

Practical Christian Living

Lesson 8 – How to Gain a Clear Conscience – (Part 2)

The Bible has much to say about the importance of having a clear conscience.

- **A clear conscience** is essential to **faith**. Paul speaks of *"holding faith and a good conscience."* When our conscience is guilty, our faith becomes weak and ineffective.

- **A clear conscience** is essential to having our **prayers answered**. The Bible says,

"Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." 1 John 3:21-22

- **A clear conscience** is essential to **good health**. To have our conscience condemning us is like having a heavy weight on us all the time.

- **A clear conscience** is necessary if we are to **build true friendships**. There will be times when we will offend and hurt people. If we want to keep their respect and friendship, we must make things right with them.

- **A clear conscience** is necessary for **effective witnessing**. If you have offended someone and you have never tried to make things right with him, you will find it impossible to witness effectively to him.

- **Most important of all, a clear conscience** is necessary in order to **enjoy fellowship with the Lord**. We must be right with God and we must be right with our fellow man. Even the slightest accusation in our conscience will hinder our fellowship with the Lord.

How does the Conscience Operate?

Our conscience is the place where God expresses His will and His holiness. It is here that God shows us His mind regarding a matter. Our conscience discerns what God thinks about things. Once we know in our conscience what God's will is about a matter, we must obey.

Our conscience is like a *"window"* to our spirit. Through this *"window,"* God's light shines, flooding our inner being with His light and truth. If we obey our conscience, the *"window"* becomes clearer and more transparent, and God's light can shine in, brighter and brighter.

If we do **not obey** our conscience and deal with the sin it condemns, then our conscience, as a window, will become dirty and clouded. As sin increases, the dirt and cloudiness increase until God's light can barely penetrate into our spirit.

If a believer continues to disobey his conscience, his heart will become hardened. A day will come when he can sin without feeling any sense of wrong at all. This is a tragic condition for any Christian.

The Bible says,

"Do not harden your hearts...but exhort one another daily, while it is called 'Today,' lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Hebrews 3:8, 13

How to Obey your Conscience

Our conscience deals with both the past and the future. It not only condemns us when we have done something wrong, but it also warns us when we are about to do something that is not pleasing to the Lord.

In obeying your conscience, there are two simple rules to follow:

- 1. If your conscience warns you that to do a certain thing is wrong, DON'T DO IT.**
- 2. If you have already done something wrong, CONFESS IT at once and claim the cleansing blood of Christ.**

Whatever God shows you in your conscience, do it. Nothing can take the place of obedience. The Lord insists that we obey Him.

Our Conscience is Limited by Knowledge

How do we know what is right and what is wrong in God's sight? One way we know is by what God says in His Word. When God's Word tells us that a certain thing is right, then we know that it is right. If His Word says that a certain thing is wrong, then we know that it is wrong.

But generally speaking, when we are first saved we do not know much about the Bible. There may be many things in our life which the Bible condemns, but if we do not know God's Word, we do not realize that these things are sins.

What does the Lord do? He begins to show us our sins, one by one. The Lord is gracious to us. He does not show us all our sins at one time. He knows that this would be too discouraging to us. Instead, He reveals our sins to us, one by one.

Here is a wonderful truth: ***A sin in our life which is unknown to us does not hinder our communion with the Lord.*** If we obey what we know to be the will of God and forsake what we know to be condemned by God, we can enjoy perfect fellowship with Him. The Bible says,

"If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." 1 John 1:7

To *"walk in the light"* means to be obedient to the light we have. If we are obedient to the light we have, we can enjoy fellowship with God.

Regarding our fellowship with God, the important thing is our attitude toward His will. If we honestly desire to obey God, we can have perfect fellowship with Him from the very beginning of our Christian life. There may be many sins in our life, but if they are unknown to us, they are under the covering of the precious blood of Christ.

On the other hand, the moment God shows us a sin in our life, we are responsible to confess and forsake it. If we permit any sin to remain after our conscience has condemned it, we will lose our fellowship with God. Every day that we continue doing something that our conscience has condemned is a day out of fellowship with the Lord.

In our dealings with our fellow believers, let us remember that there are varying degrees of knowledge among God's children. Some believers are not aware of certain sins which are regarded as serious sins by other believers. We should not reject or judge those who do not know what we know. Rather, we should pray for them and try to help them. God does not reject us because of sins which we do not know about; neither should we reject our brother for sins he does not know about.

Do not try to Silence or Overrule your Conscience

We have already mentioned the two rules you are to follow when your conscience speaks to you. Let us repeat them:

1. If your conscience warns you that to do a certain thing is wrong, **DON'T DO IT.**
2. If you have already done something wrong, **CONFESS IT at once and claim the cleansing blood of Christ.**

Unfortunately, many Christians do not follow these simple rules. Instead, they try to silence the voice of their conscience. They usually employ one or both of two methods to do this:

1. Arguing with their conscience.

A **person may try** to convince himself that something is all right because it seems so reasonable. He may point to what others are doing or he may talk it over with another believer in order to get the other person to agree with him.

We must not allow the opinion of another person to overrule our conscience.

We must not allow the opinion of another person to overrule our conscience. Someone may say that he thinks it is perfectly all right for you to do a certain thing. But if your conscience condemns it, then it is wrong for you. Any time that you believe something is not God's will for you, then you must not do it.

The Bible says,

"Whatever is not of faith is sin." Romans 14:23

We must understand that we cannot argue with our conscience. Our conscience discerns what God thinks about something. If our conscience tells us that it is wrong, then it is wrong for us. We must never attempt to silence the voice of our conscience for it represents God's will for us.

2. Doing good works.

A **second way** in which a person may try to ease his conscience is by doing many good works. Though he is not obeying God, he thinks that what he is doing is just as good or perhaps even better than what God has told him to do.

He may try to silence his conscience by giving money to God's work or by helping others or doing other good deeds. He may be quite pleased with himself and consider that his deeds are very worthy. But they are of no value in God's sight if he is disobedient.

Conscience simply demands our obedience—nothing else can please God. God does not look at the good works we do, or how much money we give to His cause, but solely at our obedience. Nothing can take the place of obedience. The Bible says,

"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice..." 1 Samuel 15:22

We must Avoid Satan's Condemnation

In seeking to gain and maintain a clear conscience, we must be aware of the fact that Satan can attack our conscience. He does this by accusing us and condemning us.

Satan puts thoughts like these into our mind: *"You have failed again. That is all you ever do. You are nothing but a failure and that is all you will ever be. God cannot love anyone like you."*

Satan's attacks can so weaken us that we can hardly face life. For this reason, it is extremely important that we recognize his work. We must be able to distinguish between the **condemnation of Satan** and the **conviction of the Holy Spirit**.

Here are some ways by which we can distinguish between Satan's work and the conviction of the Holy Spirit:

- **Satan's accusations are rambling and continuous.**

The Holy Spirit enlightens us so that we can clearly see our faults.

- **Satan's accusations are designed only to cause us to suffer and to tear us down.**

The Holy Spirit's purpose is to build us up. He shows us our sins that we may confess and forsake them and walk in the ways of God.

- **Satan's accusations keep coming back even though we have confessed the sin.**

If the conviction is from the Holy Spirit and we confess that sin to God, He forgives us, and there is no further conviction of the Holy Spirit regarding this matter.

No sin in the world is so great that it cannot be forgiven.

Sometimes Satan attacks a believer by trying to make him believe that he can never be forgiven for certain sins he has committed. To believe this is to believe a lie. No sin in the world is so great that it cannot be forgiven. The Bible says,

"...the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from ALL sin...If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from ALL unrighteousness." 1 John 1:7, 9

When God says *"all,"* He means **ALL**. By His death on the cross, the Lord Jesus paid for **all** our sins.

If you feel that Satan is attacking you, resist him in the name of the Lord Jesus. Claim the mighty victory of Calvary. The Bible says,

"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." James 4:7

We must keep a Sensitive Conscience

It is most important that we keep a sensitive conscience. If we are careful to obey the voice of our conscience, it will be kept clear and sensitive. If we do not obey our conscience, it will become hardened. Every time we refuse to listen to and obey our conscience, we damage our spiritual life. The Bible says,

"Beware, brethren...lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Hebrews 3:12-13

Evan Roberts, a man whom God used in many great revivals, liked to ask people this question: *"When was the last time that you apologized to someone?"* If it had been a long time since the last apology, he would point out to them that something must be wrong.

It is unlikely that any believer can live around other people very long without offending someone. The Bible says,

"For in many things we offend all." James 3:2

Since, undoubtedly, we will offend others at some time, the question is: What will we do about it? Will we be hard and proud and refuse to admit that we are wrong, or will we humble ourselves and apologize? God's way is that we humble ourselves and make things right with other people.

We must cultivate the habit of apologizing to others and making restitution. If we confess our sins to God and make things right with others, our conscience will be kept sensitive and clear. This is walking in obedience to God.

One of the great secrets of Paul's victorious life was this: **He obeyed his conscience.** He did not permit anything in his life to which his conscience objected. Paul could honestly say, *"I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."*

Discovered Gem – *We maintain a clear conscience by walking in obedience to God.*

Questions

1. What is our conscience?
2. What two things does our conscience deal with?
3. Is it safe to trust the warnings of your conscience or should you check with another believer?
4. When should you confess your wrong and claim the cleansing blood of Christ?
5. Is it ever ok to not heed the warning of your conscience? If so, when?
6. Is it ever ok to change your activity as a way to silence your conscience?
7. How does doing good works ease one's conscience?
8. Do you ever argue with your conscience? Why or why not?
9. How do we distinguish between the condemnation of Satan and the conviction of the Holy Spirit?
10. Can we be forgiven of ANY sin that we have committed?