

Dr. Gary Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Lecture 23, 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1, Paul's Response to the Question of Food Sacrificed to Idols.

1 Corinthians 10

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This is Dr. Gary Meadors in his teaching on the book of 1 Corinthians. This is session 23, 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1, Paul's Response to the Question of Food Sacrifice to Idols. 1 Corinthians 10.

Well, welcome back to our third session in 1 Corinthians, chapters 8 through 11.1. We've been looking at this issue of food and idols, the cultural setting of a first-century Roman colony, and the struggle of the new Christians, coming in with their Jewish heritage in a sense, and how they deal with religious pluralism. When you add to that the complications of this societal structure, social status, what we have called the elite, and what they view as their rights, it gets a little bit complicated. In chapter 8, we saw particularly where Paul balances this question of what we know and the community itself.

He upholds the fact that, yes, in terms of knowledge, there's one God, a strong monotheism, and that the religiously plural culture, with all of the deities and gods and so forth that the Corinthians were used to in their own setting are just not valid. Idols are nothing. And yet, they live in a world that's defined, actually, by all of this iconography.

And so, Paul says, we know this is a fact. And he's really reflecting Jewish Christian tradition here. And then in verse 7, he says, in verse chapter 8, 8, 7, but not everyone possesses this knowledge.

And then he talks about those who don't. He talks about them seeing the ones who are taking advantage of their knowledge in a variety of ways, those who have not been able to be transformed in their minds adequately yet. Their conscience is weak, meaning that their worldview structure is not adequate to be able to eat a piece of meat that they know has been run through the temple and not think of it as guilt by association.

He says that they're weak. Weakness is a term that's used to describe a lack of a mature worldview. And yet, Paul protects them because it's a part of life when you enter into a new worldview that you've got to make a transition that would not have been in any way easy in the first century and in that culture, even if they had some

knowledge of the Jewish setting and its monotheism and ethics, they still would have had a horrible time doing that.

And so, he's trying to protect them. So, he's got knowledge and love, as it starts out at the beginning of chapter 8. Love is representative of activity in the community. And he's trying to balance these things out.

In verse 13, he concludes that by saying, therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, and what he means by that is that the person who's weak presses beyond their level of comfortable worldview transition, and therefore does something that internal to them they're stressed by and still think is wrong, they have violated their worldview and values, and they've hurt their conscience by ignoring it. And that's this whole mechanism God has created in human beings to be able to regulate society. And so, you don't want to do that.

That's a horrible thing to do. And it sets bad patterns. And Paul says, don't do that to the strong.

And you sin against your brothers and sisters if you force them to make a transition before their time. You've got to lead them into that. Now, there are more complications, and of course, those complications have to do with what we've learned about social status in this particular culture.

And yet, the general principle is clear. You wound them. You sin against Christ because you've sinned against them.

It's a community thing. Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again so that I will not cause them to fall. So, Paul is saying knowledge is true.

It's to be protected. It's to be recognized. Yet at the same time, you've got to help people through a transition to where they can come to have knowledge and where they can get their worldview in order so that their conscience doesn't condemn them.

They don't have that internal condemnation because they have come to embrace the new worldview. Obviously, that was not the case with a good segment of this first-century Corinthian church. I think it might bear saying that every church and every organization of Christians has a continuum there, every time, all the time.

You've got weak, you've got strong, and that is how their worldview developed. You've got weak, their worldview lacks development, and they need help. They're always there.

So, you have consistently, without the cultural apparitions of Roman Corinth, you've still got that in every congregation. You've got to bring it along. That's why education in a church is so absolutely essential.

And it is something that seems to have sort of been lost in our current culture. You've got to have a very thorough, sound educational program across the board. Biblical teaching, theological teaching, ethical teaching, everything has to be brought to bear.

And you need to cycle that in a church so that the people who are coming along are educated. Paul says I'm not going to offend them. I'm going to restrict my rights.

I'm going to sacrifice. I think it is worth asking how long should one accommodate that growth issue. And I think that's a legitimate question. In other words, you can't let those who have not matured run everything, so to speak.

They cannot be the deciding factor at the end of the day. They are responsible to grow. You be tender with them.

You mentor them. But if they refuse over a period of time to grow, they have shifted into a belligerency to the truth. Then, there are different rules of engagement.

However, in this setting, Paul's rules of engagement are to educate. He supports the Strong's view that they have the right view, but to educate them that there's more involved than knowledge. There's also love, which means mentoring the community.

Mentoring has not only to do with some accommodation but also with teaching them. And if they come to a point where they're not teachable and they become belligerent, then the rules of engagement would change. Also, that's sort of my implication of take on how this sort of thing works.

Then Paul comes back in chapter 9, which we looked at last time, and talks about the issue of rights. He uses himself as an apostle, as one who's privileged and in a very special way by God, that he has rights. He has the right to support, which is what the first half of chapter 9 particularly looks at.

And yet Paul has not taken that support. He supported himself. His tent-making, probably in the Isthmian games in relation to being around Corinth, is most likely some of that background.

He says in verse 12:12b, but we did not use this right. And that right was the right to be supported, to be taken care of by the church, why they did their ministry. He uses the same term that the social elite were using.

They have rights, and their rights have become the controlling piece and not the Christian ethic. Paul says, well, I've got rights, and I gave up my rights for certain reasons. And then he goes into a beautiful explanation of that from the standpoint that if you just do your duty, and he could do his duty, and he could get paid for it, and that would all be kosher, it would all be acceptable Christian behavior, but Paul wanted to go above and beyond the call of duty.

So, he did not take their support, but he supported himself, and therefore, he's going above and beyond the call of duty, which enters into the realm of reward. You don't get any reward for just doing your duty. You go beyond duty in order to really demonstrate to God your commitment.

Now, that doesn't mean everybody's got to go beyond duty. Paul's not putting that kind of manipulative pressure on these folks. He's talking about himself.

He's talking about choices that leaders often make, and those who were applying their rights probably were in some way leaders in the community, probably the more privileged, the more resources, the more power, and yet they were not doing that. So, Paul says, though I am free in verse 19, I've made myself a slave to all. Then, he elaborates upon that through verse 23.

That needs a little more unpacking, but I just cannot do that. This lecture has to conclude our notes in relation to these chapters, and I need to move on. You can do that, I think, quite well.

Then, verse 24. Do you not know? We're back to that phrase. It's a challenging phrase.

Do you not know that in a race, all the runners run, but only one can win? Paul wouldn't be very accommodating to our current culture, as I mentioned before—verse 25. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training.

They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. So, Paul's still talking about the fact that to do ministry, to be a Christian community, means you've got to go above and beyond the call of duty, and Paul wasn't going to be disqualified for the prize by taking any shortcuts in that regard. Well, that's not all because chapter 10 continues.

We actually come back to this right thing at 10:23. I have the right to do anything. He once again re-engages probably what we call the strong in this issue of rights, but we've got an interlude here with Israel, and it's an illustration. It's a rather elaborate one, so he gives his illustration of himself, and now he's going to give an illustration that Israel missed an opportunity because they would not do it God's way.

You know, that's one way to put it. Verse 10:1, chapter 10:1, For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and the sea.

They ate the same spiritual foods. In other words, they were on an equal footing and drank the same spiritual drink from the same spiritual rock that accompanied them. That rock was Christ.

This is probably what we would call a pre-incarnate aspect of the angel of the Lord. I'm not going to digress into that now. You can look that up in the commentaries, and I'll open it up for you.

Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them. Their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Well, we know the historical story about that.

It was mostly pushing against knowledge, frankly, and trying to have their way rather than let it be Moses and God's way. Now, these things occurred as an example to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. He says this is an object lesson to us.

If Israel, with all of their privilege, failed because of their own lust and selfishness, we better take warning. For example, the word in the King James would probably be a type. Types is a category in scripture that some people use a lot.

You have to be very careful with what we call typology. I'm not going to digress here. The question, as it will come up in the notes briefly, is whether this was a predictive thing intended to predict to be used later as an example or whether it's an analogical example we look back on and use it.

Most of the things we call typological are analogical. They show the way God works in history, and it can work the same way later. It's not a predicted thing.

There are some things that are predictive, such as Tabernacle Temple, but we have to be very careful with this thing of typology. Enough said. And so, they were chided, and some of the sins that they committed, we should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did.

And he's alluding to things he's already talked about within Corinth, and they lost their spiritual privilege as a result of it. So, this is all an analogical example that if you don't straighten up and fly right, you're going to fail just like Israel failed. Don't grumble.

Verse 11. These things happened to them as examples, and they were written down as warnings for us on whom the culmination of the age was to come. So, if you think you stand firm, be careful that you don't fall.

The temptation, no temptation has overcome you except what is common to mankind. God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear, but when you're tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

In short language, this is a very famous verse, of course, 1 Corinthians 10. The point is that this Corinthian community is being tempted to deviate from Christian worldviews and ethics, and Paul is calling them to account for that. They are tempted to do so in their culture, particularly some of them who are in elite status, and they're tempted to justify that, and Paul says you cannot do that.

And that is a draw, but God will help you to overcome it. How? By having the right worldview, by doing the right thing. It doesn't mean a way out sometimes.

It means a way to survive within. It's all an aspect of how we think about our world, and how we relate to it, and what God expects of us in that relationship. That's what he's after.

Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry. Here we're back. We come back full circle to what began in this chapter.

Flee from idolatry. I speak this to sensible people. Judge for yourselves what I say.

Everyone who recognizes that chapter 10, both the traditional and the alternate view, recognizes that chapter 10 makes a negative statement about idolatry. Now, let me go back to my notes on page 124 so that I can keep track. Avoid Israel's failings, right at the very bottom of page 124.

Israel gave in to dabbling and flirting with the world, and as a result of that, they lost their place of privilege. They lost their power, and God had to deal with them in severe ways. Evidently, some of the Corinthians thought that salvation and identification with God's program provided a number of protection from sin and judgment.

But privilege has responsibility, and failure to take responsibility removes the privilege. Chapter 9 ends with a warning about the danger of being disqualified by failure to run the race. Chapter 10 paints a picture of how Israel failed to run the race and was disqualified for the wrong use of their freedom and by taking spiritual privileges for granted.

Warnings by analogy with Israel's history in 1 to 13. Great spiritual privileges do not give one the liberty to violate moral precepts. Paul is wrapping up a lot of things here with his analysis of the community, and even in terms of sexual sins, he raises that again.

Israel enjoyed a great place of privilege, but it did not produce a proper response to God. I'm going to let you read this down through here. I've written that out so that I can move on to keep within the limits that I want for this lecture.

Verses 6 to 13. Israel's actions are canonized object lessons for future generations. The nature of these examples is that they are examples of retrospect or original intention.

Did God write? Did the things that happened with Israel and were written about intended to be brought up later? I think that's an overstatement. I don't think that was the intent. It's analogical.

So, for those two things I mentioned previously, you've got a typology that could be intentional for setting up big metaphors throughout scripture. The tabernacle, and the temple have some things along those lines. Then there are things that come back, and the same thing happens now that happened then.

That's what we call an analogical connection. Spiritual history and human history always sort of work in the same way. The examples are pedagogical teaching that departure from God's way begins a path of destruction.

The substance of these examples in 10:7 and 10, they were idolatry. Issues of sexual morality. Don't test God.

Israel did and Israel lost. And if you test God, you Corinthians, you will find out that you as well will lose. Separate yourself from the world as Israel was told to do long ago.

Grumbling is not tolerated. Numbers and Exodus are brought up in this whole thing of grumbling. Pretty severe judgment of God on Israel during the time of the wilderness wanderings.

And Paul reminds this congregation of that. It makes one wonder if there had to be a pretty good knowledge of Jewish history for chapter 10, particularly, to float well. And so, you've got this mix of Jew-Gentile, you've got this mix of the Jews dealt with idolatry, now the Christians got to deal with idolatry.

So, it's a very interesting kind of ebb and flow here—warnings by analogy with the idol feast and the Eucharist in 10:14 to 22. Flee from idolatry.

Verse 18, consider the people of Israel; do not let those who eat the sacrifice participate in the altar. Do I mean then that food sacrificed to an idol was anything or that an idol is anything? No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons. No uncertain words here about association with idol feast and idol association.

Anything that would smack of giving homage to the Caesar as a God or to any of the idols is not acceptable. And Paul says that in no uncertain terms. In verse 21 he goes on, you cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons.

You cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons. Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than he? So, there was something to be accounted for in that Corinthian community. And it may have been more widespread than just those with social status in the banquets.

But consorting, showing homage in any kind of way within a city that was religiously plural, idols were on every hand when you walked. No matter what you did, you confronted idolatry. Living apart from that in the sense of not letting that taint your worldview would have been no small challenge.

Let me go on to verse 23. The believer's freedom. But what does it mean? I have the right to do anything.

This is the same quotation we saw earlier in chapter 6. I have the right to do anything, you say, but not everything is beneficial. I have the right to do anything, but not everything is constructive. No one should seek their own good but the good of others.

What a summary. And it captures not only chapters 8 through 10 but it captures the earlier chapters. Rights are great, but rights are not to be the only criteria by which decisions are made.

There's the community, and there's also the truth and the knowledge that you cannot participate in idolatry at any level in any way. With the traditional view, I think there are some issues with the market and some issues with eating at someone's house that allows you to eat that meat. But when the question is raised, then you've got to follow a line that upholds that knowledge that you cannot participate with idols.

Now, notice how he follows up on that in verse 25. Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience. In verse 25, for the earth is the Lord's and everything in it.

Some might treat that as a slogan, but I don't think so. I think Paul is saying to them that they may eat the meat because idols are nothing from the market. When he says, ask no questions for conscience sake, I think that is the way the old King James read that.

Let me see if the NRSV maintained or changed it because it sets us off in a bad direction. 25, eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience is the way that it's put in the NRSV, which is better. King James says, ask no questions for conscience's sake.

Let me clarify that, be real careful. King James Version has conditioned a lot of thinking of previous generations who created teaching, then the teaching comes down even when the translations change. Ask no questions for conscience's sake.

I have heard many, many times people try to explain that by saying that asking no questions for conscience's sake means what you don't know won't hurt you. Can you imagine Paul teaching what you don't know won't hurt you? That is an aberration that has been put onto those words in the King James Version, ask no questions for conscience's sake, which is a very literal rendition, but you can listen to the NIV how it phrases this. Eat whatever, excuse me, go back, eat, you can eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience.

Ask no questions for conscience's sake is one thing without raising questions of conscience. Gooch, in the bibliography, has a very good article on this. The point is this: you don't need to ask any questions about the meat because idols are nothing. Therefore, the meat is not tainted.

You ask no questions for conscience's sake because conscience shouldn't bother you because, in your worldview, it's not an issue. In other words, ask no questions for conscience sake by the King James implies something that is what you don't know won't hurt you. That's wrong.

The point is in the context, you don't need to ask any questions because it's not an issue. Now it can be an issue if you toy and flirt with the gods in relation to but just on the bare facts of the meat being tainted by an idol, it's not a question because idols are nothing. Therefore, it's not tainted, and you may eat it, and you don't have to; your conscience does not have to bother you, is what verse 25 is about. For the earth is the Lord's and everything in it.

If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience uses the same phrase, it's not the idea what you don't know won't hurt you, you really already know, but it's not an issue. Don't make an issue out of it. Now, if the unbeliever host says to you this has been

offered to sacrifice, when we read that, we often think negatively, well they're they're trying to trap them, I don't think so.

I think they're being nice; I think they're trying to protect their guest by warning them that if that's a problem, don't do it. And notice what Paul says, then don't eat it if they raise it as a question, don't eat it both for the sake of the one who told you, and here's what's very interesting, for the sake of conscience, I am not referring, I am referring to the other person's conscience, not yours, for why is my freedom being judged by another's conscience? If I take part in the meal with thankfulness why am I denounced? The whole point is this: if your worldview is in good shape and your conscience, therefore, will not bother you because you know that idols are nothing, the meat's not tainted, you may eat it. But if anyone else raises a question, that's because they haven't been educated adequately, even a pagan.

The pagan may think that you think that doing that is honoring the idol, well you don't want them to think that, so you've got to avoid a lack of clarity here in relation to this meat and the idol and, therefore, you're going to refuse it, not because of your conscience, but because of theirs. Isn't that an interesting shift? They have not been adequately educated; even as pagans, they still think it's something, and so,, therefore,, you don't want to give them any grounds for that, and you're going to isolate yourself from it. Fascinating stuff here, and I think when this is read in a certain surface kind of way and misunderstood, this asks no questions for conscience's sake that is a bad, not a bad translation; it's a literal translation, but it's not helping the reader to understand what's going on.

Don't ask questions of conscience because they don't count. This is not a question of conscience, and it's a question of worldview. The worldview is unsettled.

Idols are nothing, the meat is nothing, you don't have to worry about it, but if it gets connected in any way in that culture to that idolatry, you've got to abstain. You can't press the envelope on that issue. So, in verse 31, as he closes out, so whatever you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks, or the Church of God. In other words, your neighbor who's not a believer, the Jews who have a problem, and then the Church of God. Even as I try to please everyone in every way, for I am not seeking my own good but the good of many so that many may be saved.

Follow my example, be an imitator of me, and I follow the example of Christ. Wow, dealing with your culture, it's tough. And what makes it tough is if you have a mature worldview, and all of these Johnny-come-lately's come along and start making problems and removing from you your privileges, you're not going to like it.

How do you deal with that? Frankly, it would have been much more difficult to deal with that in the first century because, in the first century, you were trapped in your historical, geographical, and cultural context. You couldn't just pack up and go to the other side of town where the circumstances change. In American culture, for example, you can find a community of believers with whom you can agree.

Now, that wasn't always true, and it may be bad in some ways, and I think it is, but the fact is that in the first-century Roman Corinth, you were trapped. And you had to be able to deal with that issue. You had to understand your own worldview and value system.

You had to understand how to deal with other people who might not have been as far down the road as you in your understanding. Challenging, isn't it? Well, there's so much more that one could elaborate on, and you probably need to think through a number of these items that I mentioned in relation to conscience, because that's so misread. But to try to help that, I have what I call an excursus on page 127 on conscience.

And I'm going to have to deal with this with more rapidity than I would like, but I want to introduce you to what I think is the biblical concept of the conscience. All right, I've written it out. Follow me.

Page 127. How would you define conscience? We talk about this phenomenon constantly, but when faced with explaining it, we find ourselves in a quandary. In a recent column by Dr. Dobson, *Answers Your Questions*, I've written a book about it.

Dobson struggled with how to explain this term. This goes back a number of years. He begins by saying that the subject of the conscience is an extremely complex and weighty topic.

Philosophers and theologians have struggled with its meaning for centuries. He then makes some observations concerning its usage in psychological analysis, which was put forward with the sound intuition of the precariousness of an appeal to conscience. He chooses, however, by noting that the New Testament cites the term on many occasions and that the Holy Spirit influences us through it.

There is no proof text for that, but that's what he says. He pointed out that conscience is not our guide on the one hand but asserts it may be used by God on the other. Well, what is it at any given moment? How do you know when conscience is yourself talking to yourself, or as he would put it, God talking to you? How do you figure that out? How do we delineate appropriate promptings, internal things that go on inside of us, or what we call conscience? How do we deal with people whose conscience gives no promptings at all? And how would we deal with situations where

my conscience says it's okay to do this, and someone else's conscience says, no, you can't do that?

That's what you get into if you follow the stereotype, a very popular stereotype, that conscience is a guide. Well, frankly, conscience is not a guide. It's a monitor, and I'm going to talk about this.

There's a difference between being a guide and a monitor. A guide initiates opinions. A monitor regulates and observes opinions that have already been established.

And as I mentioned to you in the last lecture, conscience's role is to keep our worldview and values in order. It doesn't teach us worldviews and values. We have to get that in other ways, but it helps us to have a self-reflective capacity to be consistent with our worldview and values.

At the bottom of page 127, it says, The road to understanding the nature and function of conscience is to discern what role it plays in relation to the value system, which we have identified as the product of a transformed mind. My thesis is that the value system is our guide as the only database that can objectively be analyzed. Otherwise, you're living in a horrible, subjective, no-man's land.

The conscience is a God-given function of our self-awareness, that is, our self-consciousness, which is a witness to the dictates of our value system. So, if we were to think of it back to my little stickman or stick woman again, you got the heart here, okay? This is your worldview and your values. Your self-reflective capacity is working with this worldview and values as you deal with all the issues that arise in life.

And maybe you're driving down the road, and you see a billboard with a half-naked woman on it. And all of a sudden, your mind starts racing with the possibilities of temptation and sin. That violates your worldview and values.

And your conscience as a monitor says, wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute. That doesn't match. You can't do that because your worldview and values call for sexual purity and faithfulness to your family and your wife and so forth and so on.

You can't do that. Conscience is reminding you. And so, conscience is a monitor, not an initiator.

Worldviews and values are the initiators. Top of page 128. Conscience is not a lawgiver.

It is a witness to the laws that exist within the frame of reference by which we make judgments about ourselves and our world. Conscience is not some independent

entity within our being. It is only one aspect of a human being's ability for self-aware critique.

If we violate the values that we recognize and apply, the pain we feel is what we call conscience, which basically is a logical construct. It's a term of description, not ontology. If we contemplate a course of action and we feel no pain, then we make the assumption that it's okay since our conscience didn't alert us.

Well, as I mentioned to you, I know many Christian leaders who are so adamant about their way or the highway that they can abuse other Christian ministry people and feel they're doing God a service because they are so set on their own way of thinking. They have deified their own opinions, their own way of doing things. And therefore, they become the voice of God.

And they will say, well, my conscience is clear in this judgment. Well, sure, it is because that's your worldview. Your problem is not your conscience.

Your problem is your worldview. You have been barking up the wrong tree. It is a term of description.

If we contemplate a course of action and we feel no pain, then we assume it is appropriate since our conscience doesn't bother us. The last scenario is faulty. If the role of conscience is to monitor how we relate to our values and the value system is not programmed in a certain area, it is not right. We may not perceive the function of conscience since its function is bound within the realm of witnessing to our value judgments.

So, if you have bad values, you're going to feel okay because that's your worldview. Conscience will even encourage you in your bad values because it is merely a monitor keeping you in touch with those things. It does not provide independent judgments as if outside of yourself, but it witnesses to the judgments that the value system, the worldview, and the value system have already delivered in our self-reflective capacity.

Witness is the dominant term that's used with the word conscience. When you look at all the places in the Bible where conscience occurs, in fact, it doesn't even occur in the Old Testament. There are a lot of issues there I'm not going to go into in terms of just the nature of language and the nature of a worldview, the Hebrew man, the New Testament situation.

And by and large, the term conscience comes on the table because of the book of Corinthians. It's used a great deal in the book of 1 Corinthians. And it seems that chronologically, Paul's theologizing is stimulated by this Corinthian discussion.

So, it's an interesting piece. But if you just take the biblical data, the conscience is a witness. It's a function of your capacity for self-reflection.

But it's not a judge. Worldviews and values are the judges. Conscience is the witness.

That's a great analogy because if you bring someone into a court of law to be a witness, the only thing that witness can say is what they saw. If they start going off into domains of their own opinion or interpretation of what they saw, the prosecution or the defendant's lawyer will say hearsay. They can't say that.

They can only be a witness to what they saw. They can't make a judgment about it in a court of law. So, witness is a wonderful analogy to the role of conscience.

Conscience is a witness to our worldview and value system. It keeps us in line with it. If we violate our worldview and values, our conscience will bother us.

If we're pursuing our worldview and values, there will be a sort of peace and serenity inside of us. We can say that it's, you know, it's not that conscience is doing something necessarily right there. But nonetheless, we have peace because we're in continuity with our own worldviews and value system.

So, the two paragraphs that I've just read for you are printed out pretty thoroughly, and I'd hope that you'll mull over them a bit. But let me give you just a brief overview of the term conscience in the Bible. Excuse me.

Conscience is a term we hear and use frequently. But most people, but for most people, it is like an Almond Joy candy bar. It's indescribably delicious.

That was an advertisement years ago for Almond Joy candy bars, you know, and their advertisement was indescribably delicious. Well, for a lot of people, for example, in spiritual life, if you ask somebody what it means to be spiritual, they'll look at you, and they may give you some answers. But if you press them, they don't have a clue what they're talking about because it's sort of ethereal.

They can't put feet to it. It's not as concrete. What does it mean to be spiritual? It's indescribably delicious to them.

It's a great word, but what does it mean? Well, conscience is in the same category. It's a great word. People give it all kinds of meaning, but if you press, what does it really mean? Prove it.

All of a sudden, oh, I just like it, but I can't explain it. It's to be used but not explained. Well, that won't work.

A brief history of usage in the Bible. First of all, there is no Hebrew term for conscience. There are explanations for that.

Language, in a way, is not to be abused, but language is sort of a window into mindset. The Hebrew did not bifurcate the person. They were body, soul, and spirit, but they were a unit.

And the idea of something kind of arguing internally in your head would not be something that they would entertain as far as ontology is concerned. And so consequently, the word heart sometimes, because of the rational process, can fall into that category. But as far as linguistics are concerned, it's not there, and I'm going to leave that with other writings.

The Greek Old Testament uses it twice, Ecclesiastes 10:20 and then Job 27:6. Very interesting usages. I believe it's in Ecclesiastes, where it talks about not saying anything bad about the king because if you do, even if you do it in your bedroom, See, the bedroom is a metaphor for the most private place in your world.

Nobody's in there but you. It's private. A little bird will carry it away and tell the king, and you could lose your life if you say something bad about the king.

So, conscience, in its earliest usage, seems to be the idea that if you violate it, it can hurt you. If you violate it, it can hurt you. And there's that fleeting use of it in the Old Testament Greek.

The concept in the Old Testament is under the idea of *lei*, which is heart, *cardia*, and it's part of the self-reflective capacity because heart is the rational domain. Conscience comes from a verb, to know. Its oldest usage merely means to know, to be aware, to share knowledge, sometimes secret knowledge.

Its chronological first use in the New Testament is actually in 1 Corinthians. The New Testament pattern, Paul uses it 27 times. Peter uses it three times.

There are a few other occurrences where the verb, *synopsis*, is used, but they are not that significant. I've given you the passages. The following passages are placed in chronological order in terms of the use of conscience, and you can notice that the most usages are in the Corinthian correspondence.

They're not, you know, I'd want to check my insertion here, but nonetheless, I didn't review this particular list. But this is all the usages, so you can go look. And I think I've included some verbs because I've got, yeah, you see verb, 1 Corinthians 4.4, the, for verb.

There are a few verbs, but most of these are the nouns of conscience. Conscience, synodesis, comes from the idea of to know with. It's a verb, to know, and the preposition with, or accompaniment, accompaniment.

And so, with self-knowledge, that internal piece is sort of the morphology of this term. Now, I've given you my eventual definition on page 129 in bold print. I can't walk through all these passages with you.

I've done that. I actually have a chapter on conscience in my book, *Decision Making God's Way, Knowing God's Will*, that you can read through the Lagos system in English or Spanish. But here's where I end up.

Conscience is a critical inner awareness, a witness in reference to the norms and values that we recognize and apply. It does not create norms. It does not create values but merely responds to our existing software to use an analogy.

Conscience must be educated and programmed in relation to a critically developed world and life view. This development for Christians is rooted in the special revelation of the Bible. Romans 12:1 and 2, be transformed by the renewing of your mind, you change your worldview system, and conscience comes along with it over a period of time.

And we've talked about that from different angles before. There are several major characteristics of conscience, and this is particularly in relation to what I call Christian decision making. But let's look at these.

First of all, conscience is a God-given capacity for self-critique, because it's mulling over inside of us. It's part of our self-consciousness. It's an aspect of humankind's capacity for self-reflection.

You should not personify conscience into some kind of an independent voice. Conscience is not the voice of God. Do not equate them.

Nor is conscience the voice of the devil. Those voices you hear inside of you are yourself talking to yourself. Out of that self-reflective capacity, we all do this all the time.

Have you ever driven down the road and watched people? Someone's passing you, or you're passing them, and you look over there, and they're just talking like crazy, but not out loud. And they're talking to themselves. Maybe they're preparing for a lecture, or maybe they're having a conversation with someone they have a problem with, or they're trying to create a conversation of justification for something.

All kinds of things. But this is part of what we are as humans—self-reflective capacity.

And a good human, an alive human, is constantly thinking and mulling over issues, mulling over alternatives. And conscience plays a role in it. In decision-making, worldview and values determine the course of action.

But conscience is kind of like your aspiring partner in terms of what you're doing, and does it fit those worldview and values. 1 Corinthians 4:4, we looked at, but not adequately. I mentioned it and said I'd come back to it, and now I need to do that.

1 Corinthians 4:4 is just a fascinating text that opens up a whole door of issues. Now, here's where translations come in, and this is a good verse to be included in a chart for validating translations. But 1 Corinthians 4:4, let me read the NRSV first and see what it does.

I am not aware of anything against myself. That's really pretty close to the King James Version. I am not aware of anything against myself.

But I am not thereby acquitted. It's the Lord who judges me. I am not aware of anything against myself.

By the way, the use of conscience here is a verb, not a noun. I'm not aware. See, it uses that awareness issue.

I am not aware, a negative, with that verb to know. Listen to the NIV 2011. My conscience is clear.

See, the noun conscience isn't even in the passage. I am not aware of anything against myself. The King James and the NRSV both translate that pretty straightforward.

I'm not aware. But the 2011 NIV, trying to help your understanding of what that means, went ahead and used the word conscience. My conscience is clear.

Now, for my purpose, I don't mind that too much because let's look at what it says. Verse four: my conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. Wait a minute. I thought...

This is Dr. Gary Meadors in his teaching on the book of 1 Corinthians. This is session 23, 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1, Paul's Response to the Question of Food Sacrifice to Idols. 1 Corinthians 10.