jesus. I know that that's all you needed to do to deal with the power of sin in my life. And I thank you that you've accepted that death, and that by Jesus' resurrection I know you've accepted it. And I know it's real. And I know therefore, Lord, that you're signifying to the whole world, "This man Jesus died and now I've sent him back to show you that all that he said was happening has come true."

And so we appeal to God in that way and we say, "Lord, we know our conscience can be clear before you, because we ourselves embrace that death with Jesus. We embrace your antidote for sin. We embrace your answer to our corruption. We thank you, and we know that we're clean and clear and can stand before you openly and with full faith." That's it loved ones. That's how you deal with a guilty conscience.

You first of all align your will with what it's telling you to do and then you go before God and say, "Lord, I accept what you have done to me in Jesus. And you can look at my life and see it. My life is there for you to see. It's an open book. Do you see that I accept what you have done to me in Jesus?"

Now loved ones, while you fight that, you'll have a hard time with your conscience. And praise God that you will! Your conscience will never let you live in anything less than the full salvation

that God has wrought for you in Jesus. So be glad of that and respond to your conscience. And please do not try to drown your conscience with precious blood. What more can you ask of our Savior? Do you want more blood? Do you want more blood from that precious life than has already been shed? Do not try to drown your conscience, pleading the blood of Jesus while you're shedding the blood of Jesus.

The only way to deal with a conscience is to bring your will into alignment with it, and then go before God bringing before him -- you don't need to. Your spirit rises up. Your spirit says, "Thank you Lord, for my death and resurrection with Jesus. Thank you." But loved ones, that's the way to deal with it.

Now, there are other verses that emphasize it. If you'd like to look at 1 John 1:7, because some of us say, "Well yes, that's the particular sin my conscience is dealing with at that present, particular time. But, I have many other things that are wrong in my life. Now, what do I do with those?" Well, "But if we walk in the light," that's the light of our conscience, "As he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin." Because you see, there's conscious sin and unconscious sin. And so there are perhaps two million ways in which you are not like God. The Holy Spirit through your conscience has brought to your awareness one or two of them today.

If you submit to your conscience on those, the Holy Spirit cleanses you from all sin in God's eyes. Now, maybe tomorrow the Holy Spirit will bring to your conscience some of those things that the blood of Jesus has covered. But while you continue to walk in the light, the blood of Jesus will cleanse you from all sin, both conscious and unconscious.

Now loved ones, could I point out to you that conscious sin is an emergency? In other words, it isn't the normal walk for a child of God. Conscious sin is not the normal walk for a child of God. See, I think many of us feel, "Oh yes, yes it is. The other poor souls they sin consciously and they have to go to hell for it. But we sin consciously and we just plead the blood of Jesus and that covers it." No!

Would you look at some stark words in Leviticus 4 where God talks about unconscious sin? Leviticus 4:1, "And the LORD said to Moses, 'Say to the people of Israel, if any one sins unwittingly,' you see, unknowingly or unconsciously, "In any of things which the LORD has commanded not to be done, and does any one of them, if it is the anointed priest who sins, thus bringing guilt on the people, then let him offer for the sin which he has committed a young bull without blemish to the LORD for a sin offering." And then explains it so that whole chapter goes on in the same line.

Leviticus 20:1. Here are conscious sins persisted in, "The LORD said to Moses, 'Say to the people of Israel, Any man of the people of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, who gives any of his children to Molech,' that was an image or an idol, "Shall be put to death; the people of the land shall stone him with stones. I myself will set my face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people, because he has given one of his children to Molech, defiling my sanctuary and profaning my holy name."

Verse 6, "If a person turns to mediums and wizards, playing the harlot after them, I will set my face against that person, and will cut him off from among his people." God is talking about conscious sins. There isn't a whole line of sacrifices that are listed here. Verse 10, "If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put

to death. The man who lies with his father's wife has uncovered his father's nakedness; both of them shall be put to death, their blood is upon them."

Verse 17, "If a man takes his sister, a daughter of his father or a daughter of his mother, and sees her nakedness, and she sees his nakedness, it is a shameful thing, and they shall be cut off in the sight of the children of their people." Then in Verse 22, "You shall therefore keep all my statutes and all my ordinances, and do them; that the land where I am bringing you to dwell may not vomit you out."

Loved ones, it's startling to see it. But even in Old Testament times God emphasized that unconscious sin could in some way be dealt with by sacrifices, but there is very little provision made for conscious sin that is persisted in.

Now, do you remember a difficult verse in the end of one of John's epistles? And you might want to look at it. It's 1 John 5:16. And those of you who have been brought up as Catholics will know the doctrine behind these words. "If any one sees his brother committing what is not a mortal sin, he will ask, and God will give him life for those whose sin is not mortal. There is sin which is mortal; I do not say that one is to pray for that. All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin which is not mortal."

I don't know if you've sorted that out. But we should really think about it, as God's children, in a sober way. We should. We should not be light about it. And we should think about it. Now, what is a sin that is not mortal? And what is a sin that is mortal? Mortal means death. What is a sin that will bring death? And here John says, "You shouldn't even pray for that." And you must admit, it does tend to throw you back to Old Testament doesn't it? It tends to throw you back to the conscious, persistent sin of the Old Testament that actually brought death. They actually stoned them.

If they committed adultery they stoned them to death. If they were unclean in some other way they were cut off from God's people. It does make you think of that doesn't it? It makes you wonder is 'mortal sin', is sin that brings death conscious sin that is persisted in? And is what the loved ones in the Catholic Church call venial sin, or a pardonable sin, is that perhaps an unconscious sin, or an involuntary sin which you stumble into and suddenly you know it, "Lord, I'm sorry. I didn't intend that."

And really, we need to think of that because, you must admit loved ones, there is a strong tradition that I believe comes really straight from the pit. There is a strong tradition in evangelical Christianity that you can't do anything else but walk in conscious sin day-after-day and what you do in that case is you plead the blood of Jesus. Except, that nobody who watches such a child of God, and doesn't know God themselves, really believes that that person is a child of God. The world is not bluffed by such living. The world knows that it's hypocritical.

And I would like to testify that whenever I have found myself in conscious sin, I can testify that what I experienced could be described by death, in that I felt God's dark side of his face towards me. And I wonder how many of you could testify the same? I wonder how many of you could say, "Yes, whenever I felt abandoned by God, or whenever I had difficulty getting through to him on more occasions than not I've found that it was because I was persisting in some sin that I knew was wrong and that God had told me in my conscience was wrong."

Well, I'd just ask you to think about it. You, I think, know what conclusion I've come to in my own life. I believe that there's only one way for me to walk safely and that is according to my conscience as it's informed by God's word day-by-day, and to live up to my conscience. And loved ones, the Bible is full of exhortations to have a clean conscience, and to avoid the "searing of our conscience by which many have made shipwreck of their faith." And I don't know how many of you are trying to walk in that, "Praise God! Hallelujah! Shout loud, because my conscience is pretty dirty. And I know I'm not in the center of God's will. But somehow I have to hold on to my salvation."

Loved ones, a salvation that you have to hold on to like that is hardly a salvation. The assurance of God's favor and forgiveness, and love in our hearts is something that comes as the gentle dew from heaven. It's something that comes as the blessed Holy Spirit falls upon us like 'latter rain'. It is not something you have to grab out of the Father's hand. It is God himself approving of your life and saying, "I'm glad my son, my daughter that you've accepted what I've done for you on Calvary. And I'm glad that that's what you want with all your heart."

Now loved ones, don't get off on some self defensive kick trying to say, "Then if we sin once, we're lost." No, no. There are lots of times we involuntarily sin. We do it and we realize, "Oh Lord, I'm sorry." And there's an immediate witnessing in our conscience that the Father knows your sorry, and he knows that you didn't intend it, and he knows it was involuntarily. On the other hand there's even a further step that the Father seems to go with us. We sin something that we're having trouble with. But we hate it with all our beings. We detest it, and we fight against it. And we weep before God. And we determine we will have nothing to do with that thing. And we keep getting up and doing that every time. And the conscience testifies the Father is satisfied with us, and is willing to go with us until we get free from that.

But you know where we have our trouble. When we persist in some sin that we know God has shown us before a thousand times. And we begin to get to the point where we rationalize our failure, and we begin to say, "For me that is not sin. For me, that is alright." That's where death is getting a cold grip on our spirits. And we're beginning to come into the position where we don't even know what is right and what is wrong. That's when you're beginning to get yourself involved in mortal sin.

I don't know if you know what Paul did in that kind of situation. Do you remember the verse where he says, "He committed the man to Satan so that if possible, he might in some way be saved." In other words, he disciplined him right out of the church, because that was the only thing that that man could benefit from at that point. That now the very children of God regarded him as someone who shouldn't be among them. Now loved ones, when you get into that kind of mortal sin, then what you need is the law of God hammering on your conscience until sooner or later that hard ground is broken up, and you begin to respond again to the voice of God within you.

Now loved ones, what I'd just share in closing is some of those verses of warning that the Father gives us in the New Testament. 2 Peter 2:17 has some of those. "These," people who live that way, "These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm; for them the nether gloom of darkness has been reserved. For, uttering loud boasts of folly, they entice with licentious passions of the flesh men who have barely escaped from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption; for whatever overcomes a man, to that he is enslaved. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overpowered, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of

righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, The dog turns back to his own vomit, and the sow is washed only to wallow in the mire.”

And then in 1 Timothy just two verses. 1 Timothy 1:19, you remember Paul is talking about some people who have walked in rebellion against their conscience, urging Timothy to walk... “Holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting conscience, certain persons have made shipwreck of their faith, among them Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.” “By rejecting conscience.” And 1 Timothy 4:2, “Through the pretensions of liars whose consciences are seared.”

And loved ones, I share this with you because the conscience testifies to that great work on the cross. And the conscience testifies to what God has done to you in Jesus. And that you are therefore, free to live according to God’s commandments. And your conscience will always pull you back to that. And your conscience, as we’ll see next Sunday, is something that is very personal to you. It’s something that you alone can hear. And we all have to respect each other’s consciences. And there’s no place for us condemning each other because of what we have seen or heard in our conscience, or expecting somebody else to live up to the level of our conscience. We are each one personally responsible for what God is showing us.

But could I just share this with you again? If you swear, and your conscience has told you that that is sin, you don’t have too long to stop that. Really! And if you are promiscuous sexually and your conscience has convicted you about it, you don’t have too long to stop it, because you either have to rationalize that or you have to stop doing it. If your conscience is troubling you about some dishonesty you have with your parents or with someone else, you either submit your will to your conscience, or you set a course towards those who are described in these letters to Timothy.

But loved ones, it is as serious as that. The cross of Jesus is not there to try to cover up a bad conscience. The cross of Jesus is there to enable us to exercise our wills in obedience to our conscience, because that’s the only thing that will ever satisfy our conscience. The cross of Jesus is not there to satisfy our conscience. The cross of Jesus is there to give us the liberty from the power of sin to walk in obedience to our conscience.

And if you say to me, “Well, no isn’t the blood of Jesus there to be presented to God for all the ways in which we aren’t like God?” Certainly, yes it is that’s right. The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin so that it makes up for the million short comings and the million ‘falling shorts’ that we have of God. So in a real way the blood of Jesus is presented to God and satisfies God in place of all the countless unknown imperfections in us. But those aren’t the ones that our conscious deals with. Our consciences deal with the ones that we know about. And those we are responsible for.

So loved ones, could I plead with you that there will be no revival among us of scriptural Christianity until we men and women, who believe in Jesus’ death for us, begin to live in the victory of that death and resurrection, and begin to live as actually the old people lived. Do you know that? The old people lived this way. Our grandparents, and our great grandparents, they knew nothing of this ‘double think’ talk. They didn’t. They went to revival meeting and they forsook their sin, because they knew that God forgave those who turned from their sin, not those who wanted to continue in their sin and plead the blood of Jesus to cover those sins.

And loved ones, this has always been real Christianity. And I just really feel bad for so many of us here who have heard so much of the other diluted stuff. But do you see that if what I say tonight is not true, then do you see that heaven will be hell? Do you see that heaven will be hell? It will be filled with bluffers, filled with bluffers who sin like mad, who hate each other, who are envious and jealous, and plead the blood of Jesus to get them accepted by their Father. Well, heaven would be hell. And we know that heaven will be a place of light and glory, a place where God himself is loved, and where we will see his glory and reflect his glory. And it will be that because of what Jesus has wrought in our lives tonight.

Just one last thing for us 'TV generation'. You know fine well that you can stop sinning. You know that. That's bluff that you can't stop sinning. We are the generation who saw the guy that opposed Perry Mason [an attorney in a TV series portrayed by Raymond Burr] for years and always dealt with the hostile witnesses who were always his friends. And we know that dear guy. [Raymond Burr] And we know that he smoked right up until the point he saw death staring him in the face. And then he stopped it and he went on TV speaking against smoking.

You and I know fine well we can stop sinning when it comes down to the wire. And you have examples in your own life. And all of us are not bluffed by the whole diet game. We know that. We know we play with the diet game while we don't really think we have to diet. But the moment we see death staring us in the face, we diet. Or we control our food intake. In other words, most of us in this room know fine well you can stop sinning if you want to. And we've just been encouraged by this permissive generation, 'self generation - kind of attitude' to think that we would be doing untold damage to our 'poor little wills' to ever force them to do something they didn't want to do.

And yet we know it's bluff. We know that finally we have to do certain things that aren't easy to do, but our wills are capable of them. Why? Because our blessed Father did this work on Calvary, [On visual shows the cross through our reversed personality.] and freed us from enslavement to the body of sin, so that we can obey him. And so you can, loved ones. And you're looking at a 'miserable creature' that fought the things that you fought: pride, uncleanness, lust -- I fought them for years. And I know what you're saying. And I argued the same way as you, but I kept barking my shins on the words of God that implied to me that he expected me to stop sinning, and that that's why Jesus had died.

And I used to plead, you know, his mercy for the woman caught in adultery. And I used to plead, "Oh, but he said, 'Any of you who condemn her, throw the first stone.' And then they all walked away. And then he said, 'Neither do I condemn you.'" And I was sharing that with a dear brother who was trying to get me to see truth and I said, "There, there it is." And he said, "Yeah, but look at the next verse, 'Go and sin no more.'" And God convicted my heart and showed me, yes our Father loves us and has done everything needed to save us and now it's up to us to live in the light of that and to exercise our wills according to our consciences and to keep those consciences clean.

And loved ones, that's the only way to be happy in Jesus. "Trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey." And that dear gospel is so simple, you know. And if you say to me, "Oh, why am I having trouble getting forgiveness?" Because, you won't obey! That's it. That's it. I know you're a highly complex person. I know you're a deeply esoteric individual. I know also that you're a clever, twentieth century bluffer, but it's still true that if you obey God, if you repent and you turn from your sin, the shining face of God comes upon you, and his favor comes upon your life. And that's the testimony of all of us who believe in this precious blood of Jesus.

I pray that it will be your experience tonight and that you won't spend any more time in an abyss, that you won't spend time trying to climb out of a pit that you've dug with your own disobedient will, but that you'll simply submit your will to your conscience and know the favor of God in your life. I know that that's what you'll experience. Should all the demons in hell oppose you, God is faithful. God will witness his favor and forgiveness to your life, if you submit your will to your conscience.

Let us pray. Dear Father, we thank you for the unity of scripture. We thank you Lord because we know we need to be corralled. We know these wills of ours are so rebellious, and Satan is such a clever and deceptive foe. That unless you corral us with verse upon verse and line upon line, we will try some how to escape your love. And so Father we thank you for the testimony of scripture that is so plain, that even in Old Testament days you expected men and woman to walk above conscience sin.

And we thank you that that's your will for us. That whatever conflict may be within, whatever battle there may be against inward sin, Lord you expect us to walk in obedience outwardly. And we thank you that because of Jesus' death we can also be freed from inward sin, so that we can come to the point where we do not even feel the sin within, and can discern between temptation and the movements that once signified our own rebellious self. Lord we thank you for that.

I pray Lord, that all these deep things will be distributed by your Holy Spirit. I know that you alone can do that, Holy Spirit. I plead with you now that you calm each dear heart here that may be a little upset about things, and show them that no man can finally preach the truth in balance, and beauty, and perfection, but that you Holy Spirit will testify to what is true, and that if each one of us seek you with all our hearts tonight, you will show us the truth in a way that we are able and ready to accept. We thank you for that.

And now we commit ourselves Lord Jesus to being followers that you're proud of and glad to have -- men and woman who are ready to serve and ready to go beyond the first principles of Christianity, and into the deeper things of glorifying you and expressing you to your world.

Now the grace of our Lord Jesus, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us throughout this night and bring us all the brightness and joy of his presence in the morning. Amen.

??

??

??

??