

Conscience and God's Existence

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Building a Christian Mind

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Bible Verse: Psalm 19:12-14
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I invite you to turn in your Bibles to Psalm 19. We've gone through this Psalm over our last two times together, taking it in a verse by verse manner and looking at what it has to say to us about the existence of God because we're in the midst of a series titled how to know that God exists and we are considering that theme as an initial introduction to our long-term goal over these next several months to build a Christian mind as we will consider many different aspects of fundamental Christian thinking. Some would like to call it a biblical worldview or a life view, as R. C. Sproul titled it in his book from the 1980s. It's so very important that we are doing this and that you are here for it. I thank God for every one of you being with us in the room and joining us through the internet because these are matters of most fundamental importance.

As we looked at Psalm 19 our past two times together, we saw that the first six verses showed the existence of God based on creation. In verse 1, we saw, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork." God has imprinted the testimony to himself everywhere in creation; whether you look to the skies or above or the plants in the ground below, God has made himself known by the order, the beauty, the precision, and the regularity of creation. And if you want a little jot of things to help you remember that and texts to go to to refresh your own mind and in conversations that you might have as you're sharing these things in the future, we looked at Genesis 1 and Psalm 19 and Romans 1 and Acts 14 and Acts 17. Genesis 1, Psalm 19, Romans 1, Acts 14, Acts 17. And I emphasize that just so that there is a sense in your mind that there are go-to texts for these things that make these things known and abundantly clear, and you can go to those texts again and again and you can take other people to the text and say, "Read it for yourself. You don't have to take my word for it. It's right there in black and white for you to read." And God uses his word to create faith in hearts, and so we want to continually and consistently point people to the word of God in all of its fullness, all of its majesty, in order to establish these great things because, beloved, the darkness is descending and has descended upon the mind of society and upon the mind of the age in which we live, and we must know not only what we believe but why we believe it and be able to go to objective things outside of ourselves in order to establish the truth of what we proclaim. It does really no good to tell someone who thinks truth comes from within them, they say, "I feel like there is no God," for you to say, "Well, I feel like there is." That's an impasse that can't be broken if it's just your opinion against someone else's.

That's why it's so important for us to point to objective matters that God has appointed by which the knowledge of him may be known and that is what we see in Psalm 19. "The heavens declare the glory of God." The first six verses of Psalm 19 establish the existence of God from creation, something which man can look upon for himself and come to his own conclusions.

By the way, and there will be a lot of repetition in what I say because I understand that, you know, it's hard to take all of these things in at once. We need the repetition, that's how we learn and how things come to stay in our minds over time. One of the things that we said is the fact – and this is so very important – one of the things that we said from Matthew 16 is the fact that there are contradictory voices to what we say from Scripture, the fact that there are people that would disagree and contest every word that comes from Scripture on these matters, that is no barrier, beloved, to you having a settled, confident conviction of the truth of the things that God has spoken to. In the days of Jesus, people could not agree, the general population could not agree on who he was. His disciples said, "Some say you're John the Baptist, others say one of the prophets or someone else." And Jesus just cut through all of that like a hot knife through butter and said, "But what do you say," so that the principle of personal accountability is critical to understand that God established you with your own accountability before him and his revelation, you, which means that you are accountable for your response not what everybody else says, and also that it establishes the possibility, it establishes the ability that you have to come to your own conviction and to know the truth for yourself even if the others around you do not go with you. "Though none go with me, still I will follow. Though none go with me, still I will follow," first person singular. "Though none go with me, still I will follow," no turning back. No turning back. That's the kind of conviction that the world in which we live calls for, and that parents have the opportunity to establish their children in.

And so we saw the existence of God established by creation around us, his greatness displayed in the universe that he created. We looked at the second section last time, and we're going, you know, these series are joined together Sundays and Tuesdays. We're not doing a separate track on Tuesday. It's one track at Truth Community Church for the next several months to come as we just go through these things. And last time on Tuesday, we we saw God, the existence of God established from his word in Psalm 19:7. Look at it with me there, "The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple." And on it goes. A half dozen times in those three verses, verses 7 through 9, the proper name of God, the covenant-keeping name of God, Yahweh is used and it is the law of the Lord, the Lord has spoken in his law, in his testimony, in his precepts, in his commandments, in the fear of the Lord, in the rules of the Lord. What we must understand is that in Scripture God has given us an independent and also sufficient way in which he has revealed himself and made himself known. We know the existence of God by looking at creation, that's enough to establish certain aspects of his character and his divine attributes, when we go to the word in which he has revealed himself, we get a whole a whole other realm given to us in which God has made himself known.

Personally, I have no sympathy for those who proclaim doubts about the existence of God, who challenge the existence of God, who have never taken the time to read through his word from cover to cover. You know, God has made himself known. God has spoken there and to ignore and reject and to refuse upfront out of hand based on secondhand testimony that Scripture is, you know, not worth your time, you know, there is no vindication, and there's certainly no nobility or honor in a position like that. The person who truly struggles with a knowledge of the existence of God has a lot of work to do. 1,189 chapters of God revealing himself in the word is plenty to occupy a mind and for God to make himself known in that way. And so we just, you know, as we look at these things from God's perspective, we just see how totally man is without excuse. Every moment of his existence is lived in a realm that testifies to the existence of God. Every opportunity is available through the 70 or 80 years of his lifetime to pick up a Bible, to read it, to say, "Lord, make yourself known through your word to me. Speak, your servant listens." But when men are not willing to consider the testimony in creation, and will not even open up a Bible to read it for themselves, that's not God's fault. It's not a fact that God has failed to make his existence known in clear and abundant way, it's simply a testimony to the guilt of mankind not to seek that for which God has, and to seek that in which God has made himself known.

And look, and I need to say this, you know, I'm speaking kind of outside the church and, you know, in a polemical way outside the walls of our church but, you know, I assume, one of the things about, one of the ways that I approach being a pastor and I make no claims to being any kind of good pastor or anything like that, I just do what God has given me to do and trust him for, you know, the results and his blessing on it. But one of the things that I do as a pastor is I do my best to just assume the best about everybody that, you know, looks to our church for spiritual care and spiritual leadership and teaching, and I kind of have operating in the back of my mind, I just assume that the people, that those of you in our room, that you actually make time in your daily life to read the Bible for yourself. I assume that as I interact with people. I assume that you're doing that, but that's the optimistic side of me. The realistic side of me knows that that's probably not true and I won't try to assign percentages to that, but to those of you for whom that is not true, you have a responsibility. You need to be reading the word of God. You need to establish a commitment in your heart to be drinking in the word of God. If you say that Christ has saved you, that God has saved you in the Lord Jesus Christ, then there is a corollary to that that says, "And then that means that I need to be reading the word of the one who intervened in my life and saved my soul." And that's one of the first things that the Holy Spirit teaches a true Christian is to come to this word. And so it's wonderful and I'm so grateful that so many people are in the room today. I really am. But I just want you to know that it's a day-to-day ongoing commitment that the Lord is looking for, and that the Lord calls you to because it is in his word that he makes your soul mature and complete. It is in his word that he makes wise the simple. It's in his precepts that you find joy. And it's in his commandments that your eyes are enlightened to what the will of God is and what the duty is that he has for you in the life that he has given to you. And so we are, you know, we are bound to this, we are bound to the 66 books of the Bible like a baby in the womb is bound to his mother through the umbilical cord. This is where we get our nutrition and we can't be separated from it without the

most dire of consequences. And so if you're convicted by your neglect of the word of God, take the opportunity of today's message to see the grace that is available to you and to confess your indifference, to confess your hard heartedness, to bring your lack of joy before the Lord and say, "Restore me through your word and establish anew and afresh your existence to me from the word that you have given, the Canon of Scripture, the 66 books of the Bible."

Now just coming back and remembering the theme, our theme is how to know God exists, and before we pivot into the final section of Psalm 19, I just want to remind you that creation standing alone by itself is sufficient to establish the existence of a powerful God who rules over the universe. That by itself is enough without any supporting testimony from the Bible, there is enough testimony from God in creation for every man to be accountable for the knowledge that is made known there. Separate independent creation standing alone is enough to establish the point that God exists, and that's how we know. Secondly, Scripture standing alone is enough to establish the existence of God, so that and I have at least one, maybe more dear friends who were born blind, who cannot see creation with their eyes, who cannot look up into the skies and see the testimony of God revealed in creation, but the word of God is more than sufficient for someone who can't see to establish the existence of God. These are supportive, interlocking testimonies to the existence of God, yet standing alone; each one is sufficient in and of themselves to establish the point.

Now, thirdly, as we pivot and we finish Psalm 19, we're going to see a third mark, a third evidence of the existence of God as we look at verses 12 through 14, and let's read them together. It'll be our text for this morning. Psalm 19:12 through 14. David says after reflecting on creation, reflecting on the Canon of Scripture as he had it then. He's looked to the skies. He's looked to the Scriptures. Now in verse 12 he looks inside, as it were. He reflects. He meditates in his heart about the truth that he has considered. These are not truths that are considered abstractly as a matter of outside intellectual interest. These are truths that impact and move at the deepest levels of the human heart. This testimony to the existence of God is just, I never cease to be amazed at this, this testimony to the existence of God goes to the furthest reaches of the infinite universe where it's all disclosed there and made known there, and yet it goes to the deepest innermost part of the human heart as well, as we will see. Inside and outside God has imprinted the knowledge of himself everywhere for man to know so that man is without excuse who denies this or who refuses to bend the knee. David shows us this in verses 12 to 14 as he says this, he says,

12 Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults.
13 Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression. 14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

What's the third aspect, the third ground upon which we know the existence of God? As we look at it here in this text and expand out into other Scriptures, we're going to see this,

it's a principle of conscience. It's the principle of conscience. Creation, Canon, conscience. God has made him known in all three of those areas, distinct ways in which the existence of God is to be known. What I want to do here this morning is just kind of go through the text clause by clause, verse by verse, and be able to see what David is saying in the context of the Psalm, and then expand beyond that to see how Scripture would help us understand the fullness of the meaning of what is being said in light of our theme for these weeks about the existence of God. David here has reflected on creation, reflected on Scripture, and now we find him expressing three different desires as we go into the Psalm, each of which has a profound devotional element to us, you know, which leads us into the most practical of things for our Christian lives and yet also united together and revealing an underlying principle that is woven into it that is built upon, or that is the foundation upon which David speaks.

Let's look at the first of his desires in verse 12 where David seeks, here's our first point, he seeks pardon for his past sin. Pardon for his past sin. You know, you and I, we fall short of the glory of God without even recognizing it. You know, we're far more sinful than we realize, and I'm mindful of this, you know, and I'm speaking in the first person here, you know, I'm conscious that I surely don't understand the depth of my own sinfulness. You know, we just don't, we just don't get it. We see sin from our perspective, our self-justifying perspective. We're always quick to be the, you know, the defender of our own, you know, reputation and our own righteousness. We're wired to being defensive and rejecting accusations that would convict us. We're mindful of that, and then we have that awful, awful tendency of judging our sin in comparison to other men, you know, and looking to the worst of people and saying, "Well, I'm better than them," and all of that kind of thinking is unbiblical, that kind of thinking itself is wrong and sinful. What David has done and the reason that he is so convicted as he prays here at the end of the Psalm, is that he has brought himself into the presence of the Creator. He has brought himself into the presence of the writer of the word of God so that he has compared himself to the fixed, holy, immutable character of God, the fixed, holy, immutable Word of God, immutable, a word meaning unchanging, and compared to the standard of perfection, he sees how far short he falls. And he immediately pleads after having completed his meditation on creation and on Scripture, he comes and he confesses sin and you see it there in verse 12 where he says,

12 Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults.

The idea is, "In light of the majesty of your greatness, in light of the glory of your goodness revealed in your word, sweeter than honey, I look at all of those things, I see transcendent excellence, I look at my own heart and I say how could I know the many ways in which I've fallen short of your glory?" And so he prays, "Declare me innocent from hidden faults."

"Who can discern his errors?" Look at the question there in verse 12, "Who can discern his errors?" It's a rhetorical question. The question anticipates the answer no one can do this. Scripture tells us that each one of us, you and I, you and I are not able to rightly, adequately discern the fullness of our errors, our transgressions, our trespasses, our sins

against a holy God. Commentator Matthew Henry puts it this way with his usual pithy insight and spiritual wisdom, commenting on this verse he says, "We are guilty of many sins which through our own carelessness and partiality to ourselves we are not aware of, many we have been guilty of which we have forgotten, so that when we have been ever so particular in the confession of sin we must conclude God knows a great deal more evil about us than we do of ourselves." He says we're biased in favor of ourselves. We have blind spots, to use the modern term. There are things that we don't see because we have spiritual blinders on that keep us from having the proper peripheral vision to bring in the fullness of awareness of our sin. And as we go from day to day, week to week, month to month with a pattern maybe of some spiritual carelessness, some indifference, some neglect of the word of God, beloved, you and I, we have no idea how much in the way of sinful motives and sinful attitudes and words and actions accumulate in our hearts that we don't confess in particular before the Lord. And as time goes on, you just forget. You just forget what you were like since your last time of earnest confession before the Lord.

And so one of the blessed things about Christian salvation is this, is that God parcels out his mercy in a way that goes beyond even our recognition of our need for it. God does not parcel out forgiveness on a 1:1 correspondence. "Oh, he confessed this sin. She confessed that sin. I'll forgive those sins, but until they get around to confessing everything else, still guilty." That's not the manner of the forgiveness of the Lord at all. And so David says, "Lord, declare me innocent from my hidden faults." And what Scripture teaches us is that God in his mercy to his children, is abundantly glad. God finds delight in the forgiveness of sin and he does so generously. He does so abundantly. The pardon in Christ that is available to us is full and complete beyond what we recognize that we even need. And you can see that reflected in the well-known verse in 1 John which echoes the sentiment that David expresses here in verse 12. The Apostle John says if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. All unrighteousness. The part that we confess, and the part that we're so dull that we don't even recognize. This is the wonder of the mercy and the grace of God that he shows mercy to us beyond what we even know that we need. Guaranteed it to us. Abundantly showered upon us in the person of Jesus Christ. God having made provision for our lack of righteousness and our sin through the atoning shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and God having made provision for our need for a perfect righteousness, he gives us and credits us with the fullness of the righteousness of Christ so that our righteousness, our standing with God, our justification, rests not on our deeds, not on even our confession of sin, certainly not on our inadequate repentance but rather on the perfect righteousness, the perfect shed blood of Christ all freely counted to our benefit by a God who is loving and gracious and merciful to sinners, and offered freely to everyone who would repent and come to Christ as Lord and give their lives to him.

David, in response to his meditation, is confessing his past sin saying, "Lord, cleanse me from all of it." If we were so inclined, if, you know, it would be justifiable, we're not going to do it but it would be justifiable for us to just stop and take five minutes of quiet silent confession for each one of us to take the opportunity to do that, and you can do it in your hearts even as I'm speaking. "God, forgive me of my hidden faults. Forgive me of my indifference to your word. Forgive me of my anger, my lusts, my ingratitude, my

unfaithfulness to you and to your people. God, I can only see it in general, broad outlines. I can only see it like a man with diminished sight just seeing shadows and forms. I only see it there but I know it's there, Lord. Cleanse me from all of it in light of your greatness and your goodness. Give me grace for the cleansing that I need."

As you move on to our second point here this morning, as you move on in the text, you see David praying not only for pardon from past sin, he's asking God for protection from future sin. I love this aspect of his prayer. Protection from future sin. Having glanced back and said, "Lord, forgive me of my hidden faults," he now looks forward to his life as it unfolds from this point forward. Look at verse 13 where he says,

13 Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.

Do you see the difference in the time frame? In verse 12 he's saying, "Declare me of these faults that I have, that have accumulated, that I have as I pray to you. Now cleanse me from those," verse 12. Now in verse 13, his desire for righteousness, his desire for godliness is so deep in response to the revelation of God in creation and in Scripture that he says, "Lord, I devote the energies of my prayer now looking forward to the steps of my life to come, and as I look to the future, I pray that you would," in a sense, so to speak, "that you would go with me and that you would establish a guard around me so that I would not transgress against you in my life to come. Keep me back." Everything about this is future. "Keep me back. I shall be blameless." Future tense. He's looking forward to what comes. And so what David is doing here is he is praying proactively in pursuit of holiness. He's not confessing sin out of one side of his mouth while planning future escapades and future sins out of the other side of his mouth. He says, "No, no, Lord, I don't just to have the release and the joy of a clean conscience, I want to be righteous moving forward into the future."

And when he speaks about presumptuous sins here, that word presumptuous describes a kind of defiance that says, "I'll do what I want to do. I'm aware of what your law says but I'm going to do something different anyway. I'll do what I want to do. I'll be the master of my own steps now." What David's describing here in verse 13, he's describing a spirit that takes liberties with the grace of God. You know, I mean, there are people who teach you to think and live the Christian life in the way that I'm about to describe. "Well, I've been forgiven therefore there's no need for me to confess sin, and I can pretty much live any way that I want to because grace is free and, you know, where sin abounds grace abounds all the more." The response of the Apostle Paul to that mindset is, "God forbid! Under no circumstances! No, no, no, no!" And David wants nothing to do with that, what's theologically called that antinomian spirit that says the law of God does not apply to me. David says, "No. God, keep me away from a defiance to your revealed will. Give me a heart that willingly submits, willingly, lovingly, relationally follows you because you have declared your will and your word. This is the way that you would have me to live, and the fact that you are gracious, I do not want to use that as an excuse for sinful

carnal living." David says, "The fact that you are gracious, I ask you to use that grace to strengthen me and enable me to better live in the righteousness that you call me to."

I can remember days in my early Christian life where I would, you know, I'd think, you know, you'd be tempted by the different sins that have come to a man in his youth. I remember the mindset of which David is writing against, you know, the mindset that says, "Well, I'll sin and then I'll confess it later. You know, I'll have my cake and eat it too." And that's profoundly ungodly, and to the extent that that becomes a settled way of thinking about the grace of God in a man or a woman's life, it may be the mark of an unregenerate heart. Someone who's not even genuinely saved, beloved, would think that way consistently to the extent that they even consider the grace of God and the confession of sin because what the Spirit of God does when he saves someone is he plants in them a love for the word of God and a love for righteousness, a desire to be holy. And, you know, we come to Christ in order to be delivered from sin, not to continue in it with abandon and with a free pass of perpetual forgiveness. When God does a saving work in the heart of a man, when Christ comes and saves someone, he's coming to save them from sin in its power and in its practice, one day to be delivered completely from its presence. It's a deliverance from sin not an enablement to continue in it. That's pretty convicting, isn't it?

What David is praying here, to put it another way, is he says, "God, so work in my heart that you would keep me from resisting your will. Work in my heart so that I am compliant, content, obedient to you." What David is saying here is that he understands that his nature could motivate him to sin against God in the future even though he is presently submissive. He doesn't trust himself, in other words. "God, I'm here, I'm before you, I submit to you, but I know that sin clings to me in such a way that it remains an ongoing threat, and so I pray that you would protect me and deliver me and keep me from that kind of self assertion against you. I don't want to become like that, O God." So David takes advantage of his present desires, his spiritual frame of mind now, to use a phrase, he makes hay while the sun is shining, says, "God, in this righteous frame of mind, I ask you to develop and keep this frame of mind in the future when I might be tempted to stray from it."

Charles Spurgeon says this, he says, "This earnest and humble prayer teaches us that saints may fall into the worst of sins unless restrained by grace, and therefore they must watch and pray lest they enter into temptation." A growing believer, a true Christian, wants to be protected from sin. He wants God to direct his steps in a way that lead him in righteousness. And beloved, this aspect of praying which is simply a manifestation of the desires of a redeemed heart, this is exactly what Christ taught us to pray when he spoke in Matthew 6. You don't need to turn there. You will remember it quickly as I read the words to you. When our Lord said, "Pray in this way," the latter part of that prayer in Matthew 6 says, "And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors," cleanse me from my past sins, pardon my prior iniquities, and then what is the very next line? You know. The very next line that he says that he instructs us to pray in, "and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil." Pardon my past sin, and as I look to the future, lead me not into temptation. As I face this day, keep me away from sin and lead me in

righteousness. Work in my heart that I would be responsive to you. You see, a growing believer wants protection from sin and that spirit runs throughout the Bible. It runs throughout the redeemed heart.

So, "Lord, pardon my past sins. Protect me from future sins." And then there's more, a third and final point in which David prays. He prays for a sense of purity in the presence of God. Purity in the presence of God. Pardon, protection and purity. Verse 14. And to introduce the verse, he's not simply saying, "Keep me from the negative things, establish righteous godly principles in my heart. In the deep recesses where only you see, O God, there in my inner man, there in my heart, there in my conscience, there in my spirit establish godliness of an unshakeable sort that would please you." Verse 14,

14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

God's knowledge of everything in the universe is perfect, comprehensive and exhaustive. And it always has been. God has never learned anything because he has always known everything. And when we say that God knows everything, included within that general statement is the fact that God knows specifically the thoughts and attitudes of our hearts. He knows the words of our mouth. David said elsewhere, I believe in Psalm 139, "Before there is a word on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it all." David's mindful that God knows him thoroughly for better and for worse, you might say. And in light of that, what David recognizes and what you and I need to grow in our own sense and understanding of the Christian life, David sees that his inner man is a holy place of worship before God, that his heart, as it were, is an altar, his heart is a sanctuary. I'm using words that I don't generally like to use to describe Christian life, just using them as a metaphor that his heart is a place where worship takes place and that without a heart engagement of love and devotion and submission to Christ, all the external matters are irrelevant. Scripture speaks to this often even in the Old Testament. "Why do you bring me sacrifices?" God repeatedly condemned Israel for bringing sacrifices in an outward way when their lives were full of sin, iniquity, and disobedience. He said the outward act means nothing without the inner attitude.

Look over at Psalm 51 here to reinforce this point, this great Psalm of confession of sin, and as you read and study Scripture over the years, you start to see the deep internal unity to these texts that maybe you missed the first time through because the outward form of the words is different, a different vocabulary is used but as you meditate more you start to realize there's an inner unity, a depth to this that unites these things across the different Psalms and across the different portions of Scripture. That's why it's important for us to compare Scripture with Scripture as we study together, and as we study doctrine together as we're doing in these months.

In verse 14 of Psalm 51, David says, "Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation," forgive my past sins, pardon what I've done in the past, and then going forward, "my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise." And then here's the point that we were speaking about a

moment ago, the futile nature of outward worship that is not accompanied by an inward change and devotion and submission of the heart. Nothing could be more clear on this point than what David says right here in verse 16, "For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering." The outward form of this doesn't matter, God, in comparison to the inner man. So that he says in verse 17, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."

As we look at the language of verse 14 of Psalm 19, you see David saying it, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer." David's mind has been transformed by his meditation on creation and his meditation on the word of God. He's confessed his past sin. He's asking God for protection from future sin. And now, as it were, he clinches it, he seals it, he brings it all together and what he's expressing is that from a truly transformed mind come fitting words of praise toward this God who has made himself known. "You've made yourself known everywhere I look, you've made yourself known in your most holy book, and now, Lord, I respond, I yield myself to you. I am no longer my own." Scripture says you've been bought with a price therefore glorify God with your body. David says, "In light of all that you've done, the grace that you've shown to me, your greatness in creation, your goodness in your word, God, be gracious to me now in my inner man." So that true salvation, true meditation on the things of God, true meditation on where he has made himself known leads inevitably, leads inexorably, leads powerfully to the inner core of who you are as a man, as a woman, as a boy, as a girl, and produces inside this desire to please God. "God, in light of your glory, in light of your grace, make my inner man a place of worship. So work inside me that you're pleased with what I think about and what I say." In the book of Hebrews we read that through Christ, then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is the fruit of lips that give thanks to his name.

So David is desiring that purity with an expectant trust. He calls God his rock and his redeemer. Rock says that, "God, you're reliable. You can be trusted. You are a sure source of strength to me. Me personally. Me individually." David's not going through outward ritual in a mindless way. This text of Psalm 19 is a rebuke to all ritualistic religion that makes no claim on the inner man. He says, "You're my rock. I trust you. I know that you have heard my prayer. I know that you will do this work." And the word redeemer is a reminder of the fact that God uses his power to deliver his people from bondage. David spoke this as a Jew with full awareness of the deliverance of God of his people from Egypt. He delivered them from Egypt. He redeemed them. He brought them out of slavery, literally brought them out and deposited them in the Promised Land so that they could be a unique, distinct nation given to his glory, and David says, David, in the fullness of what he's praying in this section here as he's mindful of his hidden faults and presumptuous sins and the desire to be blameless, what he's saying is, "Lord," - oh, listen to this please, listen to this please and make it your own prayer - "God, deliver me from the bondage that is inside me. Deliver me from that which clings to me. Deliver me from that inside me which gives forth unholy words, unholy meditations of heart, ingratitude, indifference. God, use your power as my redeemer to deliver me from all of that. Forgive me. Keep me from it and free my heart to be the altar of worship I want it to be to you so

that the fullness of what goes on in my inner man is a delight to you." David is putting sin to death and fueling and watering the soil in which righteousness grows. Beloved, Christ will free you from sin. Christ will forgive your sin if you turn to him in repentant faith.

David's prayer shows the presence of God in his soul and so creation led to the Canon, led to the inner man as David dealt with his conscience before Holy God. How can we know that God exists? At a macro level, we see him in creation. In the written word, we see him revealed in the Canon of Scripture. And what we find in Psalm 19 will kind of expand out to some other Scripture in just a moment, but Psalm 19 also shows that God has made himself known in the principle of conscience. The principle of conscience. We know that God exists because there is a principle of conscience that operates in the human race. I'm not simply talking about your individual conscience being a mark of the existence of God. It is that, but we're talking at a more transcendent level here, that throughout humanity, throughout the ages, there is operative in the human heart a principle of right and wrong. Humanity has a broad sense of what is right and what is wrong and you see the Apostle Paul addressing this in Romans 2. Would you turn there with me and then we'll just make some brief comments about this. In Romans 2, we are moving from the principle of the inner man in Psalm 19 to the principle of the inner man as Paul discusses it in his discussion about the doctrines of salvation.

And in Romans 2:14, the Apostle Paul says this, "when Gentiles, who do not have the law," they have not received a copy of the written word of God, they do not have the word of God themselves, there were Gentiles like that in Paul's day as there are in our day in more remote places, Paul says God deals with them on a different principle, "Gentiles, who do not have the law," when they, "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." What Paul is saying and it's a matter of great, profound importance in so many different directions, this is really an important, a critical text in Scripture, what Paul is saying is this, is that even people who do not have the written law of God and haven't been exposed to it, there is at work in their hearts a principle of conscience that tells them what is right and what is wrong. And they know that that principle is there because when they violate it there is something inside them that convicts them of wrong. It tells them, "That was wrong. You should not have done that. You are guilty as a result." And that conscience is an inner principle that God placed into humanity. Conscience directs us in the determination of what is right and what is wrong. It condemns our wrongdoing. It affirms our right doing, if you want to put it that way. Conscience is not the voice of God. Conscience is not a perfect instrument like Scripture is perfect because conscience operates according to what the mind informs it with. But even within those limitations, that human faculty of conscience has been implanted by God to help us know right from wrong in a very basic sense. And beloved, that basic sense of right and wrong inside the hearts of men, it transcends culture and it transcends time. It's an enduring faculty in humanity.

Where did it come from? Where did it come from if we were just descended from a primal blob of goo that was left over after a Big Bang where a morally indifferent explosion produced creatures in a realm without God, without any source of true transcendent morality. If that's true, and it's not, if that's true then where did the principle of conscience come from? Conscience is expressed. You go anywhere in the world and there would be a common revulsion, let's say, against mass murders of children, of hypocrisy in spiritual leaders. Everybody knows those things are wrong. The more darkness descends upon our age, the more narrow that common ground of shared conscience and morality becomes as it's assaulted in the media, assaulted in entertainment and mocked and defied at every level. It's such a grievous thing that we see happening all around us. But there's still that common core where everyone knows, "That's wrong." In a different sense, a different manifestation of this, men and women, boys and girls, at some level have feelings of guilt over the private wrongs that they commit. And just the flash of regret maybe following a night of sin where it bubbles up into your awareness, "I shouldn't have done that. Ah, forget it. Now everybody does it, it's okay." But there's that persistent, insistent accusation coming up from inside you saying, "No. Wrong." Where does that universal principle come from? God has written his moral law on human hearts.

Conscience testifies to his existence. A couple of things I want to say about this as we just think briefly about Romans 2. You say, "Really? You're going to say that that is sufficient independently to testify to me in a conclusive way that God exists?" Absolutely. Think about it this way. For those who have never had Scripture, God is going to use their conscience as the measure by which he judges them. Conscience is enough to render every man guilty before God. Is it enough to know that God exists? You better believe it because your conscience, put there by God, is a sufficient grounds for him to judge men eternally. God, regardless of what man thinks about the argument, God says it's enough and he has said he'll use conscience as a grounds for eternal judgment.

This is an incidental side point that we can address another time. So how many of you have heard, you don't need to raise your hand, but how often have you heard as people object to the gospel of Jesus Christ, "Well, what about those who have never heard? What about those who've never heard the gospel? What happens to them? It's not fair for God to judge them because they never heard the gospel." That's a bogus red herring. That's not a valid objection to anything. The view of God, the view of Scripture is that, no, these people are guilty. Every man, woman and child, all the world is guilty if we simply judge them by the principle of their own conscience alone. They have this law inside them and they haven't even kept the law that's inside them themselves, and that's grounds for eternal judgment. The fact that you and I have received the gospel when others haven't is not a sign of God's injustice to them because they are guilty no matter what and deserve judgment no matter what because of the violation of the law inside them. It's not a sign of injustice from God to them. If a man's guilty, it's right and just for him to be punished.

No, what the gospel says, and the fact that you and I have received the gospel, Christ has been presented to us, the Spirit's worked in our hearts, that's an indication that God has been gracious to us and humbles us and makes us grateful that, though we were equally guilty with those who never heard, God somehow in his kindness and his grace showed

mercy to us that we did not deserve and that not everybody gets. And the proper response to those who have never heard by those who have, one, make sure you've repented and believed in Christ because there's an even higher standard of judgment applied to those that hear the gospel and reject it. And if God has saved your soul to metaphorically, if not literally, fall on your face and say, "O God, thank you for your mercy to me, the sinner. You showed mercy to me that others don't get. You've been kind to me despite my sin and defiance and indifference to you. O God, thank you and far be it from my lips to accuse you of injustice that you in your wisdom have not shown that same grace to everyone who's ever existed. I vindicate you, O God, in your justice and in your grace. You have done all things well. It belongs to the God of all the earth to do what is right." Beloved, this is part of building a Christian mind is to think rightly about these things, not from a man-centered perspective that brings accusation against God but to see it from God's perspective and say, "Yes, you are right. You are just. You are holy and you've been gracious to me, unconditional, unqualified submission and worshiped from my heart belong to you."

For knowing the existence of God, and why conscience testifies conclusively to his existence, we turn once again to the Puritan Stephen Charnock. I'm going to give you an extended couple of quotations from him because it's so good and it's a privilege to introduce you maybe to some writers that you haven't heard of before. He's a thick read. It takes some time to work through it but, oh, the insight that he has on this point. I quote. He says, "From conscience a man may rationally be instructed that there is a God. I find something within me that directs me, contrary to my desires. There must be something above me therefore that put this principle into man's nature." Continuing on, stay with me, beloved, as I read because this is really powerful and I've never heard it stated this clearly in what I'm about to read to you. Charnock says, "These operations of conscience cannot be totally shaken off by man. If there be no God, why do men not silence the clamors of their conscience and scatter those fears that disturb their rest and pleasures? What man would continue in the punishment of conscience if it were in his power to deliver himself?" What Charnock is saying here is that if conscience doesn't come from God, if it's just something under the authority and the power of man, why doesn't he just cast it off because conscience disturbs us. It robs us of our sleep. It testifies that we are not righteous but we are guilty. And where does its persistent prevalence, how does it continue on if it's simply something man-made because man has every motive to get rid of it if he could? He's motivated to get rid of it because it makes him uncomfortable. It convicts him. He says, why would a man continue with that if he had the ability to get rid of it?

Charnock goes on to say, "Man can as little silence those thunders in his soul as he can silence the thunders in the heavens. Since man cannot throw out the process it makes against him, it is an evidence that some higher power secures its throne and standing in the human heart." Charnock concludes, "This proves the existence of God. If there were no God, conscience would be useless. The operation of it would have no foundation if there were not someone to take notice of conscience and punish or reward the action." In other words, there is no evolutionary reason for conscience to exist in the heart of man. It's so enduring, it's so insistent, it's so contrary to what motivates man, what man would

want, but the fact that it's there testifying to right and wrong tells the observant man or woman there's a God who put it there, and a God who will use it in the final day. Is that sufficient for us to know that God exists? I repeat myself but we better. You better. God will use conscience to judge men who did not even hear his law. A man's conscience renders him without excuse because he has not even kept the law that he has inside himself.

Now beloved, I realize that through repeated sin it's possible for a man to dull his conscience. I realize that the whole realm of psychology, in large part, exists in order to quench conscience and say, "No, you're fine. You're good. You need to have better self-esteem. Don't be so hard on yourself. Forgive yourself." And all of that trying to grab conscience by the throat and strangle it and to put it to death. And so conscience is not as alive and vibrant as it could be but when men go down that path, sinning against their conscience, some of you I know have done that, maybe you are in the midst of it now, when psychology trains men to disregard and to quench the testimony within them of their own wrongdoing, beloved, understand that that has happened from a starting point of the testimony of conscience. Conscience testifying to the individual, "You shouldn't do this." I'll do it anyway. [softer] "You shouldn't do this." [louder] I'll do it anyway. [softer] "You shouldn't do this." [louder] I'll do it anyway. Conscience has been silenced but its testimony was there and it endures and same thing when a man-centered, so-called doctor of psychiatry, psychology, tells people to disregard that, the testimony of conscience was prior, it was pre-existent to that, and instead of saying, "Let's go to the word of God and find out the reality of your guilt," the psychologist with the full ascent of his subjects, takes a bat and beats conscience down into submission. But that doesn't disprove the principle and it does not terminate the accountability of it all.

And so we see from creation, we see from the Canon, we see from conscience, three independent principles at work in the universe, at work in humanity testifying to us conclusively about the existence of God. Now what about you? As we draw this to a conclusion, I could see where something like this would be quite convicting for someone. Let me take you back. Let me take you back to the mercy that we saw in Psalm 19 and rather than silencing and hardening your heart against the things that now convict you, I plead with you to turn to Christ and to ask him in his mercy and his grace which he manifested to utter perfection at the cross of Calvary where he cried out, "Father, forgive them," where he now comes to you and offers you the free full pardon of all of your iniquity and promises eternal life if you turn to him, make it your prayer this morning as we close, verse 12, "O Christ, declare me innocent from hidden faults and let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer." Turn your inner man in the fullness of who you are, in the fullness of how you best know how to do it, to Christ and you'll find him as I did long ago, a merciful Savior, ready to forgive, willing to receive all who come to him.

Let's pray together.

O Father, let the words of our mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord our rock and our redeemer. In light of what we have heard, Father,

we pray that your Spirit would advance your purposes in each one, drawing the unsaved to Christ, assuring Christians of pardon even today in the midst of their rebellion of this past week, and affirming and establish those with desires for righteousness that you hear this prayer, that you answer this prayer, you do enable your people to persevere in the faith until the end. We glorify your name. We reject the opposition of the world against your testimony. We embrace what you have said in creation, in the Canon, and in conscience. We recognize your existence. We honor it, and we thank you that you have made yourself known even more in the Lord Jesus Christ. Help us as we go forth to carry forth these things and, Father, for each one here, every man, woman, boy and girl, build in each one a Christian mind through the power of your Holy Spirit working through your word because faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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