

David: Issues of the Heart
A Conscientious Heart
Part 3
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If you have got your Bible I am going to read from 1 Samuel Chapter 19 first of all. I am just going to pick out one or two verses here and then go to Chapter 24.

And we have been talking about David for a few weeks, though it's a number of weeks back into our history now (you've probably forgotten), looking at David and God's dealings with him under the overall theme, "Issues of the Heart."

And 1 Samuel Chapter 19 and Verse 1, it says,

"Saul told his son Jonathan and all the attendants to kill David."

Go down to Verse 11:

"Saul sent men to David's house to watch it and to kill him in the morning."

Go to Verse 15:

"Then Saul sent the men back to see David and told them, 'Bring him up to me in his bed so that I may kill him.'"

Go to Chapter 23 and Verse 15:

"While David was at Horesh in the Desert of Ziph, he learned that Saul had come to take his life."

I think that's enough to get the flavor that David has become the enemy of Saul. He even put together a regiment of 3000 men who had one responsibility: to kill David.

Now let me take you to Chapter 24.

Chapter 24:1:

"After Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, 'David is in the Desert of En Gedi.'"

"So Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel and set out to look for David and his men near the Crags of the Wild Goats.

"When he came to the sheep pens along the way; a cave was there, and Saul went in to relieve himself. David and his men were far back in the cave.

“The men said, ‘This is the day the LORD spoke of when he said to you, ‘I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish.’

“Then David crept up unnoticed and cut off a corner of Saul’s robe.

“Afterward, David was conscience-stricken for having cut off a corner of his robe.

“He said to his men, ‘The LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the LORD’S anointed, or lift my hand against him; for he is the anointed of the LORD.’

“With these words David rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul. And Saul left the cave and went his way.”

And we will look in a few moments at what happened after this.

You may remember last time we left David he was a teenaged boy who had secured a great victory for Israel over the Philistines by his slaying of Goliath, the Philistine giant that had intimidated Israel, you remember, for forty years.

Israel was in battle with the Philistines. Their king was Saul. And the star Philistine soldier was Goliath. He was big, he was tough, he was strong, he was tall, he was experienced, he was a fighting man.

And he offered to end the battle with the Philistines by having one battle between two soldiers representing each side.

“One of you fight us, and the winner of the fight is the winner of the war. If the Israelite beats the Philistine, we will serve you; if the Philistine beats the Israelite, you will serve us.”

And then Goliath, having made that challenge announced, “I am fighting for the Philistines. Who is fighting for you?”

No one dared step out of the Israelite army and say, “I am going to take him on.” Not even Saul, who was the king of Israel and who was the obvious choice because he is described as being head and shoulders above everybody else. So at least he could look Goliath in the chest.

Goliath was big, tall, strong.

But not only was Saul the biggest man they had, but God had said to the prophet Samuel when Saul became king, “Anoint him leader over my people Israel. He will deliver my people from the hand of the Philistines.”

God’s stated intent for Saul as king of Israel was that he would deliver Israel from the Philistines. Well, here’s a golden opportunity – one of three golden opportunities given to Saul. This is

Saul's opportunity to trust that God is as good as His word and what He promised He will bring about.

But instead of faith, Saul is characterized by fear.

Instead of trust, Saul is characterized by terror.

Instead of obedience, Saul is characterized by oppression.

And instead of operating by the Spirit of God, which he had been invited to do, he is operating only by human resources, by human ingenuity and by human wisdom.

And none of that was a match for the Philistine Goliath.

This was the stalemate – had gone on for 40 days.

And then along came David – you remember we talked about this last time. He had brought some bread and some cheese and some barley for his brothers who were in the battle. David himself was too young; he was back home looking after his father's sheep.

And when he came with this food for his brothers, he saw the dilemma, and to cut the story very short (because we talked about it last time) in Chapter 17:32, David went to Saul. He said to Saul,

“Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant” (that's me) “your servant will go and fight him.”

And Saul said to him, “That's impossible. You are just a boy. He has been a fighting man from his youth. He will turn you to mincemeat.”

And David said this:

“The Lord will deliver me from the hand of the Philistine.”

Now to Saul that was pious spiritual gobbely gook. That kind of thing is okay to sing about in church on Sunday or talk about when you are in a safe Christian environment, but that has no relevance to life when you are in conflict and battle and trouble on Monday, after Sunday escapism, as in fact so much of pious spiritual talk is.

But David had already proved the sufficiency of God in lesser circumstances, in private with no audience to applaud him, when on the hillside with his sheep a bear came. David attacked and killed the bear. And then a lion came and David attacked and killed the lion. And he said to Saul,

“The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of the Philistine.”

You see Saul had no hinterland of experience, of seeing God at work, whereas David did. And you build your hinterland of experience with God not in the public domain, not when people are watching. You build it alone and in secret because if our only Christian exercise is in community, we can all learn the language but know nothing of the reality.

And so when David said that, Saul responded with what actually was genuine gobbely gook to Saul. He said this:

“Saul said to David, ‘Go and the LORD be with you.’”

Now Saul didn’t believe that for a moment. If Saul believed the Lord would have been with David, he would have believed the Lord would have been with him, and gone himself. This is just jargon.

And we can learn spiritual jargon in Sunday school. We can develop our spiritual vocabulary in church, but it has no bearing on the realities of our lives. And this was true for Saul – just language, jargon.

And so David goes with his sling and his five stones, you remember, and he defeats and he kills Goliath and he liberates the nation of Israel from this Philistine threat.

So what happens now? What happens to Saul?

Saul has been on the hook and now he is off, thank you to David. What do you expect from Saul now? Do you expect him to be full of gratitude to David?

“David, thank you so, so much.”

Do you expect him to be full of praise to David?

“David, that was an incredible sling of your stone. Man, you really trusted God, didn’t you?”

No, you don’t know human nature if you think that.

Saul was filled with anger. The one who should have applauded David hated him the most. And if you go through Chapter 18, don’t turn to it, but Chapter 18:8,

“Saul was very angry.”

That’s because the people, the women in particular, were singing,

“Saul has slain his thousands, David his tens of thousands.”

That doesn’t help matters very much at all but they were singing the praises of David. Saul was very angry. Verse 9:

“From that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.”

18:15:

When Saul saw how successful he was, he was afraid of David.”

In Chapter 18:29:

“He grew still more afraid, and he remained his enemy the rest of his days.”

Chapter 19:1:

“Saul told his son Jonathan and all the attendants to kill David.”

And then I read a whole sequence of similar instructions that Saul gave over the next days.

Why does Saul want to kill the deliverer of Israel? Why does he want to kill David?

Well, when a man should trust God but doesn't and somebody else comes along who does trust God – especially if they are younger – he will hate him for it, or hate her for it.

And they may not understand why. They might not understand why they feel so antagonistic towards that person, why they feel so uncomfortable around that person. But in the New Testament Paul wrote in Galatians 5:17 that the flesh – flesh by definition is my natural self, what I am apart from God, my nature, my natural self –

“The flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh.”

And that flesh in us, that reliance on our self-sufficiency, expresses our need to be recognized. In our human prowess the flesh hates the Spirit and hates dependence upon the Spirit of God, and hates His active presence in the lives of those who are trusting Him, and they feel very uncomfortable and it becomes anger.

They will find every reason to accuse those who live by the Spirit and to criticize them and to dismiss them.

Because Saul had deserted his dependence on God, while David demonstrated his dependence on God, David became Saul's enemy and was to spend the next 13 or 14 years as a fugitive, on the run, with Saul doing all he can during that time to take his life.

As I said, he formed a regiment of 3000 men whose brief was one simple objective: “Find David and kill him and bring his body back to me. I want to see his dead body.”

Now this forms the background to what I want to talk about today.

Saul never did manage to kill David, despite the overwhelming odds in his favor. And David knew that Saul would not kill him because God had told him that he would be king and David believed what God told him. And therefore to be king, he is not going to die. In fact he is going to outlive Saul and he is going to succeed him.

If it was God who anointed him, as it was, David knew it would be God who would appoint him. What God anoints, He appoints. That is, in the course of time it comes to fruition.

Twice David had the opportunity to kill Saul. And if he could kill Saul he then would go onto the throne, although there would probably be some internal civil war, those from Saul's side, as in fact there was later.

He could have killed Saul and taken the throne for himself.

The first of these was in Chapter 24 and we read a little bit of it. Saul is on the march with 3000 men and he stopped in a cave in En Gedi, it says "to relieve himself."

The Living Bible Version says, "to go to the bathroom."

Another version says, "to take a nap" so whatever the relieving of himself involved, probably all of that.

When he came into this cave, they were searching En Gedi because they knew David was there. And David was hiding in the back of the cave with his 600 men (big cave).

And looking out of the darkness of the rear of the cave, they saw in the light, the silhouette of Saul coming into the cave to relieve himself.

And David's men got excited. "David, this is the day the Lord has given to us! Saul is walking right into our cage; we can destroy him."

But David crept over to where Saul had positioned himself. And Saul had taken his coat off, his cloak off and David, with a knife, cut a big piece out of the cloth and took it back to the back of the cave.

When Saul had finished his business, he left the cave and went back to join his men, went on in their journey.

And David came out a few minutes later and shouted down the valley, "Does anybody recognize this piece of cloth?"

And Saul says, "That's part of my robe!"

"Yes, Saul, it could have been your head that I am holding up here, but it's not; it's just a piece of your robe I have cut off. I want you to know, Saul, I will never kill you. You may wish to kill

me, but I do not wish to kill you. You are depending on purely your own natural resources to keep yourself on the throne. I am depending purely on God to bring about in His time what He wants. So Saul, do not worry about me – you are totally safe with me. I could have cut off your head; I just cut off a piece of your robe. And I may be your enemy; you are not mine.”

And in Chapter 24:10,

“This day you have seen with your own eyes how the LORD delivered you into my hands in the cave. Some of the men urged me to kill you, but I spared you; I said, ‘I will not lift my hand against my master, because he is the LORD’S anointed.

“See, my father, look at this piece of your robe in my hand! I cut off the corner of your robe but did not kill you.”

Why?

“Because God put you on the throne Saul, God will take you off in His time – not me – that’s His business.”

You know, the person living in dependence on God is totally secure in themselves. David was totally secure in himself.

Those who do not depend on God have to shore up their own security and under the surface, whatever the front that is put on, under the surface there is a deep sense of insecurity because, “I am managing my life and I might get it wrong.”

The second incident was in Chapter 26 (over the page) and I won’t read it to you, but Saul is sleeping in his camp with 3000 chosen soldiers. They have made camp and Saul himself is asleep amidst his bodyguards, who are also asleep. They had become very lax, thinking they were safe.

Saul’s sword was stuck in the ground next to his head, just parked there, and his water jug was next to him as well.

And David and his men were moving by night and they came across them – this is Saul’s army. Again David’s men said to him, “This is your opportunity. God has given it to you – another opportunity to kill Saul. Look at them; they are all sleeping and his sword is right by his head. Go and take his sword and just kill him.”

And David said no and with his trusted friend Abishai they went down to where the soldiers were, stepped over them, came through to where the bodyguards were, who were all sleeping, stepped over them and quietly took Saul’s sword out of the ground and took his water jar and crept back over the soldiers and came back to where they were at a distance from Saul’s army on the other side of a valley.

And when the morning came and Saul's army was waking up, David shouted across the valley, "Do you recognize this sword anybody? Do you recognize this water jug anybody?"

And of course it was Saul's and he said, "I have his sword, I have his water jug. You are dismal bodyguards. I walked right over you, I stepped right over you. I could have killed Saul last night and you wouldn't have known until this morning. It's not my business to kill Saul. God put him on the throne. God will take him off."

And he repeats three times to them on that occasion in Chapter 26:9,

"Who can lay a hand on the LORD'S anointed and be guiltless?"

"I mean, God anointed him; I am not going to destroy him."

And then he says in Verse 11,

"But the LORD forbid that I should lay a hand on the LORD'S anointed."

Verse 23:

"The LORD delivered you into my hands today, but I would not lay a hand on the LORD'S anointed."

"You may be trying to get rid of me because you are a master of your own situation, but I am not trying to get rid of you, because I am not the master of mine" because he trusted "to somebody bigger than me."

"And God who anointed you and put you on the throne is the God who will take you off the throne in His time. You Saul, are totally safe from me, though I understand I am unsafe to you. You are out to get me."

Now let me pause for a moment. When we started looking at David a few weeks ago, we began with that phrase used for David; God said to Samuel, "I am looking for a man after My own heart."

David was the least likely of the sons of Jesse. There were 8 sons of Jesse from whose family this man was going to come. And David was identified.

And I said on that first occasion that every life has both its external and its internal journey, its physical journey and its soul-ish or spiritual journey inside.

The external journey is about what happens to us. I get up in the morning, I have my breakfast, I go out to work etc. That's the external journey.

The internal journey is about what happens in us – our thoughts, our feelings, our hearts, our disposition.

And we have a lot of insight into both journeys in David's life.

For his external journey we actually have 59 chapters of what David did – 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Chronicles. David did this and David did that and David went there. And we can follow enough detail that you could make a movie about David's external life.

But his internal life with all its joys and its anxieties in equal measure, with all its victories and its sleepless nights, come to us in 75 of the 150 Psalms. Half the Psalms are attributed to David and he probably wrote some of the ones that are not attributed.

And also along the way the writer pauses and gives us some insight into what is going on in David's heart. And a crucial aspect of this is in 1 Samuel 24:5 which I read earlier, where he said afterwards (this is after David had cut a piece of robe out of Saul's cloak when he was in the cave), afterwards David was conscience-stricken for having cut off a corner of his robe.

A crucially important aspect of David's heart is the tenderness of his conscience. He could have justified killing Saul in self-defence, from a military, from a human point of view. He could have justified that – all his men wanted him to get on and do it.

But even just teasing Saul by cutting a piece of his robe and then shouting across to him, when he was out of the cave, that he had cut this piece of the robe; even that left him conscience-stricken for having cut off the corner of his robe.

I am going to come back to that.

In the next chapter, Chapter 25, there was an incident when David asked a man called Nabal, a man David had greatly helped in the past; now he asked Nabal for some food and water for his men.

Nabal was a landowner, employed a lot of men. Nabal refused and in fact he insulted David. And so David's men became set on revenge against Nabal.

And someone told Nabal's wife – her name was Abigail. She immediately sent food and water and she pled with them not to attack Nabal and his men. And "here's the food, here's the water; here's what you were looking for; I am giving it to you."

And Abigail said to David in 1 Samuel 25:29,

"Even though someone is pursuing you to take your life, the life of my master" (that is David there – the life of David) "will be bound securely in the bundle of the living by the LORD your God."

I love that phrase, that, "David, your life is bound securely in the bundle of the living because you are a man who does business with God and God has an agenda He is working out in your life."

“But,” she said ‘the lives of your enemies he will hurl away as from the pocket of a sling.

“ ‘And when the LORD has done for David every good thing he promised concerning him and when he has appointed him leader over Israel, my master’ (that’s David) ‘will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed by having avenged himself.’”

So here’s Abigail plea: “David, don’t go an attack Nabal for his insensitivity and his abuse of you, because if you do, I know you well enough to know that you will have on your conscience for the rest of your days that you had needlessly avenged blood.”

And she immediately wins the argument when she appeals to his conscience.

Many years later towards the end of his life David did a census to count his fighting men. God had told him not to, but he did do so.

And shortly afterwards, in 2 Samuel 24:10 it says,

“David was conscience-stricken after he had counted his fighting men.”

I don’t think it is insignificant that three times the writer talks specifically about David’s conscience.

I looked through the Old Testament this week and found it interesting – the only other person whose conscience is ever referred to is Job.

There is no reference to the conscience of Abraham, though of course he had one, and Moses and Isaiah or any one of these folks. But there is three times a reference to David’s conscience because he was very aware of his conscience.

A good conscience is vital to living well. There is a mental part of our minds that enables us to know facts. There is a moral part of our minds that enables us to distinguish right from wrong and good from bad in the light of the facts to determine how I behave.

It’s one thing to know the facts; it’s an entirely different thing to know how to behave in the light of those facts. Before we engage in any action we make a moral choice and we determine whether it’s right or wrong and therefore we determine - not after the event; in advance of the event – whether it is good or bad, whether we engage in it or whether we don’t.

You know we mention people’s IQ (Intelligence Quotient) – I don’t know if there’s any way of measuring a MQ (Moral Quotient). Because David (I’m sure he had a high IQ), had a high MQ. He was conscientiously sensitive.

We are born with a conscience – it’s not just a matter of environment, although an environment can adjust and change our consciences because it is a very fragile thing.

But in Romans 2:14 Paul says,

“Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thought now accusing, now even defending them.”

So Paul’s case there in Romans 2 is that there is an inherent capacity with which we were born, whether you are a Christian or not, whether Jew or Gentile, it’s not relevant to this conscience, this inherent capacity within us to know right from wrong.

However Scripture is also very clear that our conscience needs to be carefully maintained. It can be violated. It can be distorted. It can be desensitized.

And Paul in 1 Timothy 1:18 speaks of those who are holding onto faith and a good conscience because some have rejected these and they have shipwrecked their faith.

You play fast and loose with your conscience and the end result is going to be you shipwreck your faith. That’s what happened to these men that Paul talks about.

And when we break our conscience on what may seem a small way, we may open what seems to be a small gap in the door, but that has the potential to shipwreck our faith.

Paul speaks also to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:2 of those whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron; they have desensitized their conscience and they are no longer driven by a moral guide; they are driven only by their perceived ability to manage the consequences.

So my issue is not is this right or wrong? My issue is can I control it? And usually that means can I hide it? And if I can get away with it, I have won.

That’s why the first symptom of a dishonest conscience is deceit, which leads to cover-up, which is all built on lies. We don’t resist lying because lying is evil; if your conscience is seared, you resist lying because if you are found out you will get into trouble.

You don’t not steal because stealing is wrong if you have no conscience; you only steal because of the consequence of being found out. But if there is no being found out, if I can pull the wool over people’s eyes, I can sneak my way through, this dishonesty, this stealing, this lying, whatever it may be, then my conscience is quite content with that.

And David, at this stage, is demonstrating a good conscience. Now he did later violate his conscience in several areas. I am going to refer only to one because it is the easiest to refer to, because it is the best known and it’s the most obvious. It’s the most blatant breaking of his conscience when he committed adultery with Bathsheba.

I have no doubt that part of his processing over that issue was that it happens, it’s no really big deal, happening every night in Jerusalem.

And in our day we can look at issues such as that with the normalizing of sexual relationships outside of marriage is such; we live in such an environment we can engage very easily because it's what everybody does.

And so the conscience that needs to be sensitive and maintained is broken, whether if it's in what the Bible calls fornication (which is premarital sex) or whether it's adultery (which is extramarital sex), whether it's any other combination.

The media bombards us with provocations, the physical lust, the Internet gives us access to expressions of sexual behavior that become mainstream, and subliminally if we play around with them, confuse our own moral judgement.

For a high profile man like David I am sure in his subconscious he was aware that pulling women was a perk – high profile, most important man in Israel.

But once he had done that he knew it was wrong. His conscience came alive again. He had to cover his tracks and he covered his tracks through murder of the husband of Bathsheba – murder by proxy, sending him into the most dangerous part of the battle to get him killed, to make sure he was killed.

And they lost the battle and Joab, his commander, sent a message back: “Bad news: we lost the battle; good news: Bathsheba's husband is dead, killed in the battle that we lost.”

Little by little conscience is eroded and little by little, along with conscience eroding, entitlement comes in.

And do you know how you know when you have damaged your conscience? It's when you find it easier to do things today you would never have done ten years ago or five years ago or twelve months ago.

You see the first time you violate something you know to be right, your conscience screams at you and can keep you awake for a week. You probably confess it a thousand times to God.

But the second time you do it, it's not quite so bad. You don't stay awake quite so long.

The third time you do it, it's easier still.

The fourth time you do it, you think, well there's no real problem here; I wonder why there's such a fuss about this.

The fifth time you do it you start to be able to defend it; you can build a rationale in your own mind of defending it.

The sixth time you can actually encourage it and you have rejected your conscience and shipwrecked your faith.

And David, at this stage, when he was in the cave, had a tender conscience. But later when he was in the palace as king, seeing a beautiful woman on a neighboring building and she catches his eye and he seduces her and she becomes pregnant with his child, he has to arrange the death of her husband Uriah, what happened to the man with the tender conscience?

How has he now become an adulterer? How has he now become a liar? How has he now become a murderer?

I'll tell you what happened. In the cave David was a fugitive; he was being hunted; he was an outcast. His self-awareness and his conscience is strong and it's humble; there is no entitlement on David's part now and his conscience is alive.

But years later, probably about 15 years later, he is in the palace in Jerusalem. Now he is king. Now his word ruled. Now people fawn over him. Now every whim is met for him. Now people serve him day and night. It's a very dangerous position to get into because his self-awareness and his conscience, which had been so acute in the cave, has now become distorted and diluted in the palace.

And that's why when God in His grace enables us to be in a better situation than we were, whatever context of that betterness is, be very careful with the sense of entitlement that may come with it.

And David recognized this later when he wrote Psalm 19. And the King James Bible in Verse 13 of Psalm 19 says,

“Keep back your servant from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me.”

Presumptuous sins are particularly evil, they are particularly dangerous. They say, “I deserve this.” It's presumption. “I am different. I am entitled. God understands me.”

The NIV translates that same verse.

“Keep your servant from willful sins; may they not rule over me.”

And to be presumptuous is to be willful. Presumptuous sins are willful sins. You are not a victim; you chose it.

And in the previous verse of this psalm he said,

“Forgive my hidden faults.”

Those are the most dangerous and so, glossed over them and because they are hidden, I felt a right to exercise them. I have kept them hidden in the back of my mind and now they come out into the fore.

Let me ask you as I close, how sensitive is your conscience? Is it governed by the Spirit of God and the Word of God? Do you listen to it? Because if you cut one little corner, you will soon be cutting big corners.

And David's answer is found in Psalm 51, which we are not going to look at.

A man called Nathan came to David, told him the story of a man who had one sheep at home and somebody came and said, "I need it." A rich man came and said, "I need a sheep for my – we have got a banquet. Your sheep is a good-looking sheep. I am going to take your sheep." He killed it and fed it to his guests.

And this poor little man, who only owned one sheep, was left devastated. This sheep was like a daughter to him, like a pet as well as raising it for meat.

He told this story to David about this man in David's kingdom and David was angry and said that man who took that man's one sheep, who had hundreds of his own, he must be punished.

And Nathan looked at David and pointed his finger in his face and said, "David, you are that man. You took the husband of Bathsheba and you slaughtered him on the battlefield to get what you want."

And the sensitivity of David's conscience was this, that once he was confronted he broke. He absolutely broke in repentance and remorse, and he writes Psalm 51 after that occasion.

Amongst other things it says, "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast, or a right spirit within me."

A man after God's own heart he was; it is now a corrupted heart.

"Create a clean heart in me."

Not help me to deal with – I don't know, you know, I've got a problem with I don't know, I'm prone to lust and I need some help with that. No, no, no. It goes right back to the source. It's my heart that needs to be purified.

And then he says,

"Don't cast me away from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me."

He had seen Saul, a man appointed by God. He had seen the Spirit of God in Saul, but he had grieved Him and the Spirit of God had left him.

And he cries out, "Do not leave me. Take not Your Holy Spirit from me and don't cast me from Your presence. Instead restore to me the joy of Your salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me."

It's hard work in staying close to God, you know. He says, "Give me that willing spirit; sustain me."

You don't just sit back and say, "Well, I hope it's going to happen." There is structure and discipline and work that has to be done."

We are all nearer to falling than we probably realize. We are all vulnerable – all of us. "He that thinks he stands," the New Testament says, "take heed, lest you fall."

In fact those of us who think we stand are probably the most vulnerable.

I know people who joined with us in this congregation for years. They participated enthusiastically in worship and the study of God's Word. They got involved in service. And I know a number of people – it breaks my heart to know them because they are not here this morning. Do you know why? Because they have rejected their conscience and have shipwrecked their faith, as Paul warned against.

I've had conversations with folks who have not shipwrecked their faith; they have just compromised in their conscience, but give them 6 months, give them 12 months and they will be a million miles from God, they will have shipwrecked their faith.

We are going to pray together.

I don't know how God, the Holy Spirit, has spoken to you this morning. I am not going to ask you to do anything public because there are a number of things that have got to be worked out in private and a public response doesn't do it.

It's first acknowledging that we are away from God. There are areas in our lives where we have violated and are violating our conscience.

And if you have trained your conscience to accept it now and it doesn't keep you awake, well, remember when it did and ask God to take you back and to cut off all that which will undermine the Spirit of God in your life.

Lord Jesus I pray for every one of us in this building this morning. None of us are exempt – none of us. We all know the battle in walking with God where the flesh fights against the Spirit to keep us from doing what we would.

We recognize that warning, "Do not give the devil a foothold" and yet so often we have. We want to destroy that foothold, whatever it may be. We want to confess to You our sin, our disobedience. We want to thank You that Jesus Christ died and His blood is sufficient. We want to thank You for the Holy Spirit who will "create in me a clean heart, O God and renew a right Spirit within me."

And we pray that we will do serious business with You that our lives might be safe and secure and holy.

