

## The Condition of the Conscience

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 4:2; Heb. 10:22; 1 Cor. 8:7; 1 Tim. 1:5; 3:9

### I. A conscience that has been branded, as with a hot iron—1 Tim. 4:2:

- A. The conscience of the hypocritical liars spoken of in 1 Timothy 4:2 has lost its sense, as if branded with a hot iron.
- B. For someone's conscience to be branded as with a hot iron means that they have given up the feeling in their conscience; that is, their conscience has lost its function.

### II. An evil conscience—Heb. 10:22:

- A. If we do something wrong before God or man, we will have an evil conscience.
- B. An evil conscience is a conscience with offense and condemnation.

### III. A weak conscience—1 Cor. 8:7, 10, 12:

- A. A weak conscience is due to the lack of proper and adequate knowledge.
- B. A weak conscience is defiled when it is touched by any matter of which it lacks adequate knowledge.

### IV. A good conscience—1 Tim. 1:5, 19; Heb. 13:18; 1 Pet. 3:16, 21:

- A. A good conscience is a conscience without offense.
- B. When we deal with our wrongdoings by applying the cleansing of the Lord's blood, we will have a conscience that is cleansed, without offense, and without condemnation.

### V. A pure conscience—1 Tim. 3:9; 2 Tim. 1:3:

- A. A pure conscience is a conscience purified from any mixture.
- B. When we deal with our heart to make it pure and single (Matt. 5:8), our heart causes our conscience to also be simple, single, and pure; then we have a pure conscience before God.

## Excerpts from the Ministry:

### A CONSCIENCE BRANDED AS WITH A HOT IRON

First Timothy 4:1-2 says, "The Spirit says expressly that in later times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and teachings of demons by means of the hypocrisy of men who speak lies, of men who are branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron." Here Paul does not say "the Holy Spirit"; he simply says "the Spirit." Many times in the New Testament this term denotes not only the Spirit Himself but the Spirit mingled with our human spirit. The Spirit in verse 1 is the speaking Spirit, the Spirit who mingles with our spirit and always speaks.

Here the Spirit's speaking is an express, distinct warning concerning those who depart from the faith. For someone's conscience to be branded as with a hot iron means that they have given up the feeling in their conscience; that is, their conscience has lost its function. In this way, the speaking Spirit warns against ungodliness. (*CWWL*, 1966, vol. 2, "The Divine Spirit with the Human Spirit in the Epistles," p. 339)

### A WEAK CONSCIENCE

In [1 Corinthians 8:7] Paul goes on to say, "But there is not in all this knowledge; but some being accustomed to the idol until now, eat it as an idol sacrifice, and their conscience being weak is defiled." A weak conscience is due to the lack of proper and adequate knowledge. This indicates that our knowledge has much to do with our conscience.

The ex-idol worshippers who are now believers in Christ, being accustomed to the idol until now, lack the knowledge that an idol is nothing (v. 4). Thus, their conscience is weak concerning the matter of idols. The weak conscience is defiled when it is touched by any related matter of which it lacks adequate knowledge. (*Life-study of 1 Corinthians*, p. 391)

### **HAVING A CONSCIENCE THAT IS BOTH GOOD AND PURE**

First Timothy 1:5 says, “The end of the charge is love out of a pure heart and out of a good conscience and out of unfeigned faith.” In order to exercise our spirit, we must have love, a pure heart, a good conscience, and unfeigned faith. If we lack any of these, we will not be able to exercise our spirit in a proper way. Once again, this means that to exercise our spirit we must deal with every part of our inner being. Verse 19 says, “Holding faith and a good conscience, concerning which some, thrusting these away, have become shipwrecked regarding the faith.” Not holding a good conscience causes us to be like a wrecked ship. The conscience is the leading part of the spirit (Rom. 8:16; cf. 9:1). If our conscience is wrong, we cannot have a proper spirit; our spirit will be not exercised but deadened.

First Timothy 3:9 says, “Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience,” and 2 Timothy 1:3 begins, “I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers in a pure conscience.” For the exercise of our spirit, we need not only a good conscience but also a pure conscience. We may illustrate the difference between a good conscience and a pure conscience in the following way. If we do something wrong before God or man, we will have an evil conscience, a conscience with offense and condemnation. After we deal with the wrongdoing by applying the cleansing of the Lord's blood, we will have a conscience that is cleansed, without offense, and without condemnation. This is a good conscience. However, we may still not be purely for God and for His will. What we seek may be good and not sinful, but it may be something other than God Himself. This mixture indicates that we do not have a pure heart to seek only God Himself. If our heart is not pure and single, our conscience also will not be pure. The seeking of our heart changes the condition of our conscience. If our conscience is only good but not pure, we will not be able to serve God in an adequate way. In order to serve God, we need a conscience that is both good and pure, a conscience from a heart that seeks after God alone.

A brother may be not only for God but also for the work of the gospel. His heart is divided between two things. Because he cares more for the gospel work than for the Lord, the gospel is a substitute for the Lord in this brother's life and work. It is something for the Lord, but it is not the Lord Himself. If this brother does something sinful, his conscience will condemn him, but because he believes that the gospel work is good, his conscience does not condemn him. Therefore, he has a good conscience, but he does not have a pure conscience. When we deal with our heart to make it pure and single, our heart causes our conscience to also be simple, single, and pure. Then we have a pure conscience before God. This kind of pure conscience will condemn us if we care more for a work than for the Lord. (*CWWL, 1966*, vol. 2, “The Exercise of Our Spirit,” pp. 9-10)

### **References and Further Reading:**

1. *The Divine Spirit with the Human Spirit in the Epistles*, ch. 10.
2. *Life-study of 1 Corinthians*, msg. 44.
3. *The Exercise of Our Spirit*, ch. 1.