

INTRODUCTION: DEFENSE vs. ACCUSATIONS (Acts 23:1; 24:16(24,25); 1Tm 1:5; 2Tm 1:3 /1Pt 2:19; 3:16,21)

I. THE DEFINITION OF CONSCIENCE

A. GREEK BACKGROUND

1. idea: self-knowledge (see 1Cor.2:11; Ps.4:4; 63:6)
2. moral: right & wrong (see Rom.2:15; note: appeal to conscience in evangelism; 2Cor.5:17)
3. negative: condemnation (see Rom.2:15; 9:1; 1Cor.4:4; 1Jn.3:19-21)

B. OLD TESTAMENT COUNTERPART: THE JUDGMENT OF GOD IN THE HEART

(Gen.3:8; 1Sam.24:5; Ps.32:3,4; 38:2; 39:10; 51:4; 139; see 1Jn.3:19-21)

C. NEW TESTAMENT USAGE: AN INWARD SWORD (Rom.13:5; Acts 23:1; 24:16 (1Tm.1:12f); 1Cor.4:4)

D. FURTHER ILLUSTRATIONS: ALARM, INVISIBLE FENCE

II. THE OPERATION OF CONSCIENCE

A. PREPARATION

1. hardware repaired (heart; Jer.17:9,10; Eph.2:1,5; 4:22-24,30; Heb.10:22; 1Pet.3:21)
2. software rewritten (Law; Rom.2:15; Heb.10:16; 2Tim.3:16,17; 1Tim.1:5,19; 3:9)
3. conscience and prayer (see Lk.6:12f; Acts 16:6f; Rom.14:4f; vs. "casuistry" in negative sense)

B. USE

1. withdrawal from pain (repentance; see 1Tim.4:2; Rom.13:5)
2. perseverance in painlessness (see Acts 23:1; 24:16; 1Jn.3:21)

C. ABUSE AND CORRECTION

1. *desensitized* through deception, temptation and sin (Gen.3:13; 2Cor.11:4)
 - a. *burnout and destruction* (1Tm.4:1,2 with 1:19; Tt.1:15; Heb.3:13f; see Eph.4:30)
 - b. *the priority of protection* (Rom.14:13; 1Cor.8:10-13; 2Th.2:10)
 - c. *secondary alarms* (Ezek.3:17f; Mt.18:15f; Lk.17:3; Jms.5:19,20; see 2Sam.12:7)
 - d. *healing of damages* (Ps.51:9-11; Heb.9:14; 10:22; see Jn.13:10)
2. *hypersensitized* through extraneous programming
 - a. *weakened by programming beyond the Scriptures* (1Cor.8:7; see 1-6)
 - b. *result: needless pain* (1Cor.8:7; see 1Jn.3:20?)
 - c. *correction: edit program according to Scripture* (2Tim.3:16; Jn.8:32,36)
 - d. *respect conscience until editing complete* (Rom.14:23; 1Cor.8:10)
 - e. *use right freedom from pain responsibly* (Gal.5:13f; Rom.14:13f; 1Cor.8:9/ Rom.14:7-9; 1Cor.10:31)

III. MAINTAIN A BLAMELESS CONSCIENCE! (Acts 24:16; 23:1; see 1Tm.1:5/19)

A. ASK FOR A REBUILT CONSCIENCE IN CHRIST (Jn.3:3; Jer.17:9,10; 31:33(=Heb.10:16); Eph.2:1,5,22-24; Rom.6:1-11; Col.3:9,10; Heb.10:22)

B. USE THE SCRIPTURES, SACRAMENTS, PRAYER AND CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP FOR THE EQUIPPING AND MAINTENANCE OF A CLEAR CONSCIENCE. ("means of grace"; Heb.10:16,22; 2Tim.3:16,17; 1Tim.1:5,19; 3:9; 1Pt.3:21)

C. NEVER DO WHAT YOU KNOW IS WRONG; ALWAYS DO WHAT YOU KNOW IS RIGHT (Ps.19:12-14; Acts 24:16; see Rom.14:23; 1Tm.4:1,2; 1:19; Heb.3:1; Jms.4:17; Eph.4:30)

D. WHEN YOU DEFILE YOUR CONSCIENCE, CLEAN IT UP (Ps.32,51; 1Jn.1:9; 2Cor.5:17 /Acts 23:1-5; 24:16)

E. DO NOT CONDEMN AS SINFUL OR CONTEMN AS FOOLISH THOSE WHOSE CONSCIENCE RESPONDS DIFFERENTLY THAN YOURS IN THINGS BEYOND THE SCRIPTURES

1. we are *all* bound by the *same* convictions *in* the Scriptures (2Tim.3:14-17; Ps.119; see Lk.17:3,etc.)
2. we may *each* be bound by *different* convictions *beyond* the Scriptures in our heart before Christ (Rom.14:4-9)
3. conclusion: in the *same* matter, *one* conscience may be in pain and *another* not (Rom.14:1f)

CONCLUSION: PREPARE YOUR DEFENSE (Acts 24:16(24,25); 23:1; 2Tm.1:3 /1Tm.1:5 /1Pt.2:19; 3:16,21)