TOPIC:  Conscience, Christian Living

The Power of A Clear Conscience
Hebrews 10:19-22 (NKJV)

Please turn with me in your Bibles to our scripture text in the Book of Hebrews, chapter ten. And let's read verses 19-22.

HEBREWS 10:19-22 (NKJV)

19 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,

20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh,

21 and having a High Priest over the house of God,

22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

PRAYER

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INTRODUCTION

ILLUSTRATION

Is it just me, or does anyone else find it strange that you can remember something that happened when you were a kid, but you can't remember what you had for lunch yesterday?

As I was preparing this sermon, I remembered something that happened to me 53 years ago when I was a first grader at Callands School in Callands, Virginia.
One afternoon during recess, I noticed some of the older students going over to a coke machine and I saw them put some coins in the slot and then pull a bottle of ice cold Coca Cola out of the machine. I thought to myself, “I sure would like to have a bottle of ice cold Coca Cola;” so I waited until everyone walked away from the machine before I made my approach.

Imagine if you will this scronnie little first grader looking up at that big Coke machine. The coin slot is barely within my reach. I dig into my pocket and pulled out all the change I had, a nickle and four pennies. I didn't know how much a bottle of ice cold Coca Cola cost, but I was pretty sure a nickle and four pennies would be enough. And so stand up on my tip toes, and one by one I put each of the coins in the coin slot.

Then I opened the glass door and reached in to pull out my bottle of coke, and the bottle wouldn’t come out. And I pulled and I pulled with all the might my scronnie little six year old body could muster, and I still couldn’t get the bottle of COKE to come out. All the sudden this terrible thought came to mind: “I have broken the machine.”

Quickly I looked around to see if anyone had seen me putting coins in the machine. Feeling like a criminal who had gotten away with a crime I quickly distanced myself from the COKE machine and went to hide behind a tree.

I remember I didn’t sleep “a wink” that night because my conscience was bothering me so much. I was worried I was going to get kicked out of school or that I might have to buy a new COKE machine to replace the one I broke. I wondered if my mom and dad would come visit me in prison. Oh it was terrible! My conscience was eating at me like you wouldn't believe.

Imagine my relief the next day at recess when I saw some of the older students plopping coins in the COKE machine and pulling out their bottles of ice cold COCA COLA.

I hadn’t broke the machine after all! I wasn’t a criminal! I was just a scronnie little first grader who didn’t know a bottle of COKE was a dime, not a nickel and four pennies.
Just what is a “conscience?” When you break the word down you see the prefix “con” means “with,” and the word “science” means “knowledge.” So “conscience” means “with knowledge.”

The conscience is our internal knowledge of our own thoughts and actions. Our conscience is that part of us which helps us discern right from wrong and good from evil.

Every human being has “a conscience.” Our conscience goes with us every where we go. You take your conscience with you to work every day and you take it to bed with you every night. There is no where you can go to escape your own conscience.

Don’t ever underestimate THE POWER OF YOUR CONSCIENCE! A guilty conscience will haunt you......and hound you......and potentially destroy you. The conscience never bothers us before we do wrong, but after we do wrong it won’t leave us alone. Our conscience will “eat at us” and “gnaw on us,” especially at night when we are alone with our thoughts.

A guilty conscience will rob you of confidence to come before GOD in prayer. A guilty conscience will take you out of sweet fellowship with GOD. A guilty conscience will keep you from reaching your God-given potential. And a guilty conscience will hinder you from sharing your faith with others for fear they will discover all your imperfections.

And so I’m asking you Christian, is your conscience clear before God this morning? Do you have the peace and joy that comes from having a clear conscience before God?

As we consider this issue of The Power of A Clear Conscience there are three thoughts I would have you to consider.
First of all, let's consider......

I.  Where Did The Conscience Originate?

1. To answer that question we need to go back to the very beginning. Please turn with me in your Bibles to Genesis chapter three.

   Genesis 3:1-5 (NKJV)

   1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden’?”

   2 And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden;

   3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’”

   4 Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die.

   5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

2. Adam and Eve had the most perfect environment any human beings have ever known on earth. They had all the natural beauty of a paradise made by God Himself. They had all the food they would ever want or need. They had perfect fellowship with GOD HIMSELF!
3. Eve didn't have to worry if she was the “perfect woman” because there were no beautiful super models to compare herself to. And she didn't lie in bed at night wondering if she had married “the right man,” because Adam was the right man, since he was the only man.

4. But then along comes the serpent who engages Eve in a dialogue about “the forbidden fruit.” The serpent convinced Eve that God was holding out on them by forbidding them to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

   He told Eve, “You will be like God. You will know good and evil. You will know what's best for your life; you'll be the god of your own life. Go ahead, EAT!”

5. And we know, Eve did eat of the forbidden fruit, while Adam stood right there and watched her do it! By abdicating his role as the head of his home, Adam's sin was just as grievous, if not more so than Eve's.

6. By disobeying GOD, Adam and Eve suddenly found themselves in a situation they had never been in before. **Verse 7 says, “Then the eyes of both of them were opened.”**
7. That means for the very first time man realized he had a conscience. GOD had created man with an internal “warning system” to sound the alarm any time man violates GOD'S laws and commands. Adam and Eve's conscience had just been awakened for the first time.

Secondly, let's consider ....

II. How Does Our Conscience Work?

Let's continue on to verses 7-11

7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

9 Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, “Where are you?”

10 So he said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.”

11 And He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?”

1. In these verses we see several ways our conscience works on us when we sin against GOD.

(A) First of all, our conscience causes us to feel **SHAME**.

Verse 7 “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked........”
How did Adam and Eve know they were naked? Did a bird sitting in a nearby tree cover his eyes with his wings and sqwawk, "You guys are naked, you guys are naked, bwwawk? No, their conscience told them they were naked. Remember before they sinned, Genesis 1:25 tells us, “They were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.”

But sin changed all that! Sin awakened their consciences to the “shamefulness” of what they had done and they saw themselves differently than before they sinned.

Doesn’t our conscience do the same? Doesn’t our conscience cause us to see ourselves differently? Is there anyone here this morning who can look at yourself in the mirror and truthfully say, “I have never done anything shameful?” Or, “I have never had a sinful thought or spoken a sinful word?”

**ILLUSTRATION:** The late J. Vernon McGee, once told his congregation in Los Angeles, “If you knew my heart like I know my heart, you would never even listen to me.” But before you start running towards the exits let me also say, “If I knew you, like you know you, I wouldn’t even be talking to you.”

(B) But not only does our conscience cause us to feel shame, our conscience also causes us to **BLAME.** Adam blamed Eve, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.” (verse 12)
Then in verse 13, Eve said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” And as for the serpent, “Well, let's just say he didn't have a leg to stand on.”

Isn’t that what we do when our conscience is eating at us for some wrong we have done? We find someone else to blame. **We search for “fig leaves” to cover ourselves.**

“*Well if my husband had just paid more attention to me.*”

“*Well if my wife had shown me a little love and respect.*”

“*Well if my parents had raised me the way they did.*”

Our conscience convicts us so much that we try to pass the blame for our shameful behavior on to someone else.

**Our conscience causes us to feel SHAME.**
**Our conscience causes us to BLAME.**

(C) And our conscience causes us to feel PAIN.

**Genesis 3:16-19 (NKJV)**

16 To the woman He said: “I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you.”

17 Then to Adam He said, “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’: “Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life.

18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field.

19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, And to dust you shall return.”
Adam and Eve didn’t fully realize at the time, just what God meant when He said, “In the day you eat from the forbidden tree you shall surely die.”

They didn’t even know what death was. They had never seen the death of anything; not a plant, not an animal, not even an insect. They didn’t realize that “death” meant the death of their dream to live forever in the Garden paradise, as they were banished from the Garden. They didn’t realize that “death” meant that one day one of their sons would murder their other other son. They didn’t realize that “death” meant that as the result of their sin that sin.....sickness......disease.......pain......sorrow......and death would be unleashed upon every human being who came after them.

But you see, their conscience reminded them of all that pain. And likewise, our conscience does the same thing. Our conscience reminds us: You can't get back your lost virginity! You can't back that unwanted baby you aborted! You can't get back all those years lost to alcohol or drugs! You can't back that marriage that was destroyed.

Oh, how our consciences remind us of ALL THE PAINFUL CONSEQUENCES of our sins!

Does this mean we are hopelessly banished to a life of guilt and shame and there's nothing we can ever do to clear our conscience of all the haunting memories of our sinful failures? Absolutely not!
Let's consider.....

III. How We Can Have A Clear Conscience

**Genesis 3:21 (NKJV)** Also for Adam and his wife the LORD GOD made tunics of skin, and clothed them.

1. Like me, many of you have read that verse countless times and gave little thought to it. At face-value it seems that what GOD did here was an act of modesty. He made skins and clothed them so they could “ditch” those shameful “fig leaves” they had covered themselves in.

2. But there is more to this verse than meets the eye. Listen carefully! **There is NO CHEAP covering for sin!** God made clothes of skin for Adam and Eve to cover their nakedness. This meant there had to be the shedding of blood and the sacrifice of a life in order to cover their shameful nakedness. Of course this was the first of the countless animals sacrifices we read about in the Old Testament. But of course these animal sacrifices pointed towards the greatest sacrifice of all, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, “the spotless Lamb of God.”
3. This brings us right back to where we started in **Hebrews 10:19-22**. Let me read it again, and perhaps the meaning of these verses will be much clearer now.

**HEBREWS 10:19-22 (NKJV)**

19 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,

20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh,

21 and having a High Priest over the house of God,

22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

4. Brothers and sisters, there is only one way you and I can have a clear conscience before GOD and that is to bring our sins under the precious cleansing blood of Jesus Christ.

5. You can't have a clear conscience by covering yourself with “the fig leaves” of hypocrisy or self-righteousness or good deeds or religion. You can only have a clear conscience by being clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, the perfect Lamb of God.

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CONCLUSION

If you have ever driven to Elizabeth City (NC) on U.S. Highway 17 I'm sure you have seen this billboard. Its an advertisement for a company that installs “Invisible Fences.”

An “invisible fence” is an electric wire buried underground around the perimeter of the customer's yard to keep a pet dog confined to a certain boundary line. A shock collar is placed around the dog's neck and anytime he gets close to that “invisible fence” he will feel an electric shock that reminds him where the boundary line is.

Think of your “conscience” as an “invisible fence” GOD has created within your heart. Your conscience is to remind you where GOD’S “boundary line” is; and any time you or I cross that boundary, our heart feels “the shock of guilt and shame.”

Brothers and sisters, if your conscience is feeling “the shock” of guilt and shame over and over again, GOD is reminding you to get your life back within the boundary of His will.

Don’t ever forget, “There is no softer pillow to lay one's head on at night than a clear conscience before God.”