

A Clear Conscience: The Freedom of a Blameless Heart

INTRODUCTION

We return to our study on revival. Revival is...“*the extraordinary movement of the Spirit of God in the hearts of _____, producing extraordinary results.*”

Revival is the Reviver at work in the life of His own, the church. Take this with **you: a revived heart loves and serves**. The revived heart loves God and people; serves God and serves people, especially God's people. **A revived heart looks for ways to love and serve!**

So far, our study has focused primarily on the **vertical** aspect of revival - *that is, our relationship with God (humility, confession of sin, repentance, grace, holiness & obedience)*. Now we turn the corner to consider the **horizontal** implications of revival - *that is, how a right & revived relationship with God affects our relationships with others*.

For this morning, I want us to **talk about our conscience**. I want to specifically address the need, the importance and the benefit of having a clear conscience toward both God and others.

Please turn in your Bible to **1 Samuel 12:1-5**. The Old Testament prophet Samuel was a hero in Israel. He had been a faithful spiritual counselor for many years. His life was stable, and his leadership had always been reliable, even during times of national chaos. In **1 Samuel 12** we find that the entire nation has gathered to listen to Samuel. He is now an old man and his reputation is well known among all the people. He asks the people an astonishing question and received an equally remarkable response.

Samuel's life beautifully illustrates what it means to have a clear conscience. He could stand before God's people who knew him and had observed his life and ask them to hold him accountable. **What a contrast with the group of people we meet in John 8.**

The authors of Seeking Him remind us of the importance of having a clear conscience. They **write**: "*Any child of God who is serious about seeking the Lord and experiencing personal revival must be committed to maintain a clear conscience toward others. This is where the rubber meets the road -this is the context in which genuine repentance, humility, and holiness (and obedience – my addition) are demonstrated practically.*" Seeking Him, p. 150)

So let's begin with...

I. What is the _____?

What happens when you tell a lie or gossip about someone? Is there an inner voice telling you what is right and what is wrong? What about people who commit horrible crimes against humanity? Do they have an inner voice crying out, disturbing their peace and sleep? We have all grown up hearing it said, "*Let your conscience be your guide.*" Is that a good thing? What is our conscience? Is our conscience always a good guide for our thoughts and actions?

The dictionary defines conscience as "*the inner sense of what is right or wrong in one's conduct or motives, impelling one toward right action.*" The Greek word means "*to know together*". The conscience is a gift from God to all men. It gives people the power of moral judgment. The word appears some 31 times in the New Testament. In his book **The Vanishing Conscience**, Dr. John MacArthur **writes**, "*The conscience entreats us to do what we believe is right and restrains us from doing what we believe is wrong. The conscience is not to be equated with the voice of God. It is a human faculty that judges our actions and thoughts by the light of the highest standard we perceive. When we violate our conscience, it condemns us, triggering feelings of shame, anguish, regret, consternation, anxiety, disgrace and even fear. When we follow our conscience, it commends us, bringing, joy, serenity, self-respect, well-being and gladness.*" (MacArthur, The Vanishing Conscience, p. 37)

Thus, the conscience can only react to what it knows and what it has been taught. **If the conscience is taught that the Bible is the Word of God and that it is the supreme standard for right and wrong, the conscience will react**

when there is any deviation from the teachings of the Word of God. If the conscience is taught that Islam, Mormonism, Hinduism, etc., is the truth, it will react when those standards are about to be violated. J. Oswald Sanders said this concerning the **conscience**: *“Every conscience needs instruction. Its delicate mechanism has been thrown off balance by the fall. Just as a bullet will reach the bull’s-eye only if the two sights are in correct alignment, so correct moral judgments are delivered only when the conscience is correctly aligned with the Scriptures.”*

Next question is...

II. What does the _____ say about the conscience?

The Bible has much to say about our conscience. God as our Creator has created us as moral beings. As such, God has equipped every human being with a **"built in"** moral conscience. We see evidence of this in **Rom 2:14-15**: *“For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them.”* The Law was given to the Jews, but the Gentiles had the work of the Law, written in their hearts. Their conscience bore witness to a higher law! Their conscience was like a judge and jury, presiding in the courtroom of their hearts.

There are seven Bible words that characterize the condition of your conscience.

A. God's Word speaks of a _____ conscience
1 Timothy 1:5 states: *“The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”* A good conscience is one that is healthy and sensitive to the Holy Spirit and God’s Word. In short, a good conscience is working as intended by God. It is pushing us and pointing us in the right direction, keeping us on course.

B. God's Word speaks of a _____ conscience
To be *“blameless”* means to be without offense. **Acts 24:16 says,** *“I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.”* (NKJV) The function of a conscience is to warn us, indict us, convict us. Those brothers of Joseph did not have a blameless conscience. They were filled with guilt.

C. God's Word speaks of a _____ or _____ conscience

2 Timothy 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.”* This is a conscience that is clean and without regret. Paul was always giving his all and doing his best for God and others. A clear conscience is a wonderful thing in the day of accusation. It liberates us from fear and instills courage.

D. God's Word speaks of a _____ conscience
1 Cor 8:12: *“Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.”* A weak conscience is one that can easily be swayed or influenced by others. It lacks knowledge.

E. God's Word speaks of a _____ conscience
Titus 1:15 says, *“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.”* The word *“defiled”* means to be *corrupted or polluted*. Our conscience is like a window. When it is clean, more light can enter into our hearts and lives. Our conscience can be weakened, dulled, and dimmed by the sin that we tolerate in our lives. When we sin, refusing to acknowledge it as such, it soils or defiles our conscience.

F. God's Word speaks of an _____ conscience
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.”* An evil conscience is one that is so defiled, so corrupt, it turns our values upside down, confusing and blurring the distinction between right and wrong, moral and immoral – see **Isaiah 5:20**.

G. God's Word speaks of a _____ conscience

Mark Twain said "*An uneasy conscience is a hair in the mouth.*" We are in trouble when personal sin no longer bothers us. **1 Timothy 4:2 says, "Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron."** A seared conscience is one that is cut off, silenced, that is beyond feeling.

The last question is...

III. How do I _____ my conscience?

What can we do to keep our conscience good, clean, pure, and functioning? Three Steps...

**A. Step one: We must _____
to make the written Word of God our constant guide
and standard for our living.**

This is the changeless standard to which we must hold our conscience. Someone has said, "*Conscience is a trustworthy compass when God's Word is your north.*"

**B. Step two: We must _____ sensitive
to the voice of the Holy Spirit.**

The Holy Spirit is not to be confused with our conscience. While every human being is gifted with a conscience, only believers are gifted or indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Our conscience can be corrupted. God's Holy Spirit cannot be corrupted. He remains as a holy, sinless presence and influence in our hearts and lives. The Holy Spirit helps us interpret the message sent by our conscience. The Holy Spirit always brings the Holy Scriptures to our minds. To re-sharpen our conscience, God has given us His written Word, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit, to coach and guide us according to the Word. **Psalms 119:59 says, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies."**

**C. Step three: We must _____ short accounts
with our sin and moral failures.**

We can cleanse our conscience. How? It is called confession and repentance. **1 John 1:7** tells us that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sins. Our sins are forgiven, and will not be remembered again. When our conscience is cleansed, we are able to live according to the ways shown by the Word of God with the help of the Holy Spirit.

God certainly does not desire us to over-sensitize our conscience with needless, neurotic guilt. **We must never forget the grace of God extended to us through the Lord Jesus Christ that promises us forgiveness.** The atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross has freed us from all sin past, present and future. At the same time, God does not want our conscience to be desensitized and defiled. Thank God for your conscience! Make the most of this God given gift!

CONCLUSION

Where do we go from here? **Time to make it personal...** Have you trusted in Christ as Lord and Savior? Believing the gospel makes a difference. It's the starting point if we are serious about enjoying the freedom of a blameless heart.

So, how do we go about clearing our conscience with others? Here are just a few questions to ponder:

1. Q: With whom should I clear my conscience?

A: My confession should be as public, or private, as my sin.

2. Q: What should I say?

A: Use the language of the Bible.

3. Q: What if they won't forgive me?

A: That's their responsibility, not yours.

4. Q: Can't I do this later?

A: Delayed obedience is no obedience at all.

Determine today to maintain a clear conscience toward both God and man and enjoy the freedom of a blameless heart.