

## Conscience

### 1. The Importance of a Clear Conscience

- A. Article: Fugitive woman recaptured after nine years: “Even though I’m in a cage, it’s like a weight’s been lifted.”
- B. We all know the unpleasant effects of a burdened conscience: loss of appetite, a sense of dread, physical illness, lack of sleep, obsessive thoughts, etc.
  - 1. Ps 32:3-4 – David expresses wounded conscience when guilty of sin.
  - 2. Mt 27:3-5 – Judas overwhelmed with remorse as his conscience convicted him.
- C. But what, exactly is the conscience?
  - 1. Not a guide to moral, spiritual right and wrong. We are not right because our conscience doesn’t bother us. Paul killed Christians in “*all good conscience*” (Ac 23:1) even while killing Christians.
  - 2. The word literally means “with knowledge” and refers to that part of our mind that judges our actions to be in or out of harmony with *what we believe to be right*. It takes more than our own self-approval to be acceptable to God.
  - 3. The conscience must be *trained or calibrated* according to proper principles for it to function at optimum capacity. **Ex:** The KAL jet that was shot down by USSR several years ago. There were no warnings that the jet was straying off course because the pilots incorrectly set navigation instruments.

### 3. The Wrong Way to Deal with an Ailing Conscience

- A. Deactivate it: 1 Tim 4:2. Some “sear” their conscience, make themselves insensitive to it. **Illus:** Smoke detector with no batteries.
- B. Ignore it. **Illus:** Some hear the alarm but disregard it. How many die in fires because they go back in for “one more thing”?
- C. Fail to take responsibility for actions. Some blame everyone else for the discomforts of conscience. Nothing is their fault. **Illus:** A person who stays in a burning house while blaming the person who set the blaze. *Just get out!*

### 4. The Proper Way to Deal with an Ailing Conscience

- A. Accept responsibility for actions. This is the first step in being saved: response to

John's' preaching (Mt 3:6); Peter's response to Jesus (Lk 5:8).

B. Change behavior that brought guilt. "*What shall we do?*" the people asked John (Lk 3:10, 12, 14). The murders of Christ asked the same (Ac 2:37).

C. The **good news!** We do not have to depart from God, nor He from us, because of our sins. Our conscience can be fully cleansed by the sacrifice of Jesus:

1. The sacrifice of Jesus provides the basis of forgiveness (blood) – Heb 9:14.

2. God's command provides the instrumentality (baptism) – Ac 2:38.

3. Our own obedient response of faith appropriates that provision of forgiveness – 1 Pet 3:21. **Illus:** Suppose a man is bitten by a poisonous snake. 1) Medical research makes possible the antidote; 2) drug manufacturers make available the serum and distribute to doctors/pharmacists; 3) **then each victim must take the necessary steps to acquire the antivenin if bitten!**

**Conclusion:** The result? A clear conscience. A forgiven soul. A good night's sleep.