

The Conscience (John 8.9)

One of the most powerful tools we have, built into man, from youth.

Next to the Bible and prayer it is THE MOST powerful tool we have.

Some have discovered its power and abused it – Sampson’s first wife and Delilah (even Mary tried using it on the Lord, Luke 2.48)

Only WITH the Bible can it perform properly.

Conscience tells us **that** we ought to do right, but it does not tell us **what** right is--that we are taught by God's word. [H.C. Trumbull](#).

We hear much about it, not as much as we once did, though:

Clear conscience, clean conscience

“Let your conscience be your guide,” “follow your conscience”

Somebody once said the only problem with following your conscience is that most people do this the way they follow a wheelbarrow; they make their conscience turn the way they want, and then follow.

Against conscience, guilty conscience; “Does your conscience bother you?”

As someone else has said, "She won't listen to her conscience. She doesn't want to take advice from a total stranger." [Bob Goddard, St. Louis Globe-Democrat](#).

But today we will look at the conscience from the standpoint of Scripture and try to see it for the powerful God-given tool it is intended to be, and how that tool is to be used:

What is it really?

What some have said in an attempt to explain it:

The meaning of a compound word in Greek – “to know with something else” or “to know something about one’s self” or “to be conscious of something”

The word expresses a shared knowledge with one’s self. That knowledge comes from information gathered through a person’s experiences.

The acquired information helps form standards of right and wrong.

This is why others have defined conscience in various ways:

1. It is the awareness of a moral or ethical aspect to one’s conduct together with the urge to prefer right over wrong.
2. A properly programmed conscience is an inner warning system to prevent straying.
Example: airplanes. . .
3. A human’s moral compass is designed to direct someone through difficult times.

Romans 2.15 Gentiles consciences judged what they did, accusing or excusing them.

One writer, commenting on this text, said that the conscience acts as a court reporter, witness, prosecutor and defender.

It is the thing within us that tells us when we are doing right or wrong.

The decision between right and wrong is based on our experiences and information gained in other ways. (GPS analogy – that annoying “recalculating”)

What God says about the conscience:

From the Writings of Paul

Paul had more to say about the conscience than any other NT writer:

His example:

([Act 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."

(Act 24:16) This *being* so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.

(Rom 9:1) I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit,

(2Co 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.

(2Co 4:2) But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

(2Ti 1:3) I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as *my* forefathers *did*, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day,

Important to remember that Paul did some things that were right according to his conscience, but later found out he had persecuted the Lord Himself.

A conscience has to have the right information to function right. (Again, the GPS analogy)

His teaching and commandments on the subject:

On the source of a good conscience –

(1Ti 1:5) Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, *from* a good conscience, and *from* sincere faith,

(1Ti 1:19) having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck,

(1Ti 3:9) holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience.

On abuse of the conscience

Of the consciences of others - 1Co 8 and 10: On causing a brother to violate his own conscience by something you do

On abuse and neglect of our own –

(1Ti 4:2) speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,

(Tit 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.

The Path to a Pure Conscience

The beginning of a good conscience:

(1Pe 3:21) There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

(Heb 9:9) It *was* symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience—

(Heb 9:14) how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Continuing with a good conscience:

(Heb 10:22) let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

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

(1Pe 2:19) For this *is* commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully.

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

The antagonism between life and conscience may be removed in two ways: By a change of life or by a change of conscience. [Leo Tolstoy](#).

Invitation

Conscience Illustrations:

Throughout his administration, Abraham Lincoln was a president under fire, especially during the scarring years of the Civil War. And though he knew he would make errors of office, he resolved never to compromise his integrity. So strong was this resolve that he once said, "I desire so to conduct the affairs of this administration that if at the end, when I come to lay down the reins of power, I have lost every other friend on earth, I shall at least have one friend left, and that friend shall be down inside of me."

A man consulted a doctor, "I've been misbehaving, Doc, and my conscience is troubling me," he complained. "And you want something that will strengthen your willpower?" asked the doctor. "Well, no," said the fellow. "I was thinking of something that would weaken my conscience."

[Bits & Pieces, May 27, 1993, p. 21.](#)