

View

Viewpoints

Guilt, the conscience, and morality

A lady by the name of Louise Fletcher Tarkington wrote a poem entitled "The Land of Beginning Again." This poem reflects the desires of many.

I wish that there were some wonderful place
 Called the Land of Beginning Again,
 Where all our mistakes and all our heartaches,
 And all of our poor selfish grief
 Could be dropped like a shabby old coat at the door,
 And never put on again.

This is one way to think about the effect of Romans 3:20-26 or Ephesians 2:1-10.

Conscience

You know the feeling. You tell your parents you're going one place, when really you're going to another. You take cash to avoid taxes. You spread a story about someone. You break a promise to spend time with your child.

At the moment you're thinking about it a yellow warning light flashes in your brain. Something tilts out of balance inside. If you do the right thing, the light turns green. If you head toward the wrong thing, it turns red. If you choose to go through the red light, it sends the message, "You fool, you idiot. You crossed the line. You better fix it. Don't do that again!"

I Cor 10:13 says that with every temptation God provides a way of escape. The conscience is working during that moment when you are deciding whether to take the escape route or head on into the sin. The decision you make will depend on how the conscience is trained and whether you decide to follow it or not.

It's not the same for everyone. One guy can lose sleep over calling someone a fool. The next guy can murder and still sleep soundly.

The church of Christ

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Services

Sunday Morning Assembly
 9:30 AM
 Sunday Evening: 5:00 PM
 Wednesday Bible Study
 7:30 PM

Classes for all ages.
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A well-trained (i.e., by God's word) conscience is like like a thermostat. A thermometer is circumstantially led. Depending on the temperature, the mercury moves up or down. It moves according to the whether circumstances that it is set in. Everything around a thermometer controls how the thermometer works, whether it moves up or down.

A thermostat, on the other hand, influences its surroundings. Unlike the thermometer, the thermostat controls the heat or coldness around it.

Anyone can be like a thermometer; God calls us to a higher place – to be like a thermostat; do those things that control our surroundings.

Strange "Ethics"

USA Today did an article on "sin" recently and included some interesting (if disturbing) polling data. Most people, according to the poll, feel that adultery is sin (81%) but only 45% believe that premarital sex is sin. Smoking marijuana, getting drunk, gambling, swearing, gossip – all of those come in at well under 50%.

Oddly, 63% feel that not saying anything if a cashier gives you too much change is a sin. That's about 20% higher than "getting drunk." Is it just me, or are people

really confused these days? Or have we come to the place where everyone is his own moral law? (Yes).

It reminds me of the story about a man who went to the park with a woman to eat lunch. They had stopped by KFC to buy some chicken, but when they arrived at the park and opened the bag, they found that the cashier had given them the deposit bag instead of their bag of food. There was over \$1,000 in the bag. The man immediately went back to the store and returned the money. Of course, the manager, who had noticed the mistake earlier, was ecstatic and impressed by the man's honesty. He wanted to call the news people and tell them, but the man stopped him. "Don't do that! The woman I am with is not my wife!"

When it comes to morals, to each his own, I suppose. I think they are doing what Paul warned against in II Cor. 11:12 – they are classifying and comparing themselves with one another and that becomes their "moral center," instead of God's revealed law.

DP

Managing Guilt

- Did you know that ever since 1811 (when someone who had defrauded the government anonymously sent \$5 to Washington D.C.) the U.S. Treasury has operated a Conscience Fund? Since that time over \$4 million has been received from guilt-ridden citizens.

You've probably heard the story about the man who sent \$100 to the IRS with a note: "Here is some money to pay taxes on income I didn't report on my return. If I still can't sleep, I'll send you the rest."

Getting Caught

...Or the one about the four college students who couldn't resist the temptation to skip finals to go to a concert. Later they showed up seeking to take the final, but were asked, "why they had missed" They told the teacher that their car had had a flat tire. Much to their relief, the teacher smiled and agreed to give them the test. He placed each of the students in a separate room and handed them the tests, which had only one question—"which tire was flat?" "Be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23)