

CONSCIENCE

1Tim 1:15-20

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Through the years, many people have misunderstood the place of conscience in religion and consequently have made drastic mistakes in regard to their service to God.
- B. Conscience defined: (Vines) Literally a knowing 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. (Webster) Sense or consciousness of the moral goodness or blame worthiness of one's own conduct, intentions, or character, together with a feeling of obligation to do or be that which is recognized as good; - often with special reference to feelings of guilt or remorse for ill-doing.
- C. There are several mistakes, in regard to conscience, prevalent among those trying to please God
 1. Allowing one man's conscience to be the guide for all Rom 14:3-12
 2. Allowing one's conscience to be his personal guide separate and apart from Scripture
 3. Acting against the teachings of one's own conscience
- D. When we realize the prevalence of these ideas we can then see a need for studying about the conscience.

DISCUSSION:

- I. CONSCIENCE MUST ALWAYS REMAIN UNDEFILED**
 - A. A clear conscience is a necessity to being pleasing to the Lord 1Tim 1:5,19; 1Jhn 3:19,20
 - B. Even in matters of liberty, we must not violate our conscience Rom 14:23
 - C. The consequence of going against the judgments of our conscience is hardness of heart or a seared conscience 1Tim 4:2; Eph 4:17-19; Tit 1:15
- II. CLEAR CONSCIENCE ALONE DOES NOT IMPLY ACCEPTABILITY**
 - A. Paul was a blasphemer, persecutor, and injurious while following the leadings of his conscience Acts 23:1; 24:16; 1Tim 1:12-14
 - B. Sins committed in ignorance are still violations of God's law Lk 12:47,48
 - C. The folly of being guided by conscience alone is revealed in the Old Testament Jer 10:23; Prov 14:12; 12:15; 21:2

- D. Just by observation alone we can see the weakness of following our conscience or just letting our conscience be our guide. NOTE: People have thrown newborn babies to crocodiles in answer to their conscience.

III. CONSCIENCE IS SUBJECT TO EDUCATION

- A. Since we cannot be acceptable to God with a defiled conscience, and since a pure conscience alone is not sufficient, it is evident then that something else is needed, and that is the guiding of God's word to educate the conscience.
- B. Notice how Paul's conscience was changed
 1. He was persecuting Christians with a good conscience Acts 9:1,2
 2. He was confronted with evidence showing that Jesus was truly God's Son Acts 9:4-6
 3. After obedience to the commands of his new Lord, he began to teach and preach that same gospel to others that he had fought against Acts 9:20-22
- C. Jews on Pentecost illustrate these same principles
 1. They had previously crucified Jesus Acts 2:23
 2. Peter preached to them, convincing them that Jesus was **BOTH** the Messiah and their Lord (they were "cut to the heart") Acts 2:36, 37
 3. They then obeyed the commands given under the authority of Jesus, the one whom they had crucified Acts 2:38-42
- D. These illustrations show us that our conscience must be educated by the Word of God and that it plays a prominent role in our obedience to Jesus the Christ 1Pet 3:21; Rom 8:16

CONCLUSION:

- A. Imperative we refute these false notions about our conscience. Especially the false denominational concept of "Let your conscience be your guide."
- B. It becomes evident from the study of these principles that when an honest man in religious error hears the truth, he either ceases to be honest or ceases to be in error. Because when an honest man hears and understands the truth his conscience will prod him toward obedience of the truth
- C. Why not respond to the prodding of your conscience based on your hearing of the truth, before your heart becomes hardened to the point that it can no longer be pricked with the truth.