

3: GUILT – HOW DO I GET A CLEAR CONSCIENCE?

List as many underlying reasons as you can...

Why do you sometimes feel guilty?

Why do you sometimes *not* feel guilty?

RECOMMENDED

- *The art of turning from sin to Christ for a joyfully clear conscience*, Kevin DeYoung
- *A personal liturgy of confession*, David Powlison

1. YOUR CONSCIENCE MATTERS!

(a) Its significance: it is a very precious thing to have a clear conscience

Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms (1521): "I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience."

2 Corinthians 1:12 "For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you. "

Acts 23:1 "And looking intently at the council, Paul said, "Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day.""

Romans 9:1 "I am speaking the truth in Christ-- I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit--"

2 Timothy 1:3 "I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day."

Hebrews 13:18 "Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things."

(b) What is your conscience?

- Moral faculty in human beings that assesses what is good and what is bad.

(c) How does your conscience work?

Romans 2:14 “For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them”

- the Spirit’s prosecution AND defence attorney

ACCUSE: Uses God’s law in our lives... to remind us of our offences... leading to conviction, repentance and forgiveness. (E.g. David and Nathan, 2 Sam. 11-12).

EXCUSE: Uses God’s law in our lives... to assure us that we are not guilty

- The Holy Spirit, through His Word, works in a Christian’s conscience to produce a life of godliness and peace.

2. WHY DOES YOUR CONSCIENCE GO WRONG?

(Or why does Pinocchio turn into a donkey...)

(a) The evil conscience / guilty conscience

Hebrews 10:22 “let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience & our bodies washed with pure water.”

- Real wrongdoing... which has not been dealt with... prompted by Spirit/Bible... know in your gut that you’re wrong
- DANGER: push away the Spirit’s prompting

(b) The seared conscience

1 Timothy 4:2 “through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared,”

- Cauterised / wounded / nerve damage
- Persist in sin... start to feel better about it... normalised

(c) The weak conscience

1 Corinthians 8:7 “However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled”

- Feel guilty about things that are not against God’s law
- Sinning against your conscience (e.g. Rom. 14:23)
- Stumbling blocks
- Inform your conscience

(d) The tender conscience (Satan's work...)

Zechariah 3:1 "Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him"

- The accuser: wants us to feel unforgiveable.

3. THE WAY TO A CLEAR CONSCIENCE See DeYoung, pages 32ff

(a) Turn from sin

(b) Turn to Christ

4. PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE / TURNING IT INTO PRAYER

Almighty and most merciful Father,

Tell God what He is like – and what difference that makes in your situation.

I have erred and strayed from your ways like lost sheep.

Specifically and honestly record how you have strayed.

I have followed too much the devices and desires of my own heart.

Confess your motivations/excuses/"reasons" for your sins.

I have offended against your holy law.

Which of God's laws have you broken.

I have left undone those things which I ought to have done, and I have done those things which I ought not to have done. And there is no health in me.

Pray that you'd feel the weight of your sin.

But you, O Lord, have mercy upon me, miserable offender. Spare me, O God, I who confess my faults. Restore me when I turn to you according to your promises that you have declared to me in Christ Jesus, my Lord.

Through the Gospel he makes us clean! Now consider these (or other) Gospel promises: read them aloud... think about what they mean for you... pray that you would believe/feel them to be true for you.

Exodus 34:6-7, Psalm 25:11, 2 Cor. 1:20

Hebrews 4:16, 2 Cor. 5:15, Phil. 1:6

He pardons and absolves all those who truly repent.

He truly forgives and sets us free. When we turn to Him we find Him. So, come to God: imagine being washed clean of your sins. Seek the help of other brothers/sisters to walk with Christ. Come to the Lord's Table. Give thanks to God.