

AMANA TRUST BIBLE STUDIES

Lesson 4

The Human Conscience as the Law to the Gentiles

Bible reading

Please pray over these verses.

Romans 2:14-15

14 For when **Gentiles**, who have no law, do by nature the things of the law, these, though they have no law, **are a law to themselves**,

15 Who show the work of the law written in their hearts, **their conscience bearing witness** with it and their reasonings, one with the other, accusing or even excusing them.

Introduction

Just as the creation of God causes man to be without excuse in his knowing of God (1:20), the law of God given to the Jews is also a protection and restriction to sinful man. However, even the Gentiles, who were not given the law, have no excuse because God has still given them a conscience that functions to remind man of the good, God-created nature within him.

Bible study reading

Please prayerfully read through the following portions of ministry related to this lesson.

God gave the outward law to the Jews, so the Jews have to behave and act before God according to the God-given, outward law. God did not give the Gentiles an outward law, but in the nature of every human being there is a conscience, and that conscience is in the function of the law. The function of the conscience is just the same as the function of the law. The Jews are under the law condemned by God, and the Gentiles are also condemned before God according to their conscience. The conscience works to accuse you or excuse you. When the conscience accuses you, it means that you are wrong, and when it excuses you, it means that you are right. There is something within you by nature, in your nature, that condemns, accuses, you or justifies, excuses, you. (*Elders' Training Book 6: The Crucial Points of the Truth in Paul's Epistles*, ch. 2, section 2)

Our original nature, as created by God, was good. Everything created by our Father, including our nature, was good originally. Of course, our nature was poisoned by the fall. There can be no doubt about this. Nevertheless, as human beings, we have a nature which God created good, and we need to act according to it. We should take heed to this nature. Although you may argue that it is not wrong to steal from others, the nature within you protests whenever you are tempted to steal. Even bank robbers will admit that, as they rob banks, their nature tells them, "Don't do this." However, they will not listen. It is the same with every evil-doer. Whenever they do something wrong, their nature disagrees. We need to observe the requirements of the nature within us. (*Life-study of Romans*, msg. 3, section 4)

According to the New Testament, a Christian's conscience is very important. The apostle Paul said that he exercised himself to always have a conscience without offense toward God and men (Acts 24:16). He lived in a good conscience before God all the time (23:1). He also said that the Christian life is a life of love out of a pure heart and out of a good conscience and out of unfeigned faith

(1 Tim. 1:5). Both love and faith depend on a pure conscience. Without a pure conscience it is hard to have love and faith. Moreover, he said that if we thrust away a good conscience, we will become shipwrecked regarding the faith (v. 19). By this we can see how important the conscience is. (*Practical Lessons on the Experience of Life*, ch. 10, section 2)

Going deeper

Please read or listen to these materials for an in-depth study of this lesson.

Further reading:

[*Life-study of Romans*, msg. 3, sections 3-4](#)

[*The Economy of God*, ch. 6, sections 3-4](#)

[*Practical Lessons on the Experience of Life*, ch. 10, sections 2-3](#)

[*The Experience of Life*, ch. 6](#)

Radio broadcast link:

Broadcast 4, [*The Source of Wickedness and the Way of Restriction*](#) (start at 18:11 and end at the 24:52-minute mark)

Footnotes from Recovery Version of the New Testament:

Romans 2:14, footnote 1

Romans 2:15, footnote 1

Acts 23:1, footnote 3

Questions for personal or corporate study:

References in brackets indicate readings or broadcasts that may be helpful in answering the questions.

- What is the function of the conscience within man? (Romans 2:14, footnote 1 and 2:15, footnote 1, Recovery Version)
- Explain the function of the conscience within a believer, and provide verses that highlight the importance of the conscience in our relationship with the Lord. (*Practical Lessons on the Experience of Life*, ch. 10, sections 2-3)

Works Cited

Lee, Witness. *Elders' Training, Book 6: The Crucial Points of the Truth in Paul's Epistles*. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1985. www.ministrybooks.org

---. *Life-study of Romans*. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1989. www.ministrybooks.org

---. *Practical Lessons on the Experience of Life*. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 2001. www.ministrybooks.org

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