

Our State of Theology – 9f(1)

The Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit in Sanctification and Our Conscience

Hebrews 5:12–14 (NIV84)

¹²In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!

¹³Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.

¹⁴But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves **to distinguish good from evil.**

- What is it within us that needs to be *trained to distinguish good from evil*?

Jeremiah 17:5–10 (NIV84)

⁵This is what the LORD says: "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD.

⁶He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives.

⁷"But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him.

⁸He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."

⁹The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

¹⁰"**I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve.**"

- *Heart* = לב **leḇ**: usually refers to some aspect of the immaterial inner self or being since the heart is considered to be **the seat of one's inner nature** as well as one of its components.¹
- When it comes to sin, there are two kinds:
 - Sins of *action*
 - Sins of *the mind*
- Sins of action are obvious. They are made evident by what someone does. Sins of action have outside deterrents.
 - Other people.* They keep you from doing wrong even though you may have wanted to.
- Sins of the mind are not obvious. Not always made

evident by someone's action.

They have no outside deterrent. The only deterrent to the sins of the mind is your conscience.

No outside influence can detect or deter a sin of the mind. They can only recognize the sin, when it becomes an action displayed by an act or through spoken words.

- **Your conscience, however, is a witness to every sin that you commit.**
- **Conscience is triggered when we sin.** It is triggered by the highest law known in our hearts and since even pagan people have the law of God written within them so they know what is right and wrong, their conscience afflicts them with guilt.²

Matthew 5:21–22, 27-28 (NIV84)

²¹"**You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'**

²²**But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.**

²⁷"**You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.'**

²⁸**But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her **in his heart.****

- The Pharisees based their righteousness on their ability to avoid *sins of action*. Jesus addressed their *false piety* when he spoke of the condition of their hearts.
- A person can still be in sin, if they did not commit any sins of action but held those sins in their minds.
- Many Christians emphasize holiness and their attempt to please God based on their ability to keep God's *rules*. "Don't, don't, don't..."
 - These were attempts to avoid *sins of action: external deeds* that were visible to others.
 - This is called legalism, which the Pharisees were guilty of.

1 Samuel 16:7 (NIV84)

⁷But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man

¹ Warren Baker and Eugene E. Carpenter, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2003), 536.

² John F. MacArthur Jr., *John MacArthur Sermon Archive* (Panorama City, CA: Grace to You, 2014).

looks at the outward appearance, but **the LORD looks at the heart.**"

Job 27:6 (HCSB)

⁶I will cling to my righteousness and never let it go. My conscience (*heart*, קַיִן) will not accuse me as long as I live!

- *Conscience* (*Heart*, קַיִן) = לֵבָב *lēbāb*: A masculine noun meaning heart, mind, inner person. The primary usage of this word describes **the entire disposition of the inner person that God can discern.**³
- *Heart* is often equated with *conscience*.
In the absence of a specific word for “*conscience*,” the word “*heart*” (לֵב, *lev*) is used to connote **self-awareness**, including moral emotions and judgments. The heart is viewed as the core of the person and functions as the seat of feelings such as remorse or obligation.⁴

Colossians 2:13–23 (NIV84)

¹³When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins,

¹⁴having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

¹⁵And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

¹⁶Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day.

¹⁷These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

¹⁸Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions.

¹⁹He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

²⁰Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules:

²¹“Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”?

³ Warren Baker and Eugene E. Carpenter, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2003), 537.

⁴ Paul A. Hartog, “*Conscience*,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

²²These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings.

²³Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but **they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.**

- When God made us alive with Christ (*regeneration*), he canceled *the written code* or all the laws that stood opposed to us.
Those laws showed man what sin was. The law defined *right* and *wrong*. They were *opposed to us*, because we, in the flesh, were not able to keep them and ultimately be free from the wrath of God.
Under the law and without the Holy Spirit, we did not have the ability to please God through the keeping of the law.
- God took those requirements away, when Jesus Christ kept every one of them and had them nailed to the cross by His crucifixion.
- Jesus Christ disarmed Satan and his cohorts, who held the power of death, so that we do not have to fear death or the consequences of not being able to keep the law.
That’s why vs. 16-23 tell us to not let the legalists judge you because you don’t regard a certain day as holy.
- Vss. 20-21 asks the Christian, “Why are you following all these legalistic rules, if through Jesus Christ you died to them?”
- V.23, The keeping of all these legalistic rules have an *appearance* of wisdom, with all its external harsh treatment of the body, but they do not change you on the inside.
You are *conformed* to a legalistic righteousness on the outside, but on the inside your sensual desires have not been squelched.
- **The legalistic rules, through the fear of the consequences of breaking them, kept a person from committing *sins of action*, but they did not stop one from committing *sins of the mind*.**
It did not clear the sinner’s conscience.

Hebrews 9:6–14 (NIV84)

⁶When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry.

⁷But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance.

⁸The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing.

⁹This is an illustration (*parabole*, GK.) for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered **were not able to clear the conscience** of the worshiper.

¹⁰They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—**external regulations** applying until the time of the new order.

¹¹When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation.

¹²He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.

¹³The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are **outwardly clean**.

¹⁴How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who **through the eternal Spirit** offered himself unblemished to God, **cleanse our consciences** from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

- The Tabernacle and the old covenant focused on the externals rather than the heart. There was no inner cleansing, only the *purifying of the flesh*. (Hebrews 9:13) Sacrifices had to be repeated over and over and the **guilt and shame remained**.⁵
- The ancient ritual had one major flaw. It did not cleanse sin of the heart.
 - The ritual could cleanse a man's body and, at the same time, leave his heart black with brooding and anxiety.
 - It did not lift the load of guilt from his conscience.
 - It left the sinner depressed and exhausted.
- When Christ forgives, our energy is no longer drained off by carrying an **enormous burden of past guilt**.⁶

Hebrews 10:11–25 (NIV84)

¹¹Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

⁵ Glen Spencer Jr., *Hebrews: Looking unto Jesus*, Expository Pulpit Series (WORDsearch, 2011), 178.

⁶ Charles A. Trentham, "Hebrews." in *Hebrews–Revelation*, ed. Clifton J. Allen, Broadman Bible Commentary (Broadman Press, 1972), 66–67.

¹²But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.

¹³Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool,

¹⁴because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

¹⁵The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says:

¹⁶"This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds."

¹⁷Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more."

¹⁸And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.

¹⁹Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus,

²⁰by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body,

²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God,

²²let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, **having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience** and having our bodies washed with pure water.

²³Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

²⁴And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

²⁵Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

- The "clean conscience" and "washed heart" were considered parts of a person that **represented the entire person**.⁷

Through the Lord Jesus Christ, a believer is cleansed "inside and out."

- When you are free from a guilty conscience, you can approach God in the Holy of Holies with a confidence, assurance, and without fear that you have sin that would annihilate you in His presence.

This *fearlessness* or *confidence* can only *truly* be granted to the regenerated person. *Truly* because there are some who have a false confidence and believe they are right with God, when, in fact, they

⁷ Herbert W. Bateman IV and Steven W. Smith, *Hebrews: A Commentary for Biblical Preaching and Teaching*, ed. Herbert W. Bateman IV, Kerux Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Ministry, 2021), 317.

are not.

Matthew 7:21-23 (NIV84)

²¹"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

²²Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?'

²³Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

1 John 3:11–24 (NIV84)

¹¹This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another.

¹²Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous.

¹³Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you.

¹⁴We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death.

¹⁵Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.

¹⁶This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. [*And how do we do that? The following verses show us how.*]

¹⁷If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?

¹⁸Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

¹⁹This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

²¹Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God

²²and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.

²³And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.

²⁴Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

- The work of the Holy Spirit at work in the life of a believer reveals where sin is present—both the kind

that is obvious and the sins of the mind.

When this revealing takes place, a person is prompted to change their habits and can do so by the power of the Holy Spirit's work within them.

- Our assurance or confidence is anchored in God and God alone, never in our own ability to generate feelings of confidence.⁸
- The assurance spoken of here is the assurance of salvation. When our *hearts condemn us*, the guilt of our past is brought to our minds causing us to doubt our salvation.
- We can have confidence before God, because through the blood of Jesus Christ, we have been eternally forgiven.

But what about when *Christians* sin?

1 John 1:8–2:6 (NIV84)

⁸If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

¹⁰If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

^{2:1}My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

²He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

³We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.

⁴The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

⁵But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him:

⁶Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

- Christians sin. This is a Scriptural fact.
- Yet even Christians differ in their views as to what constitutes sin.

1 John 3:4 (AMP)

⁴Everyone who commits (practices) sin is guilty of lawlessness; for [that is what] sin is, lawlessness (the breaking, violating of God's law by transgression or

⁸ Gary M. Burge, *Letters of John*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 164.

neglect—being unrestrained and unregulated by His commands and His will).

- This is how Scripture defines sin, but people usually have a different view.

Romans 2:12–16 (NIV84)

¹²All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law.

¹³For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.

¹⁴(Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law,

¹⁵since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, **their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.**)

¹⁶This will take place on the day when God will judge men’s secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

- *Romans 2:15-16 (HCSB)*: Their consciences confirm this. **Their competing thoughts will either accuse or excuse them** on the day when God judges what people have kept secret, according to my gospel through Christ Jesus.
- Conscience then is the highest court on earth. Conscience is the soul’s warning system⁹ that either *accuses* or *excuses* us.
- Conscience is the best critic because it knows the innermost secrets of our heart and nobody else does except for God.¹⁰
- Our consciences do not stop *accusing* or *excusing* us after we are born again.

1 Corinthians 4:4 (NIV84)

⁴**My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent.** It is the Lord who judges me.

- *Conscience* = σύννοια *synoida* = to be aware of information about something, *to know*.¹¹
be aware of, be conscious (*of oneself*)¹²
This is the awareness of what’s in your heart, whether good or bad.

⁹ John F. MacArthur Jr., *John MacArthur Sermon Archive* (Panorama City, CA: Grace to You, 2014).

¹⁰ John F. MacArthur Jr., *John MacArthur Sermon Archive* (Panorama City, CA: Grace to You, 2014).

¹¹ William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 973.

¹² James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

- *Conscience* is not a clear-cut indicator of morality—whether something actually is right or wrong—but an **indicator of one’s personal conviction about whether behavior is right or wrong.**

The central theological importance of “*conscience*,” though, is *maintaining a self-awareness and alertness about the potential for sin and avoiding that potential sin*.¹³

1 Corinthians 2:11a (NIV84)

¹¹For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him?

We must maintain a self-awareness and alertness to sin and its temptations; no man knows what’s in your heart but you.

1 Timothy 4:1–2 (NIV84)

¹The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.

²Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, **whose consciences have been seared** as with a hot iron.

- False teachers are so thoroughly deceived they have become insensitive to the truth. They have no sense of how far they have wandered from the truth because they are following powerful *deceitful spirits*, or demons.¹⁴
- **2 Corinthians 11:13 (NIV84)**
¹³For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ.
- False teachers **have followers who believe their lies.** When a person is deceived, they do not know it. They believe that if you don’t believe what they believe, *you* are the one who is deceived.
- *Tony Evans*: The conscience, rightly trained, helps us to know right from wrong. But these false teachers had burned theirs to the point that they were numb; they could no longer discern goodness from wickedness.¹⁵
- We have a conscience. And conscience tells us we are guilty. It hammers us. It is like a relentless ringing in our spiritual ears. And so, what do we do? We try to silence conscience by camouflaging our sin or redefining our sin or disavowing our responsibility.¹⁶
This is what *sears* a person’s conscience.

¹³ Douglas Mangum, “*Conscience*,” ed. Douglas Mangum et al., *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).

¹⁴ Tommy C. Hagle, *Journey into Living the Gospel: A Study of First Timothy*, The Journey Series (Marietta, OK: Tommy Hagle Publishers, Inc., 2012), 38.

¹⁵ Tony Evans, *The Tony Evans Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2019), 1 Ti 4:1–2.

¹⁶ John F. MacArthur Jr., *John MacArthur Sermon Archive* (Panorama City, CA: Grace to You, 2014).

- How do you know when a person's conscience is seared and how do you prevent that from happening?
- Is my conscience seared? How do I know?
- Next Week!!! (The Lord Willing)