Sermon Notes

 F.  The New Testament Concept of Conscience is more Individual in Nature and Involves Three Major Truths.

 1)  First, your Conscience is a God-given Capacity for Human Beings to Exercise Self Evaluation.

 -  Paul refers several times to his Own Conscience being “good” or “clear” (Acts 23:1; 24:16; 1 Corinthians 4:4).

 -  Paul examined his Own Words and Deeds and found them to be in Accordance with his Morals and Value System, which were, of course, Based on God’s Standards.

 -  His conscience verified the integrity of his heart.

 NOTE: Mose, David and Paul were all murders and yet

   they had a Clean Conscience through

   Forgiveness and Reconciliation to God

 2)  Second, the New Testament portrays the conscience as a witness to something.

 -  Paul says that the Gentiles have Consciences that Bear Witness to the Presence of the Law of God Written on their Hearts, even though they did Not have the Mosaic Law (Romans 2:14-15).

 -  Paul also appeals to his Own Conscience as a Witness that he Speaks the Truth (Romans 9:1) and that he has Conducted himself in Holiness and Sincerity in his Dealings with men

 (2 Corinthians 1:12).

 -  He also says that his Conscience tells him his Actions are Apparent to Both God and the Witness of Other Men’s Consciences (2 Corinthians 5:11).

 3)  Third, the conscience is a servant of the individual’s value system.

 -  An Immature or Weak Value System produces a Weak Conscience, while a Fully Informed Value System produces a Strong Sense of Right and Wrong.

 -  In the Christian life, one’s conscience can be driven by an inadequate understanding of scriptural truths and can produce feelings of guilt and shame disproportionate to the issues at hand.

 -  Therefore, Maturing in the Faith Strengthens the Conscience.

 4)  This last function of the Conscience is what Paul addresses in his Instructions regarding Eating Food sacrificed to idols.

 -  He makes the case that, since idols are not real gods, it makes no difference if food has been sacrificed to them or not.

 -  But some in the Corinthian church were weak in their understanding and believed that such gods really existed.

 -  These Immature Believers were horrified at the thought of eating food sacrificed to the gods, because their Consciences were Informed by Erroneous Prejudices and Superstitious Views.

 -  Therefore, Paul encourages those More Mature in their Understanding Not to exercise their Freedom to Eat if it would cause the Conscience of their Weaker Brothers to Condemn their Actions.

 -  The lesson here is that, if Our Conscience is Clear because of Mature Faith and Understanding, we are Not to Cause those with Weaker Consciences to Stumble by Exercising the Freedom

   that comes with a Stronger Conscience.

 G.  Another reference to a Conscience in the New Testament is to a Conscience that is “Seared” or Rendered Insensitive as though it had been Cauterized with a Hot Iron  (1 Timothy 4:1-2).

 1)  If a Conscience is Hardened and Calloused, Then it can No longer Feeling Anything.

 2)  A person with a Seared Conscience No Longer Listens to its Promptings, and he can Sin with Abandon, He can Delude Himself into Thinking that All is Well with his Soul, and Treat others Insensitively and Without Compassion.

 3)  As Christians, we are to keep our Consciences Clear by Obeying God and keeping our Relationship with Him in Good Standing.

 4)  We do this by the Application of His Word, Which Renews and Softens our Hearts.

 5)  Thus We Consider those whose Consciences are Weak, by treating them with Christian Love and Compassion.

4.  So, how can I get a Clear Conscience?

 A.  As we have noted before, your Conscience can be defined as “An Inner Feeling that Acts as a Guide to the Rightness or Wrongness of One’s Behavior.”

 B.  For those with a Biblical Worldview, the Conscience is the Part of the Human Soul that is Most Like God (Genesis 3:22).

 1)  Those who Disbelieve God have a Difficult Time Explaining the Existence of the Human Conscience.

 2)  Evolution cannot account for this facet of the human spirit, which cannot be explained by a “Survival of the Fittest” Mentality.

 C.  The Conscience of Man was Awakened when Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s Command and ate from the Tree  of the Knowledge of Good and Evil  (Genesis 3:6).

 1)  Before that, they had Known only Good.

 2)  The word “knowing” in Genesis 3:5 is the same word used elsewhere to describe Sexual Intimacy (Genesis 4:17; 1 Samuel 1:19).

 3)  When we choose to “know” Evil by Intimate Experience, our Consciences are Violated and Emotional Discomfort takes over.

 4)  Whether we Acknowledge God or not,  we were Created to have Fellowship with Him.

 5)  When we do Wrong, we are at Odds with our Created Purpose, and that Feeling is Deeply Disturbing.

 D.  Adam and Eve had offended God, and Shame entered into the equation.

 1)  Yet it was God Himself who Provided the Solution to their Violated Consciences.

 2)  He Slaughtered an Innocent Animal to Cover their Nakedness (Genesis 3:21).

 3)  This was a Foreshadowing of God’s Intended Plan to Cover the Sin of All Mankind.

 E.  Humans have tried a Variety of Things to Clear their Consciences, from Charity Work to Self-Mutilation.

 1)  History is full of examples of Mankind’s Efforts to Appease his Conscience, but Nothing Works.

 2)  So he often Turns to Other Means of Drowning Out that Inner Voice that Declares him Guilty.

 3)  Addictions, immorality, violence, and greed are often deeply rooted in the fertile soil of a guilty conscience.

 F.  However, since All Sin is Ultimately a Sin against God, only God can Redeem a Violated Conscience.

 1)  Just as He did in the Garden of Eden, God provides us a covering through the sacrifice of something perfect and blameless (Exodus 12:5; Leviticus 9:3; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

 2)  God sent His own Son, Jesus, into the world for the purpose of being the Final, Perfect Sacrifice for the Sins of the Whole World (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2).

 3)  When Jesus went to the Cross, He took upon Himself Every Sin we would Ever Commit.

 4)  Every Violated Conscience, Every Sinful Thought, and Every Evil Act was Placed Upon Him (1 Peter 2:24).

 5)  All the Righteous Wrath that God has for Our Sin was Poured out on His own Son (Isaiah 53:6; John 3:36).

 6)  Just as an Innocent Animal was sacrificed to cover Adam’s Sin, so the Perfect Son was Sacrificed to cover Ours.

 7)  God Himself chose to make us Right with Him and Pronounce Us Forgiven.

 G.  We can have our Consciences Cleansed when we Bring our Sin, our Failures, and our Miserable Attempts to appease God to the Foot of the Cross.

 1)  The Atonement of Christ Forgives our Sin and Cleanses our Conscience (Hebrews 10:22).

 2)  We acknowledge our Inability to Cleanse our Own Hearts and ask Him to Do It for us.

 3)  We trust that Jesus’ Death and Resurrection are Sufficient to Pay the Price we Owe God.

 4)  When we Accept Jesus’ Payment for our Personal Sins, God Promises to Cast our sins Away from us “as far as the east is from the west” (Psalm 103:12; Hebrews 8:12).

 H.  In Christ, we are Freed from the Stranglehold of Sin. (Dead to Sin)

 1)  We are Set Free to Pursue Righteousness and Purity and become the Men and Women God created us to be (Romans 6:18).

 2)  As Followers of Christ, we will Still Commit Occasional Sins.

 3)  But, even then, God Provides a Way for us to have our Consciences Cleared.  (Daily Prayer/Bible Reading)

 4)  1 John 1:9 says that, “If we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

 5)  Often, with that Confession, we must Make Things Right with the Ones we have offended.

 6)  We can take that step with the People we have Hurt, knowing that God has Already Forgiven us.

 I.  Our Consciences can Remain Clear as we Continually Confess our sin to God and Trust that the Blood of Jesus is Sufficient to Make us Right with Him.

 1)  We continue to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33).

 2)  We trust that, in spite of our imperfections, God delights in us and in His transforming work in our lives (Philippians 2:13; Romans 8:29).

 3)  Jesus said, “So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36).

 4)  We live with a Clear Conscience by refusing to Wallow in the Failures that God has Forgiven.

 5)  We stand Confident in His Promise that, “if God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31).