



A Clear Conscience **Romans 7:21-25**

Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.

Many people carry around the _____ of sin and a guilty conscience when they don't have to. Today we're going to find out _____ to have a good conscience. God wants to _____ us and _____ us. He teaches us how to _____ and how to _____ Him in His Word, the Bible. The Bible is _____ of God's grace and wisdom. The gospel contains the _____ of God unto salvation, and that is why we must keep _____ His Word.

A Christian lady described an incident when she was only five years old. She was at her grandfather's house all dressed up in a white dress and new gloves; she was proud as she could be. Her granddaddy told her she could go into the kitchen and get herself a special cookie. Next to the cookies was a stack of quarters. Sure that no one was looking, she took a quarter. When she returned with her cookie, her grandfather asked her to show him her gloves. She held out only her left hand and he said, "Well, show me the other hand." When she reluctantly did so and revealed the quarter, she immediately saw disappointment in her grandpa's eyes. He paused a moment and then he "hugged me up" she said, and said "Darlin', you can have anything in the world that I have, but it breaks my heart that you would ever steal it." The woman said that even fifty years later this story of how her grandfather gave her the gift of conscience still brought tears to her eyes.

Few things can _____ the values and morals of a child more than the sting of lovingly administered _____. It helps _____ right from wrong and gives a powerful emotional dimension to issues of ethics and character. God Himself gave us our consciences.

Our reading today comes from the book of Romans 7:21-25.

The concepts of guilt and shame are often _____. Guilt takes place when a person feels responsibility and _____ for some offense, crime, or sin that he or she commits. Shame, on the other hand, takes place when someone has the painful feeling that arises from the consciousness that he or she could be the _____ of person who would commit a crime, offense, or sin. We feel guilt for what we _____; we feel ashamed of ourselves for having _____ it. The young girl felt _____ for having stolen the coin, but she felt _____ for having disappointed her grandfather. Shame follows guilt when people realize that they could do such a thing.

So, many people speak as if guilt or shame should _____ happen. It's an unfortunate thing that people think that. Oh, I understand that there are some cults and some parents who have _____ others with shame, and I'm not supporting that. Instead, that we should feel guilt and shame for truly sinful acts is _____ and actually _____ to our spiritual lives. I

worry far more about someone who sins against God or his neighbor and _____ no guilt and no shame than I do for the person who feels shame when he's really _____.

Some folks don't feel guilt when they _____. Many _____ the seriousness of sin. Rather than call sin evil some people _____ sin as a "mistake," or "a poor judgment," or "the result of wrong influences," or even "an alternative." By relabeling sin, they have attempted to _____ away man's responsibility to God. Many consider words like "sin", "judgment", and "hell" as _____ concepts. They would _____ them from our vocabulary altogether if they could. Sin, however, is not imaginary. It's _____. Its consequences are so great that Christ had to come and die to _____ us from them. We cannot wish away the _____ of "sin." Our consciences won't let us.

Proverbs 28:1 says, "The wicked _____ when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion." Why do the wicked flee? They know they've done something _____. After Adam and Eve sinned by eating the fruit, they _____ themselves from the presence of the Lord. They hid because they were guilty and ashamed to _____ the Lord for what they'd done. They had a conscience, and so does everyone, so do you. The conscience is a God-given faculty of the _____ by which we know about ourselves. We _____ when we do right and when we do wrong. **Read what Romans 2:14-16 says.**

Our consciences _____ us when we know we've done something wrong and _____ us when we know that we're innocent. Our conscience is our _____ sense. It warns us, nags us, and rebukes us when we are at _____, and then it assures us when we've done the _____ thing. The conscience serves as a moral monitor, and we should be _____ to God for this gift. When we sin, this moral monitor causes us to have _____ and urges us to _____. Why do we have sorrow? Because we know that when we sin, we have _____ the God who created us.

The very folks who think there's no such thing as sin still pass _____ on the wrongs of others. **Read Romans 2:1-4.** When we consider how God _____ us and how we have _____ Him by our sins, it makes us want to _____ our hearts and our behavior.

The apostle Paul once had to _____ the Corinthians because they tolerated sin. This made the Corinthians _____ over their wrong behavior. **Read what Paul said to them in 2 Corinthians 7:8-10.** When people feel grief over their sins, they don't want to _____ in that sin. They have to _____ that sin behind and they have to do what's right.

Sadly, some people ignore their guilt and allow their consciences to become _____. They pursue their wicked ways with such determination that they don't _____ what God or anybody else thinks. The idolatrous Jews in Jeremiah's day reached the point that they didn't feel _____ about their sinfulness or their idolatry. Jeremiah said, "Were they ashamed when

they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed; they didn't know how to _____" (Jeremiah 6:15). When we lose our moral sense of right and wrong, we are destined to _____ ourselves and everyone around us. When people feel no guilt, they'll feel _____ to do anything. The Russian novelist, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, had one of his characters in the book Brothers Karamazov say, "Well, if there is no God, then everything is _____." When people _____ God out of their lives and they _____ their hearts and their consciences, they too will feel that they can do anything they _____. The greatest problems of America today are not social or political; they are _____ and _____. You cannot throw God away and expect the quality and beauty of life to _____!

Sadly, some people today will say or do any shameful thing and never _____. Many have become so desensitized to _____ they will not blush about anything. It seems no _____ behavior is off-limits on television these days. Viewers seem to _____ more and more programs with sex and violence. One author asked years ago, "Whatever Became of Sin?", and another spoke of The Vanishing Conscience. Things have only gotten morally _____ since then. **Read the warning in Hebrews 3:12-13.**

Instead, we should be more like the apostle Paul who said, "I also do my best to maintain always a _____ conscience before God and man" (Acts 24:16). To have a clear conscience toward God means that you know what God _____. To know what God teaches you must _____ the Scriptures. Many people trust their _____ thinking rather than _____ to God's Word, and that gets them into _____. If your conscience isn't in line with Scripture, you can sin against God and not even _____ it, and you certainly won't _____ guilt. Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way that seems _____ to a man, but its end is the way to _____." Again Jeremiah 10:23 says, "I know, O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself, it's not in man who walks to _____ his own steps." This is why we must study God's word diligently. If I permit something in my life that is wrong in God's eyes, it is wrong regardless of how I _____ about it. Remember, in moral matters that affect our souls God has the _____ say and the _____ say.

We need to make it our _____ not to sin at all. Many people make it their aim not to sin so much, but God asks us to repent and to correct _____ sin. Pollution of the heart and soul is man's greatest _____. Many people allow _____ sins to grow into _____ ones because they permit little compromises in their lives. No one sets out to be a drunk, but only people who drink become drunks. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 16:10, "One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little thing is also dishonest in much." Little compromises _____ to devastating problems.

You may have read sometime back about two high school boys in Florida. They drew suspensions for eating so much garlic that no one could stand to have them around. The boys said that their garlic

binge began when they read garlic helps cleanse the blood and lowers blood pressure. At that point, each of them ate half a garlic head. For breakfast the next morning both students consumed three or four more heads of garlic apiece. When the teachers and the students complained about their odor, the boys simply laughed and they went on eating garlic. When confronted by school officials, one of the boys protested that the smell couldn't be all that bad. "After all," he pointed out, "we were blowing in each other's face, and we couldn't sense a garlic smell."

That's how sin works; with time it _____ our sense of morality. At first people experiment, then they _____ sin regularly, and eventually that sin captivates and enslaves them. People enslaved to sin will _____ and _____ about it. They cause their consciences to grow callous by wallowing in the sin until it no longer smells bad to them. They are offensive to others, but act indignant when anyone _____. Since they don't think what they're doing is wrong, they don't _____ why God or godly people are offended.

Sin warps our _____ about everything. **Read Titus 1:15-16.** Perhaps you know of someone who has a filthy _____ and a filthy _____. They can take the most _____ things and defile them because they're defiled in conscience and soul. It's hypocrisy to _____ like you know God while you _____ an ungodly life. You not only _____ yourself, but you also _____ others to blaspheme God.

The Lord Jesus said, "Blessed are the _____ in heart, for they shall _____ God" (Matthew 5:8). A person who is pure in heart seeks to _____ God and _____ Him. He doesn't want any sin or moral stain to come _____ God and himself. He knows sin will _____ him from God. **Read Isaiah 59:1-2.** When people let wickedness and sin into their lives, it _____ a barrier between God and themselves. God will turn His _____ away from them and will no longer hear their _____. Do you have a _____ conscience? You don't have to _____ with guilt or shame. God can help you.

I've spoken plainly today because I care about your soul. Paul told Timothy, "But the _____ of our instruction is _____ from a pure heart and a _____ conscience and a _____ faith" (1 Timothy 1:5). That's our goal too. We want you to be right with God and to live with Him eternally in _____. The blood of Jesus can _____ us from sin, but God expects us to clean up our lives. **Read Galatians 6:7-8.** When we _____ in Christ, we purify our hearts and our lives. **Read 1 John 3:2-3.** What about you? Can you say with Paul, "I also do my best to _____ always a blameless conscience before God and before men?"

To have a clear conscience, _____ in Jesus and in His Word, _____ of every sin and follow the Lord, _____ Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be _____ into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. In baptism we _____ to God for a good conscience. First Peter 3:21 says, "Baptism... now saves you, not as a removal of _____ from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Won't you get right with God and become a Christian today? I hope you will.