

## I Believe in Morality 2 Timothy 2:19-22

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

Every person has a sensitivity to right and wrong, a \_\_\_\_\_ sense. Only \_\_\_\_\_ could give us our sense of morality. We didn't get it from the rocks; and we didn't inherit it from animals. God \_\_\_\_\_ us moral beings! God gave us the Scriptures to \_\_\_\_\_ what is right and wrong, to help us avoid what's evil, and to practice what's good. The more we study and practice what God has revealed in Scripture, the \_\_\_\_\_ we'll become spiritually. Whether we obey God matters, and the Scriptures \_\_\_\_\_ us how to love and to obey the Lord Jesus. It teaches us to \_\_\_\_\_ sin and to live righteously.

Each of us has within our \_\_\_\_\_ a moral faculty called a conscience that accuses us when we do what's wrong and excuses us when we do what is right. When we violate our consciences, we feel the \_\_\_\_\_ of guilt and shame. We feel guilty because we \_\_\_\_\_ we have sinned; we feel ashamed that we're the kind of person who could do something so wrong. Even the most evil people know in their \_\_\_\_\_ when they have been evil. Everyone has a conscience. Sin defiles the conscience, but the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ can cleanse our consciences.

Thankfully, God \_\_\_\_\_ our consciences, and He does it through the Scriptures so that we can avoid sinning against God and defiling our hearts. When people don't know the Scriptures, they may \_\_\_\_\_ themselves into thinking what they have done is right, when God actually regards it as wrong. Paul said that he had lived "in all \_\_\_\_\_ conscience up to this day" (Acts 23:1). Before he became a Christian, he thought it was \_\_\_\_\_ to persecute the church, to put people in prison, and to blaspheme the name of Jesus Christ. When he learned the truth, he \_\_\_\_\_ of his sins, and when he was baptized, God \_\_\_\_\_ them away.

**Our reading, today, comes from Paul's Second Letter to Timothy 2:19-22.** He talks about our relationship with the Lord. How we live matters to God. Pursue righteousness.

Our moral senses aren't physical, but \_\_\_\_\_ and God-given. To suggest that we're moral beings because we \_\_\_\_\_ from non-living matter or from animals isn't rational. Our self-awareness and our ability to evaluate the morality of our thoughts and behaviors must arise from being made in the \_\_\_\_\_ of God. We are moral beings who judge \_\_\_\_\_ and judge what we see and experience in this life. This moral sense is a universal experience, found in every age and culture of mankind.

In Genesis 3, when Adam and Eve sinned by eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, their eyes were \_\_\_\_\_ to both right and wrong. They discovered that they were naked, so they "sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths." When the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord walking in the garden in the cool of the day, they "hid themselves from the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Lord God among the trees of the garden." They felt \_\_\_\_\_ from having disobeyed God and they were afraid of His finding out. They were ashamed of being naked,

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and Eve knew the serpent had deceived her. Only people made in God's image ever have these emotions or feel guilt.

There is a universal law of God that's \_\_\_\_\_ than human law. Just because something is \_\_\_\_\_ in the eyes of a society doesn't make it right in God's eyes. Dick Szanyo, my friend in Pelham, Alabama, reminded me of the Nuremburg trials after World War II. When the famous trials occurred, the Nazis defense was \_\_\_\_\_: "you're trying us based on British law, or American law. We were obeying German law, so you have no \_\_\_\_\_ to accuse us of the murder of anyone." Robert Jackson, who prosecuted the case, argued that the Nazis weren't guilty because they violated British law, American law, or even German law. They were being judged by a law \_\_\_\_\_ than the "provincial and the transient." What they did was \_\_\_\_\_ wrong, for all persons, in all places, and at all times!

My friend, Dick Szanyo, concluded, "Evolution does not and cannot account for this moral sensitivity. Individual humans cannot account for this "oughtness" that we all experience. Neither can groups of humans (like the Americans, English, or Germans) account for these truths. They cannot be found in the physics, or chemistry, or biology of Naturalism (that is, that nothing exists but a physical universe). Indeed, the only thing that can account for this common moral experience is a Supernatural Moral Lawgiver. This is what we mean by God."

Jeremiah knew the nature of man was to downplay sin and even \_\_\_\_\_ himself about it. The prophet wrote, "I know, O LORD, that a man's way is not in himself, Nor is it in a man who walks to \_\_\_\_\_ his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). Man left to his own devices will try to \_\_\_\_\_ whatever he says or does. Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way which seems right to a man, But its \_\_\_\_\_ is the way of death." People can do very foolish, hurtful things simply because they want to. Love for sin will cause people to ignore all the warnings and plunge themselves into ruin. Proverbs 16:2 says, "All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, But the LORD weighs the motives."

You can fool yourself; you can fool your family and your friends; but you cannot fool God. Proverbs 15:3 says, "The eyes of the LORD are in \_\_\_\_\_ place, Watching the evil and the good." Nothing escapes the notice of God. What we think is trivial may be a serious matter to God. God loves us, but He cannot and will not overlook \_\_\_\_\_. The prophet spoke about God, "Your eyes are too \_\_\_\_\_ to approve evil, And You cannot look on wickedness with favor" (Habakkuk 1:13). Our consciences are a moral governor, but they must be brought into harmony with the will of God.

The serial killer, Jeffrey Dahmer, was a sexual predator and a cannibal of his homosexual lovers. Though Dahmer had been brought up to \_\_\_\_\_ in God, he was exposed to atheistic evolution which devastated his faith in God. Dahmer placed the \_\_\_\_\_ for his murders on his atheistic beliefs and in the theory of evolution. From these beliefs, he found no \_\_\_\_\_ to respect human dignity or life. In his interview with Dateline NBC, Dahmer said, "If you don't...think that there is a God to be accountable to [and no atheistic evolutionist does]...what's the point of trying to modify your behavior to keep it within acceptable ranges? That's how I thought, anyway. I always believed the theory of evolution as truth, that we all just came from the slime. When we...died, you know, that was it, there was nothing."

Lionel Dahmer, Jeffrey's father, gave this explanation for Jeffrey's thinking in A&E's Biography of Jeffrey Dahmer: *The Monster Within*, which aired in 1996. Jeffrey believed, "If it all happens naturalistically, what's the \_\_\_\_\_ for a God? Can't I set my own \_\_\_\_\_? Who owns me? I own myself." God and morality are unalterably connected to each other. A good, holy, and pure God gives us the foundation for our faith and for our morals. God created us and \_\_\_\_\_ us all, whether we realize it or not. Romans 14:12 says, "So then each one of us will give an \_\_\_\_\_ of himself to God."

In fact, Christians do not \_\_\_\_\_ themselves. They have no right to participate in immoral behavior. The Corinthians were well-known for being sexually immoral people. Paul said, "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). Sin has a high price to pay. If you want to live with God, you must leave sin.

**Read what Paul explained in 1 Corinthians 6:18-20.** When Jesus died on the cross, He \_\_\_\_\_ us to redeem us from sin at the cost of His own blood. It's vital to our souls that we realize that we are not our own. We belong to Jesus Christ!

When people imagine that they can do as they please and aren't accountable to God, there's no \_\_\_\_\_ to the evil they will do. Fyodor Dostoevsky in his book *The Brothers Karamasov* examined the thoughts of Ivan Karamasov who believed that "if God did not exist, everything would be permitted" or lawful. Though Dostoevsky didn't use those exact words, his character Ivan did say on page 72, "There is no \_\_\_\_\_ if there is no immortality." He toyed with the idea that there's nothing moral, nothing good or evil, because there is \_\_\_\_\_ God. In the end, all that kind of thinking brought was pain and regret. The historian and humanist, Will Durant, said, "There is no significant example in history, before our time, of a society successfully maintaining moral life without the \_\_\_\_\_ of religion." George Washington said, "It is impossible to rightly \_\_\_\_\_ a nation without God and the Bible."

God not only sees our behavior, He knows and \_\_\_\_\_ our hearts. God said through Jeremiah the prophet, "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I \_\_\_\_\_ the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his \_\_\_\_\_" (Jeremiah 17:9-10). God sees things as they truly are! You can't spin a \_\_\_\_\_ with God; He'll see right through it. **Read Hebrews 4:12-13.** Because God knows us, we should make it our aim to \_\_\_\_\_ Him in every way.

Our relationship with God ought to \_\_\_\_\_ our thinking, our words, and our behavior. God said, "Therefore, prepare your minds for \_\_\_\_\_, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I (God speaking) am holy'" (1 Peter 1:13-16). A holy person keeps himself \_\_\_\_\_ from the ways of sin.

The Hebrew writer said, “Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving \_\_\_\_\_ that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called ‘Today,’ so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of \_\_\_\_\_” (Hebrews 3:12-13). God loves you and will do everything He can to keep you from falling away in sin which leads to unbelief.

Hebrews 10:26-31 warns, “For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of \_\_\_\_\_ and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without \_\_\_\_\_ on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will \_\_\_\_\_ who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will \_\_\_\_\_.’ And again, ‘The LORD will \_\_\_\_\_ His people.’ It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

Don’t let sin overwhelm you with grief and despair. God’s love and grace provide the way to \_\_\_\_\_. The wicked won’t inherit the kingdom of God, but they can repent and \_\_\_\_\_. The Lord Jesus will help you become a different person with a \_\_\_\_\_ conscience. After listing several sins, Paul said, “Such were some of you (that is, you sinned in all these things); but you were \_\_\_\_\_, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11). You don’t have to remain enslaved by what you were. God can wash you, make you holy, and justify you! You can become a \_\_\_\_\_ of God and live a new life filled with love and hope and eternal life.

When our conscience stings from our sins, and we realize how our sins are painful and can cost us our souls, we start \_\_\_\_\_ for forgiveness and a clean conscience. Guilt and shame will cause a person to \_\_\_\_\_ himself or herself. You may not \_\_\_\_\_ what you see when you look in the mirror. Does your conscience sting? What are you doing about it? Some people \_\_\_\_\_ their consciences and become callous to sin. They don’t care what they do or whom they \_\_\_\_\_. I worry more about the person with a seared conscience than I do for the one who feels guilt. Why? It’s because that pain, a godly grief, may cause him to repent.

Second Corinthians 7:10 says, “For the sorrow that is according to the \_\_\_\_\_ of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.” Your God-given conscience isn’t a \_\_\_\_\_. It’s God opening our eyes about what’s wrong so that we may \_\_\_\_\_ what’s right and be saved. Guilt grieves us, but God offers us a clean conscience! In Christ, we have forgiveness and hope. We can be born again and walk in newness of life. The old man of sin dies so that we can be free from sin and raised with Christ!

Trust in the Lord and confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Let your grief over sin lead you to repent and turn from evil to the Lord. When you do, you’re ready to be baptized! In baptism God washes away sin (Acts 22:16), causes us to be born again (John 3:5), and makes us His child (Galatians 3:27). He also gives us newness of life free from sin (Romans 6:3-7). Why not turn your life around and come to the Lord?