

## The Conscience

### I. The conscience of man is often characterized as a function of the heart.

- 1 Sam 24:5, “And afterward David’s heart struck him...”
- 2 Sam 24:10, “But David’s heart struck him...”

### II. Man’s conscience is informed from the outside.

#### 1. At birth, the conscience has some limited knowledge of the Law.

**Rom. 2:15**, “They show that the work(εργον) of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them...”

#### 2. Throughout life, the conscience is either ...

##### A) correctly informed by God’s Word of Law alone, (troubled conscience)

**Eph 2:12** “...having no hope and without God in the world.”

**Hebrews 9:9-10**, “According to this arrangement(*the OT Temple sacrificial system*), gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.

##### B) correctly informed by God’s Word of Law and Gospel, or (good conscience)

**Hebrews 9:11-14**, “But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent ( not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) 12he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. 13For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, 14how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”

**2 Cor 1:12**, “For our boast is this: the testimony of our conscience that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you.

**Acts 23:1**, “And looking intently at the council, Paul said, ‘Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day.’”

##### C) Not sufficiently instructed, which includes knowing but not internalized as able to trustingly act upon it. (doubting or weak conscience)

**Romans 14:23** But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.

**1 Cor. 8:10**, “For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol’s temple, will he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols?”

##### D) misinformed by some other means. (erring conscience)

**Titus 1:15**, “To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled.”

**1 Tim. 4:2**, “...through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared...”

**III. The conscience correctly informed by God's law alone compares the person, his works and his words to the standard of God's law. And thus the conscience**

1. ...demands godly thoughts, words and actions in the present.
2. ...judges the past thoughts, words and actions.
3. ...and ultimately condemns the thoughts, words and actions of the past.
4. ...troubles the person with the punishment temporal and eternal death.

**III. The conscience correctly informed by God's law and Gospel**

1. ...compares the person, his works and his words to the standard of God's law.  
**The conscience**

A) ...demands godly thoughts, words and actions in the present.

B) ...judges the past thoughts, words and actions.

C) ...condemns the thoughts, words and actions of the past.

**Romans 3:20**, "For by works of the law no flesh will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin."

D) ...and ultimately leads the person to acknowledge that he is a sinner who deserves temporal and eternal death.

2. ...comforts the person with the person, works and words of Jesus Christ and the Gospel (the Good News). **The conscience**

A) ...assures us that our past sins are forgiven. (clean conscience)

**2 Cor. 1:12**, "For our boast is this: the testimony of our conscience that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you."

**2 Tim. 1:3**, "I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day."

**Hebrews 10:22**, "...let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."

**1 Peter 3:21-22**, "Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him."

B) ...motivates the person to presently want to keep God's law. (good conscience)

**1 Tim. 1:5**, "The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."

**Hebrews 9:14**, "...how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God."

**Hebrews 13:18**, "Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things."

**2 Cor. 4:2**, "But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God."

**1 Peter 3:16**, "...yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame."

**C) ...and ultimately lead the person to profess that he is a dearly loved saint who will be given eternal life through faith in Christ.**

**Galatians 2:16**, "yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified."

**1 Tim. 3:9**, "They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience."

### **III. Man's conscience is not a fail proof guide always to be followed.**

**Ecclesiastes 10:2**, "A wise man's heart inclines him to the right, but a fool's heart to the left"

**A. God intends man's conscience to be correctly informed and to serve man by bearing witness to God's will and therefore obeyed.**

**Acts 24:16**, "So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man."

**Romans 9:1**, "I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—"

**Romans 13:5**, "Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience."

**2 Cor. 5:11**, "Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience."

**B. God intends that the misinformed conscience, which does not agree with God's Word, is to be corrected by the knowledge of God's Word first, and then obeyed.**

**C. God intends that our neighbor's conscience would be respected and/or taught by God's Word.**

**1 Cor. 8:7-13**, "However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. 8Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. 9But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. 10For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? 11And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. 12Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. 13Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble."

**1 Cor. 10:23-33**, "All things are lawful," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful," but not all things build up. 24Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor. 25Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience. 26For "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof."

27If one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience. 28But if someone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience— 29I do not mean your conscience, but his. For why should my liberty be determined by someone else's conscience? 30If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks? 31So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 32Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, 33just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved.

#### **IV. The person who does not listen to his conscience**

##### **A. is self-condemned and**

**Titus 3:10**, "As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned."

##### **B. is in danger, if not already there, of clinging to evil and committing the sin (blasphemy) against the Holy Spirit.**

**1 Tim. 1:5-7**, "The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. 6Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, 7desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions."

**1 Tim. 1:18-20**, "This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, 19holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, 20among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme."

**Matthew 12:31-32**, "Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come."