

A Good Conscience

- *But the end of the charge is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned: 1Tim 1:5*
- What is a Good Conscience?
- To help us answer this question, we will look at the uses of the term “good conscience” as it is used in the New Testament.

A Good Conscience

- *Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, "Men and brethren, I have lived **in all good conscience** before God until this day." Acts 23:1-2*
- After reading this verse, we generally go into an explanation of how Paul could have a good conscience while he was persecuting the church.
- Then never quite get back to the question:
- **What is a Good Conscience?**

A Good Conscience

- *But the end of the charge is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned: 1Tim 1:5*
- *This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, 19 having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, 1Tim 1:18-20*

A Good Conscience

- *But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; 16 **having a good conscience**, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. 1Pet. 3:15-16*

A Good Conscience

- ▣ *There is also an antitype which now saves us — baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 1 Peter 3:21-22*

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- *Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, "Men and brethren, I have lived **in all good conscience** before God until this day." Acts 23:1-2*
- *Pray for us; for we are confident that **we have a good conscience**, in all things desiring to live honorably. 19 But I especially urge you to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner. Heb 13:18-19*

What is a Conscience?

- suneidesis lit., "a knowing with"
- (sun- "with" oida, "to know")
- (con- "with" science "to know")
- "a co-knowledge (with oneself), the witness borne to one's conduct by the conscience"
- If this sounds complicated it's because it is.

Defined

- “*suneidesis*... [lit. ‘joint-knowledge’]...
a. *the consciousness of anything*... b. *the soul as distinguishing between what is morally good and bad, prompting to do the former and shun the latter, commending the one, condemning the other; conscience...*”
(Thayer, p. 602-603; 4893)

The Conscience

- The inner workings and purpose:
- *in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing (them) Rom 2:15*
- The conscience bears witness and either accuses or excuses. Thus the conscience is a separate entity in the mind that watches over all our thoughts, words and deeds. It assesses motives, goals, and the true intent of each.

- *I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit, Rom 9:1*
- Paul says it with his mind,
- his conscience bears witness to its truth.
- Thus there are two voices
- Two to bear witness over our thoughts.
When faced with a moral dilemmas

- The first is the mind. We take all the facts we know from the Scriptures and from our personal life.
- Our conscience oversees all of this, in some way separate from the process.
- Our conscious mind plays no part here.
- When the conscience is functioning properly, it only oversees what is in the mind.
- Nothing in the mind can change its function to make us feel good when doing what we “know” is right / or bad / wrong

- Nothing in the mind can change its function to make us feel good when doing what we “know” is right / or bad / wrong
- It can only:
- accuse us if we are knowingly overlooking something that would change the outcome
- excuse us if we have taken all the facts into consideration and are doing the best we can to do what is right.

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Brings us Back to Paul's Words

- *Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." Acts 23:1-2*

Nothing to do with Guilt

- *Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. 9 And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank. Acts 9:8-9*
- *So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. Acts 9:11-12*

Paul Felt Guilt after seeing Jesus

- *This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. 16 However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. 1 Tim 1:15-16*

Paul's Conscience

- Always working properly.
- Accusing and excusing exactly as designed.
- Thus conscience is *knowing with or along side of...*
- The facts in the mind may be right or wrong.
- But conscience can only work with what is in the mind.
- God did not design it to learn.
- Only to assess ... accuse ... excuse.
- If info is wrong conscience is not to blame.

Paul's Conscience - Universal

- *And Paul, looking stedfastly on the council, said, Brethren, I have lived before God in all good conscience until this day. Acts 23:1*
- *Herein I also exercise myself to have a conscience void of offence toward God and men always. Acts 24:16*
- *I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers in a pure conscience, how unceasing is my remembrance of thee in my supplications, night and day 2 Tim 1:3*

Paul Felt Guilt after seeing Jesus

- *And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, 13 although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. 1 Tim 1:12-14*

Paul Felt Guilt after seeing Jesus

- *To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, Eph 3:8-9*
- *For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 1 Cor 15:9-10*