

## Doctrine of the Conscience

1. The word for conscience is *suneidesis* which literally means "a knowing with" (*sun*, with, *oida*, to know). *Suneidesis* is a co-knowledge with oneself.
2. The conscience refers to the moral sensitivity to be accountable, to fulfill an obligation, to keep a commitment. The Bible recognizes that the conscience can either be good, defiled, or seared.
  - *John 8:9 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.*
  - *Romans 2:15 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)*
  - *1 Corinthians 8:7 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.*
  - *1 Corinthians 10:28 But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof:*
  - *2 Timothy 1:3 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;*
  - *1 Timothy 3:9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.*

With the conscience we come to know what is right and what is wrong based upon a sense of innate justice.

3. Every person has a conscience which is developed according to personality, society, and religious instruction.
4. When the Law of God, summarized in the Ten Commandments, is violated, there is a sense of guiltiness before God
  - *Hebrews 10:2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? Because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.*

The guilt is healthy because individuals are kept sensitive to sin. Confession of guilt is elicited and righteousness is sought.

5. The Law of God can be violated apart from any personal knowledge of Holy Scripture as per Romans 2:15 as the conscience distinguishes between what is morally good and bad.

- *Romans 2:15 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another ;)*

While societies differ according to custom and law, there are certain things that are universally recognized as wrong such as murder, stealing, lying, and adultery.

6. In the conscience the peace of God can be discerned and find confirmation with the Holy Spirit.

- *Romans 9:1 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,*

7. When a Christian lives with integrity, there is a consciousness or awareness of that fact in the conscience.

- *2 Corinthians 1:12 For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.*

8. The way to live with integrity is to do what is right because conscience requires it.

- *Romans 13:5 Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.*

9. Christians are not to question or violate the integrity of the conscience of others in doubtful matters.

- *1 Corinthians 10:28 But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof: 29 Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?*

10. The Christian is to live so as to commend himself to every man's conscience.

- *2 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.*
- *2 Corinthians 5:11 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.*

11. It is possible to have a conscience which is not strong enough to discern between what is lawful and what is unlawful.

- *1 Corinthians 8:7 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.*
- *1 Corinthians 8:10 For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;*
- *1 Corinthians 8:12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.*

12. The presence of God prevails the life of the believer through the conscience.

- *1 Peter 2:19 For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.*

13. The sacrifices of old could never cleanse or perfect the conscience.

- *Hebrews 9:9 Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;*

14. The conscience is described in many ways.

- It is possible to have a good conscience. *Acts 23:1 And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. 1 Timothy 1:5 Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: 1 Timothy 1:19 Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Hebrews 13:18 Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. 1 Peter 3:16 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. 1 Peter 3:21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:*
- It is possible to have a clear conscience. *Acts 24:16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.*
- It is possible to have a weak conscience. *1 Corinthians 8:8 But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. Titus 1:15 Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.*

- It is possible to have a pure conscience. *1 Timothy 3:9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. 2 Timothy 1:3 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;*
- It is possible to have a seared conscience. *1 Timothy 4:2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;*
- It is possible to have a purged conscience. *Hebrews 9:14 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?*
- It is possible to have a guilt conscience. *Hebrews 10:22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*