

CONSCIENCE

Greek, "*suneidesis*"

"To know with" - "a co-knowledge (with oneself) - the witness borne to one's conduct by conscience, that faculty by which we apprehend the will of God, as that which is designed to govern our lives." [Vine's Expository Dictionary]

CONSCIENCE - ITS FUNCTION

1. **What it should do (convict/ bear witness about sin)** - John 8:9 (some translations); Romans 2:15. [See also Hebrews 10:2.]
 2. **It can testify about various matters** (such as when we have done what is right) - Romans 9:1; 2 Corinthians 1:12. [See also the previous section.]
 3. **It's function can be destroyed or made less effective** - 1 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:15. [Note: Not having a conscious awareness of sin does *not* prove that we are innocent. See 1 Corinthians 4:2-4 (Greek, *sunoida*, a related word)]
-

A GOOD/CLEAR/CLEAN CONSCIENCE

1. **Only possible through Christ (not through Old Testament rituals).**
 - The Old Testament rituals - a "shadow" of Christ - Hebrews 9:9; Hebrews 10:2.
 - Through Christ; the blood of Christ... - Hebrews 9:14; Hebrews 10:22.
2. **Examples of such a conscience** - Acts 23:1; 2 Timothy 1:3; Hebrews 13:18.
3. **Striving to keep it clear** - Acts 24:16.

OTHER THINGS RELATED TO CONSCIENCE

1. **Love resulting from a good conscience** - 1 Timothy 1:5.
2. **Things done because of conscience.**
 - Submission to authorities - Romans 13:5.
 - Bearing up under unjust suffering - 1 Peter 2:19.
3. **Things which should accompany a clear/good conscience.**
 - Fighting the good fight - 1 Timothy 1:19.
 - Holding on to the deep truths of the faith - 1 Timothy 3:9.
 - Explaining the reason for the hope that is within you - 1 Peter 3:16.
4. **A good conscience and baptism** - 1 Peter 3:21.

[Remember that in the early church, baptism was normally considered the *first* act of obedience and the *first* expression of commitment to Jesus Christ. It was not something that was done weeks or years later, after a person got "saved," and after he attended lectures or classes on various topics. In the early church, until a person was willing to obey and commit himself to Jesus - which meant he was willing first to be baptized, and then to live as a follower of Jesus - there was *no* reason for a clear conscience. There was no reason for a person to consider himself a disciple of Jesus! (The only exceptions would have been abnormal situations, comparable to the thief who died on the cross, after he asked Jesus to "remember him" - Luke 23:42-43.)]

WE AND THE CONSCIENCES OF OTHERS

PART 1 - Our actions and the consciences of others.

1. **Their awareness of our devotion to truth** [rather than us being deceptive] - 2 Corinthians 4:2.
2. **Their awareness of our "openness" in what we do and are** [nothing secret or hidden] - 2 Corinthians 5:11.

WE AND THE CONSCIENCES OF OTHERS (continued)

PART 2 - Wounding another's conscience by our arrogant expression of "rights" or "freedom."

1. **The problem** (illustrated by the issue of eating meat offered to idols):
 - A self-centered expression of "rights" may injure those with weak consciences - 1 Corinthians 8:7.
 - When we do this injury, *we are sinning* - 1 Corinthians 8:10,12.
2. **An illustration: Paul's lifestyle** - 1 Corinthians 9. [Paul did not exercise the rights he had as an apostle. Application: We shouldn't always demand our rights, either.]
3. **The solution:**
 - Exercise "rights" without raising such questions... - 1 Corinthians 10:25,27.
 - But if such questions *are* raised (by the others), do not exercise them... 1 Corinthians 10:28-29a.
 - ...Or your "rights" will be judged by their conscience - 1 Corinthians 10:29b. [See also the verses that follow.]
4. **The conclusion of the matter:** Do all to the glory of God; follow Paul's example, etc. - 1 Corinthians 10:31 - 11:1.

[Note: Study the context of these verses. When we refrain from expressing our "rights" *in this context* (so that we do not hurt others) ***it is not the same*** as giving-in to the whims of "legalistic Pharisees," whose purpose is simply to enslave us with a list of restrictions. For the first group, Paul always yielded his rights; for the second group, he ***never*** did. For the first group, our actions can cause them to sin; for the second group, they are sinful and warped regardless of our actions.]