

Conscience

- I. What is a conscience?
- A. The English word “conscience” translates the Greek word “suneidesis” meaning *co-perception, i.e. moral consciousness*.
 - B. conscience: I. Inward knowledge; consciousness; inmost thought, mind. II. Consciousness of right and wrong; moral sense. The internal acknowledgement or recognition of the moral quality of one’s motives and actions; the sense of right and wrong as regards things for which one is responsible; the faculty or principle which pronounces upon the moral quality of one’s actions or motives, approving the right and condemning the wrong.
 - C. By means of conscience we are inwardly aware of right and wrong.
 - D. “Conscience” derives from “con” - *together* + “scire” - *to know*.
 - E. It is man’s ability to reflect upon and evaluate his own actions.
 - 1. Together with ourselves, our conscience knows right and wrong.
 - 2. Conscience distinguishes men from animals.
 - a. Animals do not reflect upon their actions and make moral evaluations.
 - b. The behavior of animals can be motivated by physical reward and punishment.
 - 3. In contrast to animals, men can objectively look at themselves and their actions and make judgments.
 - 4. Our behavior is to be motivated by an inward sense of right and wrong rather than just a fear of wrath. **ROM 13:5**.
 - F. Conscience is the soul’s court where guilt or innocence is decided.
 - 1. Conscience is a witness testifying as to the rightness or wrongness of our behavior. **ROM 2:15; 9:1; 2CO 1:12**.
 - 2. Conscience acts as a judge to convict us of wrong. **JOH 8:9**.
 - 3. convict: To prove (a person) guilty of an offence which makes him liable to legal punishment; spec. to find or declare guilty, after trial before a legal tribunal, by the verdict of a jury or the decision of a judge.
- II. By definition, conscience must have some standard of right and wrong that it recognizes.
- A. Conscience evaluates our actions according to the standard of right and wrong that we have.
 - B. The conscience is not infallible and is, therefore, not to be equated with the law of God.
 - C. Because of ignorance of a law, the conscience may fail to accuse us of a sin. **LEV 4:27-28; PSA 19:12**.
 - D. Or the conscience can accuse us in areas that are not sinful. **ROM 14:14, 20-23; 1CO 8:4-13; 10:25-29**.
 - 1. This is a weak conscience because it is too easily wounded.
 - 2. However, to violate the conscience even with regard to something not sinful is to defile it and to incur judgment.
 - 3. God wants us to heed the voice of conscience.
 - 4. If we encourage a brother to ignore conscience when it accuses him based on an improper standard, he might ignore conscience when it accuses him of genuine sin.
 - 5. The problem in this case is not the conscience, but the standard that conscience is measuring by.
 - 6. Such a brother needs Biblical instruction so as to grow stronger. **HEB 5:13-14**.
 - E. Our consciences need the standard of the word of God so as to correctly judge our actions.

PSA 119:104.

- III. When the conscience accuses us of wrong, it causes shame.
- A. shame: The painful emotion arising from the consciousness of something dishonouring, ridiculous, or indecorous in one's own conduct or circumstances (or in those of others whose honour or disgrace one regards as one's own), or of being in a situation which offends one's sense of modesty or decency.
 - B. The conscience can cause fear, sorrow, anxiety, and depression. **GEN 3:7-10; PSA 38:1-10.**
 - C. Many psychologists would say that these emotions stemming from a sense of guilt are the problem.
 - D. The problem is not the painful emotions, it is the behavior that triggered them.
 - E. One is in a dangerous condition who does not feel shame for sin. **JER 3:3; 6:15; ZEP 3:5.**
 - 1. This is the condition of those who are alienated from the life of God. **EPH 4:17-20.**
 - 2. Scripture warns of the conscience that has been *seared with a hot iron*. **1TI 4:2.**
 - a. The Greek word translated "seared" is "kauteriazō" and means *to brand (cauterize), i.e. to render insensitive.*
 - b. One can violate conscience so much that it becomes insensitive like tissue that has been burned too much.
 - F. Some try to anesthetize the conscience with busyness, noise, drugs, or other means.
 - G. Do not try to silence the voice of conscience by shifting blame. **GEN 3:11-13.**
 - H. **ROM 1:18-32** describes the downward spiral of those who ignore the voice of conscience.
 - I. Rather, correct the behavior that violated the conscience that triggered the painful emotions. **PSA 119:6.**
- IV. We need authority figures to appeal to our consciences and put us to shame for sin. **JUD 18:7; MIC 2:6; 2CO 4:2; 5:11; 1CO 15:34.**
- V. We should ALWAYS strive to have a good conscience. **ACT 23:1; 24:16.**
- A. Do not put off dealing with issues of conscience.
 - B. A good conscience is an approving conscience, a consciousness that we have offended neither God nor man.
 - C. By contrast, a violated conscience is defiled. **1CO 8:7.**
 - D. God is served with a pure conscience. **2TI 1:3; 1TI 1:5.**
 - E. A good conscience is maintained by obedience to the word of God. **1PE 3:14-16; HEB 13:18.**
 - F. The mystery of the faith is held in a pure conscience. **1TI 3:9.**
 - G. If a good conscience is not maintained, one will make shipwreck concerning faith. **1TI 1:19.**
 - 1. Bad behavior will breed bad doctrine.
 - 2. Transgressors tend to disbelieve whatever their consciences convict them of in order to silence the voice of conscience.
- VI. The blood of Christ sprinkles our hearts from an evil conscience. **HEB 9:9; 13-14; 10:1-2, 22.**
- A. The conscience of a sinner is depraved just as the rest of his being is depraved. **PSA 53:3; TIT 1:15-16.**
 - 1. Because a sinner is not subject to the law of God and because his understanding is

darkened, his conscience does not convict him to the extent that it should.

ROM 8:7; EPH 4:18.

2. As with his knowledge, understanding, will, reason, and emotion, a sinner's conscience is deformed by sin and falls short of the standard that God requires of it.

ROM 3:23.

3. Because a sinner does no good, his conscience can never rightly approve him.

ROM 3:12.

4. Regeneration renews and enables the conscience to function as it ought.

TIT 3:5; EZE 36:25-32.

- B. If a good conscience approves, an evil conscience condemns.

- C. Only the blood of Christ could fully and finally remove the sin that defiles our consciences.

- D. Have you sinned?

1. Bring to God a broken and contrite heart. **PSA 51:17.**

2. Confess and forsake your sin. **PRO 28:13.**

3. Deal with all sin so as to have a conscience VOID of offence. **ACT 24:16.**

4. The blood of Christ will cleanse you of sin thus restoring a good conscience.

1JO 1:9.

5. The gospel is for the brokenhearted. **LUK 4:18-21.**

- VII. Baptism is the answer of a good conscience toward God. **1PE 3:21.**

- A. When a child of God understands the gospel, his conscience urges him to respond to God.

ACT 2:37.

- B. Baptism is the response he ought to make to God. **ACT 2:38.**

- C. How can you have a sense of right toward God and not be baptized? **1PE 2:19.**

- D. People put off baptism because they do not want to deny self to follow Jesus Christ.

MAT 16:24-25.