

The Conscience

Acts 23:1; 24:16

Introduction: Every person has been given both the capacity and inclination to judge his own behavior on the basis of right and wrong. This "moral awareness" is what we call a conscience.

The word conscience is used some thirty times in the Bible. Paul used it more than any other New Testament writer. In fact, he used it 25 times. Jesus never used the term "conscience" though He taught the same concept (Matt. 23:26).

I. Everyone is responsible for what they do.

A. The Gentiles, who were not given the Law, did what the law required. Their consciences were guided by moral premises "written on their hearts" (Rom. 2:14-16).

B. Paul argues that the Gentiles who kept the law were better off than the Jews who had the Law but were disobedient to the Law (Rom. 2:25-29).

C. In other words, a true Jew is one who has a conscience where the Law is written in his heart. Likewise, a true Christian is a follower of Christ inwardly; that is when his conscience has Christ's words written in his heart.

II. A conscience can be clear and good or seared and defiled.

A. Good and clear conscience.

1. Paul lived his life with a clear conscience (Acts 23:1; 24:16; 2 Tim. 1:3).

2. A good conscience is as necessary as a pure heart and sincere faith (1 Tim. 1:5, 19).

3. A clear conscience signals faithfulness (2 Cor. 4:2; 5:11).

B. Seared and defiled conscience.

1. A seared conscience rejects the truth and sound teachings (1 Tim. 4:1-3).

2. A seared and defiled conscience reflects disobedience and denial of the truth (Titus 1:15-16).

III. One must not violate his conscience.

A. A Christian whose conscience allows him to eat meats offered to idols has no right to disregard the conscience of a less informed brother who thinks it is wrong to eat it (1 Cor. 8:7-12).

B. Notice how knowledge affects a person's conscience. A person's conscience can be educated. Until education occurs, the person without knowledge on a moral issue is considered weak. Until that person is informed truthfully concerning that moral issue, those who are knowledgeable can not disregard that person's conscience.

C. Nor can Christians disregard the ignorant conscience of a heathen (1 Cor. 10:27-29, 32-33). Our goal is to inform the unbelievers that they might be saved.

IV. A good conscience is beneficial to the believer.

A. Living honorably is a mark of a good conscience (Heb. 13:18).

B. A good conscience is valuable even in suffering (1 Pet. 3:13-17).

C. When a person sets his conscience aside, he feels guilt.

1. Adam& Eve (Gen. 3:8)

2. Joseph's brothers (Gen. 42:21).

D. The guilty conscience is only relieved by the acceptance of forgiveness (Heb. 9:14; 10:1-2, 22).

Conclusion: A person with a good conscience will seek forgiveness for sins. In fact, baptism is the response from a good conscience that recognizes his own sins (1 Pet. 3:21). At baptism, the guilt of sin is removed. Are you living with a guilty conscience? If your conscience is good, then please come and remove that guilt that you might be saved.