Introduction

When we last encountered Christian and Hopeful, they had happened upon a pillar of salt bearing an inscription that warned them to “Remember Lot’s Wife.” Soon after, they came to the “river of God” where the two walked with great joy and were renewed and refreshed in their spirits.
After spending several days eating and sleeping, they continued on their journey but had not traveled far when they noted that the path turned away from the river. Looking over the stile for a better path, they made the grave mistake of climbing over into By-Path Meadow where they almost drowned.
Caught By Giant Despair

They fell asleep at a little shelter and were awakened in the morning by the surly voice of the owner of the land, Giant Despair. “Get up!” he demanded. After he ascertained where they were from and where they were going, they told him they were pilgrims who had lost their way.
The Giant charged Christian and Hopeful with trespassing on his land.

He forced them to go ahead of him to Doubting Castle where he lived with his wife, Diffidence.
The Dungeon

- Giant Despair put them into a very dark, filthy dungeon in his castle.
- “You have taken my companions and loved ones away from me; the darkness is my closest friend” (Ps. 88:18).
- They were without food, light, and friends.
- Christian had double sorrow.
Christian in Doubting Castle?

“What! So highly favored Christian in Doubting Castle? Is it possible, after having travelled so far in the way of salvation, seen so many glorious things in the way, experienced so much of the grace and love of their Lord, and having so often proved his faithfulness, yet after all this to get into Doubting Castle? Is not this strange? No; it is common; the strongest Christians are liable to err, and get out of the way, and then to be beset
Christian in Doubting Castle?

with very great and distressing doubts. But though in Doubting Castle, yet it is their peculiar mercy not to be shut up in the iron cage of Despair.”

- William Mason
“Sooner or later Doubting Castle will be the prison, and giant Despair the keeper of all those who turn aside from Christ and his righteousness, to trust in any wise in themselves, and to their own righteousness.”
“Despair is a refusal to struggle, deadening our hearts to the hope that we will be rescued, redeemed, and happy...The manifestations of despair spread across the spectrum of intensity: regret...sadness...depression...despair.”
Accusing Conscience

Christian and Hopeful lay in the dungeon from Wednesday morning until Saturday night. “Perhaps this exact time was mentioned, under the idea that it was as long as life can generally be supported in the situation here described. The believer may be brought by willful sin to such a condition that, to his own apprehension, destruction is inevitable. If a man may sink so low as to have no light or comfort from God’s
Accusing Conscience

Word and Spirit, nothing to sustain his dying faith and hope, no help or pity from his brethren, but severe censures or more painful suspicions; the horrors of an accusing conscience, the dread of God as an enemy, connected with sharp and multiplied corrections in his outward circumstances; as the price of the ease or indulgence obtained by some willful transgression; who, that believes it, will take
encouragement to sin from the doctrine of final perseverance? Would a man, for a trivial gain, leap down a precipice, even if he could be sure that he should escape with his life? No; the dread of the anguish of broken bones, and of being made a cripple to the end of his days, would effectually secure him from such a madness.”

- Thomas Scott
The Human Conscience

• The oldest example of the Greek word for conscience is from the 5\textsuperscript{th} century B.C.
• The general understanding from that time is that the word means “moral awareness of one’s own bad deeds.”
• From the 1\textsuperscript{st} century B.C., the noun form is used for conscience. The reference is always to the moral conscience in a bad sense.
• Conscience is like a wound in the flesh. It makes reproaches which burn more than any external fire.

• Man as man can be “gnawed by conscience” and reminded over and over again of his defects.

• Moral conscience is not primarily concerned with preparation for future decisions, but with assessing and condemning acts already committed in the past.
The Human Conscience

• Conscience is concerned with a person’s sense of himself – not others.
• Conscience is the observer of our lives; everyone else in the world is excluded.
• Conscience warns against further transgression.
• Conscience is a person aware of himself in perception and acknowledgement, in willing and acting.
The Human Conscience

• Conscience is an indication of the responsibility of man.
• The accusing voice of conscience can only be overcome because the sharper accuser, the revealed Law of God (which does not only accuse, but slays) has been set aside by the pardoning voice of God who makes us new in Jesus Christ.
The Task of Conscience

• The task of conscience is to “bring to light, expose, convict, or convince someone of something.”

• The process:
  o Accusation & admonition (by the advocate)
  o Punishment & condemnation (by the judge)

• Conscience is the only impartial accuser and infallible judge.
Let Conscience Be Your Guide?

“The dictates of a calloused conscience will be different than those of a hypersensitive conscience...When each man is allowed to be a law unto himself, moral principles will be superfluous as far as correcting or restraining him are concerned. Each man can end up doing what is right in his own eyes. Or one man’s conscience is arbitrarily selected to dictate standards for the others” (Greg Bahnsen).
Conscience and the Law of God

• “For when the Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternatively accusing or else defending themselves” (Rom. 2:14-15).
Special Attributes of Conscience

• **Good Conscience:** “Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day” (Paul in Acts 23:1). “This command I entrust to you, Timothy,…that by them you may fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience…” (I Tim. 1:18-19). “...and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered…” (I Pt. 3:16).
Special Attributes of Conscience

• **Clear Conscience:** “Deacons likewise must be men of dignity...holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience” (I Tim. 3:8-9). “I thank God whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did...” (II Tim. 1:3).

• **Blameless Conscience:** “Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things” (Heb. 13:18).
Special Attributes of Conscience

• **Conscience Void of Offense:** “In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men” (Acts 24:16).

• **Defiled Conscience:** “To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled” (Titus 1:15).
Conscience: A Theological Summary

• God made man in his image (imago Dei) and revealed his will through man’s original moral consciousness without the danger of mistake.

• The compass or standard of men’s moral activity is the revealed will of God, not man’s own independent moral consciousness.

• There is no such thing as a common consciousness of man.
Conscience: A Theological Summary

• The consciousness of man cannot be the starting point in the matter of a standard for ethics. It cannot be a trustworthy standard for man.

• The moral consciousness of man has never functioned apart from God.
Conscience: A Theological Summary

• Even in paradise before the fall, man did not live by the internal standard of his consciousness alone. God spoke to him by giving him commands that did not emanate from his moral consciousness.

• Man’s moral consciousness only answers to God’s revelation and knows that it is his duty to obey his commands.
Diffidence

- **Diffidence, n.** means “want of confidence or faith; mistrust, distrust, misgiving, doubt.”

- “It is logical that Giant Despair be married to Diffidence, for distrust and despair go together” (Warren Wiersbe).
Diffidence’s Counsel

• Beat them without any mercy.
• Encourage them to commit suicide with a knife, rope, or poison.
• Take them into the yard around the castle and show them the bones of those already destroyed.
Christian’s & Hopeful’s Condition

- Not able to defend themselves.
- Could not even turn over on the floor.
- Wallowed in their misery and grieved about their distress.
- Sighed and uttered bitter complaints.
- Barely alive, they could hardly breathe.
- Christian considered suicide.
Hopeful’s Counsel to Christian

• You were courageous in the past.
• Apollyon was not able to defeat you.
• The Valley of the Shadow of Death could not crush you.
• You have already gone through hardship, terror, and bewilderment.
• Let’s exercise a little more patience.
• You were courageous at Vanity Fair.
You were not afraid of being killed at Vanity Fair.  
Let’s avoid the shame that is not becoming of a Christian.
“What a fool am I to lie in this stinking dungeon when I can just as well be free! I have a key in my coat pocket called Promise. I am persuaded that it will open any door in Doubting Castle.”
“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it” (I Cor. 10:13).
Escape!

With the Key of Promise, Christian opened the dungeon door, the door to the castle yard, and the iron gate. Giant Despair chased them, but he had another fit, making it impossible to pursue them. And so they escaped and were safe.
“Often trust begins on the far side of despair. When all human resources are exhausted, when the craving for reassurances is stifled, when we forgo control, when we cease trying to manipulate God and demystify Mystery, then – at our wits end – trust happens within us, and the untainted cry, ‘Abba, into your hands I commend my spirit,’ surges from the heart.”

Brennan Manning
*Ruthless Trust*
“God is cunning; He knows how to get our attention. Rather than let us wallow in the mediocrity of complacency, He lets us experience what it would be like to live without Him. He abandons us in order to shatter our illusions and then to lead us to a deeper relationship with Him. We see this pattern again and again in Scripture.”
Out of the way we went, and then we found
What ‘twas to tread upon forbidden ground:
And let them that come after have a care,
Lest heedlessness makes them, as we to fare:
Lest they, for trespassing, his prisoners are,
Whose castle’s Doubting and whose name’s Despair.