

THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF THE CONSCIENCE

INTRODUCTION

- A. Definition: “suneidesis (συνείδησις, 4893), lit., “a knowing with” (sun, “with,” oida, “to know”), i.e., “a co-knowledge (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”; hence (a) the sense of guiltiness before God; Heb. 10:2; (b) that process of thought which distinguishes what it considers morally good or bad, commending the good, condemning the bad, and so prompting to do the former, and avoid the latter; Rom. 2:15 (bearing witness with God’s law); 9:1; 2 Cor. 1:12; acting in a certain way because “conscience” requires it, Rom. 13:5; so as not to cause scruples of “conscience” in another, 1 Cor. 10:28-29; not calling a thing in question unnecessarily, as if conscience demanded it, 1 Cor. 10:25, 27; “commending oneself to every man’s conscience,” 2 Cor. 4:2; cf. 5:11. There may be a “conscience” not strong enough to distinguish clearly between the lawful and the unlawful, 1 Cor. 8:7, 10, 12 (some regard consciousness as the meaning here). The phrase “conscience toward God,” in 1 Pet. 2:19, signifies a “conscience” (or perhaps here, a consciousness) so controlled by the apprehension of God’s presence, that the person realizes that griefs are to be borne in accordance with His will. Heb. 9:9 teaches that sacrifices under the Law could not so perfect a person that he could regard himself as free from guilt. For various descriptions of “conscience” see Acts 23:1; 24:16; 1 Cor. 8:7; 1 Tim. 1:5, 19; 3:9; 4:2; 2 Tim. 1:3; Titus 1:15; Heb. 9:14; 10:22; 13:18; 1 Pet. 3:16, 21.” (Vines)
- B. Definition: 4893 συνείδησις [*suneidesis* /soon-i-day-sis/] 32 occurrences; KJV translates as “conscience” 32 times. 1 the consciousness of anything. 2 the soul as distinguishing between what is morally good and bad, prompting to do the former and shun the latter, commending one, condemning the other. 2A the conscience. (Strong’s).
- C. Expanded Definition: The conscience is moral consciousness and awareness. It is prompted based on its education and sensitivity.
1. Acts 23:1. The conscience of Paul was not a safe guide since it allowed him to persecute the church.
 2. Acts 26:9.
 3. 1 TI 1:13.
 4. Acts 24:16.
- D. This study is about a part of the Bible heart. HE 4:12.

DISCUSSION

- I. THE BIBLE DESCRIBES THE CONSCIENCE AS GOD-DIRECTED. 1 PE 2:19.
- A. Peter speaks here of the Christians being conscious of God’s presence and approval (A contrast between non-Christians and Christians).
 - B. Suffering of itself is not an occasion for commendation from God; it is only when such proceeds from one’s determination to do that which is right that it is “acceptable” in God’s sight.
- II. THE BIBLE DESCRIBES THE CONSCIENCE AS ACTIVE. JN 8:9.
- A. When these men were not wholly without conscience. The words of Jesus stirred latent concepts of right and wrong in their hearts and they realized they were

- without excuse in their evil effort to entrap the Savior or to execute judgment upon the woman.
- B. Silent and ashamed they slowly filed out of the presence of Jesus, the oldest first because, from experience, most conscious of weakness, and on down, one by one they left.
- III. THE BIBLE DESCRIBES THE CONSCIENCE AS IMPORTANT. 1 TI 1:5.
- A. The purpose and end of the Word of God is that man may be led to do God's will out of a pure heart and with a good conscience and faith unfeigned.
- B. It takes all three of these conditions to make service acceptable to God.
- IV. THE BIBLE DESCRIBES THE CONSCIENCE AS A WITNESS. RO 9:1.
- A. Paul makes a distinction between the conscience (inward man) and the flesh.
- B. Paul's conscience was clear in the matter of any attempt to reach Israel. He had done all within his power to teach them the truth about the Christ.
- V. THE BIBLE DESCRIBES THE CONSCIENCE AS REVEALING. 2 CO 5:11.
- A. Paul was saying in this that God already knew the sincerity and integrity of his soul and that he hoped the Corinthians also had been able to discern the same thing.
- B. If Paul had not walked continually in the fear of God, Acts 9:31, he might have yielded to the temptation to carry favor with his hearers by whittling down his message to suit their tastes.
- VI. THE BIBLE DESCRIBES THE CONSCIENCE AS MAINTAINED. 1 TI 1:19.
- A. Faith must be held in a good conscience. Each alone is insufficient.
- B. The conscience must be trained properly.
- C. Faith together with a good conscience is needed to be successful in this warfare against evil.
- VII. THE BIBLE DESCRIBES THE CONSCIENCE AS PURE. 1 TI 3:9.
- A. "Pure conscience" refers to the practice of the truth.
- B. It is not enough for a man merely to have "book knowledge" of the truth and to be correct doctrinally. He must couple a pure life with his pure doctrine.
- VIII. THE BIBLE DESCRIBES THE CONSCIENCE AS DYSFUNCTIONAL. 1 TI 4:2.
- A. The result of being spiritually seduced, by reception, application, and integration of false doctrine, was that such individuals became so convinced and intractable that they would not be moved.
- B. Their consciences became branded or seared so as to be incapable of proper spiritual discernment regarding the truth.
- IX. THE BIBLE DESCRIBES THE CONSCIENCE AS EVIL. HE 10:22.
- A. How can I rid myself of an "evil conscience?"
- B. This is accomplished by contact with the blood of the Christ, an act that takes place in the eternal mind of God when men submit to His will.
- C. Offering of sacrifice was external – it could not make the worshipper perfect. HE 9:9. But the sacrifice offered by Jesus reaches into the inner man, gives peace to the troubled mind, and makes the soul pure and holy. When forgiveness is granted, the burden of guilt is relieved and the "evil conscience," is replaced with a clear conscience.

- X. THE BIBLE DESCRIBES THE CONSCIENCE AS SUBJECT. RO 13:5.
- A. "Subject" – Strong's Greek #5293; ὑποτάσσω [*hupotasso* /hoop·ot·as·so/] KJV translates as "put under" six times, "be subject unto" six times, "be subject to" five times, "submit (one's) self unto" five times, "submit (one's) self to" three times, "be in subjection unto" twice, "put in subjection under" once, and translated miscellaneously 12 times. 1 to arrange under, to subordinate. 2 to subject, put in subjection. 3 to subject one's self, obey. 4 to submit to one's control. 5 to yield to one's admonition or advice. 6 to obey, be subject.
- B. We must be in subjection because failure to do so will violate the conscience, not to mention the commandment given from God regarding our obedience in this matter.
- XI. THE BIBLE DESCRIBES THE CONSCIENCE AS GOOD. 1 PE 3:21.
- A. Having explained what baptism is "not", Peter tells what it is.
- B. Baptism is an act through which an individual seeks to manifest a good conscience – shows that the one being baptized has a sensitive conscience.

CONCLUSION

- A. What describes your conscience?
- B. How is your conscience?