

## THE CONSCIENCE

Text: 1 Tim. 1:3-6

INTRO: You've probably heard the adage: "Let your conscience be your guide." Just how good is that advice? The NT has quite a bit to say about conscience. It speaks of a good conscience, a pure conscience, a weak conscience, a defiled conscience, an evil conscience, and a seared conscience. Let us see what we can learn about that subject from the NT Scriptures.

### I. THE FUNCTION OF CONSCIENCE.

A. Oxford Am. Dict. defines the Eng. word: "A person's sense of what is right and wrong.

B. SUNEIDESIS, lit. knowing with. Thayer: the soul as distinguishing between what is morally good and bad, prompting to do the former and shun the latter, commending the one, condemning the other;

B. The conscience testifies, bears witness, to the truth as we know it (or believe it to be), reminding us to do what we know (or believe) is right.

Rom 2:14-15, ...When Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, & between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them)

Rom 9:1-3, I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh,

2 Cor 1:12, For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity & godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you.

## II. CONDITIONS OF THE CONSCIENCE.

### A. Good, unviolated.

#### 1. Paul sought to maintain a good conscience.

Acts 23:1, Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. **NOTE:** He had not been right but he had been conscientious.

Acts 24:16, I... always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.

Heb 13:18, Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably.

#### 2. He urged Timothy to maintain a good conscience

1 Tim 1:18-19, ...Wage the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience...

#### 3. All Christians must strive to maintain a good conscience.

1 Peter 3:15-16, But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, & always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.

### B. A pure conscience. The pure conscience is not only one void of offense, but is one that is enlightened by God's truth.

2 Tim 1:3, I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day,

1 Tim 1:5, Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith,

1 Tim 3:9, [deacons must hold] the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. 1

C. Weak. Not properly enlightened.

1 Cor 8:6-12, There is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live. However, there is not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse. But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.

**NOTE AGAIN:** When a person has not learned the truth on any subject, his conscience will not prompt him to behave correctly, nevertheless it is **sinful** to ignore the promptings of conscience, for your conscience prompts you to do the best you know how to do with your present knowledge.

Rom 14:23, But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.

D. Defiled. The state of the conscience of one who has done what he knows to be wrong.

1 Cor 8:7, Some with consciousness of the idol, until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.

Titus 1:15-16, To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind & conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.

E. Evil. The state of the sinner who has not yet obeyed Christ for the forgiveness of his sins.

Heb 10:22, Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience & our bodies washed with pure water.

F. Seared.

1 Tim 4:1-2, Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,

Eph 4:17-19, This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

### III. CLEANSING THE DEFILED OR EVIL CONSCIENCE.

A. For the alien sinner, obedience to the gospel.

Heb 10:22, Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience & our bodies washed with pure water.

1 Peter 3:20-21, ... 8 souls were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us--baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

B. For the erring Christian.

1 Tim 1:5-6, Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, 6 from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk,

James 5:19-20, Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

Rev 2:5, Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place--unless you repent.

1 John 1:9, If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Acts 8:22, Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you.

CONCLUSION: Conscience is NOT a safe guide. The Bible is our ONLY safe guide – but our conscience is helpful in prompting us to do what we understand to be right -- & in prompting us to shy away from what we understand to be wrong. We must continue to study God's word to enlighten our conscience, so that our conscience can help us to live in harmony with what we have learned from God's eternal word.

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