

# CONSCIENCE AND CONVICTIONS

Acts 23:1

## INTRODUCTION:

- A. Sometimes people say, “Let your conscience be your guide.”
  - 1. Is that a safe comment? YES or NO. YES and NO.
  - 2. The conscience is a safe guide IF it is safely guided.
- B. On December 11, 1783, Thomas Jefferson wrote to his daughter Martha, “You will feel something within you which will tell you it is wrong and ought not to be said or done. This is your conscience, and be sure to obey it. Our Maker has given us all this faithful internal monitor; and if you always obey it, you will always be prepared for the end of the world.”
- C. The word “conscience” occurs 29 TIMES in the New Testament.
- D. The person who wrote most about the conscience was the apostle Paul. The first time he mentioned it was in **Acts 23:1**.
  - 1. He had been falsely accused of bringing a Gentile into the temple.
  - 2. He was rescued from the ensuing mob by a Roman commander who had been stationed in Jerusalem.
  - 3. Paul addressed the mob and all was fine until he said that he had been sent to preach to the Gentiles.
  - 4. The people again became angry and demanded he be put to death.
  - 5. The Romans put Paul under arrest until the next day when he appeared before the Sanhedrin.
  - 6. As he stood before the Sanhedrin he said, “Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.” Acts 23:1
- E. From the life of Paul, let’s see what it means to have a “good conscience.”

## I. A GOOD CONSCIENCE HAS CONVICTIONS.

- A. Paul was a man of convictions.
  - 1. His Jewish background had given him many firm convictions: about God, about people, about life.
  - 2. “I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers’ law, and zealous toward God as you all are today.” **Acts 22:3**
  - 3. “Men and brethren, *I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee*; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!” **Acts 23:6**
- B. Paul’s Jewish upbringing gave him convictions about right and wrong. He wrote, “Indeed I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.” **Acts 26:9-10**. He was wrong, but *THOUGHT* he was right.

- C. How does a conscience come to have convictions?
  1. By the study of GOD’S WORD to learn God’s will on any matter.
  2. By what we are TAUGHT by parents and others. (Parents, we need to instill right and wrong in our children.)
- D. A conscience is of no value without correct convictions.

## II. A GOOD CONSCIENCE ACTS ON CONVICTIONS.

- A. Convictions should ALWAYS lead to conduct. As James wrote, “Faith without works is dead also.” James 2:26
- B. Paul certainly acted on his convictions. **Philippians 3:5-6.**
  1. He was “circumcised the eighth day of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin...” v.5.
  2. He was “a Pharisee . . . concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.” v.6.
- C. It’s not enough to have convictions, you must have the courage to act on those convictions.

## III. A GOOD CONSCIENCE CORRECTS CONVICTIONS.

- A. Even the best conscience is not always right. The most sincere conscience can be wrong.
- B. Paul could honestly say, “I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.” **Acts 24:16.**
  1. If Paul had continued to persecute Christians after the Lord appeared to him on the road to Damascus, he would have been “kicking against the goads.” **Acts 9:5.**
  2. Paul would not do that. As he told King Agrippa, “Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.” **Acts 26:19.**
- C. We must always be studying and comparing ourselves to God’s word to assure we are right in our convictions.

## IV. A GOOD CONSCIENCE STANDS ON ITS CONVICTIONS.

- A. Not everyone will agree with your conscience.
  1. Some will always honestly differ with your strong convictions.
  2. Still, a good conscience holds its ground.
- B. Paul always followed his conscience, regardless of how many misunderstood and persecuted him. **2 Corinthians 11:23-28.**
- C. Make sure you are right, and when you are, do not violate your conscience.

## CONCLUSION:

- A. The conscience is a wonderful thing, if properly taught and with the right convictions.
- B. Does YOUR conscience have convictions?
- C. *ILLUSTRATION*: An old man was asked to explain his conscience. Placing his hand over his heart, he said, “My conscience is a little triangular thing in here which stands perfectly still when I do what is right, but when I do wrong, it turns slowly and causes much pain. And, if I keep on doing wrong for a long time, by and by the sharp corners wear down and it doesn’t hurt anymore.”
- D. Have you violated your conscience in regard to God’s will?

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