INTRODUCTION: The first movie I ever saw at the theater was Walt Disney’s Pinocchio, back in 1953 …

1. I was four years old. It remains one of my favorite films of all time.
   a) Produced in 1940 by Walt Disney
   b) His second animated film after the 1937 Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs
   c) Based, loosely, on the Book The Adventures of Pinocchio by Carlo Collodi (1883)

2. Pinocchio, a puppet (mannequin), is brought to life by the kindly Blue Fairy, so that the aged puppet-maker, Geppetto, has some child. Pinocchio wants to become “a real boy,” but to do so he must pass an extended test: He must learn to live by his conscience and prove himself to be “brave, truthful and unselfish.”

3. Blue Fairy: “Always let your conscience be your guide.”

4. Jiminy Cricket is appointed to his “guardian.” He is to serve as Pinocchio’s surrogate conscience until Pinocchio becomes a “real boy” (human being) and gets his own conscience.

5. Jiminy Cricket attempts to give Pinocchio his first lesson in life:
   a) J.C.: “The world is full of temptations.”
   b) Pin: “What’s a temptation?”
   c) J.C.: “Temptation … well … they’re the wrong things that seem right at the time. But, even though the right things might seem wrong sometimes; sometimes the wrong thing might be right at the time … or vice versa! Understand?”
   d) Pin: “Uh-uh!” (No)

6. So Jiminy Cricket says to Pinocchio: “You need to stick close to me,” which leads to a song: “Give a Little Whistle”
   a) When you get in trouble and you don't know right from wrong
      Give a little whistle! Give a little whistle!
      When you meet temptation and the urge is very strong
      Give a little whistle! Give a little whistle!
      Take the straight and narrow path
      And if you start to slide
      Give a little whistle! Give a little whistle!
      And always let your conscience be your guide
   b) i.e., If Pinocchio is in doubt about a specific course of action, he’s to whistle, and Jiminy Cricket will help him determine what’s the right thing to do.

7. You know the story: Pinocchio learns through one failure after another how to be brave, true and unselfish. In the end, he becomes a real boy, and Jiminy Cricket gets a gold badge - Conscience!
8. A child’s book and a classic movie to remind us that to be truly human we must live according to our conscience.

9. The human conscience is a powerful force in life.

10. Conscience is a Biblical Word.

   a) From the Latin: conscientia – knowledge within oneself, a sense of right and wrong, a moral sense.

      (1) conscire: to be aware with (con); to be mutually aware
      (2) com (with, thoroughly) scire (to know)
      (3) to thoroughly know (right from wrong)

   b) The Greek synonym: Suneidesis

      (1) with (sun) knowledge (eido)
      (2) to be aware of, conscious of, to know one’s mind.
      (3) the soul distinguishing between what is morally good and bad; a consciousness of right and wrong.

   c) Related words: consciousness, conscientious, conscious (i.e., awareness) and consensus

   d) Suneidesis (conscience) is used some 29 times in the NT

      (1) Twice in Acts
      (2) 20 times in Paul’s letters
      (3) 4 times in Hebrews
      (4) 3 times in First Peter

   e) Paul, especially, appeals to the conscience: using that word 22 out of its 29 times in the NT.

      (1) And looking intently at the council, Paul said, “Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day.” (Acts 23:1)
      (2) So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man. (Acts 24:16)
      (3) I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit— that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. (Romans 9:1-3)
      (4) But if someone says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice,” then do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience—I do not mean your conscience, but his. For why should my liberty be determined by someone else's conscience? (1 Cor. 10:28-29)
      (5) The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. (1 Tim.1:15)

11. Paul is a Jew. As such he had a deeply developed Theology of the Conscience.
a) Men were made in the image of God.

b) Therefore, unlike the animals, they share with God and the Angels a moral capacity.

c) The capacity for moral judgments (between right and wrong)

d) A morally responsible being: A Human Being

then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. (Gen. 2:7)


It shouldn’t surprise you that you have a conscience. You’re made in the image of God, and God is a moral God, so you must be a moral creature who makes moral judgements. And what is conscience if not shining the spotlight of your moral judgment back on yourself, your thoughts, and your actions. A moral being would expect to make moral self-judgments. So conscience is inherent in personhood. It is not the result of sin. It is not something that Christians will lose after God glorifies them. This means that Jesus, who is fully human, has a conscience. Unlike our consciences, though, Jesus’s conscience perfectly matches God’s will, and he has never sinned against it.

13. So, in setting forth man’s need for the Gospel and the salvation this Gospel offers in Jesus Christ, Paul appeals to the human conscience.

a) Key truth: Sinful people are without excuse. They are guilty before God for all their sins.

b) Why? Because they violate (go against) two powerful witnesses of General Revelation

(1) The witness of Creation …

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. (Rom. 1:18-20)

(2) The witness of Conscience …

Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? (Rom. 2:1-3)

For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them (Rom. 2:14-15)

c) J.D. Crowley: Conscience, pp. 23-24
Many have taken their lives because of a secret guilt – a sin that no one else knew except that impossible-to-suppress voice within. Others have gone mad from the telltale heartbeat of a guilty conscience. But when you think about it, why should you care what your conscience says about you? The “why” is a great mystery. No one knows why the conscience feels so much like an independent third party, but it probably has something to do with the relationship between two universal realities that Paul discusses in Romans chapters 1 and 2. Romans 1:19-20 claims that all humans know intuitively by the witness of nature that God exists and must be absolutely powerful. Romans 2:14-15 goes on to teach that everyone also has a conscience, an imperfect-but-accurate-enough version of God’s will, as standard equipment in their hearts. Then verse 16 makes a link between the conscience and the day of judgement. Listen to these two passages side by side.

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For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. (Rom. 2:14-16)

Put together, these passages seem to explain conscience like this: though we all have a sense that what’s going on in our conscience is secret, we also have a sense that an all-powerful, all-knowing God is in on the secret and will someday judge those secrets at his great and terrifying tribunal.

14. Remember where Paul is with his “bad news” before the Good News.
   a) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Rom. 3:23)
   b) First: The Roman Pagans (1:18-32)
      (1) dishonored bodies (heterosexual immorality)
      (2) degrading passions (homosexuality and lesbianism)
      (3) depraved minds (approving of wrong)
      (4) They are without excuse because they ignore the Light of God’s creation order.
   c) Second: The Greek Moralists (2:1-16)
      (1) condemned by his own virtue judgements
      (2) condemned by his own conscience
      (3) Charles R. Erdman: Romans; p. 43
         There is to be such a day of retribution and punishment, a day when God’s opposition to disobedience and sin must be manifested against sinners. This fact the universal conscience of mankind attests. The principles of such judgment, however, will be absolutely just: (a) Each man will be judged
according to his deeds (vs. 6-11), and (b) each man will be judged according to his light (vs. 12-16).

They are without excuse because they ignore the Light of Conscience.

d) Third: The Jewish Legalists (2:17-3:20)

(1) They are condemned by their own religion
(2) They are condemned by their great privileges
(3) They are condemned by the Word of God
(4) They are without excuse because they ignore the Light of God’s Revelation (Scripture)

Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path. (Ps. 119:105)

e) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Rom. 3:23)

15. So … Paul now turns to The Rule of Conscience (Romans 2:12-16)

a) For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. (Rom. 2:12-16)

b) The Moral Knowledge of the Conscience

c) The Sins of the Conscience

d) The Guilt of the Conscience

e) The Judgement of the Conscience

I. THE RULE OF THE CONSCIENCE (Romans 2:12-16)

For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. (Rom. 2:12-16)

A. The Moral Knowledge of the Conscience (2:12-15a)

1. For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by
nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, (Romans 2:12-15a)

2. In the previous verse Paul told us the God’s judgments would be impartial: “For God shows no partiality” (2:11)

a) He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. (Romans 2:6-10)

b) a judgement upon our sinful works:
   
   (1) when we transgressed the Law
   
   (2) when we neglected obedience.

c) or a reward for our good works: obedience

d) In verse 12 Paul continues this thought:

3. Charles Hodge: Romans; p. 53

a) God is just and impartial in all his judgments. This is confirmed not only by the previous assertion, that he will judge every man according to his works, but also by the exhibition of that important principle contained in this verse. Men are to be judged by the light they have severally enjoyed. The ground of judgement is their works; the rule of judgement is their knowledge.

b) Romans 2:1-10 = Judgement according to our Works

c) Romans 2:12-16 = Judgement according to our Light

   (1) The ground (basis): What I did/ did not.

   (2) The rule (measure): What I knew.

d) Illustration: You wouldn’t fail a second-grader for not knowing that the area of a circle is derived by multiplying the radius squared by the number $\pi$ (area = $\pi \times r^2$). But you would expect the child to know that $2 + 2 = 4$.

e) True Example: My going the wrong way on a round-about in Aberavon, Wales. The Bobbie’s pity on me. (Ignorance)

4. According to Paul “all have sinned” (Romans 3:23)

a) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Rom. 3:23)

b) The difference is either –

   (1) They sin with a Knowledge of the Law from God’s Word

   (2) They sin with a Knowledge of God’s Law in their conscience

c) i.e., they either sin under the Law or they sin without the law, but they all sin!
5. Paul’s statement here is startling: *People have the Law of God written on their hearts* (i.e., their consciences)

   a) *For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law.* (Rom. 2:14)

   b) i.e., the **Ten Commandments** (the moral law)

   c) … They show that the work of the Law is written on their hearts.”

   d) This is **important** wording …

      (1) not *The WORD of the law are written on their hearts.*

      (2) but *The WORK of the law are written on their hearts.*

   e) meaning: They may not be able to recite the Ten Commandments, word for word or in order, but they do know murder is a capital offense, sleeping with your best friend’s wife is grossly immoral, and that taking things from your employer is stealing and illegal!

   f) **They know these things instinctively!**

6. Most people do not have the Law of Moses before them: Genesis to Deuteronomy; All people do have the Ten Commandments written on their consciences! **Need proof?**

   a) **First:** Read Genesis 1:1-Exodus 19:25; you’ll find these things to be true …

      (1) The people of Babel worshipped false gods and were judged.

      (2) Cain did not worship God properly and knew he was wrong

      (3) Cain’s descendants refused to honor the name of the Lord (Gen. 26)

      (4) ? Sabbath Breaking?

      (5) Ham dishonored his father Noah and was cursed because he did so

      (6) Lamech killed men and he knew it was wrong *(Thou shall not murder)*

      (7) Lamech took two wives and committed adultery, and was condemned.

      (8) ? Stealing?

      (9) Cain lied to God about Abel, because he was covering up his murder.

      (10) The Angels coveted the daughters of men and took them as wives (Gen. 6)

      (11)  *The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.* (Gen. 6:5-6)

      (12) And all this before *Noah* died; almost 1,000 years before the **Ten Commandments** were written down by Moses!

   b) **Second:** We’ve never discovered a people group who did not have the Ten Commandments as the Basis for their moral and ethical code. They all intuitively embrace the Decalogue.
c) **Third**: Guilt, shame, honor and glory are natural human emotions which point to an active conscience in every human being.

7. We are all to be judged by the same measure: We did not do what we knew was right.
   a) Those who knew more violated all they knew.
   b) Those who knew less still ignored what they knew.

8. Key word: “by nature” (i.e., instinctively)
   a) For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. (Rom. 2:14 ESV)
   b) For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, (Rom. 2:14 NASB)
   c) The Greek: phusis (physis) – the essence of something; the original nature of a thing; the basic constitution of something.
   d) **Charles Hodge**: Romans; p. 55

      The φύσις of anything is the peculiarity of its being, that in virtue of which it is what it is; it is that which belongs to its original constitution, and is opposed to what is taught, acquired, or made. The word is sometimes used for a disposition or sentiment arising out of our nature, as opposed to mere arbitrary rules. It is by nature, not by an external law, that the Gentiles are led to perform moral acts.

   e) phusis (nature) is set in opposition to nomos (law)
   f) **Illustration**: I am, by nature, a Caucasian male human being. I have by law become an American, middle-class, mid-western, Protestant, male, human being.

9. Essential Truth: all human beings are by nature moral creatures who instinctively know right from wrong, and who act according to their conscience – one way or the other.

B. The Sins of the Conscience (2:14)

1. For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. (Rom. 2:14)

2. Sins against the conscience are, in essence, the same as sins against the Law of God.

3. Why? Because the **standard** is the same: What the Law requires.
   a) The Law is the reflection of God’s nature, character and will.
   b) This Law is revealed – written down by the finger of God.

      (1) On two tablets of stone

      And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God. (Exodus 31:18)

      (2) Seen in His mighty works and wonders
Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God.” But Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the Lord had said. (Ex. 8:19)

(3) Written on the human heart …

- They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, (Rom. 2:15a)
- And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. (2 Cor. 3:3)

c) Regardless of how we know the moral order of the universe – Scripture, Creation, Conscience – we are responsible for what we know.

4. And sin is simply not doing what you know is right or doing what you know is wrong.

Q. 14. What is sin?

A. Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God. (WSC #14)

5. So … although the conscience is a subjective force in our lives, it operates from an objective truth: The Will of God revealed to us.

a) Your conscience is personal
b) No two consciences are the same
c) Your conscience applies to you but not to others
d) God alone is the Lord of the conscience
e) But: Every conscience is bound by the Will of God and is informed by the Word of God.
f) Hence: Ignorance of God’s Law, Will, Word is no excuse!

Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. (Rom. 2:1)

6. J.D. Crowley: Conscience; p. 27, 28

Of course, we all tend to assume that our own conscience standards line up with God’s will. No person’s conscience does. Let this truth sink deep into your heart. As we come to understand God’s revealed will more and more, we will have opportunities to add rules to our conscience that God’s Word clearly teaches and weed out rules that God’s Word treats as optional. This will take a lifetime, but we have the Spirit of God, the Word of God, and the church of God to help us.

C. The Guilt of the Conscience (2:15)

1. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them (Rom. 2:15)

2. bears witness ... accuse ... excuse ... Three Functions of the conscience

a) summartureo: to witness/ testify together with (with what? Answer: God’s law/ standard. The Conscience agrees with God)
b) **accuse:** to make an accusation against.

c) **excuse:** to defend, to justify, to speak in favor of

3. **Thomas R. Schreiner:** Romans: ECNT; p. 123

The reference to the conscience also points in the direction of natural law (v. 15). The conscience in Gentiles proves that they are keenly aware of moral norms that accord with the Mosaic law. The conscience is not the origin of moral norms but passes judgment on whether one has abided by those norms. Gentiles who do not have the written law have a twofold witness to the moral norms of the law. First, the commands of the law are written in their hearts, and second, the conscience also testifies to the validity of those moral norms, in that it condemns or approves of the behavior practiced.

4. It is **impossible** to silence the conscience. The conscience can be weakened, defiled, seared or distorted …

   a) **Weakened** by being encouraged to sin:
      
      (1) *Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.* (1 Cor. 8:12)

      (2) The weaker brother syndrome

   b) **Defiled** by immoral living (impurity) and unbelief:
      
      *To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled.* (Titus 1:15)

   c) **Seared** by repeatedly suppressing its moral guidance

      (1) hardened, desensitized, scarred

      (2) *Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared.* (1 Tim. 4:1-2)

   d) **Overly sensitive** because of legalism, rules, lack of assurance or failure to appropriate grace or receive forgiveness.

5. The conscience is **never infallible** and always **fallen** (sinful), and therefore must be discipled, developed and trained by the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. Consciences are immature but can grow up!

   a) **But solid food is for the mature,** for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. (Heb. 5:14)

   b) **Trained to follow God:** a good conscience

      *The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.* (1 Tim. 1:15)

   c) **Trained to disobey God:** a bad conscience

      *For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of*
Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. (Heb. 9:13-14)

6. But the moral law (natural law) written on the human conscience can never be erased or its witness for truth or against sin ever be silenced.

7. Charles R. Erdman: Romans, p. 46

It should be further noticed that Paul indicated here that conscience is universal and infallible. Of course it cannot tell a man what is right and wrong, but it never fails to indicate to him whether his purpose was consciously right or wrong. That is to say, conscience may need enlightenment but it never fails to approve or rebuke what is right or wrong in moral intention. However, for its enlightenment it needs both the revealed law of God and his glorious gospel of grace.

D. The Judgment of the Conscience (2:16)

1. on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. (Rom. 2:16)

2. In the end, God will judge the secrets of men = the inner thoughts, motives and affections that only the conscience knows.

3. The conscience will be like a tape-recording of our souls. It will serve as an inerasable, permanent and unbiased record of how we lived our lives and why we did what we did. It will be the chief witness against us (for us) on the day of Christ’s final judgment!

Conclusion: How does all this apply to us?

1. Very simple: We live in a culture in which there is a massive, deliberate and concerted effort to reprogram the conscience by redefining right and wrong.

2. Allow me to Illustrate: In our culture today …
   a) Our kids in public schools are taught that homosexuality, same-sex marriage or living in fornication are ok, but to call these things “sin” is a “hate crime” worthy of expulsion.
   b) Our public school kids can get free condoms, birth control pills, dabble in witchcraft, learn about Ramadan, or make totem poles and dance around them, but they can’t read the Bible, pray out loud to one God, or recite the Ten Commandments.
   c) Bank of America and Wells Fargo will force all employees to go through sensitivity training to endorse gay lifestyles but will fire a person who openly declares opposition to those sins.
   d) Your tax dollars will fund abortion through Planned Parenthood (and the sale of human body parts) but your taxes can’t support church soup kitchens, or tutoring programs or counseling for drug addiction.


4. The human conscience will not rest easy and live in peace as long as we violate Natural Law (the Law of Nature) and ignore God’s Law recorded in Scripture and taught by the church. So …
   a) The man feeling guilty for sodomizing another man,
   b) The woman living in an unnatural marriage with another woman,
   c) The guy who uses his girlfriend sexually every Friday night,
d) The young lady full of remorse, shame and guilt over the abortion of her child,

e) And the godless man who is angry at God and so professes to be a “scientific atheist,”

f) must do something to assuage the relentless witness of their weakened, defiled, seared and wounded conscience!

5. **How?** By convincing others to redefine good and evil, so that what is making them feel so guilty will somehow be accepted, approved and exonerated by everyone! Then their feelings of guilt will subside!

6. So they purpose to shame, to bully and intimidate, to socially force, and even to physically persecute others into changing their conscience, and calling sin good and godliness evil!

   a) **Woe to those who call evil good**
      and good evil,
      who put darkness for light
      and light for darkness,
      who put bitter for sweet
      and sweet for bitter!
      Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes,
      and shrewd in their own sight!
      Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine,
      and valiant men in mixing strong drink,
      who acquit the guilty for a bribe,
      and deprive the innocent of his right! (Isa. 5:20-23)

   b) **Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;**
      remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes;
      cease to do evil,
      learn to do good;
      seek justice,
      correct oppression;
      bring justice to the fatherless,
      plead the widow's cause. (Isa. 1:16-17)

   c) “**Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord:**
      though your sins are like scarlet,
      they shall be as white as snow;
      though they are red like crimson,
      they shall become like wool.
      If you are willing and obedient,
      you shall eat the good of the land;
      but if you refuse and rebel,
      you shall be eaten by the sword;
      for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.” (Isa. 1:18-20)

7. **But it won’t work**, for one reason: **God alone is the Lord of the conscience!**

   a) **God alone is the Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in anything, contrary to his Word; or beside it, if matters**
of faith, or worship. So that, to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commands, out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience: and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also. (WCF 20-2)

b) meaning: The conscience reports to God alone and doesn’t care what “everybody agrees” upon!

c) The conscience is **programmed** by God’s Natural Law. It’s in the **hard-drive** of our humanity and cannot be erased or eradicated!

8. Remember the story of *Cain and Abel*?

   a) It’s the story of the **Human Conscience**, and its invincibility!

   b) *Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord.” And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. The Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.”* Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?” And the Lord said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. (Gen. 4:1-10)

   c) What does Hebrews 11:4 say?

   
   By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. (Heb. 11:4)

   d) How does Abel still speak? In our **human conscience**.

   e) Everyone agrees: *Cain killed Abel. Cain is guilty. Cain is cursed!*

   f) You can’t rewrite that story to end in any other way because the **human conscience** won’t allow you to do so!

9. **Remember** the Fairy Tale called “*The Emperor’s New Clothes*”?

   a) *Many years ago there lived an emperor who loved beautiful new clothes so much that he spent all his money on being finely dressed. His only interest was in going to the theater or in riding about in his carriage where he could show off his new clothes. He had a different costume for every hour of the day. Indeed, where it was said of other kings that they were at court, it could only be said of him that he was in his dressing room!*

   One day two swindlers came to the emperor's city. They said that they were weavers, claiming that they knew how to make the finest cloth imaginable. Not only were the colors and the*
patterns extraordinarily beautiful, but in addition, this material had the amazing property that it was to be invisible to anyone who was incompetent or stupid.

"It would be wonderful to have clothes made from that cloth," thought the emperor. "Then I would know which of my men are unfit for their positions, and I'd also be able to tell clever people from stupid ones." So he immediately gave the two swindlers a great sum of money to weave their cloth for him.

b) The Emperor’s sins of vanity, pride and suspicion took hold of him …

c) He sent various state officials to check on the new fabric, each one falling under the spell of fear and his own pride.

d) The two swindlers invited him to step closer, asking him if it wasn't a beautiful design and if the colors weren't magnificent. They pointed to the empty loom, and the poor old minister opened his eyes wider and wider. He still could see nothing, for nothing was there.

"Gracious" he thought. "Is it possible that I am stupid? I have never thought so. Am I unfit for my position? No one must know this. No, it will never do for me to say that I was unable to see the material."

"You aren't saying anything!" said one of the weavers.

"Oh, it is magnificent! The very best!" said the old minister, peering through his glasses. "This pattern and these colors! Yes, I'll tell the emperor that I am very satisfied with it!"

e) Official after official gave in to social fear rather than face the truth of their own conscience ...

f) … until the fateful day arrived!

g) "Goodness, they suit you well! What a wonderful fit!" they all said. "What a pattern! What colors! Such luxurious clothes!"

"The canopy to be carried above your majesty awaits outside," said the grandmaster of ceremonies.

"Yes, I am ready!" said the emperor. "Don't they fit well?" He turned once again toward the mirror, because it had to appear as though he were admiring himself in all his glory.

The emperor walked beneath the beautiful canopy in the procession, and all the people in the street and in their windows said, "Goodness, the emperor's new clothes are incomparable! What a beautiful train on his jacket. What a perfect fit!" No one wanted it to be noticed that he could see nothing, for then it would be said that he was unfit for his position or that he was stupid. None of the emperor's clothes had ever before received such praise.

"But he doesn't have anything on!" said a small child.

"Good Lord, let us hear the voice of an innocent child!" said the father, and whispered to another what the child had said.

"A small child said that he doesn't have anything on!"

Finally everyone was saying, "He doesn't have anything on!"
The emperor shuddered, for he knew that they were right, but he thought, "The procession must go on!" He carried himself even more proudly, and the chamberlains walked along behind carrying the train that wasn't there.

10. **Gospel People** are **real people** with **real consciences**: Like Pinocchio, they’ve learned to be “brave, truthful and unselfish.”
   
a) **brave** enough to face social ridicule or reprisals,
   
b) **true** enough to follow their conscience and speak God’s Word,
   
c) **unselfish** enough to care about the eternal destiny and spiritual welfare of those not clothed in Christ’s righteousness.

11. Is homosexuality really ok? Are two lesbians really in love? Does the young man sleeping with his girlfriend really have nothing to be ashamed of? Can we really believe that same-sex marriage is legal? Is it really the case that Christianity is evil and atheism is good? Do we really believe that God’s Word is wrong but the American culture is right? Is the Emperor correct or is King Jesus? Really?

12. Shhhh! Listen! Can you hear that? All those voices? Can you hear all your own **consciences**? “*Look! The Emperor has no clothes!*”

13. … because he is not dressed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ!