

Guided By Your Conscience

Introduction:

1. A young boy's father peered over his backyard fence into his neighbor's property where there were various fruit trees ripe for picking. The father, calling his young son to him to be his watchman while he picked all he wanted from his neighbor's trees, asked his son, "Is there anyone come from the south? The boy replied, "No, father, no one is coming from the south." The father then asked his watchman, "Son, is there anyone coming from the east?" The devoted son responded, "No, father, no one is coming from the east." Again the father inquired of his son, "Is there anyone coming from the west?" The son responded, "No, father, no one is coming from the west." Feeling more confident that no one was around to hinder his decision the father lastly asked his son, "Is there anyone coming from the north?" Looking around, the son replied, "No, father, no one is coming from the north." The father then began to climb the fence when his son retorted, "Father, you forgot to look one other direction." "Which direction, son?" Pointing his finger he mindfully said, "Up! You forgot to look up."
2. It's situations like these and our decisions about them that speak volumes about the condition or our conscience. The moral decisions we make in life, the spiritual choices in key moments of personal dilemmas that challenge our faithfulness to God will greatly depend on the condition of our conscience.

I. "ALWAYS LET YOUR CONSCIENCE BE YOUR GUIDE"?

A. What the conscience is:

1. Webster's Dictionary. Conscience [from the Latin *conscientia*, to be conscious of guilt]:
 - a. the sense of consciousness of the moral goodness or blameworthiness of one's own conduct, intentions, or character together with a feeling of obligation to do right or be good;
 - b. a faculty, power, or principle enjoining good acts.
2. Greek – (sunideesis):
 - a. Walter Bauer's Greek English Lexicon of the N.T. & Other Early Christian Literature: **Moral consciousness. With attributes... a good conscience** (Acts 23.1; 1 Tim. 1.5; 1 Pet. 3.21; 1 Tim. 1.19; 1 Pet. 3.16); a weak conscience, **one that cannot come to a decision** 1 Cor. 8.7, 10, 12 (cf. Acts 26.14; 1 Tim. 3.9; 2 Tim. 1.3; Heb. 13.18); **a bad conscience or a consciousness of guilt** (Heb. 10.22; 1 Cor. 8.7; Heb. 9.14).
 - b. William D. Mounce's Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament – **consciousness... conscience**, as ¹**an inward moral impression of ones' actions and principles**, John 8.9; Acts 23.1; 24.16; Rom. 9.1; 2 Cor. 1.12; **conscience**, ²**as the inward faculty of moral judgment**, Rom. 2.15; 13.5; 1 Cor. 8.7b, 10, 12; 10.25, 27-29; 2 Cor. 4.2; 5.11; 1 Tim. 1.5, 19; 3.9; 4.2; 2 Tim. 1.3; **conscience**, ³**as the inward moral and spiritual frame**, Titus 1.15; Heb. 9.9, 14; 10.22; 13.18; 1 Pet. 3.16, 21.

- c. Joseph Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament – **b. *the soul as distinguishing between what is morally good and bad, prompting to do the former and shun the latter, commending the one, condemning the other;*** not strong enough to distinguish clearly between things lawful for a Christian and things unlawful, 1 Cor. 8.7.
- B. The fact that we have a conscience, something to inflict guilt on us to regulate our actions and cause us to make moral judgments in various circumstances speaks to the fact that God has made us with free will to choose.
- C. *Almost* always let your conscience be your guide! (Acts 23:1)

II. 5 CONDITIONS OF THE CONSCIENCE THAT EFFECT US SPIRITUALLY

- A. Weak conscience. What makes a weak conscience weak, and strong conscience strong? In other words, what distinguishes between a weak and strong brother? The strength or weakness of one's conscience is determined by two factors:
 - a. **KNOWLEDGE OF LIBERTY:** Knowledge that a particular thing or action is not sin (has no bearing on our relationship to God). (1 Cor. 8.7-8)
 - b. **FAITH OR DOUBT** (Rom. 14.22-23): Your own convictions before God. It's what you do with what you believe. Doing with doubt (making an exception/allowance when you think something is a sin) is actually the defilement of the conscience. A weak conscience is more easily swayed to participate in something against their own conviction on a matter.
- B. Strong conscience. (Implied in 1 Corinthians 8. The opposite of a weak conscience)
- C. Defiled conscience. (1 Cor. 8:7) To defile the conscience is to defile one's faith, the attribute which gives limits to our actions. Acting with doubt defiles one's faith so that personal judgments lose sight of limitations. At such a point a conscience becomes seared and calloused.
- D. Seared conscience. (1 Tim. 4:1-5) Guilt is a good thing.
- E. Good/pure conscience. (Acts 23:1; 24:16; 1 Pet. 3:21; Rom. 9:1)

Conclusion: Conclusion: Have you ever realized the significance of God's teaching about being sober-minded? (1 Thess. 5:8; Eph. 5:15-18) Good judgments for godly, moral living come from a pure conscience. (Heb. 10:22) Driving our spiritual lives under the influence of our intoxicating, self-willed, sinful desires will kill our souls and potentially even the souls of others. Good and bad judgments in moral and spiritual matters come from the very condition of our conscience (con = with, science = knowledge).