

Having An Undeclared Conscience

The conscience reacts to the convictions of the mind and therefore can be encouraged and sharpened in accordance with God's Word. The wise Christian wants to master Biblical truths so that the conscience is completely informed and thus can make right judgment because it is responding to the Word of God. A regular diet of Scripture will strengthen a weak conscience or restrain an overactive one. Paul wrote to Timothy about being nourished up in good doctrine, in fact doctrine is stressed often in the pastoral epistles. We need this also so the Word of God can direct our lives. (II Tim. 3:15-17)

When we violate our conscience it condemns us -- triggering feelings of shame, anguish, regret, consternation, anxiety, disgrace and even fear. Error, human wisdom, and wrong moral influences filling the mind will corrupt or cripple the conscience. When we follow our conscience (especially when it is informed by the Word of God) it commends us, bringing joy, serenity, self-respect, well-being, and gladness.

In some ways our conscience is like the nerve endings in our fingertips. Its sensitivity to external stimuli can be damaged by the build up of calluses. I remember often on the farm as the spring and summer work progressed my hands would become so calloused that many times things that usually brought pain were not even noticed any longer. We can so resist the working of the Holy Spirit as He works through our conscience that we become dead to convictions over our sins and failures. Paul also wrote of the warnings of the dangers of a calloused conscience (I Cor. 8:10), a wounded conscience (vs. 12), and a seared conscience (Tim. 4:2).

The conscience is privy to all our secret thoughts and motives. It is therefore a more accurate and more formidable witness in the soul's courtroom than any external observer. We play a deadly game when we gloss over an accusing conscience in favor of some human counselor's reassurance that all is well. Too often God's people will encourage someone to not be hard on themselves when they speak of some failure or wrong in their lives. Probably their conscience is smiting them -- we need to allow the Lord to work in their lives, pray for them, and not encourage them in the wrong direction. We cannot escape the all-knowing God.

Some day the lost person will be summoned to final judgment, and the conscience then will be fully informed about every violation and will step forward as an eternal tormenting witness against them. (Consider Luke 16.)

People should not sin in hope of concealment. What if it is concealed from others, can it be concealed from one's own conscience? Though the conscience may be seared now and cannot speak because it has been bribed in this life, it will have power and efficacy in the life to come.

Those who profess Christ but ultimately reject faith and a good conscience suffer shipwreck spiritually (I Tim. 1:19) -- that is, they prove they never truly believed in

the first place. My, what a warning this is!!

We desperately need revival in our lives and in our country. Revival will only take place when God's people get right... repent of sin... experience brokenness and contrition and that won't take place without our embracing truth, thus applying God's Word. (II Chron. 7:14; Psa. 51:17; 34:18) The conscience of every believer, when needed, ought to bring us to conviction about our lukewarmness, our indifference to the lost and our failure to live a godly, Christ honoring life wherein the Holy Spirit can have free reign in our lives.

The Christian can rejoice in the provisions of the cross for sin. Since the guilt of sin was entirely erased by His death and since His unblemished righteousness is credited to our account (II Cor. 5:21; Rom. 5:1; Heb. 9:14), God declares us not guilty and receives us as fully righteous through Christ vicarious death. This doctrine is known as justification.

God's own verdict is Not guilty; wholly righteous and none can accuse us. Who can bring charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies, who is the one who can condemn? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. (Rom. 8:33-34) When our sins cry out against us, the blood of Christ speaks on our behalf. Glory, Glory, to God be all the praise! And our faith communicates to our conscience that we are pardoned through the precious blood of Christ.

Does that mean we can persist in sinning and yet enjoy a clear conscience?
No! Ongoing, daily sins must still be dealt with to keep and to restore fellowship. (I John 1:3-10, 2:1,2) How can we who died to sin still live in it? (Rom. 6:2) The new birth brings a transformation of life, a new life, an overhaul of the human soul, (heart, mind, etc. II Cor. 6:17) A washed and rejuvenated conscience is only one evidence that such a transformation has taken place (I Pet. 3:21). Love of righteousness and hatred of sin is another evidence of our salvation. (I Jh. 3:3,8) Believers whose behavior contradicts their faith will cause their conscience to be defiled (I Cor. 8:7) and those who persist in sin will experience God's chastening. (Heb. 12:5-11)

May each one of us enter into personal self-discipline of a continued, daily oversight over our walk with the Lord, over keeping a clear conscience, void of offense toward God and toward man.