



## Keep a Good Conscience

Keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is

wrong. For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the* just for *the* unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits *now* in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through *the* water. Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him. (1Peter 3:16-21)

Twice in the third chapter of 1Peter, the apostle talks about the conscience. In verse 16, notice that the apostle is saying that Christians must give a defense for their hope, having a good conscience, that is, having a firm, sincere, conviction of their answer. Winning the argument is not the thing of importance. Answering with a good conscience is. In verse 21, one has the answer of a good conscience, we are told, when he is baptized in order to be saved. Doing right, he has a good conscience. This suggests that several things need to be considered relative to the conscience.

What is the conscience? The dictionary tells us that the conscience is the power within a man that guides him to do right. It is something like a built-in police force. So, the conscience is an important thing. It is something that must be shown what right is to guide in that way.

### A Good Conscience

There is such a thing as a good conscience. This is a conscience which is functioning correctly, telling the individual to do what the conscience considers to be right. Paul had a good conscience. He had always done what his conscience told him to do (**Acts 23:1**). He did not always do right, but he always did what he thought was right. We can see that a conscience, although good, is not always reliable.

### A Clear Conscience

There is such a thing as a clear conscience (**1Timothy 3:9**). A clear conscience is one which has not been polluted by violations. When a man's conscience knows right and tells him so, and then he does not follow the advice of his conscience, he no longer has a clear conscience.

## A Weak Conscience

There is also such a thing as a weak conscience (**1Corinthians 8:12**). This is a conscience which is not strong and is easily swayed as to what is right and is not right. This is like a having a policeman who knows right but can be easily swayed as to which is right and not right in any given situation.

## A Seared Conscience

There is such a thing as a seared conscience (**1Timothy 4:2**). This is a conscience whose message has been disregarded over and over again until it has lost sensitivity. This is like having a policeman who arrests violators and sees them freed over and over again until he begins to ignore their offenses.

## A Defiled Conscience

There is such a thing as a defiled conscience (**1Corinthians 8:7**). This is a conscience which has been corrupted until it no longer gives correct advice, and if it gives advice it will be advice which defiles. People will then say: “Well, my conscience does not bother me” when doing something known or shown to be improper.

## The Functional Conscience

In what areas is the function of the conscience apparent? It testifies or bears witness (**2Corinthians 1:12**). It may give good or bad testimony. The conscience convicts—makes one to feel guilt when one does wrong (**John 8:9**). It would be safe to say that Judas was a good example of this (**Matthew 27:3-4**). The conscience subjects (**Romans 13:5**). It subjects the individual to whatever it considers right, whether it is right or wrong. It makes one bold to act (**1Corinthians 8:10**). This can be good or bad, depending upon whether it is wrong or right. It is possible for the conscience to make us bold enough to sin.

So, educate your conscience with God’s word. It must be right to help you.