

“My Conscience, Your Conscience”

August 11, 2019

I Thessalonians 5:1-8

Thank you for an opportunity to preach God’s Word again today. Please find with me the fourteenth chapter of Romans.

Psalm 139:14 says this *“I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.”*

Man is fearfully and wonderfully made; “man” meaning mankind. Consider just how you’ve been made – made in the image of God – with a conscience.

Just the fact that you have the ability to tell right from wrong, your heart reminds you that you are a creature formed and designed by God, your Creator. So, your conscience tells you that you are a moral being. And a moral being is an indication of a moral standard. And a moral standard comes from a perfect, moral Being – God.

I’ve titled today’s message “My Conscience, Your Conscience.” Shall we pray?

Let’s read Romans 14:1. When someone reads God’s Word, if possible, you should follow it closely in your own Bible for two reasons. One, because it’s the only Book in existence that contains pure truth. And how often do you read things that are true throughout the week. Proverbs 30:5 *“Every word of God is pure...”* And two, because we need to be like the Berean Christians, who were commended because they searched the Scriptures daily whether the things Paul taught were truly Scripture.

Please follow in your own Bible at verse one [Read Romans 14:1-8].

Have you ever said “I have a bad feeling about this”? That bad feeling is not your conscience. In this case, your dictionary is incorrect. Conscience is not *“An inner feeling or voice viewed as acting as a guide to the rightness or wrongness of one’s behavior.”* [Found on Google search as the definition of conscience]. Your conscience is quite large in comparison to your feelings, which fluctuate all day long.

Rather, your conscience is a function of your heart. And, have you noticed that you can love someone while you are going against your conscience. It happens all the time today. Couples live together who are not married. Initially they know their relationship is wrong. But, by pushing back the prodding of their conscience, they proceed to develop a love for that person.

So, what is the conscience? J. Cricket once said this *“A conscience is that still, small voice that people won’t listen to.”*

Your conscience is your inner questioner. So, yes, it can correctly be called a voice because here’s what it does. It simply asks you this: “Right? Or wrong? Should I or shouldn’t I?” Then, your will either abides by the right or it rejects the voice and chooses the wrong.

Here’s what you conscience can do. Your conscience can convict you. Do you remember the case when the Pharisees brought an immoral woman to the Temple and threw her at Jesus’ feet? That day Jesus knelt down and wrote in the sand; after which all of the Pharisees, one by one, *“convicted by the conscience”* (John 8:9) all walked away.

And your conscience bears witness to the existence of God’s law. Romans 2:15 *“For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: (15) Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their **conscience also bearing witness**, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)...”*

And you might have a weak conscience. I Corinthians 8:10 *“For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol’s temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; (11) And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? (12) But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their **weak conscience**, ye sin against Christ.”*

But, let me say just one more word about your conscience. Your conscience has been made in the image of the perfect conscience of Jesus Christ; just like *you* were made in His image. So, the more you learn of *Him*, and the more you learn *from* Him, the stronger your conscience will be.

One man puts it like this. *“We must learn to obey Jesus in everything, and so must begin somewhere: let it be at once, and in the very next thing that lies at the door of our conscience!”* (G. MacDonald).

What, then does the Apostle Paul teach us here in this fourteenth chapter of Romans?

First, maintain fellowship with other Christians; verse one.

Let’s begin with this word “weak” here in verse one.

Romans 14:1 *“Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. (2) For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.”*

Surprisingly, the Early Church often had problems with Christians and eating. For example, sometimes in some Churches, some of the wealthier people would come to the Agape Feast, the Church dinner, and they’d be very hungry and wouldn’t wait for others and some of them would even get drunk while others got no food or drink.

In another place, some Christians felt it was OK to go to the town Bazaar and buy food that been left over after it had been brought to the altar of the town idols. Then, when that food was cooked and offered at their table, some Christians

would not think it was right before God to eat it since it had been offered to idols.

Then, there’s the case of Peter eating with Gentile Christians until the Jewish Christians came in town; those who would only eat quote “kosher” meals. Paul had to confront and correct the Apostle Peter for doing this.

So, the Early Church often had trouble with eating and foods.

This section of Romans is a teaching on how Christians should live among other Christians.

In this case, it was a matter of “Should I eat meat when I share a meal with my brother in Christ when he would only eat vegetables?” It was a problem; and most likely, larger than you would think. Some Christians would eat meat and some would only eat vegetables.

Look again with me at verse one.

Romans 14:1 *“Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. (2) For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.”*

Eating vegetable wasn’t the real problem, was it? Some Christians were weak. That means they had a weak conscience. It’s a conscience that’s weak because it doesn’t have enough information [Idea found on <https://www.ligionier.org> “The Weak Conscience” by Dr. R. C. Sproul].

Let’s, for example, say you were saved out of a cult that taught you from a little child that eating meat was sinful. Now, you are saved. And now you’ve been invited to dinner with a mature Christian. So, the question of what food you’d like comes up. And you, you’ve been recently saved out of a cult where you were told it was a sin to eat meat, so you convey this to your prospective host. And the host, knowing Romans fourteen, knows exactly what to do – don’t insist on eating meat when these folks come to your home.

Let's say you've been a drunkard and are now saved. And you've been invited to someone's house for a meal. Will the host serve you alcohol, knowing that you've lived in sin in that alcohol for most of your adult life? Of course, not.

To have a weak conscience means you don't have enough information.

By the way, you've all heard of vegans and vegetarians. Do you know what vegan is? A vegan is someone who won't eat or even use or wear animal products. So, their questioner, their conscience, asks them "Is this right or wrong? Should I or shouldn't I eat meat?"

And what's the difference between a vegan and a vegetarian? A vegetarian is a vegan; no poultry, no meat, and no fish; but a vegetarian will eat eggs and drink milk and use mayonnaise. And some vegans will not eat with vegetarians and vice versa. And some are so quote "pure" they won't eat with anyone who isn't like them.

Can you see, though, that the problem is not really the food as much as it is the matter of maintaining a spirit of unity in the Church? The real problem in Rome was that the unity of the Body of Christ was being disrupted by eating or not eating meat.

Folks, when someone has what they believe is a good reason why they have a right to do a particular thing, Christ-like unity says "Don't do it if and when it will have a deleterious effect on them." Deleterious means it will cause harm or damage to them in some way.

The problem then and the problem now is the same. Unity between Christians can easily be interrupted by your choices. In other words, the devil will even use food to play havoc with one of the most important things there is; fellowship between Christians.

So, yes meat-eaters versus vegetarians existed in the Early Church just as they do today. But, what one person eats

versus what another eats shouldn't destroy our unity in the LORD.

The passage in front of you was given by the Holy Spirit, not to get you to eat or not to eat vegetables. Instead, the Holy Spirit is focused on your fellowship. The body of Christ is more important than the food you eat.

So, how do you apply these words? Ask yourself "What are the things that bother me about other Christians?" Is what they are doing sin? That's an entirely different matter. But, if it's a matter of their conscience, Paul says receive them. Romans 14:1 "*Him that is weak in the faith **receive** ye, but not to doubtful disputations.*"

First, maintain fellowship with other Christians.

Second, your attitude is more important than your diet; verse three.

Romans 14:3 "*Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. (4) Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.*"

Folks, Your attitude towards another Christian is a hundred times more important than your diet.

It's surprising how much of the New Testament Christian's life is determined by his attitude.

Did you know that there's a command in the Bible that you must take on the attitude of Christ? Philippians 2:1 "*If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, (2) Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.*

(3) Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. (4) Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. (5) Let this mind [attitude] be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: ..."

What you do should be done while you take in consideration other people. What's your attitude towards your neighbor? Do you remember who your neighbor is? It's anyone who is "near" you.

What's your attitude towards that person; what they do or don't do; even how they do what they do or don't do?

Oh, and have you ever wondered why other people can't see the world the way you see it?

Folks, that's your attitude. It's not why can't other people see things my way; but, how can I see things the way they do? I've got a friend who owns a lawn-care business and a he owns a mobile detailing business. And here's what he says. "I can't stand all the paperwork. I'd rather do physical labor all day than to sit down to my desk." Obviously one approach is different than the other. But one's not better than the other.

And do have any idea how frustrating it is to me that some people are so goal-oriented? Why can't other people be like me? Why can't they see that good relationships are far more important than whether or not you swam the English Channel?

And, why do you drink coffee? Tea's better for you anyway. Folks, does it really matter that other people aren't just like you?

Someone wrote *"It's not our differences that divide us. It's our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences"* (Audre Lorde).

Think again about Jesus. He took on flesh. He lived with brothers and sisters. He had a mom and dad. He had neighbors. He had temptations. He hurt when other people hurt. He laughed when other people laughed. He showed compassion. Jesus had the perfect attitude towards people.

So, what's Paul's word to you and me?

Romans 14:3 *"Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God*

bath received him. (4) Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand."

That's your attitude. Are you despising somebody else because they eat meat and you don't? Are you despising them because they have something you can't afford? Are you despising people because they don't see the world like you see it?

Paul's answer is simple. God has received him. He's saved. He's a child of God. She's come to know the LORD. And who are you to stand as his or her judge? Are you here to judge the way somebody else parent's their children? Each of us stands and falls before the Master. And folks, He's able to make them stand. Romans 15:7 *"Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God."*

So, that's the attitude you need to maintain; the attitude of Christ Himself.

First, maintain fellowship with other Christians.

Second, your attitude is more important than your diet.

Third, who are you serving anyway? Verse five.

Romans 14:5 *"One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.*

(6) He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

(7) For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. (8) For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."

Paul goes from the types of food we eat to the day on which we worship. He says "whether it's the food you eat or don't eat or it's the day on which you worship, do it to the LORD. Eat or drink to the LORD.

Everything you do can be done as to the LORD.

Colossians 3:23 *“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; (24) Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.”*

I Corinthians 10:31 *“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”*

And Paul gives us one specific qualifier on what you do and don't do. It's in verse six. Romans 14:6 *“He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for **he giveth God thanks**; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and **giveth God thanks**.”*

Folks, if you want to hold a good conscience before God and men, ask this one question constantly “Am I giving thanks to the LORD for this?”

Can you see that this is your new-found freedom in Christ? God has saved you for freedom. You belong to a Savior Who has freed you from condemnation, from sin, and from selfishness. You no longer have to live for yourself now that you are saved. You are now living unto the LORD.

Romans 6:14 *“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”*

Romans 8:1 *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”*

And Romans 14:7 *“For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. (8) For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.”*

Folks, you *do* have a conscience. It's your innate questioner posing questions to you regarding all of your choices. But, can you see your freedom in Christ? Can you see that you no longer live unto yourself? And you don't die

unto yourself. Whether I live or whether I die, I am the LORD's; period.

My wife and I try to go for a walk together on Sunday afternoons. So we go to Cornfield Point. We sit on one of the benches. And we enjoy one of the most spectacular sunsets in the world. And we talk, about everything.

Last week the question of music came up. And Janet asked me about the music in the Churches I attended in Lesotho and South Africa. So, I told her.

The music lasts for about an hour with a lot of clapping, a lot of movement; lots of sitting and standing and praising the LORD, no music to sing from; and a lot of volume. Now, I totally enjoyed the services. But the music was way too loud, lasted way too long, and, by the time I was to get up to speak, I was really tuckered out.

I don't like the loud worship music. Yet, the spirit of the people was so tremendous. The happiness and joy in the LORD was so evident that I couldn't help but rejoice along with them. [Watch video by S'Fiso

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ili5DgZJ2tk>

Father if it is Your will, let it be done;

Let it be Father,

Let it be Father,

Let it be all powerful,

It is well then, my Father,

If it is your will, then let it be done,

All that happens in Your will All Powerful One

No matter if it's good or bad, let it be

But only if it is Your will,

If You have agreed,

Even if it shake our faith, Father,

Even if the riff raff come,

Let it be,

It is the will of my Father.

You see. Christians the world over are different. There are lots of differences between Christians wherever you go.

Simply put, you aren't your brother's judge.

A Christian belongs to the LORD, first and foremost.

Can you see how you are being called to maintain the unity in the body of Christ? It happens, in part, by your attitudes.

First, maintain fellowship with other Christians.

Second, your attitude is more important than your diet.

Third, who are you serving anyway?

Here are the two most important questions you need to ask whenever you are about to do something. "Am I doing this as unto the LORD?" And "Am I giving thanks to the LORD as I do it?"

You see, Jesus died to pay for every one of your sins. Sin was so repulsive the LORD that He had to remove it from His sight. His Own Son became the Sacrifice for your sins. Have you received Him as your personal LORD and Savior? If not, why not?

Hymn # 769 "O, That Will Be Glory"