



November 30, 2014

2 Samuel 24

"Listen to your Conscience"

Pastor Gary Hamrick

As we come to the end of our study in 2 Samuel, there are a number of things that are in the distant past in David's life, including his adulterous affair with Bathsheba, which happened about 15 years earlier. It took that long to deal with all of the consequences of his sin, which came in the form of strife and conflict within his own household (rape, revenge, murder, rebellion, and an attempted coup).

David was now about 65 years old, and he had been king approximately 35 years. The nation of Israel was well established under his leadership, and they were prosperous and secure. In fact, things were going extremely well, which is oftentimes when we too are prone to forget God, become a little full of ourselves, and think we got to our place in life because of our skill, intelligence, talents, and tenacity. David fell into this trap, and his sin cost the lives of 70,000 people.

Pastor Gary asked the question: "Wouldn't it be great if life came with an electric collar?" He commented on how beneficial it would be for each of us if every time we came close to doing something sinful our collar would start to chirp, and the closer we got to the act of sin, the louder it would chirp. He said, "The truth is that life does come with an electric collar; it's called a conscience!"

In this study we'll learn about what the Bible has to say about our conscience, and how important it is for us to hear our conscience, as well as follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit as he increases our conscience when we grow in the Lord.

Counting The Fighting Men

1. **2 Samuel 24:10** - *"David was conscience-stricken after he had counted the fighting men, and he said to the Lord, 'I have sinned greatly in what I have done.*

Now, O Lord, I beg you, take away the guilt of your servant. I have done a very foolish thing."

2. The difference between the times (twice) Moses counted the Israelites and David's order to count the men in his army is directive and motive.

a. Directive

i. God directed Moses to take a census.

1. **Numbers 26:1-2** - *"After the plague the Lord said to Moses and Eleazar son of Aaron, the priest, 'Take a census of the whole Israelite community by families - all those twenty years old or more who were able to serve in the army of Israel.' "*

ii. According to **2 Samuel 24:1**, David was the one who directed that a census be taken: *"Again the anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and he [Satan] incited David against them, saying, 'Go and take a census of Israel and Judah.' "*

1. **1 Chronicles 21:1** - *"Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel."*

b. Motive

i. For Moses, the motive was simply to obey God's instructions.

ii. For David, the motive was pride.

1. David wanted to take pride in how vast and powerful his kingdom and army had become, and counting the fighting men would make him look good, which resulted in a power-trip of the highest order!

2. We see that Joab, the general of David's army, knew David's motive was wrong because of the way he challenged David.

a. **2 Samuel 24:3** - *"But Joab replied to the king, 'May the Lord your God multiply the troops a hundred times over, and may the eyes of my lord the king see it. But why does my lord the king want to do such a thing?' "*

b. **1 Chronicles 21:3** - *"Why should you bring guilt on Israel?"*

3. David overruled Joab and ordered the army commanders to count the fighting men, who numbered 1.3 million, of which 800,000 were from Israel and 500,000 were from Judah.

4. In **2 Samuel 24:8** we learn that it took nine months and twenty days to complete the census, which is an important detail, because it tells us how long the "electric collar" was chirping in David's ear!

a. When you think about it, it's hard to believe that David didn't call off the taking of this census, but he didn't, and it wasn't until the final numbers came in that he was conscience-stricken.

Conscience

3. One way to think of your conscience is to think of it as your “moral compass,” and just like a real compass knows where true north is, so also your moral compass knows the difference between right and wrong, because it is aligned to God by God, as part of being created in God’s image and likeness.
4. A person doesn’t have to be a Christian to have a basic sense of right and wrong, because they were created that way.
5. Unfortunately, in some cases a person’s moral compass gets broken (usually early in life, only to be revealed later in life) which creates a complete absence of conscience altogether, and when that happens, a person is identified by psychiatrists as a sociopath or psychopath, and diagnosed as having an antisocial personality disorder.
 - a. In the early 1900s, this was called “psychopathic personality,” but in the 1830s, when the problem of an absent conscience was first diagnosed, it was called “moral insanity.”
6. The Greek word for conscience is used 29 times in the New Testament, and the Hebrew word for conscience is used six times in the Old Testament, and two of the six are mentioned in reference to David.
 - a. The first time this word is used to refer to David is found in [1 Samuel 24](#), which describes the time when David had the opportunity to kill King Saul, but chose not to harm the Lord’s anointed.
 - i. [1 Samuel 24:5](#) - *“Afterward, David was conscience-stricken for having cut off a corner of [Saul’s] robe.”*
 - b. The second time is found in this account.
 - i. It’s interesting to note that David was not conscience-stricken concerning his affair with Bathsheba or his part in killing her husband, Uriah, who was one of David’s mighty warriors.
 - c. Whenever the Hebrew word for conscience is translated into Greek and used in the New Testament, the word used is *suneidesis*.
 - i. The Greek word means, “to know with” or “a co-knowledge with oneself and God,” according to *Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*.¹
 - ii. Conscience is the inner judge or witness that approves when we do right or disapproves when we do wrong.

¹ <http://www.menfak.no/bibelprog/vines?word=%AFt0000546>

7. Good Conscience
 - a. [1 Timothy 1:18b-19](#) - *"... fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith."*

8. Clear Conscience
 - a. [Hebrews 13:18](#) - *"Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way."*
 - b. [Acts 24:16](#) - *"So I strive to keep my conscience clear before God and man."*

9. Weak Conscience
 - a. [1 Corinthians 8:10](#) - *"For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol's temple, won't he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols?"*

10. Guilty Conscience
 - a. [Hebrews 10:22](#) - *"[Let] us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience..."*

11. Corrupted Conscience
 - a. [Titus 1:15](#) - *"To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted."*

12. Seared Conscience
 - a. [1 Timothy 4:2](#) - *"Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron."*
 - b. The worst thing we can do is to turn a deaf ear to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.
 - c. When skin is seared with a hot iron, nerve endings are deadened and scar tissue is created, which results in a loss of all sensitivity of feeling in the affected area.
 - d. The danger we face is that our conscience can lose all feeling and sensitivity of the Spirit.
 - e. If David had not had a seared conscience for nearly ten months, 70,000 people would have been spared!

Conscience Is Instilled At Conception

13. Mankind was created in the image and likeness of God.
14. We are three parts, in a manner of speaking, in that we are body, soul, and spirit.
15. Within the spirit of man, God has instilled his sense of right and wrong.
16. In giving us a conscience, God gave us something that the plant and animal kingdoms don't have, which is a moral conscience with the capacity to distinguish between right and wrong.
17. We see evidence of this in Adam and Eve, who, when they sinned, had no need of anyone telling them they had done something wrong; they knew it, because their conscience convicted them.
 - a. Before sin entered the world, there was nothing to feel ashamed about.
 - i. **Genesis 2:25** - *"The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame."*
 - b. When Adam and Eve sinned things changed dramatically.
 - i. **Genesis 3:7** - *"Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves."*
 - c. Their sin took them from a carefree environment to a conscience-filled environment, and for the first time in their lives they experienced feeling guilty about something.
 - d. Their sin also brought them to a place in which they felt vulnerable and distant from God.
 - e. There was no law of God to read, and there was no Holy Spirit to receive, but they knew right from wrong, because God had implanted a conscience in their spirit so when they did wrong, they felt it.
 - f. **Romans 2:15** - *"... the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness [to the law of God]..."*

Conscience Is Influenced By Conditions

18. Though our God-given conscience is instilled at birth, it is influenced by many factors in the course of life, sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worse.
19. Conscience is shaped by everything from parental values, to the laws of the land, to our surroundings, environment, and culture.

20. There is a certain innocence of conscience when we are young that we grow into, which may be dependent on certain cultures, but generally speaking, conscience develops by the conditions around us (hopefully for the better!).

Conscience Is Increased At Conversion

21. A relationship with the Lord increases conscience.

22. When we experience conversion (when we surrender our lives to Jesus Christ and grow in his grace and the knowledge of his Word) we come into the light, and we grow in our awareness of right and wrong in ways we weren't convicted about before.

23. **Romans 7:7** - *"Indeed I [Paul] would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, 'Do not covet.' "*

24. **2 Peter 3:18** - *"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen."*

25. **Romans 8:16** - *"The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."*

26. Our conscience increases when we grow in the knowledge of God through his Word and listen to the Spirit of God testify to our spirit about what is right and wrong, but this takes time, which is why we need to give new Believers grace, because, after all, they are still a little raw and unfiltered!

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.

2. Read **2 Samuel 24:1-17** to provide the foundation for this study.

3. Prepare an overview of Pastor Gary's outline concerning what a conscience is, the biblical description of different kinds of consciences, and discuss the related Scriptures. (See #3 - #17 above)

4. What are some of the ways your conscience has been influenced by your parents' values, the culture, etc.?

5. Spend time talking about ways the Holy Spirit has brought you to a place of being conscience-stricken.
6. How has the Holy Spirit increased your conscience since you came to faith in Christ?
 - a. Read and discuss [Romans 7:7](#), [Romans 8:16](#), and [2 Peter 3:18](#).
7. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about the ways they were “unfiltered” when they were new Christians.
 - a. Pastor Gary shared a brief overview of Shia LaBoeuf’s conversion testimony, which can be described as definitely being unfiltered! ²
8. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: repent of any unconfessed sin; and yield themselves to the work and ministry of the Spirit as he increases their conscience.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).

² <http://blog.godreports.com/2014/10/actor-shia-labeouf-found-god-during-filming-of-fury/>