

## The Ease of Decision Making: Endangerment

Scripture: Romans 14:23

Code: B130422

By God's grace, each of us has been created with warning systems to prevent us from harm. Pain is your physical warning system, letting you know when something is wrong with your body. Imagine how susceptible you would be to burns, exposure, and all kinds of physical dangers if you couldn't detect pain.

In the same way, your conscience is your *spiritual* warning system. It alerts you when your thoughts, words, or behavior are contradicting the moral law that's been established in your heart. Romans 2:14-15 says that every person has God's law written in his or her heart—it's what gives each of us our basic understanding of right and wrong.

But your conscience isn't a perfect warning system. It's shaped, informed, and sharpened by several external factors, like your culture and your faith. It can be twisted, seared, and manipulated—sometimes even without your knowledge. It falls to each person to guard and protect his conscience from corruption.

In the end, your conscience functions properly only when it's oriented to God's Word, and when you're actively paying attention to it. Your conscience can be right in line with God's righteous standards, but it is useless if you ignore its warnings.

So when it comes to making decisions about issues and activities in life's gray areas—matters on which God's Word is silent—it's important to ask yourself, *Will this activity train me to ignore my conscience?*

Last week we considered Paul's instructions to the Corinthians for esteeming the convictions of other, less mature believers—his exhortation was to not let the exercise of our Christian liberty be a stumbling block to weaker brothers and sisters in Christ.

In a parallel passage, Paul gave similar instruction to the Roman church regarding food offered to idols. In so doing, he made one point very clear—it is dangerous to do anything that violates your conscience and causes you to doubt your actions, even if other Christians feel free to so act. "He who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin" (Romans 14:23). We sin if we act in any way that goes contrary to the convictions of our own faith and properly informed consciences.

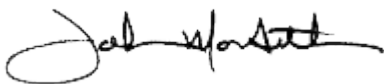
In 1 Corinthians 10:25-29, Paul makes three references to abstaining from certain practices "for conscience' sake." Never train yourself to violate your conscience. If your conscience is troubled by what you are thinking about doing, *don't do it*. If you are not sure about it, *don't do it*. Instead, heed Paul's warning to Timothy that rejecting or ignoring your conscience leads to spiritual shipwreck (1 Timothy 1:19).

It is hard to overstate the value of a clear conscience, and it is definitely worth keeping your conscience clear so that your relationship with God will not be hindered (cf. Psalm 66:18). If you keep yourself in prayer and the study of God's Word, you will rightly inform your conscience so you can "walk as children of Light . . . trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:8, 10).

Charles Wesley wrote a hymn called "I Want a Principle Within" about our need for a clear, sensitive conscience. That hymn is rarely sung these days, but the truth of Wesley's words ought to resonate with every believer.

I want a principle within  
Of watchful, godly fear,  
A sensibility of sin,  
A pain to feel it near.  
Help me the first approach to feel  
Of pride or wrong desire;  
To catch the wandering of my will,  
And quench the kindling fire.

From Thee that I no more may stray,  
No more Thy goodness grieve,  
Grant me the filial awe, I pray,  
The tender conscience give.  
Quick as the apple of an eye,  
O God, my conscience make!  
Awake my soul when sin is nigh,  
And keep it still awake.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be "John Wesley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'J' and a long, sweeping underline.

(Adapted from [\*Right Thinking in a World Gone Wrong\*](#).)

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