

### **A Good Conscience Towards God**

Conscience is defined as knowledge or the feeling of right and wrong; the faculty, power or principle of a person which decides on the lawfulness or unlawfulness of his actions (Webster). The New Testament makes conscience an awareness of self and sin.

**Acts 24:15-16** - Every normal person is born with a conscience. The Bible is the only true standard that can help one educate his conscience. The conscience is a guide within itself; nevertheless it will give better directions when it is influenced by the Word of God. It was Paul's hope concerning the resurrection that inspired his desire to have integrity towards God and man. 1 Corinthians 8:12 - Having a clear conscience toward God develops clearing of offense with our fellowman. One cannot hold good thoughts toward God and bad thoughts toward each other. When I love Jesus, I love you; when I love you, it's because I love Jesus.

**Hebrews 9:14** – A believers conscience has been purged from dead works, therefore making him more sensitive to right or wrong.

**Hebrews 10:2** – In a person's "lost state", the conscience is evil. After the new birth the conscience is cleansed resulting in a God-consciousness. It should no longer tolerate evil.

- Even when no one else is around, our conscience should cry out at the presence of evil. It should be witness enough without others to guide us or defend us against error. When we speak, our witness on the scene can vouch for us; a good conscience, which is influenced by the Holy Ghost.
- If we happen to cut the truth short or say things out of proportion, a good conscience toward God will sound the alarm that we have grieved the Holy Spirit.
- If we violate our conscience after being warned, it will be easier to override its next warning.

**Romans 2:14-16** -To train the conscience – Read the word of God, pray, and act in obedience (Psalm 119:11). Do the right thing and don't hesitate; perform the right thing before rebellion sets in. If one receives no law from without, the conscience is his law within; written by the hand of Almighty God.

Having a conscience without enough understood Word in our heart; allows the Evil one to false accuse and lead us into a "guilt trip" or feeling bad when we should be rejoicing.

**2 Corinthians 1:12** – The conscience will testify. Sin on the inside can do damage to our mind, attitude, and disposition. An interesting quote... "When our smile says one thing and our heart says something else, I call that a Christmas smile to hide a Halloween heart." Life is not only the visible and the tangible. We are spiritual beings

also; our “hidden man” must be respected and recognized. When we approach God or fail to spend time with Him, the conscience is there. It will sound approval or disapproval.

**Psalm 19:12-14** - How does one destroy the conscience? By sinning knowingly and presumptuously; with also acting as though nothing has happened. *“A man who refuses to admit his mistakes can never be successful. But if he confesses and forsakes them, he gets another chance. Blessed is the man who reveres God, but the man who doesn’t care is headed for serious trouble.”* Proverbs 28:13-14, TLB

Paul warns Timothy of this: *“Cling tightly to your faith in Christ and always keep your conscience clear, doing what you know is right. For some people have disobeyed their consciences and have deliberately done what they knew was wrong. It isn’t surprising that soon they lost their faith in Christ after defying God like that.”* 1 Timothy 1:19, TLB

Satan has a plot to destroy our confidence in the ministers of the gospel. Hoping by the ministers’ failures, others will excuse wrong. The devil would like to see us sin so often that we burn away all of our convictions. A seduction to make wrong seem right.

In this area we must be aware of how we adopt practices of others, without prayer and meditation. They may not hold the same convictions we hold! To do something which seems acceptable by others but rejected by our own good conscience is to do robbery to ourselves. None of us should want an alarm system which is guaranteed to go off after the thief is gone or after the house burns to the foundation! Maintain your closeness to God so that your spiritual alarm will be sensitive. We need an alert before the fact, not just after the fact.

**Hebrews 13:18** – Our responsibility goes beyond that of keeping in step with what others are doing. We must find peace within; our own conscience must be clear in the actions we are taking. A good conscience will call out advert pride no matter what form it appears in.

**1 Timothy 4:1**- The conscience is a good rule of conduct for one to order their life by, but it is not the only rule. Notwithstanding, the conscience could be a bad ruling guide; if it is not good toward God. When one slays his conscience by consistent wrong, their conscience will begin to approve wrong.

To have a good conscience toward God we must submit to His written word and the concepts He reveals in our spirits (Matthew 16:17; 1 Cor. 2:10). That which He reveals in our spirits will never conflict with what is written. Thus, we can trust God’s word before us and God’s word within us. Once we become holy, we will develop a hatred for mechanisms which deface holiness. We must consult God’s word that is

before us and God's word within us before we decide to partake of societal things generally accepted. This principle when followed will help us maintain Godly standards and not so easily abandon holiness cultural distinctives when being "seduced" by contrary "winds" of worldly philosophies (Jer. 29:8; Eph 4:14; Col 2:8).

Those who were taught a Christian dress code didn't change overnight to a supposed new liberty or in other terms a yielding unto their flesh (Gal 5:13); without a fight with their conscience. Some leaders can get adamant when they feel one is trying to pass on their personal convictions. Yes, convictions exist for everyone on an individual level. However, there is a Biblical call to "modest apparel, with shamefacedness" (1 Tim 2:9) *See Note 1*. The Bible also indicates that there is a heavenly design for which the earthly pattern should follow (Ex 25:9; Matt 16:18,19; Heb 8:5). A Christian dress code should bring an individual into submission with a sanctified decorum as a worshipper (Gen 35:1-7) while preserving his separation from the world. Also, we should be able to find a respect for God's divine order as it relates to clothing for both genders (Gen. 1:27; Duet 22:5). Now if we kill our conscience in one area, it makes it easier to proceed into another area and cause fatal harm. If a person is more aligned with the world than with the Lord's concern they will never submit to wearing apparel that pleases God (James 4:4). In other words, the Christian can kill his own conscience just to meet the approval of those around him.

Now, some alleged profound individual will say we need to stick with the Word of God and move away from a holiness rule of dress. After all it is just tradition. Yes; one should move away from any tradition that is hindering that person from obeying the Truth or seeking to take the place of the Word of God (Matt 5:43-44 with Lev 19:18; Matt 15:2-6). However, the Bible instructs us to "...stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle" 2 Thess 2:15 (also see 2 Thess. 3:6). In other words, God has given us "fathers" to set holiness boundaries and landmarks for the protection of our perspective, convictions, and conscience (Proverbs 22:28; 23:10). In some cases, those who seem to feel they have found freedom in dress codes, now have been demonstrating freedom in sinning. Unfortunately, once a person drives viewpoints into their conscience that were once forbidden, a passive attitude is adopted against sin.

Satan understands that he cannot give a Christian an elephant to swallow; he is too large and as a result, very easy to identify. The enemy reduces the dosage. He starts with something that seems insignificant, with the intent of destroying our best defense outside of the Word of God; our conscience. Once the adversary removes the watchman, he can easily capture the city. With many souls this has happened, for there are many who are not able to do "life" in moderation; but are extremists (Romans 7:21-23). Simply because something is not spelled out as sin, does not make it safe for maintaining a conscience that is "good toward God." Good reasoning would declare that

if an item was once viewed to be harmful and later accepted as nonthreatening; it demands watching.

**Romans 14:19** – Customs will change, but God’s word remains true to time and change. However when customs transition we must be sensitive to rapid changes. We should not be a stumbling block to other persons. We refrain from some things for the sake of others (Rom 14:13).

**Proverbs 20:27** - A person cannot afford to program their conscience so that it only accepts what is in black and white (1 Cor 6:12; 10:23). This would rule out God being able to communicate with our spirits. When God communicates to us, our spirit is where he conveys the message. Salvation not only made new the spirit (2 Cor 5:17); but it renewed our conscience, or rather purged our conscience from dead works (Rom 12:2; Eph 4:20-24).

Note 1: “Therefore I desire that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting; in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works” (I Timothy 2:8-10, *NKJV*). As stated in *The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, “Paul was shrewd enough to know that a woman’s dress is a mirror of her mind. Outward ostentation is not in keeping with a prayerful and devout attitude. . . . Paul leaves no doubt as to what he means, by adding a list of prohibitions relating to outward adornment. . . . The plaiting of the hair was a usual feature of Jewish women’s hairstyle, and in the more elaborate types the plaits were fastened with ribbons and bows . . . Such tendencies to ostentatious adornment must be resisted by Christian women, and the same applies to the use of jewelry and costly clothing. In all these injunctions the dominating idea is the avoidance of anything designed merely to promote ostentation, with all its accompanying dangers.”

To be modest means to be decent, chaste, proper, unpretentious and pure, with particular reference to dress, speech, conduct and deportment. The word *shamefacedness* (*KJV*) or *propriety* (*NKJV*) comes from the Greek word *aidos*. According to Thayer’s *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, *aidos* means a sense of shame, modesty, and reverence. The word *sobriety* (*KJV*) or *moderation* (*NKJV*) comes from the Greek word *sophrosune*, which Vine’s *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* defines as soundness of mind, sound judgment, habitual inner self-government with constant rein on all passions and desires. Thayer defined the adjective form as curbing one’s desires and impulses, self-controlled, temperate.