

Doctrine of the Conscience

1. The soul has a conscience with norms and standards. The word translated conscience in the New Testament is **Suneidesis**. The conscience is an inward expression of a set of standards based on the Word of God. It is an awareness of a moral or ethical aspect of one's conduct.

1.1 For the mature believer it is a sense of right conduct based on what the Bible says is "right thinking and conduct."

2. A conscience developed from doctrine metabolized in the soul becomes part of our stream of consciousness. A believer's conscience should not be the same as an unbeliever's.

2.1 For example, a believer from his or her conscience should display the following protocols.

- be slow to anger
- pray for those who spitefully use you
- bless those who curse you
- avoid envy, bitterness and jealousy
- do not offend a weaker brother
- associate with all people including those of low degree
- avoid seeking places of honor
- avoid local assemblies where there are women deacons and/or pastors
- avoid local assemblies where homosexuals are ordained
- separate from criminals, gainsayers and hyper-emotional types
- recognize the total depravity of man
- believe in eternal security
- support the privacy of the believer
- believe in unlimited atonement
- support establishment principles and obey all laws
- serve in the military and kill the enemy with vigor
- pay all taxes owed
- be a good employee
- love all people with impersonal love
- be a good husband, wife and parent
- do not lie
- name your sin to God when the Holy Spirit shows you a sin
- obey all other ethical imperatives found in the Bible

2.2 The protocol plan of God is designed to develop an inward sense or consciousness commensurate with our position in Christ.

2.3 The conscience of the mature believer will be replete with the precepts found in the Bible.

2.4 Most people have a conscience or set of standards acceptable to self. There may be those who have no conscience; for example, a sociopath.

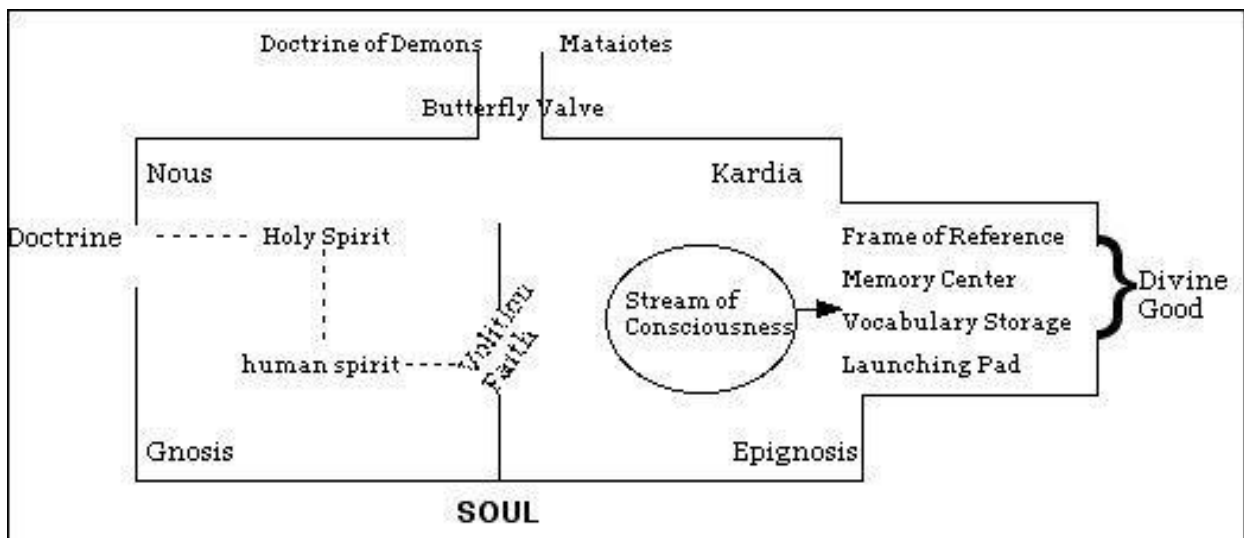
Rom 2:15 since they (Gentiles) show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their **consciences** also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.

3. The Greek **Suneidesis** is a technical word used to describe a result, i.e., a new way of thinking, a direct consequence or corollary of the consistent intake of the Word of God.

Rom 12:2 "Be you not conformed to the thinking of this world but instead be transformed by the renewing of your mind ..."

4. The conscience is a responder to that which resides in the soul. Tit 1:15

Tit 1:15 To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and **consciences** are corrupted.



5. The conscience is used by God the Holy Spirit to flag certain sins based on established norms. The conscience convicts of wrong based on established norms both for the believer and the unbeliever.

Joh 8:5 Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?

Joh 8:6 This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.

Joh 8:7 So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

Joh 8:8 And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.

Joh 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.

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6. The believer's job in time is to transform the mind and build a conscience acceptable to God. In speaking to Felix at Caesarea, Paul described his own conscience as “void of offense toward God and toward men.”

Acts 24:16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men.

7. For purposes of explanation, we could say the conscience of a mature believer consists of a unique frame of reference, a memory center, a repository for vocabulary storage and a launching pad for producing divine good. Let's take a closer look at the constituents of the conscience.

Frame of Reference

It serves as a foundation for learning more complex doctrines.

It provides a system to move from the simple to the complex.

It permits the function of systematic theology.

It makes clear the need for waiting upon the Lord.

It establishes the importance of listening and concentrating on the messages of the pastor-teacher.

It provides a new perspective from which we look at life's experiences.

It makes possible our becoming Christocentric rather than anthropocentric.

It reminds us that we are the clay and He is the potter.

It serves as an alarm system to alert us when false doctrines are heard.

It provides a means for handling guilt--rebound instead of panic.

Memory Center

It serves as a storage compartment for doctrines that can be used for reverse-process thinking.

It provides ideas and thoughts for communicating and witnessing.

It provides ready answers for questions concerning our Christian expectations.

Vocabulary Storage

It is a place where technical concepts are developed.

It is a place where ideas are collected and categorized.

It provides words and phrases to communicate spiritual matters.

Launching Pad

It is from here that divine good is produced from doctrine in the soul.

It is also from here prohibitions are established; e.g., criminal activities and immoral practices are declared out of bounds.

8. Paul, in writing to the church at Rome, declared that constituted authorities were established for a purpose; as such they were to be obeyed, not just because of fear, but because of a developed conscience.

Rom 13:4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.

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

9. False norms and standards can formulate legalistic patterns leading to all manner of evil--in particular Paul relates the malady to false teachers of the last days. Legalistic patterns can impede a believer's witness.

2Ti 3:1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

2Ti 3:2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

2Ti 3:3 Without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

2Ti 3:4 Traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

2Ti 3:5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

2Ti 3:6 For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,
2Ti 3:7 Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

10. A properly transformed conscience is a basis for rejoicing. 2Co 1:12

2Co 1:12 Now this is our boast: Our **conscience** testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace.

2Co 1:13 For we do not write you anything you cannot read or understand. And I hope that,

2Co 1:14 as you have understood us in part, you will come to understand fully that you can boast of us just as we will boast of you in the day of the Lord Jesus.

11. The development of a believer's conscience is part of our spiritual maturation.

1Ti 1:5; 1:19 and 3:9

1Ti 1:5 Now the end of the commandment is a proper mental attitude of virtue love out from a pure heart, and a good **conscience**, and a sincere faith.

1Ti 1:18 Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight,

1Ti 1:19 holding on to faith and a good **conscience**. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith.

1Ti 3:8 Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain.

1Ti 3:9 They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear **conscience**.

1Ti 3:10 They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.

12. The pastor-teacher must teach from a well-developed conscience. 2Co 4:1-2

2Co 4:1 Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.

2Co 4:2 Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's **conscience** in the sight of God.

13. False norms and standards in a pastor-teacher can result in a seared and calloused conscience. 1Ti 4:2

1Ti 4:1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

1Ti 4:2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their **conscience** seared with a hot iron;

1Ti 4:3 Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

1Ti 4:4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving:

14. One of the temporal results of Christ's death was to permit the development of our conscience. In comparing the inferiority of the shadow worship of the Mosaic law, the writer of Hebrews urges the acceptance of Church Age truths that will develop the conscience.

Heb 9:13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

Heb 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?

Heb 9:15 And for this cause Christ is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

15. The conscience of a mature believer will provide a soul free from mental- attitude sins like discouragement, vengeance, jealousy, bitterness and envy.

1Pe 2:18 Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh.

1Pe 2:19 For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he has developed a renewed **conscience**.

1Pe 2:20 But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.

1Pe 2:21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

1Pe 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.

16. A transformed conscience must be carefully controlled to not offend those whose consciences may not have developed properly. This is especially germane when it comes to things for which the Scripture gives you liberty to do but not necessarily a license.

1Co 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.

1Co 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.

1Co 8:9 But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.

1Co 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 ...

1Co 8:12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak **conscience**, ye sin against Christ.

1Co 8:13 Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

Rom 14:21 It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

I hate to end our study on a negative, but clearly an inferior and often times evil conscience can be constructed in the soul of either an unbeliever and carnal believer.

