

Chapter 10

Without Understanding

In Romans 1, we have been looking at the results of, the consequences of God giving a people over to a reprobate mind, leaving them to themselves. We are now in verse 31, and the words, “*Without understanding*”. Man by nature, by birth does not understand spiritual matters. That is true, whether you are 18 years old or one day old. Man does not understand spiritual matters. An 18 year old can **know of** spiritual matters, whereas a one-day-old can not. But neither **understand** spiritual matters.

By “understanding” I mean spiritual comprehension. Psalms 14:1-4, as well as Psalm 53:1-4, says, “*The fool hath said in his heart, [There is] no God. They [The ones just referred to.] are corrupt, they have done abominable works, [there is] none that doeth good. The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, [and] seek God.*” The context of the people being talked about is “children of men”. That is everybody. “*They are all [The word “all” always needs to be taken in context. He is literally talking about everybody here.] gone aside, they are [all] together become filthy: [there is] none that doeth good, no, not one. Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people [as] they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD.*” Paul refers to this passage in Romans 3:11, “*There is none that understandeth, [As a result.] there is none that seeketh after God.*” Man's understanding, his spiritual comprehension is this; and you need to get this out of your vocabulary; “Well, they're too young to understand”. Age isn't the problem. What you're implying by saying that is that you get to an age where you do have spiritual understanding, which means you have some works, and that is heresy. Nobody understands unless God does a work in them.

We need to understand the difference between understanding and having a knowledge of something. Anybody that sits in church has a **knowledge** of God, but that doesn't mean they **understand** what they have a knowledge of. Man's understanding, his spiritual

comprehension is corrupt, it is enslaved to his sinful nature. Man, in and of himself, can possess a knowledge **of** spiritual things. That's referred to in Romans 2:20, speaking about a knowledge **of** spiritual things, "*An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge [There is a big difference between the form of knowledge and understanding.] and of the truth in the law.*" They have a form of knowledge, of truth, and law. They know **of** truth. That's true of anyone who comes here any length of time at all, they know **of** truth, they know **of** the law of God. That doesn't mean they understand it. If they are lost, they have no understanding. "There's none that understandeth." A form of knowledge is not saving knowledge. It is devoid of comprehension, devoid of understanding.

From Psalm 14, and Psalm 53, we see this absence of spiritual comprehension in natural man is connected to foolishness and atheism. Verse 1, "*The fool hath said in his heart, [There is] no God.*" It did not say they say with their lips there is no God. They say within the heart there is no God. In other words, they live as if there were no God. That's true of the lost, the unsaved sinner. They live as if there were no God. Those who sit here Sunday after Sunday, lost, in their heart they don't really believe the necessity of them being saved. Jesus said, "if you knew you would have". We see this natural lack of understanding results in foolishness. I'll call it practical atheism. That is they live as if there were no God, they live as if they're going to live here forever.

It is also connected to corruption. They are corrupt. That word means a degradation of morals. A degradation of morals is connected with this lack of understanding. We see also, they have done abominable works. There's a connection to foolishness, atheism, degradation of morals, and abomination.

There is a connection to a non-pursuit of God. We see this in Psalms 14:2, "*The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that*

did understand, [and] seek God.” That's what Paul is referring to. They are all gone upside. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. Man in his natural ignorance will not seek God.

Connected to this is a going away from God. Not only will they not seek God or move in the direction of God, they will do just the opposite. We see they're all gone aside. They're all gone aside from what? Aside from God. There's none that seek God and they go aside from God. They go the opposite direction from the Lord.

Then there is a connection to sinful acts. They are altogether become filthy. There's none that doeth good. No, not one.

There's a connection to hatefulness toward God, and acts of oppression against His people. In verse 4, *“Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people [as] they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD.”* They act with hatefulness toward God and God's people. There is a rejection of God, as they do not call upon the Lord.

All this stems from, “There's none that understandeth”, without understanding. That is natural. We are all born in that condition. You do not develop a spiritual understanding on your own by age. Nobody does that. So stop saying, “Well, they're too young to understand.” An 80 year-old, I can say, is too old to understand. Neither one understand. God has to do work. That is the new birth.

From all this we see the disastrous results of an absence of spiritual understanding. We come here to Romans 1:31, “without understanding”, which is a state of destitution. An absence, destitute of understanding, absent of understanding. Is this talking about what we are by birth? I don't think so. In the context of Romans 1, this is something that goes beyond, this “without understanding” is something that goes beyond man's natural ignorance of spiritual matters, man's natural dullness concerning spiritual matters.

This “*without understanding*” is something that is

the result of being given over to a reprobate mind. This is something that goes beyond our natural depravity. This is serious. “Without understanding” is kin to what we read in verse 21, “*their foolish heart was darkened.*” Their heart was already foolish. Again Psalm 14, “*The fool has said in his heart there is no God.*” Our heart was already foolish, was darkened. That is, made black and ignorant, made even blacker and more ignorant. I don't even know how you get more ignorant than total ignorance. But that is what we have here. “*Their foolish heart was darkened.*”

To be without understanding as the result of being given over to a reprobate mind, meaning the lack of comprehension, it is to be without reason, without understanding. That is they're left to themselves and now they have no reason. They do not have the ability to reason. Listen to people, listen to politicians. They do not have the ability to reason. Listen to people today. They have lost their ability to say, “Well, let's sit down and have a reasonable conversation.” You can't. They have lost their ability to reason. In order to have a reasonable conversation, you have to have two people with reason, and that's hard to find. It's to be without reason.

It is to be without rational ground. You can not try to rationalize with these people who have been given over to a reprobate mind. They have lost their rational ground. They do not have the ability to think orderly. To think orderly means, “You do this. This is the result. This will be the result of this.” That is orderly thinking. They have lost their ability to think orderly and you try to explain something to people who have been given over to a reprobate mind, you might as well talk to the wall. They have lost their ability to think in an orderly way. I'm not talking about people thinking exactly like us. I'm talking about being able to just order thoughts. They have lost that ability. It is a lack of mental sanity and sobriety.

Over all this “without understanding”, what it means is they have been given over to a reckless habit of mind.

Chapter 10 - Without Understanding - Part 1

When somebody is reckless they are dangerous. It doesn't matter if they are in a car, if they are handling a gun. If they are reckless, they are dangerous. A people that has been given over to a reprobate mind simply means they are in a reckless habit or state of mind. They're dangerous and the results can be disastrous. That is what we have here in Romans 1. We'll look more at this "to be without understanding" in the next lesson. This is something that goes beyond our nature. It is a result of reprobate mind.

Chapter 10 - Without Understanding - Part 2

In the last lesson, in Romans 1:31, we began looking at the phrase, “without understanding”. We have to keep in mind that this is the result of a reprobate mind and that is how we need to consider this. Having said that, we learned in the last lesson, that man by nature, man by birth, does not understand spiritual matters. He is without understanding. It does not matter what the age of the individual is, they are without spiritual understanding. To say, “Well so-and-so, they're at an age where they can not understand.” That is not so. They are without understanding. That is true of all men; by nature, by birth, they are without understanding. There is a natural “*without understanding*”, without spiritual understanding.

We learned in the last lesson, that “without understanding” is connected to foolishness, atheism in heart, corruption of or a degradation of morals, abomination, and non-pursuit of God. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God in a saving way. There is a connection to hatefulness toward God and acts of oppression against God's people. There is a connection to a rejection of God. Man does all these things by nature. But here in Romans 1, this “without understanding” is something that goes beyond man's natural lack or absence of understanding. It is something that goes beyond man's natural spiritual dullness. It is the result of a reprobate mind.

It is kin to what we read in verse 21, “... their foolish heart”. Our heart was already foolish, we are born that way. Our heart was already darkened, but this is something that goes beyond, “... their foolish heart was darkened,” meaning their heart was made black and ignorant. This “without understanding” goes beyond the natural absence of spiritual understanding.

What is it? What does it mean to be “without understanding”? All you have to do to find out what it means is talk to just about anybody today and listen to what they say. They are without understanding. It is a lack of comprehension, which means to be without reason, without

rational ground; there is no rationale in their thinking; an inability to think orderly, a lack of mental sanity and mental sobriety.

As we said in the last lesson, it is basically a reckless habit of mind. When someone is reckless they are dangerous. When somebody is reckless they not only endanger themselves, they may very well endanger those around them. Somebody that is reckless in an automobile, is not only a danger to themselves but a danger to those around them. So, it's a reckless habit of mind. I believe that pretty much sums up our society; a reckless habit of mind, making absolutely no sense whatsoever.

To be "without understanding" is to be senseless. This is something that even goes beyond man's natural absence of understanding. It's to be without discernment. That is, there is an inability to separate truth from error. In 1st Kings 3:9, the prayer of Solomon, "*Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that [I need this understanding heart, that ...] I may discern between good and bad:*" There is a connection. between understanding and discernment. Discernment is of the utmost importance. It is the faculty of mind that enables us to distinguish between one thing and another, enables us to distinguish truth from error, what is right, what is wrong, moral and immoral.

People, who are without understanding as a result of this reprobate mind, have lost their faculty of mind that is able to discern between moral and immoral. The individual who defends immorality, defends an immoral way of life, will use such arguments as "This is the 21st century, or everybody else is doing it." Well, not everybody is, but that is the reasoning. I mean, they have lost their ability to reason and they have also lost their ability to distinguish. Anybody that tries to defend error or immorality or anything like that, can't discern. Then they will make statements such as, "Well it's all the same." You have just announced that you have no ability to separate between two things.

“Without understanding.”

Throughout the Bible, there is a call for God's people to discern. Particularly, this principle is taught in the Old Testament. You cannot live the Christian life and not be able to discern between right and wrong. The foundation of the Christian life, the first principle of the Christian life is “follow me.” You are going to have to be able to discern in order to do that. You have to discern between Him and everyone else. If you can't do that, who knows who you're going to follow. In Leviticus 10:10, the people are called upon to discern, “*And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean;*” There is a difference. There is a difference between your hands being clean and your hands being dirty. You know, they try to make two men married to each other, two women married to each other, the same as a man and a woman married to each other. They say, “There is no difference.” They will say, “Our marriage is just as valid as a man and a woman.” You see they have lost their ability to discern. They are without understanding. They can't make that difference. A lot of it of course, is they are not willing to, but I'll even take it further, they **can not** because they have been given over to a reprobate mind.

In Leviticus 11:47, “*To make a difference between the unclean and the clean, and between the beast that may be eaten and the beast that may not be eaten.*” We could give a lot of examples of the lack of discernment in our society. In Jeremiah 15:19, “*Therefore thus saith the LORD, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, [and] thou shalt stand before me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, [There is discernment there, precious and vile.] thou shalt be as my mouth:*” We see we are to take forth the precious from the vile, there has to be a distinction. This is why churches have given into abominable practices, because they can not discern between the precious and the vile. They are without understanding.

In Malachi 3:18, “*Then shall ye return, and discern*

between the righteous and the wicked,” The wicked will say, “Well, I’m no different than anyone else.” But they are, they have lost their ability to see that difference. They have lost their ability to discern, “... *between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.*” Today, people who profess to be saved, who obviously are not serving God, who are in no danger of serving God, will say, “Oh, I serve the Lord just as much as the one who does.” They believe that. The reason they believe that is because they are without understanding. They can not make a difference between the one who serves and the one who doesn't.

“Without understanding” results in an absence of discernment. You put that together with everything else in Romans 1; you put that together with the fact that we live in a culture of filth that is vile, of wickedness and ungodliness, abomination, blasphemy and heresy; then you add to that people who cannot put a difference between those things and what is right, you have disaster, you have destruction. Not only that, it is intensifying. It intensifies by the moment. That is where we are today in society.

People have been given over to a reprobate mind. They are without understanding, they are without discernment. It is what we read of in Ephesians 4:18-19, “*Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling ...*” Their conscience is destroyed, without feeling. I can't tell you how many times I have sat down with people, tried to show them where they were wrong and many times they will say, “Well, the Lord hasn't, we don't feel like we're doing anything wrong.” What is sad is that's true. They are blatantly wrong, but they don't feel like they're doing anything wrong. “Certainly, if there was something wrong the Lord would show me. Certainly if there was something wrong with it, I would feel a certain way. But my conscience is clear.” That is a sad commentary because it means that you are without understanding. You have gotten to the point

where you are past feeling, it is the hardening of the heart.

To be without understanding, is to be possessed, controlled, and under the influence of worldly wisdom. In James 3:14-15, he speaks of two different kinds of wisdom. There is a heavenly wisdom that descends from above. In verse 14, "*But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom [That is the wisdom that produces bitter envying and strength.] descendeth not from above, [It is not of God.] but [is] earthly, [It is in line with the spirit of the world.] sensual, [That means it's in line with fleshly appetites. Lastly,] devilish.[That means it's demonic.]*

This "without understanding" is a very serious situation. We live in a society that has been left to themselves, the result is they are without understanding. The result of that is destruction everywhere. The result of that is the destruction of the home, the destruction of family, the destruction of marriage, on and on and on we could go; the destruction of learning, the destruction of everything. "Without understanding."

God help us in this society in which we have been called to serve the Lord.

Romans 1:31 says, "*Without understanding*". We know lost man is without understanding concerning the gospel. This "*Without understanding*" is something beyond man's natural spiritual dullness. If you listen to so-called leaders talk, many of them might as well just put a sign on their head, "Without understanding." They have no idea. It is simply a lack of comprehension. To me, perhaps the best definition is something we see all the time. It is to be without reason. That is, you have two people, one has understanding, one does not, and given the exact same facts, they will come to two completely different conclusions. They have the same facts, but one does not have the ability to take the facts and reason, because they are without understanding. They cannot reason, they are incapable of reasoning. It is an inability to think orderly. Their thoughts are everywhere. Some may think this is mean, but it is a lack of mental sanity to be without understanding, it is a lack of mental sobriety. It is a reckless habit of mind and they are dangerous to themselves, but they are also dangerous to others.

"Without understanding" means to be senseless, which is also very descriptive of our day. To be senseless is to be without discernment, and that is really what the phrase means literally, "without understanding" is without discernment. It is the inability to separate differences. That is why you see so much "comparing apples to oranges" today. They do not have the ability to separate the difference between an apple and an orange. It is an inability to separate truth from error. They've lost that part of their mind to discern. It is very dangerous.

In Ephesians 4:18-19 it says, "*Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling ..."* Because of the blindness of their heart they are past feeling. Their understanding is darkened, they're ignorant, they're blind, they're past feeling. What we need is a miracle of

God.

Notice in Luke 24:45, it is talking about the two on the Emmaus road, "*Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, ...*" God had to work on their understanding. What we have to understand about the reprobate mind is it is a mind that's lost its way and can not find its way back. The word reprobate is a curse. It is not that God can not reverse the reprobate mind, the very word, the very meaning implies He won't. We know that God may intervene, and we can only pray that He will.

This "to be without understanding" is described throughout the word of God. In Isaiah 29:14, "*Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, [even] a marvellous work and a wonder: [We need to pray for that.] for the wisdom of their wise [men] shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent [men] shall be hid.*" Then in Jeremiah 4:22, "*For my people [is] foolish, they have not known me; they [are] sottish...*" That means dull, stupid, senseless. This is what God says of His people. "*... they [are] sottish children, and they have none understanding:*" We see this "without understanding" goes along with being sottish, a word that we are not very familiar with, but it means dull, senseless. "*... they [are] wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.*" That describes "without understanding"

"Without understanding" is foolishness, as we see in Psalm 38:5, "*My wounds stink [and] are corrupt because of my foolishness.*" Psalm 53:1, "*The fool hath said in his heart, [There is] no God.*" It's foolishness that leads to atheistic thoughts. Atheistic thoughts lead to more foolishness.

Foolishness is a mocking of sin. "*Fools make a mock at sin:*", Proverbs 14:9. They jest at sin. The same is true with perversion, Proverbs 19:3, "*The foolishness of man perverteth his way:*" The fool is filled with self-confidence, Proverbs 28:26, "*He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool:*" This lack of understanding leads to foolishness, madness,

derangement, lunacy, craziness recklessness, a state of frenzy.

Notice in Ecclesiastes 9:3, *“This [is] an evil among all [things] that are done under the sun, that [there is] one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is **full of evil, and madness [is] in their heart** while they live, and after that [they go] to the dead.* Then in Ecclesiastes 10:13, *“The beginning of the words of his mouth [is] foolishness: [That is the beginning.] and the end [In other words, foolishness has a result.] of his talk [is] mischievous madness.”* Madness, lunacy. “Without understanding” is a very, very serious problem in society. When you have these individuals being elected to public office, you have problems. Who are people “without understanding” going to vote for? People “without understanding”. People that they can relate to.

When you put these people in schools and colleges and their teaching is the result of “without understanding”, it is a huge, huge problem that goes back decades, a hundred years, maybe. You have people today who want to do away with history and write what they like. That is not history. They want to do away with statues, the Civil War, as if it never happened, but it did happen. History includes bad and good.

The purpose of the bad is that you learn from it. That's what is so wonderful about the Bible. The Bible gives us the bad and good of a society. Read about various individuals in the Bible. The Bible doesn't hold back about the bad characteristics. When you have people saying, “We don't like that part of our history, so we're going to pretend it didn't happen or we're going to rewrite it,” you are doing away with history, you are doing away with learning. “Without understanding” just keeps increasing.

You think of our individual lives. Our lives are history. Do you like everything about your life? No? Are there bad things about our life? Yes. We are to learn from that, not do away with it as if it never happened. It shapes

Chapter 10 - Without Understanding - Part 3

who we are. This “without understanding” is a serious result of the reprobate mind. It just keeps increasing. God help us.

We are in Romans 1:31, “*Without understanding.*” In the last lesson, we learned that this includes many things; atheistic thoughts, mocking of sin, perversion, self-confidence, madness, derangement, lunacy, reckless behavior, dishonesty, on and on it goes. “Without understanding” also includes an ignorance of the sinful nature of man. This “without understanding” is something different than what we are by nature. We are without understanding to some degree, but what Paul is referring to is something else.

It includes an ignorance of the nature of man. The reason that some people believe that you do not need those who enforce laws is because they believe that man is basically good, man will behave. That is based on ignorance of man's sinful nature. It has its roots, of course, in humanism.

It also includes an ignorance of Satan's devices, how the devil works, an ignorance of sin, how sin works, the consequences of sin. We see again that they are filled with “without understanding.”

If you do not have understanding, which is the result of a reprobate mind, problems are misidentified. You watch the news and listen to people, and more often than not problems are misidentified. They focus on the wrong things because they do not have the understanding to understand what the problem is. If problems are misidentified then solutions are inaccurate as well. That is why so often, the solution creates a greater problem, the solution or the cure is worse than the problem. That happens a lot of times.

Included in this “without understanding”, they have the foundation in the philosophies of humanism, secularism, pluralism, and atheism. They are all tied to the different branches of humanism. What they all do is they simply blur or do away with God-ordained lines. God's lines are very well defined and very easy to see. Humanism and secularism and the like, they begin to blur those lines. Then as you advance through generations, the lines get more and

more blurred. It started out as a thick black line and now it is just a shadow. That is what is happening in our society. The lines are blurred. The lines are done away with. Lines between male and female, done away with, lines between husbands and wives, lines of morality and decency, just kind of fade away. That is the result of “without understanding”. What you have is a society that is drowning in dysfunction, a society where dysfunction is more the norm than a sane society. It is more normal, more common to be dysfunctional. A dysfunctional family is really the normal thing now. I defined dysfunctional as contrary to God's word. It is dysfunctional. That is the common thing. Therefore, when it becomes the common thing, that line is even more and more and more blurred.

To be without understanding is to be without conscience. The Bible has a lot to say about conscience. The word occurs thirty-one times in the New Testament. It is used both positively and negatively. To be “without understanding” affects the conscience.

The conscience is the faculty of judging one's own conduct with reference to a standard of right. We are born with a conscience. We are born with it. It is designed to protect us, but of course it becomes corrupt. Therefore it becomes your enemy. It is the faculty by which we judge according to a standard of right. We just know this is right, this is wrong. Conscience tells us that. When one is without conscience, they no longer discern between right and wrong.

It is the process of thought that makes a distinction between that which is moral and that which is immoral. It commends the moral and condemns the immoral. It is a part of us that bears witness with God's law. I mean, why do people do something that is wrong and they try to hide it? Because they know, conscience tells them this is wrong. We are in a day where many things are no longer hidden, but they are flaunted. Why is that? Well, it is because conscience is gone. Conscience is affected by this “without understanding”.

In Romans 2:15 *“Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, [This is the conscience of the natural man.] and [their] thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)”* Then notice Romans 9:1, *“I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,”* There is a conscience affected by the spiritual. “My conscience also bearing me witness” is our conscience that can make you feel guilty. That is conscience. That's a God-given thing. That's a good thing. But, as in all creation, it is affected by sin. When God gives the people over to their own mind, to their own ways, conscience becomes more and more affected. It no longer bears witness, where a person is without the witness of God.

We have said many times, you can sit down with somebody and you want to explain to them why what they're doing is wrong, and they will say, “Well I don't feel that it's wrong. If it was wrong wouldn't the Lord cause me to know it was wrong and feel it's wrong?” I mean, I am talking about things that are very plain in the word of God. Take adultery. “Well, I just don't feel guilty about sleeping around. I just don't feel condemned about that.” Well, that's because their conscience is not what it should be. That is a sad testimony. They say that to prove what they are doing is not wrong, but really it proves just the opposite. It proves that they are in worse shape than you thought. Their conscience, there is no witness of God there.

Conscience is the moral faculty, the faculty of conviction, or convincing of wrong. You go back even before you and I were saved, and there were times when you did wrong and you were convicted of it. That is conscience. People today many times will do what is wrong and there is no conviction whatsoever. This is carried over into churches as well. A lack of feeling, a conviction, a convincing of wrong. That is how I'm using the word conviction here.

Notice in John 8:9, we have the account of the adulterous woman. Remember they were going to stone her

and the Lord wrote on the ground. In verse 9, this is unsaved individuals, *“And they which heard [it], [They heard what Christ wrote on the ground.] being **convicted** by [their own] conscience, went out one by one,”* They were convicted by their conscience. To be without understanding is to be without conscience, which means to be without conviction of wrong. These are people who say, “Well who’s to say what’s right and what is wrong?”

Conscience is the faculty of remorse and shame, remorse and shame for wrongdoing. To be without conscience is to be without remorse, to be without shame. In Jeremiah 6:15, you can read the exact same words in Jeremiah 8:12, *“Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time [that] I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.”* They lost their conscience, which of course is going to result in the judgment of God.

Conscience is very important. It is a gift from God. When man is turned over to himself, conscience is greatly affected, the ability to discern between right and wrong. How many times have you heard parents speaking of the children say, “Well they know better.” Do you know that for sure? You can say, “I taught them better than that.” That you can say as a fact if you have, but you cannot say with absolute certainty, “They know better.” You do not know that. They may not. They may have gotten to the state where their conscience no longer works. So, they don’t know better. Yes, you taught them better. They may know better. I’m not saying they don’t. What I’m saying is, really think about that before you say that, because they may not. That makes the situation worse than you think it is.

Conscience is the ability to feel and to be moved by a sense of wrong. You take a child, just a little child, they do something wrong, they come to you and they apologize. You do not know anything about it. Why did they do that? Because of their conscience, they have felt a sense of wrong.

You take the child who just does wrong right in front of you, does not feel any remorse whatsoever. There is a difference in their conscience. Again, conscience as a gift of God. It is the ability to feel and to be moved by a sense of wrong. If you are without conscience, then that is greatly diminished or absent altogether. That is the society that we live in. You look at the behavior of people and people say, "What are they thinking?" Well, they are not. They have a reprobate mind. They don't have the ability to reason. This is not an excuse, it is just explaining their behavior.

This "to be without conscience" is further explained in Ephesians 4:17-19. We read of, *"the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:"* There are some very serious words there; darkened, alienated, ignorance, blindness. Now notice in verse 19, *"Who being past feeling"*, That is conscience. This is something that goes beyond just apathy. "Who" describes those that we read of in verse 18. This is where this leads to; the understanding being darkened, being alienated from the life of God, ignorance, blindness. What it eventually results in is being past feeling. That is they become so hardened in sin that their emotion toward sin, as far as feeling guilty, is dead. They're past feeling. A people or society left to themselves will eventually get to "past feeling". It's almost like they don't have a soul. They do of course, but it's like there's nobody home. A people left to themselves, their conscience is negatively affected, and the result is "past feeling".

The conscience can become weakened. This is true with the unsaved and saved. Notice in 1st Corinthians 8:7, *"Howbeit [there is] not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat [it] as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled."* Their conscience is **weak** and defiled. This person has not necessarily gotten to "past feeling", but the conscience is weak. We need to keep an eye on that in our

own lives. In verse 10, *“For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol’s temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;”* That is, his conscience being weak, he is encouraged to do what is wrong. In verse 12, *“But when ye sin so against the brethren, and **wound their weak conscience**, ye sin against Christ.”*

What is a weak conscience? It is not as bad as “past feeling”, but it is a conscience not strong enough to distinguish accurately or clearly. This is due to the process of sin.

There is also the defiled conscience. In Titus 1:15, *“Unto the pure all things [are] pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving [is] nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. [Or polluted.]”* This can happen through the process of secularization. Secularization is a process. You just do not wake up one morning secular. It gradually weakens the conscience.

There is also the evil conscience. Notice in Hebrews 10:22. *“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”*

There is the seared conscience. 1st Timothy 4:1-2, *“... some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;”* Their conscience is cauterized. It is sealed and nothing gets in. It kind of goes back to “past feeling”.

This “without understanding” leads to “without conscience”. Conscience can become weak, defiled, eventually, as the process goes on, it becomes past feeling. This of course leads to many problems. In Isaiah 42:25, *“Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger; [God’s judgment.] and the strength of battle: and it hath set him on fire round about, [Notice what it says next.] yet he knew not; [God’s judgment is right before them. God’s judgment is upon them! And they don’t even realize it.] and*

it burned him, yet he laid [it] not to heart. Conscience Has been affected.

In Acts 28:27, "*For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with [their] eyes, and hear with [their] ears, [Meaning, 'Don't confuse me with the facts, I've already made up my mind.'] and understand with [their] heart, and should be converted,*" They just become more and more hardened, become uncaring, become unfeeling concerning wrong, concerning the consequences of wrong. You can watch an individual go through this, an individual who has been given over to a reprobate mind and that is sad. But you take a whole society, when this becomes the common thing in society, this is very serious. This is not something that man can fix. As far as I know there is not a doctor for your conscience. How do you fix that? Only God can. Will He? From what we read in Romans 1, He has already given them over. Could He? Yes. Will He? Probably not. Again, it's "being filled with," full of "without understanding", so much so that it is commonplace, so much so that it becomes an epidemic.

You can tell people who have a conscience. You get a group of people together and you start telling them about the Lord, and perhaps everybody in the group begins to mock and to make fun, to commit abomination. They do not feel the least bit guilty or condemning. All of a sudden one person in the group gets quiet, they stop acting like that. Conscience is working. I believe that. I'm not necessarily saying the spirit of God is dealing with them in order to save them, but they have a conscience. They become silent because they feel guilty, they feel bad.

When a person loses that feeling of guilt and the ability to feel bad for a behavior, they are in serious, serious trouble. They are a danger. God help our society.