

THE CONSCIENCE:
THE DIVINE ALARM SYSTEM

Acts 24:16

November 12, 2017

INTRODUCTION: *Webster* (latin) “An awareness of right and wrong, with a compulsion to do right.”

W.E.Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, compound word in the Greek, with, to know; a co-knowledge (w/oneself); the witness borne to one’s conduct by conscience, that faculty by which we apprehend the will of God, as that which is designed to govern our lives. The conscience is designed to serve as a goad and a governor, but not a guide. The conscience does not set the standard; it only applies it.

Conscience may be compared to a window that lets in the light. God’s Law is the light, and the cleaner the window is, the more the light shines in.

Olde saying, “*Just let your conscience be your guide.*” Should say, “*Let your conscience be goaded as you are guided by the truth and instruction of God’s truth.*”

Vines defines conscience as that process of thought which distinguishes what it considers morally good

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or bad, commending the good, condemning the bad, and so prompting to do the former, and avoid the latter.

The *conscience* is not an infallible guide and acts according to the light that it has.

Romans 9:1, “I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit”

The conscience of God coincides with the Spirit of God in man. Only when the Spirit controls the conscience can it be trusted, but it remains imperfect and its warning must always be evaluated against the Word of God.

The Bible speaks of a good conscience, a weak conscience, a wounded conscience, a convicting conscience, a defiled conscience, an evil conscience, and a pure (clear) conscience.

The *conscience* is a God-implanted knowledge of right and wrong within our hearts.

I. A GOOD CONSCIENCE. Acts 24:16

“This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.”

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His conscience had undoubtedly acquitted him of his early days and past life.

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.’”

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

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

God created man with a conscience as his self-judging faculty.

1 Timothy 1:19, “having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck”

A good conscience serves as a rudder that steers the believer through the rocks and reefs of sin and error. Good refers to that which produces pleasure and satisfaction.

2 Tim 1:3, “I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience...”

II. A WEAK (WOUNDED) CONSCIENCE.

1 Cor 8:12

“But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.”

There is a call in Scripture to be sensitive to your conscience and the conscience of others. The conscience of some newer converts were still accusing them strongly with regard to allowing them to eat idol food without feeling spiritually corrupted and guilty.

Paul’s response:

1 Corinthians 8:13, “Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.”

III. A CONVICTING CONSCIENCE. John 8:9

“Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last.

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And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.”

The woman taken in adultery and demanding justice according to the Law.

The *conscience* is the soul’s warning system, which allows human beings to contemplate their motives and actions and make moral evaluations of what is right and wrong.

ILLUSTRATE: HOME SECURITY SYSTEM

Alarm system is set (if it goes off, it will alert you as to the place of entry). You cannot set the alarm if the house is not secure and the system will inform you of where the problem is.

NOTE: Rom. 2:14-15

“for 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, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them”

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Because God has written His law on man's heart, man knows the basic standard of right and wrong. When he violates that standard, his conscience produces guilt, which acts as the mind's security system that produces fear, guilt, shame, and doubt as warnings or threats to the soul's well-being.

On the other hand, when a believer does God's will, he enjoys the affirmation, assurance, peace, and joy of a good conscience.

1 Peter 3:16, "having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed."

A life free of ongoing and un-confessed sin, lived under the command of the Lord, will produce a conscience **"without offense"**

IV. A DEFILED CONSCIENCE. Titus 1:15

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

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This speaks of the corruption of the conscience. It is possible to so sin again the probing of the conscience until it becomes defiled. Defiled is word for “dye” which will lead to a major problem with being discerning.

John MacArthur, *“It is reported that a tribe in Africa had an unusual but effective way to test the guilt of an accused person. A group of suspects would be lined up and the tongue of each would be touched with a hot knife. If saliva was on the tongue the blade would sizzle but cause little pain. But if the tongue was dry, the blade would stick and create a vicious, searing burn. The tribe knew that a sense of guilt tends to make a person’s mouth dry, and a seared tongue therefore was taken as proof of guilt. The making of such a dry mouth is, of course, the work of the conscience.”*

V. A SEARED CONSCIENCE. 1 Tim. 4:2

1 Timothy 4:2, “speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron”

Seared is a medical term referring to cauterization. The

allowing of your conscience to become desensitized. **Eph. 4** refers to **“being past feeling”** – morally insensitive. As you continue to sin and turn away from God, you become still more apathetic about moral and spiritual things. Speaks of the losing of moral restraint. The Christian’s hope and strength is in restraining influence of the Holy Spirit.

Repeated sinning hardens the conscience so that it becomes *seared* like scar tissue. The neglected and resisted conscience becomes more insensitive and eventually may stop giving warning signals about wrongdoing.

NOTE: Herod’s process with his conscience

- 1. Stirring Conscience - Loved John’s Preaching**
- 2. Silenced Conscience - Put John in Prison**
- 3. Seared Conscience - John Murdered/
Jesus Mocked**

Jerry Vines preaches **“The Death of A Conscience”** – compares the conscience to the heartbeat on a monitor

VI. THE TESTIFYING CONSCIENCE.

II Cor. 1:12

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

Paul faces his critics by appealing to the highest human court, his conscience.

“grace of God” – only God can accurately judge a man’s motives

“not fleshly wisdom” – human insight cannot be the ultimate judge

James 3:13-16, “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.”