

The Conscience and the Successful Christian life

Introduction

- A. The Christian, to be successful, must live according to Truth. God is Truth – and He has revealed Himself in the work of Jesus Christ and in the Scripture.
- B. One provision which God has made for the believer is the conscience. This is that inner faculty which decides on the moral quality of one's thoughts or actions and responds with approval or disapproval. We may not violate our conscience.

I. The Explanation Regarding the Conscience.

- A. The conscience reflects our creation in the image and likeness of God, Romans 2:14,15.

For when the Gentiles (non-Christians), which have not the law (Bible), do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves. Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.

Observation: All men have a conscience and therefore a sense of morality. This is due to our creation. We have the law of God written on our hearts. Due to our fallen and sinful state the conscience now works without a standard and must be taught.

- B. The approval-disapproval of conscience will vary with different people, I Cor. 10:25.

Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake. . . if any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake . . . Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offence . . .

Observation: God never made the conscience to be it's own authority. Unless the person is taught from the Bible the conscience will be wrong in its evaluation. The Christian is to be careful in the exercise of his freedom that he does not hinder one who does not understand the truth.

II. The Exhortations Regarding the Conscience.

- A. One may live with a conscience void of offence, Acts 24:16.

And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men.

Observation: Paul states this as a daily goal. He indicates that he had to "exercise" himself to achieve this.

- B. The Holy Spirit works in conjunction with the believer's conscience, Rom. 9:1.

I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit.

Observation: To transgress our conscience is to grieve the Holy Spirit.

C. A good conscience may be the cause of rejoicing, II Corinthians 1:12.

For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation (daily life) in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.

Observation: A conscience which causes rejoicing is one related to sincerity, the grace of God, and living in harmony with the grace of God -- both among non-Christians and Christians.

D. It is the express will of God that the believer have a good conscience, I Tim. 1:5.

Now the end of the commandment is charity (love) out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned (unhypocritical). (See II Cor. 4:2)

Observation: Note that the goal of the commandments of God is that the believer may be genuine in love, faith and live with a good conscience.

III. The Warnings Regarding the Conscience.

Holding faith, and a good conscience, which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck. I Timothy 1:19

Speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron. I Timothy 4:2

Unto the pure all things are pure, but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled. Titus 1:15

Observation: These verses warn us that the conscience must be taught and that we must choose to live according to truth* If we fail to believe and live in honesty - our conscience will not help us. The Bible is our authority.

IV. The Counsel Regarding the Conscience.

Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge, for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol, and their conscience being weak is defiled. I Corinthians 8:7

How much more shall the Blood of Christ, Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Hebrews 9:11;

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Heb. 10:22

Pray for us, for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. Hebrews 13:18

Observation: Our conscience may be weak, may need to be washed, and we all need the prayers of other Christians so we may live in good conscience. Does your conscience contradict the premises and commandments of the Bible - then teach your conscience and reject it when it violates the Bible. If we fail to do this we may come under the serious accusations of Satan - who is called "The Accuser", Rev. 12:10.

Conclusion: Can we live by our conscience? Yes, in the same way we get to Chicago by following our nose. We must keep our nose pointed in the right direction by the roadmap. You can succeed by following the conscience - we must - but we must keep it going in the right direction.