

When Conscience Doesn't Judge

2 Corinthians 1:12-14

"The conscience is a warning system, placed by God into the very framework of the human soul. Like physical pain, which warns of damage to the body, the conscience warns of damage to the soul." (J. MacArthur)

So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man. (Acts 24:16)

"To do anything against conscience is neither safe nor sound." (Martin Luther)

I. Life with Simplicity

"Sincerity" means openness without hidden motives.

But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. (2 Corinthians 4:2)

For we are not writing to you anything other than what you read and understand. (2 Corinthians 1:13)

I wanted to come to you first, so that you might have a second experience of grace. ¹⁶ I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia, and to come back to you from Macedonia and have you send me on my way to Judea. ¹⁷ Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this? Do I make my plans according to the flesh, ready to say "Yes, yes" and "No, no" at the same time? (2 Corinthians 1:15-17)

But I call God to witness against me — it was to spare you that I refrained from coming again to Corinth. ... I made up my mind not to make another painful visit to you. (2 Corinthians 1:23-2:1)

Slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with **sincerity (simplicity) of heart**, fearing the Lord. (Colossians 3:22)

II. Life with Godly Sincerity

"Sincerity" is a compound word in Greek that refers to something that is "examined by sunlight and found to be pure."

Therefore I testify in the Lord that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ... But that is not the way you learned Christ! ... **to put off** your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and **to put on** the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (Ephesians 4:17-24)

Therefore, having put away **falsehood**, let each one of you speak **the truth** with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. ... Let **the thief** no longer steal, but rather let him **labor**, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. Let no **corrupting talk** come out of your mouths, but only such as **is good for building up**, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. (**Ephesians 4:25–29**)

But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. ⁴ For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. ⁵ Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, **who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart**. Then each one will receive his commendation from God. (**1 Corinthians 4:3–5**)

III. Life Not by Earthly Wisdom

For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. (**1 John 2:16**)

But I call God to witness against me—it was to spare you that I refrained from coming again to Corinth. ²⁴ Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith. (**2 Corinthians 1:23–24**)

And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God **with lofty speech or wisdom**. ² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ³ And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, ⁴ and my speech and my message were **not in plausible words of wisdom**, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ so that your faith might **not rest in the wisdom of men** but in the power of God. (**1 Corinthians 2:1–5**).

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. (**1 Corinthians 15:10**)

A thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹ But he said to me, **'My grace is sufficient for you**, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (**2 Corinthians 12:7–9**)

“Seeing that all of human nature has been affected by sin, both a person’s perception of the standard of action required and the function of the conscience itself (as a constituent part of human nature) are also affected by sin. For this reason conscience can never be accorded the position of ultimate judge of one’s behavior. It is possible that the conscience may excuse one for that which God will not excuse, and conversely it is equally possible that conscience may condemn a person for that which God allows.” (Colin G. Kruse)

“The voice of conscience cannot be safely rejected; those who attempt to do so face spiritual ruin.” (J. MacArthur)

Wage the good warfare, ¹⁹ holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith. (**1 Timothy 1:18–19**)

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing. (2 Timothy 4:7-8)