

CONSCIENCE

The Scales Of Eternal Justice



Lester Sumrall

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Unless otherwise indicated,
all Scripture quotations are taken from
the *King James Version* of the Bible.

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1

WHAT IS CONSCIENCE?

Homo sapiens is so intriguingly designed, engineered and perfected that, after six thousand years of human study, man's innermost workings are still a mystery. Science may understand many things, but man is its greatest mystery.

Man witnesses and sees the beauty of the universe with two instruments called eyes. He feels with his total personality all the vibrations of human experience.

Man's inner mechanisms of mind and emotions will spur imagination, conscience and memory beyond the grasp of total definition. You can struggle with them, but they baffle scientific minds.

Human conscience is one of the greatest gifts God gave to man. The Bible says in Acts 24:16, "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men."

What is the "voice of conscience" that we hear about so often? What does it mean to have a conscience?

When we say, "That man has a conscience," what do we mean?

What do we mean when we say, "Conscience is my way of life. I live by my conscience"?

Sometimes people will say to one another, "Man, have a conscience." What do we mean when we ask a person to have a conscience?

If a man drives a hard bargain with someone, his neighbors will say, "That fellow has no conscience." What is really lacking in that person?

Others say, "Now, that is the voice of conscience speaking out." What is the voice of conscience speaking out? What

is the voice of conscience?

Without conscience, man would be an animal. He would not be a human person. He would not be “made in the image and likeness of God” if he had no conscience. Man’s conscience is in his soulical part, not his spirit. It is part of our Adamic nature and not our born-again spirit nature.

The word “conscience” comes to us from a Latin word *conscire* which means “con-science” or “with knowing.” There is the word *conscientia* which means “a moral sense of knowledge.”

The word “conscience” comes from a Greek word *suneidesis*, which means “knowing or to know the truth.” Conscience means knowing truth.

Conscience is the faculty by which we apprehend the will of God. It is a function and operation from the soulish part of us.

The conscience is designed to govern our lives. The sense of guilt before God comes through conscience. It helps us know how we should live before God. Hebrews 10:2 says, “For then would they

not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.”

In the Old Testament, sin was forgiven at the time of sacrifice. When an Old Testament believer committed another sin, he had to return and ask for forgiveness again. God says the offerings that were offered at that time took away the conscience of sins. The Lord Jesus does not function in that way. He does not have to die every year, or every month, or every day. Christ died one time and He purged our consciences. Mankind is still purged after 2,000 years.

Conscience distinguishes what it considers morally good or bad; commending us if we are good and condemning us if we are bad.

Conscience is the ability to evaluate judgment and to justify the works or the thoughts you have.

Conscience cannot be measured for size. It is an explosive power on the inside of you that permeates your total being. It functions through all your soulical parts: your mind, your feelings and your decisions.

Human conscience was not a part of man's nature until Adam and Eve ate the

fruit of the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden. Kenneth Taylor translated in his Living Bible that the tree Adam and Eve ate of was the "Tree of Conscience." Rather than call it the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, he called it the Tree of Conscience.

As a soulical power, conscience is neutral. Conscience can become spiritual through spiritual rebirth. Conscience can become evil if you lend yourself to evil. Then human conscience is no longer neutral.

The reason the Bible says that some people's consciences are seared with a hot iron is because of wrong decisions. They do what is wrong. Your conscience can be carnal, or fleshly, or it can be spiritual. Man has to decide what kind of conscience he desires inside of himself.

The Apostle Paul said, "I want a conscience void of offense to God." Then he paused and said, "I want a conscience void of offense to man."

He had the capacity to direct conscience to whether it would be a spiritual conscience or a sinful conscience. You have

the authority within yourself to decide what kind of conscience you will have. You can make your conscience more tender by drawing closer to God.

Conscience is a faculty by which the human mind, human emotions, and human will apprehend the morality of God. Man knows and understands what is right and what is evil by his inner man, his conscience man. To have a conscience is to be governed by conscious decisions spiritually motivated by the reborn experience.

Today, God is not telling anybody anywhere to live by his conscience. He is telling us to live by the blood of Jesus Christ which cleanses us from our sins so that we can be holy before Him and live according to His Word.

When I was traveling to Alaska, I enjoyed one of the most beautiful boat rides in the world up the Inland Passage between Seattle and Juneau. As the boat made its way, one night I was walking on the top deck and found the captain. He was striding alone and I got in step and walked with him.

It was a beautiful starry night as we two

men walked the top deck, back and forth. I leaned over and said, "Captain, who is Jesus? Whose son was He?" It was amazing how angry the captain became. He knew it was a religious question and he let me know that he was not religious. I almost was sorry he was the captain.

The captain looked up and said, "Those stars are my gods. They have guided me for 50 years." I touched him on the arm and said, "Do you know that my God created your gods?"

How did the sea captain arrive at such a conclusion? His conscience was out of balance with the Word of God and the Spirit of God, out of balance with reality. The man worshiped a dead star made of gases and minerals.

We use the word "conscience" in many interesting ways. For example, there is the conscientious objector. He is a person who objects to military service on the grounds that his conscience forbids him to take up arms.

In London, England, they have the Court of Conscience. It is used for the recovery of small debts, usually to keep petty grievances out of the big courts.

In Scotland on the trams and buses I noticed a small box on the back. That special box is there to put your fare in if the conductor is busy at the other end of the tram or bus and cannot get to you. It is called a Conscience Box. I was intrigued to watch people when they got off the tram. If the conductor had not gotten to them, they would put their threepence or sixpence in that box. When I spoke to the conductor about the box, he said, "The Conscience Box is full every day." Those people slept well at night.

Your conscience is like a compass. It tells you where you are without lying. It gives direction on where you are going.

Eve's conscience, in the Garden of Eden said, "God said not to eat of this tree." Satan's rebuttal was, "You will not surely die. Go ahead and eat of the fruit." Satan told Eve that the forbidden fruit was delicious.

The devil is always offering something that he does not have. He said the fruit would be enlightening to the soul. What Satan did not tell Eve was that her rebellion would be devastating to the human spirit. The rebellion would alienate her from the Most High God and

it would bring pain in childbirth and sorrow to her and to all women who would ever live on planet Earth.

When a person realizes he is in trouble, his conscience begins to assist him. "Remember that thing you did!" Then you pray, "Oh, God forgive me."

Why was your conscience so alive? Because you were in trouble. Men in fox-holes in war make all kind of promises and commitments to God. Men and women in hospitals make new resolutions, conscience resolutions. A man who used to come to my church in South Bend was in the hospital. When I went up to see him, he gave his heart to Jesus on the hospital bed. He told me, "I almost went to hell over a six-inch fish and fishing on Sunday." Over and over he said, "I almost went to hell over a six-inch fish."

The human conscience has the built-in authority to convict or approve your actions. Your conscience can approve of your deeds or expose them.

Conscience can make you aware of real needs. Conscience can be called a policeman—it is a watchman over your soul. Conscience is a court of appeals,

evaluating the decisions that you have made.

This generation has a conscience burned out as by a hot iron, and many people do not know right from wrong.

Through the reading of the Word, your conscience will produce conviction of sin. Without conscience there is no conviction.

You cannot imagine what goes on inside the hearts of men and women who have lived dishonestly with their mates and have sinned outside of marriage. Their consciences will accuse them for the rest of their lives. There is no medicine to heal the conscience. Drugs bring only temporary relief.

The human conscience can bring a person from hopelessness to calling upon the Most High God for assistance. When your conscience tells you that you really need help, Christ is the helper.

Paul wrote in I Timothy 3:9, "Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience." Your conscience will function by the mystery of faith. The human conscience, when born again, is taught how to please God by the Holy Spirit and through

the Word of God. It functions through the newborn spirit dwelling within you. Paul calls this "the mystery of faith." Faith guides the conscience into making spiritual decisions rather than carnal and sinful ones.

II Corinthians 1:12 says, "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience..." The testimony of your conscience witnesses to what kind of person you are. The Apostle Paul declared that his conscience gave witness to the simplicity and the sincerity of his ministry to people.

Paul said, "I have a better witness and I have a testimony on the inside of me. His name is conscience and he has a good witness upwardly toward God; he has a good witness outwardly toward you; he has a good witness inwardly on the inside of myself. I feel good inside." That is very important.

The Bible speaks to us about holding on to our conscience and getting a grasp on it. I Timothy 1:19 says, "Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having

put away concerning faith have made shipwreck.” You have to keep a good, clean conscience inside. God wants you to keep a conscience that is spiritual and joyful unto the Lord. We must guard our consciences like a treasure. We must hold on to a good conscience.

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

Paul speaks of an impaired or abused conscience. Your conscience can beat on the door of your heart and you will not let him in. He can make the brain restless at night because you have not done what is right during the day. The human conscience can be seared with a hot iron. It can be burned out. It can be so calloused over that even if you committed murder, your conscience would not bother you.

A man’s convictions become clear by his conscience revealing his real person. Your conscience is like your shadow; it is always there.

Man has to learn to live with his conscience because your conscience happens to be the scales of eternal justice.

2

DOES GOD HAVE A CONSCIENCE?

“And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

“Now therefore, behold, the cry of the

children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them'' (Exodus 3:7-9).

We can see very clearly in this scripture that God has a consciousness of conditions. God also has a conscience directed toward human persons. He saw their sorrows and their hurts, and He heard their cries. Conscience is what moves a person. When a person's conscience begins to flow in a certain direction, whether it is anger or love, his whole being flows that direction.

God gave man a conscience and man must possess this conscience to direct his own life, his own decisions, and his own choices before God. The Bible tells us in Genesis, chapter 1, that man is made in the image and likeness of God. He possesses what we call a God-conscience, or God-consciousness. God must have a conscience or man could not be God-conscious. Conscience means to evaluate moral conduct. God has an amazing and tremendous conscience. God understands the feelings that have never been represented outwardly and the words that have never been spoken. He understands

man's innermost feelings. God has a conscience and He knows how to deal with conscience in your life or mine.

Is God absolute conscience or is He above conscience? A king may be above his laws, but if that king disrespects his own laws, his subjects will also disrespect the laws and his kingdom will deteriorate. Soon he will be overcome by a stronger nation. God's conscience is not above law. He operates the moral fabric of the universe on His consciousness.

In Genesis 1:26, God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." It was through His conscience that God conceived man in His own likeness. God delighted in His creation and when God created His universe, He looked upon it and it was good. The consciousness of God was flowing out of the things He had created. He was conscious that they were good.

"And God blessed them, (Adam and Eve) and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth,

and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

“And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so” (Genesis 1:28-30).

We behold the consciousness of God in His creative works, in His choice of what He did, and where He placed the sovereignty over planet Earth. He placed the dominion over all His creation in the human person and He placed the scales of eternal justice, called conscience, inside of him. The conscience, with the knowledge of good and evil, became awakened and came into mighty activity at the time of transgression. Adam's conscience had to decide which of these to follow.

We see conscience working so strongly after the fall. Genesis 3:8 says, “And they

heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.” Without a conscience they would not have hidden themselves. They were smitten by their consciences working in their minds, emotions, and will.

Conscience is a soulical power and a soulical function. It cannot be taken out. If a person goes to hell, his conscience will be there. Jesus told about a rich man in Luke 15. Even though he was in hell, he had a conscience bearing witness to the life that he had lived on this earth. You are not going to lose your conscience. You are going to keep it for eternity. For that reason it is subject to the laws of God. You must live in subjection to the Most High in order for you to have eternal peace and joy.

Genesis 6:1-3 says, “And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that

he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.”

Man could have lived forever in the garden of Eden, but after Adam sinned his lifespan was about a thousand years. God saw that man learned to sin so quickly that He reduced their days from up to a thousand years to around a hundred and twenty years. Later He reduced them again to around seventy years. Man has had a reduction of his years because of his rebellion against God and not paying attention to his conscience.

What happened when the sons of Elohim married regular women of Adam's seed? Verse 4 says, “There were giants in the earth in those days.” The sons of Elohim created giants. Possibly there were men whose heads were three feet across. Possibly they had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot. They may have been ten feet tall and weighed five or six hundred pounds. They were probably brutes who growled like lions. They were not human; they were something more than human.

“God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5). That

is what conscience will do for you. God saw and understood the whole situation through the powers of His conscience.

God said He repented that He had even made a man on the earth and it grieved Him in His heart. There is conscience! Jehovah said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them" (Genesis 6:7). All this came because of rebellion, which is a feature of the conscience inside of a man.

Verse 8 says, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." Earth has had three great priesthoods. The first was the priesthood of the sons of God, who were called the priests of Melchizedek. The Word of God tells us about them in Hebrews, chapters 5, 6, and 7.

Hebrews 5:6-7, speaking of Jesus, says, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared." This reveals to us the great conscience of God. He had to work with great wickedness

from Adam right down to Noah—nearly 2,000 years.

God had great feeling toward sin and righteousness, toward good and bad in those early times of man. Conscience has not just been born. Conscience came straight out of the Garden of Eden. God still has a conscience which is working toward you and toward all humanity, right now.

Genesis 18:20-21 tells us about a city called Sodom. "And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know." Here we see God's consciousness toward the great city of Sodom.

Moses was very aware of the consciousness of God. God saw Israel's suffering in Egypt; He heard their cry; He saw their taskmasters. In Exodus 3:7 God said, "...I know their sorrows." That is the function of God's conscience.

God delivered the Israelites out of Egypt and brought them to the Red Sea. "The Egyptians shall know that I am the

LORD, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night” (Exodus 14:18-20). The Egyptians sought to pass over, but they could not. God overthrew the Egyptians completely. God had seen what had happened to the Israeli people and He said, “I’ll do something about it.” His conscience was stirred and God dealt with that situation.

God knows good and God knows bad. Though He is pure and good and holy, through His consciousness He understands goodness and holiness and unholiness and impurity.

God’s conscience was moved in the desert toward Israel when they worshiped the golden calf. He was angry about it. Everytime they did wrong during those forty years of desert wanderings, the conscience of God was stirred up toward them.

God also has a conscience toward you. He sees what you do every day and He understands your motivations on the inside. God knows when your lips speak one thing and your heart believes another. He judges you by His conscience.

David was a great man who understood the consciousness of God. II Samuel 23:10 says, "He arose, and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword: and the LORD wrought a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to spoil." I Samuel 25:31 adds, "That this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself: but when the LORD shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid." David had been mistreated and he was about to kill Nabal when Nabal's wife said, "Oh, don't do that, he is not worth it." She brought alive his God-consciousness within him.

When we study the Psalms, we realize that David was a person who very strongly understood the conscience of God. In fact, the whole Bible is a picture to us of the conscience of God. Every word in the

Bible represents God-consciousness. What does God say about this? How does God feel about this matter? What will God do in this case? The Bible is God's conscience toward sin, toward good, and toward people.

I believe the seven dispensations of time were given to man in order to let his conscience come alive to God. God, through His conscious spirit, gave man these seven opportunities to know and serve Him.

I believe that Christ is actually the conscience of God in the earth. How does God feel? Look at Jesus and you can see how God feels. He is an image of the Father. How does God make judgment? Observe Jesus. To the woman caught in adultery, He said, "Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more." Jesus still loved her. Christ and His conscious acts reveal to us the conscience of God. He is the beautiful image of the Most High and how God feels about everything.

It could be that the New Jerusalem, the eternal city of God, will be the very conscience of God. The ultimate feeling of God will be in the building and the making and the creating of the New Jerusalem. It will be His perfect restora-

tion. The New Jerusalem will be the fulfillment of God's total joy. The New Jerusalem will be the embodiment of what God determined by His feeling and by His conscience.

In the heart of the Almighty, conscience is the scales of eternal justice. God has a conscience; if He did not, man would not be on the face of this earth.

3

THE DISPENSATION OF CONSCIENCE

There was a period of time when conscience was actually the law of the land. It was the only law men had. It is most remarkable to me that God created a dispensation called Conscience.

When Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden, God removed them from the Dispensation of Innocence and brought them into an era called the Dispensation of Conscience. The human consciousness had been born in them through the eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. They now had to live by that new law which

they had created themselves—the law of obedience by conscience. Their minds, emotions, and wills—the areas of the functioning of the conscience—would tell them how they should live before God.

The Dispensation of Conscience was a long one—1,656 years. It began at the door of Eden after Adam's debacle and continued until the Flood covered the earth in Noah's day.

The human life span was changed in this dispensation. God said, "My spirit shall not always strive with man" (Genesis 6:3). God shortened man's span, which was almost a thousand years, down to 120 years. That is a tremendous change.

Adam volitionally decided to choose his own way rather than God's way. He had a personal determination to do something that God did not want him to do. A power called human consciousness awakened in him to determine between good and evil. From that time, every moral act of man would be governed by the conscience inside of him. This began the remarkable period of time known through history as the Dispensation of Conscience. Man had

no laws, he had no governors; he lived by the power of his own conscience saying, "This is good; that is bad." He was ruled only by an inner feeling during this Dispensation of Conscience. This was a very wonderful thing that God still relied upon man so strongly that man had total freedom to make his own decisions. After the debacle in Eden God said, "I will speak to man through his conscience and converse with him through his inner man."

Adam and Eve had two sons. One was named Cain, the other Abel. The devil put it in the heart of Cain to kill his brother Abel. The devil said, "One of these will bruise my head." He thought the first one born would be the redeemer, so he caused Cain to murder Abel through rebellion. This damned his conscience right there. As long as Cain lived, he had a terrible conscience. There are people who commit suicide because their consciences hammer away at them until they cannot stand it.

God showed Adam that a lamb must be slain for a sacrifice. Abel obeyed this law that God had laid down, but his brother Cain would not. As Abel brought his offering of the lamb, Cain brought his vegetable sacrifice of the field. God said,

“I cannot accept your offering; only blood can cover a trespass. The life of the flesh is in the blood.” Satan said, “Now I have destroyed the program of God; I caused Cain to destroy Abel, so I cannot be hurt and my head cannot be bruised. If I can infiltrate the seed of the woman, there can never be any pure seed to produce a world savior.” What an awful thing for the devil to try to perpetrate upon the human race and upon the seed of Adam!

There have been three priesthoods in the history of the human race. The first one was the Melchizedek priesthood, which we have already described. This priesthood functioned during the period called Conscience. The people did have preachers who talked to them and reminded them that they should not live bad lives. Even the priesthood fell into sin; it lost its conscience.

The geneology of this period is not very exciting. It says that they were born, they lived, and they died. When you read it, you say, “Is that all a person can do: be born, live, and die? Is it true that all you can expect is a tombstone?” However, when history comes to the man named

Enoch, the pattern was changed. In only a few verses his whole life story is told, but he changed history! Genesis 5:22 says, "And Enoch walked with God..." This was the dispensation in which God desired men to walk with Him personally. He wanted to deal with them on a personal basis of conscience.

Enoch walked with God so perfectly that when he was 365 years old, God took him to heaven without his dying. What a miracle! Enoch was 65 years old when his son Methuselah was born. Adam, the great-great-great-grandfather of Methuselah, was then about 600 years old. Adam had time to tell Methuselah how he had lived in the Garden and how Eve ate him out of house and home.

Enoch was a prophet of God. One of his prophecies was in the birth of his own son. The name "Methuselah" means, "At his death judgment comes." That was an awful name to give a child. I can believe that everybody who knew him would try to keep him alive because they knew that at his death judgment would come. What amazes me is that this man lived longer than any human has ever lived. He lived 969 years, because God did

not want to judge anybody. The year that Methuselah died was also the same year the Flood came. The Flood terminated the Dispensation of Conscience. Because of the mercy of the Most High in His consciousness, He was waiting for man to become good, clean, and pure. That was what the Dispensation of Conscience was all about. It was time to live for God.

The reason Methuselah lived so long was that God did not want to send that flood of water upon the earth. Noah had the ark ready beforehand. It was the mercy of God that did not let the rain come. God said, "I will give you one more chance. The day that Methuselah dies I will send judgment upon the earth because his name means 'At death judgment comes.' " God gave Methuselah an extra year, and another extra year until he finally outlived every other human who had ever lived on planet Earth. This reveals the great mercy, love, and consciousness of God. God's consciousness goes out to you in your weakness and your failings. God wants to bring you back to Himself no matter how much you have transgressed against Him. God is love. He does not want to judge mankind, but He has to.

After the Flood, God started all over again with a new dispensation called Human Government, when men checked on other men. The Dispensation of Conscience terminated at the Flood in the time of Noah and it is gone forever. God never moves in reverse, God only moves forward. There will never be a period of innocence as there was in the Garden of Eden. There will never be a period called Conscience as there was for almost 2,000 years. Christ has now accomplished the first promise in the Bible, Genesis 3:15, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

We now live in the Dispensation of Grace when the Lord Jesus speaks to man through his heart and through the Word of God, the Bible. The Dispensation of Conscience was a very beautiful time, but it is terminated. We live under a different agreement from God. I John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Only a very few great people lived in the time of Conscience. One was Enoch, who

was translated to heaven. Another was Methuselah; we do not know if he was good or bad, we just know that he lived a long time. Enoch broke through the wall of unbelief and walked with God. What an achievement! Methuselah was celebrated in that his father Enoch prophesied over him the day he was born. He was the oldest man that ever lived. Noah, by his righteousness and good conscience, saved the whole world.

There were a few great men living in the Dispensation of Conscience, but not many. In these last days it might be the same again; there may not be many people with a great conscience inside of them.

The regulation of conscience in those days was what you might call a free moral agency or a self-acting entity. The scales of eternal justice moved on man's behalf and God did everything that He possibly could to bring man into a place of fulfillment, peace and joy in God. This dispensation ended in defeat for man because he did not obey the laws of his dispensation. They had nothing written on stone; they had nothing written on paper; they had no judges sitting to judge them. Their whole lives were built upon their consciences.

4

HUMAN CONSCIENCE WITHOUT GOD

“Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned” (I Timothy 1:5). It is possible for humans to have a good conscience before God and man. Man can stand before them making the right decisions, doing the right things, and having a good conscience.

Verse 19 says, “Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck.” You must hold on to a good conscience. The human conscience is a divine attribute possessed by the soulical man on this earth.

We do not know who else has a conscience in the universe, but we know that God does. The Bible reveals that. We know that man does. We also know that animals do not have a conscience. They are not responsible for their actions because they do not possess a conscience. Man has this attribute. Walking in holy consciousness, the human person yields his conscience to the laws of the Most High and to the Holy Spirit of God.

In rebellion, through following the devil against the Most High God, the human conscience is without divine guidance. This means it is motivated by demonic or human forces.

The first sin ever committed on planet Earth created a guilty conscience. In Genesis 3:10, Adam confessed, "I heard thy voice in the garden and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." A conscience not motivated by God caused man to be afraid. The first thing Adam said was, "I was afraid." Fear comes because of a warped conscience. With a conscience in relationship to God and a conscience with a proper attitude toward God, a person is not fearful. He is strong; he is brave; he is courageous. However,

a conscience not motivated by the Most High is a seedbed for fear.

Adam also said, "I was naked." A human conscience without God is disrobed of its holiness, its purity and its virginity. It discovers itself naked before the Most High. The human conscience without God becomes fearful of the unknown. Adam did not know what was going to happen to him. He was afraid and he hid himself from reality, from fellowship and from the One who had created him. The human conscience without God does not understand the unknown. It knows it has made the wrong decision and the insides of a human being become fearful.

We have what we call the voice of conscience. It all began in the beginning of the Bible. Not much has changed in the last six thousand years. The Lord said to Cain in Genesis 4:9-10, "Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper? And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." This is the voice of conscience.

When the people of Israel were in Egypt, their voice of weeping and hurting

and persecution cried out. Their consciences cried out, and God with His consciousness perceived it. He said, "I hear it and I will come down and do something about it." We have the voice of conscience crying in the world today. Those that are starving to death have a voice of conscience crying. A voice cries for those that do not have sufficient clothing or housing and God will hear their cry. God will hear your cry if you will cry out to Him and say, "This is not right. I want help."

In I Kings 21:19 we read about a king and his queen who did not do right. "And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine."

Queen Jezebel stole Naboth's vineyard and had him killed by false accusers. Naboth's blood cried out and God said, "In the same place where he died, you will die. You left him there for the dogs to eat his flesh, and the same thing will happen to you."

We discover in the Bible that when David sinned, Nathan the prophet came and said, "You are the man, you are guilty," and David's conscience was activated. In Psalm 51 you will find that David was beaten down by his own insides. He came to God with great contrition and said, "Forgive me, I am sorry, please forgive me." He was a man who found his way back to God.

The voice of conscience comes in so many ways. When I was a young man living in the state of Mississippi, I was told a story about a logging pond in the town of Laurel. Two men were working in the logging pond taking the logs, putting them under the water and then pulling them out when it came time for them to be sawed. They would put a big chain around the logs and pull them on to a big crawler. From there they would go inside the mill to be sawed into all kinds of timber. After they were dried, the timbers were sent out to build houses all over the world.

One day one of the men laughed and said, "In this pond ten years ago I planted a grain of rice and it never did grow." The other man began to think and think. Finally he said, "Yes, there was a man

named Rice that used to live here ten years ago and he disappeared. His family never knew what happened to him; he just disappeared." He went to the police and said, "I would like you to drag the bottom of that millpond. A man told me that he planted a grain of rice in it ten years ago. If you will look back through the newspapers, you will find that ten years ago a man named Rice disappeared."

The police took their instruments and dragged the bottom of the pond and they brought up a skeleton with a chain wrapped around it! When the police presented the bones and the chain before the logger, he confessed that he had been working with Mr. Rice and that he knocked him unconscious, wrapped a log chain around him, sinking him to the bottom of the pond. He said, "I could not stand it any longer. Every night, every day, this thing was on my mind. I could not stand it!"

A person without God needs the consciousness of God. Your conscience will cry out to you. You have to say, "God, I want a converted conscience. I want a conscience toward God and not a conscience without God." A conscience without God will destroy you. It will beat

you to pieces. There are people in the insane asylums right now because their consciences have beaten them into that place.

The human conscience without God is fearful of the unknown, of the future and of coming judgment.

The voice of conscience cries out to people; it cries out to God; it has a force and a power. Even though the man was dead, the conscience still cried out.

God calls the unconverted conscience defiled and dirty. I Corinthians 8:7 says, "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."

Sin and rebellion will always bring defilement or uncleanness. God said the defiled conscience is a weak conscience. You can make your conscience stronger by working on it to strengthen it.

The human conscience without God is the consciousness of sin. It is the conscience which produces the sense of guiltiness before God.

Animal sacrifice could not heal the

consciousness of sin. Jesus came so that conscious thought could distinguish what is morally good from what is morally wrong if we are righteous and live before God. A good conscience could commend us. God wants us to live before Him in uprightness.

Acts 26:9 is an interesting scripture. "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." Here we learn that a person can have an ignorant conscience. Paul had been trained that people with the wrong religion ought to die. He put Christians in jail, he stood by and watched Stephen be stoned, and he went to Damascus to put the whole church in jail. In all this, his conscience was ignorant of the thing he was doing wrong. That possibly is true in many situations.

Romans 10:2 says, "For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." Their consciences were in a state of ignorance. When conscience comes into a state of wisdom and knowledge, it guides man the way he should be guided.

Psalm 40:11-12 says, "Withhold not

thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me. For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.” Here was a guilty conscience crying out for mercy. The Psalmist was telling here how his conscience was beating him to death. His conscience was actually destroying him. What he needed was for God to forgive him and give him a clean conscience so he could live the right way. If you will seek God, He can heal your conscience. He can heal the misdoings and the misgivings of the past and make your conscience new.

In Matthew 27:3-5 we read, “Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he (Jesus) was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.” Acts 1:25 says,

“...Judas by transgression fell.” He was not predestinated to do this. He did not have an overpowering situation from outside of him making him do it. It was his own self that wanted to do it. Judas’ conscience drove him to suicide. That was an evil, sinful conscience. He took his own life. Conscience is like that today. People never commit suicide with a good conscience. They always have griefs and sorrows and hurts they cannot overcome, so they say, “The way out is to kill myself.” It is not the way out! The way out is for Jesus to come into your heart and make you a new creature.

I Timothy 4:1-2 has a very familiar word that I would like you to hear again. It says, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron.” This means that you can burn out your conscience. You can bruise your conscience until it ceases to function. You can keep putting down your conscience until there is nothing there. There are people that could kill in cold blood and never think anything about

it. They need an operation on their consciences. Judas missed it. His conscience drove him the wrong way because he was without Christ. Peter's conscience was different. Even though he had sinned and blasphemed, he wept with bitterness and said, "I would like to get to Christ and be forgiven." That is exactly what happened to him.

"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences" (II Corinthians 5:11). Paul was saying, "I want you in your conscience to know that I am a good man. I am speaking truth. I am speaking of God. I want you to believe that and to understand it." The American Amplified Version reads, II Corinthians 5:10-11, "We must all appear and be revealed as we are before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive (his pay) according to what he has done in the body, whether good or evil, (considering what his purpose and motive have been, and what he has achieved, been busy with and given himself and his attention to accomplishing). Therefore, being conscious of fearing the Lord

with respect and reverence, we seek to win people over—to persuade them. But what sort of persons we are is plainly recognized and thoroughly understood by God, and I hope that it is plainly recognized and understood also by your consciences—that is, by your inborn discernment.” Another version reads, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience.” When you come to the Lord Jesus Christ and confess your sins, He puts a new conscience in you. The Bible says, “If we confess our sins God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (I John 1:9. At that point in time, you receive a new conscience. Your old conscience passes away and you receive a born-again conscience. An evil conscience breeds evil; a bad conscience breeds bad; a demonic conscience breeds demonic effects. Every unbeliever has a conscience that has been hurt and, like Adam, is hiding from God. An evil conscience is

fearful and tormenting. When you come to Jesus Christ and your sins are all wiped away, you have a new life in Him. A newborn conscience dwells within you. The nightmares of yesterday are all gone. The sorrows of a heavy conscience are gone. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses you from an evil conscience. God can pull the drapes of yesterday and give you a brand new future with a beautiful new magnificent conscience! Receive it! Accept it! Walk in Him! You will always be glad that you did!

5

REBORN CONSCIENCE

It is possible to have operations within you which you do not understand. When this is the case, you do not know when you are working with God or not working with God. You do not know how to direct your inner being. It is necessary to learn of these workings. It is of prime importance to know about conscience. Let us consider the reborn conscience—the saved or converted conscience.

The human conscience fell from grace with the sin and rebellion of Adam in the Garden of Eden. At that time the human conscience fell into disrepute.

All sinners have a conscience. Hebrews 10:22 says, “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our

hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience...” The conscience of man became evil through transgression. It was not evil before the fall.

It is possible to change the human conscience. In your born-again experience many things change; your mind, emotions, and conscience change when you are born again.

The conscience can only become pure by the blood of Jesus. It cannot be cleansed by resolutions. You cannot talk yourself out of it or go to a psychiatrist and have him give you reasons out of your past.

There is only one way a human conscience can be made holy. Hebrews 9:14 tells us, “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?” Only Christ can produce the reborn conscience.

Hebrew 13:18 says, “Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience...” The only way to have a good conscience is that the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses us from all our sins. Then we do not have that evil conscience, but a conscience which is holy and good unto God.

The reborn conscience is so exciting. In many countries, my wife and I have observed the miracle of the rebirth. We have seen men and women who were living together without a marriage because the wedding certificates from the government cost so much that they could not afford them. The couples were just living together without the paper, but they were true to each other. They had lived together ten or fifteen years, but were not officially married. When they got saved, inside of them they would say, "This is not right. We have ten children, but we are not married." When they were born again, something inside of them said, "Conform to God's commandments!"

As long as families are living in sin, adultery does not condemn them. When their conscience becomes purged by the blood of Jesus, they receive a good conscience before God.

It is beautiful to see a once rebellious conscience become reborn and to witness the whole inside of a person change.

Let's look at the story Jesus gave in Luke 15:17, "When the prodigal came to himself." It is hard to know what that means. When he got tired of the way he

was living, he came to realize that home was not so bad after all. When he got tired of fellowshiping with pigs, he came to himself and said, "Now, wait a minute. In my father's house there are hired servants. There is bread enough for everybody and plenty leftover. I am perishing with hunger. I am a son, but I am perishing with hunger while my father's servants are throwing away food." That was the arousement of conscience within him.

Verse 18 says, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned..." That is what salvation is all about. It was hard for him to say, "I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." This was the miracle of the soulical person, and especially this prodigal son, in the rebirth of a new life.

Home became a desirable place. He did not like it when he walked off and said, "I am glad to get away from this place. I am tired of seeing Mom and Dad. You are old fuddy-duddys anyway. You are so far out of time that you do not know what is going on in the world. I am leaving here!" When his conscience came alive, the first

thing he said was, "The place I left was desirable."

The same thing happens to sinners when they are born again. Before they were born again, they did not like church. Afterwards, you cannot get them to go home.

This prodigal son had entered into a higher state of appreciation. That is what happens to a sinner. He does not like the singing, praising, praying, or preaching. In fact, he does not like anything about God. When Jesus comes into his heart, he has a new appreciation of God, the Word of God and the worship hour. He has a new appreciation of everything that is related to heaven and God and eternity. That is what it means to have a renewed and reborn conscience!

The prodigal realized his miserable condition. He realized that he had been in the state of rebellion against his father. He confessed it very freely.

That is when the conscience is really working, cleaning up the past, cleaning out the mud, the mess, and letting you see that the pigsty is not a parlor. Sinners do not know the difference so they play in

the pigsty. When they let Jesus into their hearts, they say, "I cannot stand this mess anymore. I do not even like these 'pigs' I have been running around with."

Romans 13:5 says, "Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake." It is not easy to be subject to others. Rebellion is a normal thing for the unregenerated. Sometimes sheer rebellion even gets over into believers' lives. You can be a rebel at work; you can be a rebel at home; you can be a rebel at church. When the conscience comes alive in Jesus, your old conscience is changed or reborn.

We must keep our consciences functioning because conscience is the moral and spiritual guide of our destiny.

I have been in countries where I would not drink coffee for the simple reason that Christians in that country thought drinking coffee was a sin. So I drank water and that is all right with me. I want to live, wherever I am in the world, in a way that will help people go to heaven and not tear them down.

The Apostle Paul says in I Corinthians 8:13, "Wherefore, if meat make my brother

to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." Paul was functioning here altogether in the area of conscience.

Today the church needs the reborn conscience to make its way through the world, seeking to win many to God and not hurting anybody. Your conscience is your antenna that bends one way or the other, telling you to do this or not to do that and to be careful not to offend other people.

One of the greatest powers of conscience is prayer. I can speak harshly to my wife and feel rather good about it. When I get down to pray the Lord says, "Why are you so nasty in your speech?" I might retort, "I had my rights." God's firm answer is, "No, you did not have any right. Go say that you are sorry." The matter seemed all right until my conscience got quiet in an attitude of worship. Your conscience can purge, cleanse, and work for you.

Prayer attains a high degree of sensitivity in order that we might, like the Apostle Paul said, "Walk before God and before man with a good conscience."

Look at the word “purge.” “Purge” can mean “to purify, to clean it up or to separate.” It means to separate one thing from another. It means to wash out and take away the impurities. He wants to remove guilt from the human person. On the other hand, if you talk to a man that works with trees, “purge” means to cut off twigs and to cut back branches. Sometimes a branch might grow out too fast and it needs to be cut back. The Lord does this kind of purging so that we can produce better spiritual fruit.

You can teach the Word of God to some people and they will do the opposite of it. It is amazing that you can teach people and they will go shooting out a little branch before they are ready for it. Then God has to trim it back. You can do the right thing at the wrong time. You can do a good thing at a bad time. If you wait until God does it, it will be so easy, good, successful and blessed.

It is the same way with getting married. You can get married at the right time or the wrong time. I always thought I had no business getting married until I was able to provide a house to live in. One of the first things I did when my wife and I were

married was to buy a house. We did not live in it much, but we had a house. We were never stranded; we could always go home. To marry a girl and strand her is not the right way to begin life together. If a young man would work more diligently and make full preparation, he might have a lot more happiness after marriage.

My wife and I have been married for more than forty years and she has never had to worry about where her food was coming from or if she would have a place to stay.

The Apostle Paul talked about conscience more than anyone else in the Bible. He was very conscious of conscience, maybe because he was trained in the ways of the Greeks and the concept of conscience was a strong thought in their language.

In Acts 24:16 Paul said, "Herein do I exercise myself. I move myself; I give a lot of activity in the area of having always a conscience void of offence toward God."

Paul said, "My conscience will not offend God." Paul further said, "I will not allow an offence toward men." He was striving for good conscience toward God and man.

In the New Testament, the word “offense” is used as something that arouses prejudice or it becomes a hindrance. Offense can sometimes, in itself, be a good thing. For example, you may say, “No, I am a holy person. I will not drink alcohol.” This may become an offense to some people. I have had people tell me, “If your rejoicing was not so strong, I would worship with you.” We offended them by rejoicing in Jesus, but we cannot stop.

The greatest lesson to learn from a conscience void of offense is that we must do nothing whereby we would cause a brother in Christ to stumble or fall. Daniel did not want to offend anyone in Babylon but when he prayed he offended the whole empire.

In Acts 23:1 the Apostle Paul said, “...Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.” The Amplified version says, “Then Paul, gazing earnestly at the council (Sanhedrin), said, Brethren, I have lived before God doing my duty with a perfectly good conscience until this very day...”

Paul had a good conscience about everything that he had done. In I Timothy 1:5 he said, "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." All of us must "hold faith and a good conscience." If you do not hold on to a good conscience, you can lose it. "Which some have put away concerning faith have made shipwreck."

I have a good conscience. I have never hurt anybody to get anything that we have. The television stations we own were purchased out of bankruptcy.

I Peter 3:16 says, "Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ." The enemies of God can falsely accuse your good conscience in Christ. You can have a good conscience and people will misunderstand you completely. How glad we are to have a good conscience with a mystery of faith surrounding it.

II Timothy 1:3 says, "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with

pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day.” A pure conscience is one that has been cleansed. It has not only been purged, cut off and separated, but is one that is pure. You have to be born again in order to be the person that God wants you to be. If you will do that, you will stand before God and He will praise you for it.

Paul says in II Corinthians 4:2, “But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” We should commend ourselves to people through conscience.

A Christian can endure grief, suffering wrongfully, because of his conscience toward God. The reborn conscience can bear sorrow. It can bear hurt when others say, “I cannot stand it.” A pure conscience can stand it.

John 8:9 reads, “And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at

the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst."

These men had stones in their hands. Their consciences told them, "Stone her!" Jesus awakened within them a new conscience. He said, "You without sin, cast the first stone."

They began to look at one another and say, "You know, I am guilty and you are guilty." They dropped their stones on the ground and one by one they walked away, awakened by a conscience. The Bible says they were convicted by their own consciences. When they saw the attitude of Jesus, they had an awakening of a conscience that they did not have before.

There are two judgments before us. One is the Judgment Seat of Christ, which is just for believers, the other is the Great White Throne Judgment. At this latter judgment only sinners are judged. At both judgments, every wrong thing that people have done and justified to themselves will be weighed in the scales of eternal justice—the conscience.

This means our conscience ought to be purged and made clean and good and holy.

Some of us are smitten by our consciences. If you are convicted by your conscience, the blood of Jesus Christ God's Son can cleanse your conscience.

We read in Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus..."

If you are a believer in Christ Jesus, say, "Lord, I am sorry. Forgive me." If you have not been faithful to God, let your conscience start all over again.

FINAL WORD

We have a saying, "Let your conscience be your guide." Do not believe it! The Bible is our guide. Your conscience is your relationship with God concerning good and evil. God has placed within you this mysterious thing called conscience. It understands good and evil. It will guide you to do the things that are good and will separate you from things that are evil. Your conscience is the scales of God's eternal justice.