

Practical Christianity

by Tony Edwards

Lesson Three Notes: "Living With a Pure Conscience"

✚ From this point forward we are going to be looking at the "How To's" of Christian living. The first half of the quarter will be focused on the "How To's" of dealing with ourselves. The second half will be centered around the "How To's" of dealing with others.

✚ The first "How To" in dealing with ourselves involves living with a clear conscience.

✚ Lesson Text

- Acts 24:10-16

I. What is the Conscience?

A. Dennis Coon, author of Essentials of Psychology, calls the conscience *the part of the superego that causes guilt when its standards are not met.*

B. Another writer noted, "Conscience is our moral sense of ought."

C. The American Heritage Dictionary says it is the awareness of a moral or ethical aspect to one's conduct together with the urge to prefer right over wrong.

D. So there seems to be a general acceptance that the conscience is the inner part of man that holds him to a set standard.

E. Consequently, when those standards are violated that inner part gives man a sense of his wrong.

1. The spirit of a man is the lamp of the LORD, Searching all the inner depths of his heart. (Prov. 20:27)

F. The apostle Paul made a similar statement.

1. "For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, **by nature do the things in the law**, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, **their conscience also bearing witness**, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them" (Romans 2:14-15 NKJV)

2. The conscience can pronounce you guilty or innocent.

a) John 8:1-9

b) What convicted them?

1) _____

c) How were their consciences convicted?

1) _____

G. How can you know when your conscience has pronounced you guilty or innocent?

1. Your Actions (Guilt, shame, fear)

a) The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion (Prov. 28:1)

2. Notice the power of the conscience

a) Adam and Eve in the garden: After they sinned, they were uncomfortable with being naked in the Garden (Gen. 3:1-9)

b) David when Nathan spoke to him: According to David's own words, "My sin is ever before me." (Psalms 51:3)

H. Therefore, since the conscience plays such a vital role in our daily lives, it is vital to keep it pure.

II. Living With A Pure Conscience

A. We are urged by God to live with a good conscience.

1. 1 Timothy 1:5
2. 1 Peter 3:15-17
3. 1 Timothy 3:9 (Deacons)

B. This was the life that Paul sought to maintain (living with a clean conscience).

1. Acts 24:16
2. 2 Corinthians 1:12

C. This is also the life that we should seek.

III. How to Have a Good Conscience?

A. Having a good conscience begins with God.

1. Through obedience to the word of God, a person's conscience begins the initial stage of purity.

- a) 1 Peter 3:20-21
- b) How does the resurrection of Jesus give us a good conscience?

B. Keeping a good conscience requires adherence to the word of God, not just feeling like your life is right.

1. I mentioned that the conscience can condemn or commend.

2. However, I did not say it was always reliable.
 - a) Proverbs 14:12.
 - b) Jeremiah 10:23;17:9
3. Notice how deceitful the heart can be.
4. Now, let's determine what guides our life.
 - a) Proverbs 4:23
5. If the heart is deceitful and the heart guides our life, then the life we live can be one of deception (whether knowingly or unknowingly).

C. This is where the word of God comes into play.

D. It is the "Guiding Light" of our hearts.

1. Psalms 17:5; 37:31; ;119:11; 19:133

In Conclusion

God has given us a great responsibility. He has asked us to take the gospel to a lost and dying world. Many obstacles await us. Fighting against Satan is hard. Don't make the task more difficult by fighting yourself to. Live with a pure conscience. Realize that as a child of the King, God has cleared your conscience of any wrongs of the past. Now it is up to you to continue to maintain that clear conscience by living according to His word.