



Cape Coral Church of Christ

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<http://www.thelordsway.com/capecoralfl>

Schedule of Services

Sunday: Bible Study: 9:30 A.M.

Worship: 10:30 A.M. and 5:00 P.M.

Wednesday: Bible Study: 6:00 P.M.

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Is Conscience a Safe Guide?

Many people say, "It does not matter what one believes or does in religion just so he follows his conscience."

This is not true in secular matters. In traveling on the highways, we do not follow conscience about the road to take. We use the road map. In matters of health, we do not follow conscience – we want a doctor. We may take poison in all good conscience and die because our conscience was wrong. Honesty, sincerity, and a good conscience do not change the physical laws of nature. Nature's laws were framed by the same God who gave us the laws of religion and worship. Why then should we think conscience could change any of God's laws? Conscience is not safe in the business world. Sincerity does not keep banks from failing, business from going broke, or companies from losing money. It is not enough in marriage. Many marriages fail, not because of insincerity, but because of other factors.

If conscience is not safe in these matters, why should we think it safe in religion? Conscience is not our guide; it serves as a court. It is the exercise of one's judgment of knowledge previously acquired. Conscience may accuse or excuse (Romans 2:12-15) or bear witness (Romans 9:1). Conscience warns us only when we are going contrary to what we have been taught. When one is doing what he has been taught to be right, his

conscience is clear and is spoken of in the Bible as good (Acts 23:1), pure (2 Timothy 1:3), and void of offense (Acts 24:16). If one violates what he has been taught, his conscience is said to be defiled (Titus 1:15) or seared (1 Timothy 4:2).

Conscience should not be violated (Romans 14:14). However, to think a thing is right does not make it right, for the Apostle Paul persecuted Christians with a good conscience (Galatians 1:13; Acts 26:9-10; Acts 23:1).

What then is our guide? In religion it is the Bible only. "Though thy precepts I get understanding ... " (Psalm 119:104). Christ has all authority (Matthew 28:18). We will be judged by His word (Revelation 20:12).

The Living Word

God's word may be called the "living word" because it is able both to bring to life, and to sustain the life of those who receive it. This life-producing influence of the word may be exerted through several channels. The written word itself, contained in the book we call the Bible, has the power both to convict and to convert those who read and respond in obedience to its instruction. It contains information which can make us "wise unto salvation."

"Salvation," however, must not be thought of as merely a state of forgiveness. Salvation is a maturing relationship with God, something we're instructed to "work out" (Philippians 2:12). It is a transformation that is evidence of the word of God living in us. It is a living condition in which the word has been translated into the language of changed hearts and lives of those who have received it.

Indeed, some may merely read the Bible and discover the solution to their problems. Others may be persuaded by the preaching of the word. But the lost world needs to see the power of the gospel displayed clearly in the love, joy, peace, and sureness of purpose that characterizes those who have been recipients of this Good News, and whose quality of life is a reflection of its transforming power!

Jesus didn't just come to speak the word. He came as the living Word of God! All the blessings of the term "gospel" are perfectly embodied in Him. So it should be with those who claim to be His disciples. The changed lives of saved sinners is the translation of the Bible that the watching world is most likely to read, and believe.

May God help us to become His "living epistles!" That's what it means to "adorn the doctrine" (Titus 2:10) and to live a life worthy of your calling.

I Did a Terrible Thing

Are there skeletons in your closet? Are there things in your past which you want to keep in the past? Have you done things for which you are deeply ashamed? If we live long enough to discover the difference between right and wrong, sin comes to be a plague on the soul of every man. The only exception I am aware of is Jesus. "He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth? (1 Peter 2:22).

No one can honestly say, "I have never sinned!" Surely, we all have regrets. There are things in our past which we would undo if we could. I'm not interested in dredging them up, but I do want to acknowledge that the Lord has a remedy for them, and it is His blood. "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1:7).

The depths of God's forgiveness is one of the hardest lessons in life to grasp, and one of the most important. God loves us! Christ died for us! His blood can cleanse us! He is no respecter of persons. His forgiveness is accessible to all, but on His terms, not ours. If we truly believe in Him, we will repent of our sins, confess His name, and be baptized, His blood will cleanse, and he will add us to His church. As long as we walk in the light (are faithful to our commitment), His blood continues to provide cleansing. And when we sin, if we will confess those sins and seek His forgiveness, we will find it (1 John 1:7-10).

God's love, mercy and grace are sufficient to save. Three names immediately come to mind - David, Peter, and Paul. King David, though called "a man after God's own heart," committed adultery, tried to cover it up, and then conspired to have the woman's husband murdered. Yet, when he sought forgiveness, God granted it. Of course that did not mean that David avoided the consequences of his sin. He had to live with his mistakes, but God still forgave him. In a moment of weakness, Peter denied his Lord three times, but when he recognized his sin, he repented in tears. Christ forgave him, and did not remove the "keys of the kingdom" from his hands. As Saul of Tarsus, Paul was an ardent persecutor of Christians. He operated under the misguided belief that he was serving God when he hunted down, arrested, and brought to trial men and women whose only crime was believing in Jesus. When he discovered the truth and turned to Christ, he also found forgiveness (1 Timothy 1:12-16). They each did a terrible thing, but God forgave them. If they could be forgiven, then so can we.

Overcoming Self-Pity

There's an old saying that goes, "If you want help in overcoming your problems, help someone else with theirs." T. Huffman Harris gave a good example of this in his book titled, *Open the Door Wide to Happy Living*, where he told the story of a young man who became tired of life and decided to leap from a bridge into a turbulent river. A total stranger saw the young man being swept downstream and plunged into the water in an effort to save him. The young man, who was a good swimmer, noticed the would-be rescuer floundering desperately in the strong current, and knew that without his help he would drown. Something stirred within the heart of the young man, and with all his strength he swam over to the rescuer and rescued him. Saving the stranger, who had attempted to save him, brought new hope and meaning to the young man's life.

Should you, then, find yourself in the depths of despair, do not drown yourself with an attitude of self-pity, but rather, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).

What Happens When a Nation Forgets God?

When a nation that once honored God and His laws decides to reject Him from its schools, courthouses, and other public sites, choosing to enthrone man and human opinion in their place, what happens?

The Bible speaks of a people who once knew God, but became unthankful and departed from Him (Romans 1:21, 28). The results were idolatry and nature-worship (vv. 22-23, 25), fornication (v. 24), homosexuality and lesbianism (vv. 26-27), and a host of other transgressions of God's laws (vv. 28-31), subjecting themselves to God's judgment (v. 32).

So, what happens when a nation forgets God? Man becomes his own god and forms his morality on the basis of popular opinion. Living together without marriage becomes the norm. Entertainment must be violent or sexual in nature. Men-with-men and women-with-women sexual relationships and even "marriages, become a "right." Those who oppose such are labeled bigots who seek to "impose their values upon others." The major "sin" is "intolerance" of other lifestyles. In other words, man becomes his own god and thus feels free to set his own standards of right and wrong.

Do you know of a nation that has become like this?