

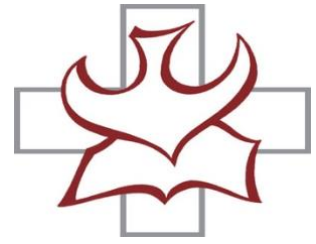
Good & Clear Conscience

The Book Of Ephesians

Psalm 32 Hebrews 9:11-14 John 8:2-11

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A guilty conscience is a terrible thing.

You know the feeling. You said or did something that you regret; you are filled with remorse and an overwhelming feeling of dread. It can make you sick; you feel like hiding; you hope no one finds out about it. God seems distant; and you are ashamed to approach Him. *You feel like the woman in the Gospel lesson today – thrown on the ground in front of the Judge with your guilty conscience pointing a finger at you!* A guilty conscience turns everything into gloom and doom.

So what do you do with a guilty conscience?

The **world** tells you that you need more **self-esteem**. *Do whatever you have to* or *think whatever you need to* in order to feel good about yourself. “Forgive yourself,” “let it go”, “focus on the good,” “you are a good person,” and “don’t be too hard on yourself” are common platitudes. The problem is that they never take away the guilt – they only suppress it, deny it, or turn it into a motivator for something else: all these things are pure deceptions. Without the Gospel, your conscience remains guilty and it condemns you.

Your conscience is a gift from God; and it can only be cleansed by the Gospel of Christ. Your conscience is a God-given gift to you that compares your thoughts, words, and actions against the Word of God. Your conscience is like an “inner judge” to let you know how God sees you. Your conscience will either accuse you of wrong-doing; or it will confirm that you did the right thing. Your conscience is like an “**internal compass**” that God has given to you to guide you through life.

A **guilty conscience** is meant to expose your sin and lead you to **repentance**. You realize that you have done the wrong thing; you admit it, you are sorry for it, you turn away from it, and you confess it by name to God. You hear the Gospel Good News that Jesus is your Savior. He has taken your sin upon Himself; **your guilt is laid on Him**, and He has paid for your sin and guilt with His death on the cross. In His resurrection from the dead, you hear that you are forgiven, that your sin is no longer counted against you; that **your guilt is removed**. **You have peace with God**; in Christ, your conscience is cleansed; you have a clean and clear conscience that can stand in God's presence. God remembers your sin no more.

Your Conscience
is the
Ten Commandments
written on
your heart!
Romans 2:14-15

The only way to have a good, clean, and clear conscience is through Repentance: confess your sin, and believe that you are forgiven in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

The **worship service** is designed to give you a good, clean, and clear conscience. That is one of the most important reasons why we go to church every week.

Throughout the week we sin; and we fall into all kinds of rebellion, disobedience, and immorality in our thoughts, words and deeds. On Sunday, we come to the House of the Lord with our guilty consciences because we know that God has invited us to come to Him for healing, forgiveness, and peace

Our worship services begin with the **Invocation**, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and in the Holy Spirit." The Invocation reminds us of the same words that were pronounced over us in our **Baptism**, where God washed away our sins and removed our guilt.

Baptism . . . **now saves** you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a **good conscience**, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ 1 Peter 3:21

Baptism is ongoing salvation that cleanses your conscience! The phrase “*Now saves you*” is present tense: it means that Baptism continues to save you by giving you a **good conscience**. Baptism connects you to Christ, and His resurrection: your sins are perpetually forgiven and you have peace with God!

Even though baptism is something that happens at one time and in one place, it is not finished once the ceremony is over, just as marriage does not end after the wedding ceremony has been completed. Baptism is not a past event; it is an ever present gift of forgiveness and a good conscience.

“Liturgy And The Delivery Of The Good Conscience”
Dr. J.W. Kleinig, *paraphrase*

In your **Baptism**, God wrote His Name on you and you belong to Him. Your **Baptism** gives you continual access to the Father in Heaven. In Lutheran Worship, the **Invocation** reminds us that we are the **Baptized** People of God: we belong to Him and He invites us into His presence for healing, forgiveness, and peace.

The invocation leads to **Confession and Absolution**.

In worship, when we gather together, we come before God our Judge humbly confessing our sins and laying our guilty consciences before Him. Because we know that the Judge sent His Son to rescue us from our sin and cleanse our guilty consciences, we do not fear. *We “throw ourselves” on the mercy of God our Judge*, knowing that He is merciful; that He loves us and cares about us and promises to forgive our sins because of Jesus. **Absolution is the ongoing verdict of forgiveness**. We repent, confess our sin, we hear the divine verdict of forgiveness that cleanses our consciences.

The only way to have a good, clean, and clear conscience is through Repentance: confess your sin, and believe that you are forgiven in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

In worship, not only do we begin by remembering our **Baptism** with the words of the **Invocation**; and not only do we **Confess** our sins and hear the divine verdict of **Absolution**; but we also receive the very body and blood of Christ our Savior in **Holy Communion** that forgives our sins and **cleanses our conscience**.

How much more will the **blood of Christ**, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, **purify our conscience** from dead works to serve the living God. Hebrews 9:14

A guilty conscience makes you impure; and you cannot stand in God's presence, nor can you serve Him. So God sent His Son Jesus, as a Sacrificial Lamb, who shed His Blood on a cross to cover over your guilty conscience and all of your sins. **The blood of Christ purifies your conscience, you are clean, and holy, and righteous.** God no longer considers you impure; you have been cleansed and made pure by the blood of Christ. You have a good, clean, and clear conscience. In **Holy Communion**, the Blood of Christ is applied to you as you *take and eat* and *take and drink* His Body and Blood in the bread and the wine. Holy Communion cleanses your conscience; it forgives your sins.

**We receive God's
heavenly gifts
in our
earthly worship!**

Now that you have a good, clean and clear conscience through Christ as He works in your life through Baptism, Absolution, and Communion, you respond by worshipping God as you **hear** His Word as it is spoken and preached; you **sing** praises to God with joy and thanksgiving; you give your **tithes and offerings** so that others can learn to have good, clean, and clear consciences through Christ; you boldly approach God in **prayer** with all your requests; you have **fellowship** with other forgiven sinners with clean consciences, and you leave here and go into your various vocations with God's mighty **Trinitarian blessing**: *“May the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord make His face shine upon you; may the Lord look upon you with favor.”*

Through faith in Christ, you have access to God's grace and you can approach God the Father directly in order to receive forgiveness of sins and a **good, clean and clear conscience**. You cannot get a good, clean, and clear conscience anywhere else on earth. It does not come by clever psychology, better self-esteem, or your own good works or effort. It comes only from God through Christ as He provides it for you in Baptism, Absolution, and Communion.

The **Worship Service** is designed to give you a good, clean, and clear conscience each week! That is one of the most important reasons why we go to church every week! Amen!

Holy Trinity, today we thank you the gift worship where we are invited into your presence to receive your good gifts. Help us to believe in Christ our Savior who works through Baptism, Absolution, and Communion to forgive our sins and give us good, clean, and clear consciences. Motivate us to live holy and godly lives now as Your pure and holy people. Amen!