

Acts of Jesus 52 A Clear Conscience notes

The U.S. government in 1811 began collecting and storing letters like the following note dated February 6, 1974: "I am sending ten dollars for blankets I stole while in World War II. My mind could not rest. Sorry I'm late." It was signed: an ex-GI. And there was this postscript: "I want to be ready to meet with God." The U.S. government not only collects and stores these letters, but the Treasury Department established a fund and labeled it the "**Conscience Fund.**" Since its inception, the **fund has had millions of dollars flow through to fix guilty consciences.**

Do you have a clear conscience? Paul did **Acts 23:1**

--Paul makes mention of a clear conscience on several occasions during his writings:

-Twice while giving defense of his ministry: here and in **Acts 24:15-16.**

-Once again in his second letter to Timothy: **II Tim. 1:3**

1. Because it shows up here in our text and because it is fairly large topic in our Bibles, we need to spend some time understanding it and how it works and the importance it plays in our lives.

We need to strike a balance here:

1. Having a clear conscience and not violating your conscience is very important.

2. Must be careful not to overrate it: "Let your conscience be your guide"—Jiminy Cricket-- is not completely advisable either.

--Our consciences are only as good as the ones who are in charge of them.

First of all, understand how our conscience works.

--The construction of the word gives us a good clue as to how our conscience works.

--This is the exception where the Greek word and English have a similar construction: Both mean literally "with knowledge" (con=with, science= knowledge)

--If my conscience guides me, I am making moral decision based on what I know to be right and wrong.

--But what if I'm ignorant, or what if I've forgotten, or what if I'm so used ignoring my conscience that it no longer works?

Here in lies the problem: my conscience is only as informed as I've let it be.

1. Likened to a window that let's in the light to help you see, but what if you've let that window get dirty through sin?

--We've all been there—find ourselves condoning or participating in things that we wouldn't have before.

--We've allowed the window to get dirty

--We may be able to say with Paul, "I have a clear conscience", but it may not *mean a blessed thing.*

2. Likened to a sundial which is great which is great as long as use the sun to read it by, but if you read it by flashlight you can make it say whatever you want to.

3. Likened to a watch—watch keeps good time as long as it set on the right time to begin with.

--If you'll follow a watch that is set right, you'll be on time every time.

--But if your watch is set wrong and you follow it, you'll miss it every time.

4. Likened to a smoke alarm= great as long as you don't unplug it or

let the batteries run down.

2. Having understood the limitations of our conscience, let's come to grips with what the Bible says it is and can be.

- Can be evil:** “but I thought a conscience was always a good thing” despite what Jiminy Cricket says, that just simple isn't true.
- Heb. 10:22**—So, outside of Jesus, our conscience is evil (never trust the conscience of a lost person they are reading their sundial by flashlight)
- Titus 1:15, I Tim. 1:19-20, Is. 5:20**
- How did we get to where its fine to kill unborn babies and homosexuality is a defended and acceptable form of lifestyle, where people go and shoot up schools?
- A lost person has an alarm system that is unplugged.**

3. Paul persecuted the church: imprisoned and had others killed and yet he could say “I have a clear conscience”?

- Clear conscience comes only from Christ: **Heb. 10:22**
- If your B.C. life is bothering you, you need to accept the grace of God **I Jn. 3:19-20**
- A clear conscience is made possible through Jesus and is maintained through obedience.
- There are times when a guilty conscience has no basis.
- Then there are times when we feel guilty because we are!
- II Cor. 1:12** – But our conscience should testify against when we do wrong.
- The Holy Spirit speaks through our conscience helping walk in the light.

Beware of ignoring your alarm system!

- Because when the alarm goes off and you ignore it, you'll make it harder to hear next time.
- Hebrews 3:13**

Beware of helping others violate their conscience for the same reason.

- Romans 14:14-15** – “What's the big deal...eat pork; it's O.K.” doesn't sound bad, but if you teach a person to violate their conscience over something like this it will be easier for them to violate it in other areas.

I John 1:9 – The primary thing that needs to be cleansed is our conscience.

What if our conscience has been dulled?

- Need to clean the glass;
- Need to make sure that the light your using is the Word of God and not our own.