

Introduction

We have been looking at the goal of love. I think this is an important series for our church, because this is what the Lord has called us to be. We are people who love God with all our hearts, who fervently love one another, and who also love those who have not made a commitment to Christ. This is the kind of love that God had. He demonstrated His love in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. We are a church that loves God and loves people.

(1 Ti 1:5) "But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."

So far in this series, we looked at the surpassing value of love. We looked at characteristics of love. Then, we looked at love that comes from a pure heart. It is difficult for us to sincerely love one another if we have impure hearts. This morning, we are going to look at love from a good conscience.

At one time, I had a man on my leadership team that knew the word. This man had great leadership potential. He had not been set in as an elder, but he was on the leadership team. As I began to really get to know this man, I had a difficult time understanding how he was coming up with some of his strange views about Scripture. Finally, one day it dawned on me what the problem was. This man had a seared conscience. He had seared his conscience by doing things that violated his conscience. He had come to a place where he could do wrong things in his life, without feeling remorse about them. He had also rationalized his actions to the point of deception.

This morning we are going to define conscience. Next, we will look at the characteristics of our consciences, and third, we will look at gaining a good conscience. Fourth, we will look at maintaining a good conscience.

Love from a Good Conscience

1. Definition of conscience
2. Characteristics of a conscience
3. Gaining a good conscience
4. Maintaining a good conscience

1. Definition of conscience

There are twenty-nine references to the word conscience in the New American Standard Bible. Twenty-one of the references are given by Paul. There are three references to conscience given by Peter in the book of 1 Peter. There are four references in the book of Hebrews. If Paul wrote the book of Hebrews, then twenty-five of the twenty-nine references would be from Paul.

When we look at love from a good conscience, we have to look at the life of Paul. We have to look at the statements that Paul wrote about conscience to get a better understanding of what he means. Today, we will be examining some of those passages. My desire is that this body and the body of Christ will begin to follow the example that the Apostle Paul set for us and to live with a pure heart and a good conscience. It is time for the love of Christ to be demonstrated to the world around us. We can make a difference in the lives of people around us, but we need to have pure hearts and good consciences.

First of all, let's take a look at some common definitions of a conscience. Merriam Webster Dictionary defines it as: 1) "the part of the mind that makes you aware of your actions as being either morally right; 2) a feeling that something you have done is morally wrong."¹

The Greek word for conscience is *suneidesis* (Strong's G4893). It means co-perception or moral consciousness. *Sun* means to join together or to unite. *Eido* means to see, perceive, or be aware of. Based on this, conscience is an awareness of a moral standard that we have established in our own lives. A good conscience is when your actions and convictions line up with one another. A bad conscience is when your actions do not match what you believe to be right in your heart.

Ray Stedman, a well-known Bible scholar and teacher, gave the following explanations of the conscience.

"There is a very common myth that says conscience is the means by which we tell what is right and what is wrong. But conscience is never that. It is training that tells us what is right and wrong. But when we know what is right or wrong, it is our conscience that insists that we do what we think is right and avoid what we think is wrong. That distinction is very important and needs to be made clear."

"Conscience can be very mistaken; it is not a safe guide by itself. It accuses us when we violate whatever moral standard we have, but that moral standard may be quite wrong when viewed in the light of God's revelation. But conscience also gives approval whenever we fulfill whatever standard we have, though that standard is right or wrong. And conscience, we have all discovered, acts before and after the fact – it can either prod or punish."

Our conscience is like an instrument gauge on an airline. If the instrument has been properly calibrated, it will help the pilot make right decisions. If the instrument is not giving true readings, the pilot can make some critical errors. In 2009, there were two airline crashes due to instrument errors. In March 2009, there was a Turkish Air that crashed at Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam. The altimeter gave a false reading of the actual altitude of the airline. At 1,950 feet the altimeter said the plane was at ground level and the autopilot reduced the engine speed, resulting in a crash that killed about ten people and injured another eighty. Here is part of the finding by the investigation team.

"The Turkish airliner that crashed at Schiphol last week had a faulty altimeter. That's the conclusion of the preliminary findings of the investigation team that has been working to establish the cause of the accident. The altimeter wrongly indicated that the Boeing was already almost on the ground. Because the airplane was flying on automatic pilot, the thrust was reduced according to the faulty reading. The pilots realised the problem, but had insufficient time to correct it."

In June 2009, an Air France on its way from Brazil to France crashed in the Atlantic Ocean. At 38,000 feet, the air speed gauge said they were flying too fast, and the auto-pilot slowed the engine down. It continued reading that it was flying too fast, and the engine slowed down until it stalled. The pilots were slow in recognizing the problem and taking corrective actions. Even though there was nothing wrong with the engines or the planes ability to fly, it crashed, killing all 228 people on board.

¹ "Conscience." Merriam-Webster.com Simple Definition, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/simple/conscience>. Accessed 24 Sep. 2026.

Our conscience is like an instrument on these planes. If the instrument is working correctly, it helps us make proper decisions. If the instrument is not working or is not calibrated, we may take incorrect actions that can cause our lives to crash. Our conscience, by itself, is not a good moral compass. If it is trained properly, if the instrument is working properly, it is a good instrument. If our consciences are not properly calibrated to God's word and His standards, then our consciences will not be an accurate instrument to base our actions on.

Since we understand that our conscience insists that we do what we think is right or wrong, not necessarily what is right in God's eyes, let's take a look at the Apostle Paul and a statement he makes in Acts 23:1. He tells the Council that he has lived his life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day. Paul does not say that he had not sinned. In 1 Timothy 1:15, he said he was the foremost of sinners. Paul said that he had not violated his conscience.

(Ac 23:1) "And Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, 'Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day.'"

(1 Ti 1:15) "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost *of all*."

As we look at Paul's life, we see the following actions. First, Paul participated in the murder of Stephen. He held the robes of the people who stoned Stephen. We find this in Acts 7:58.

(Ac 7:58) "And when they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him, and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul."

In Acts 8:1, we find that Paul was in hearty agreement with putting Stephen to death. Furthermore, a great persecution took place immediately after that, and Paul was right in the midst of that persecution against the church.

(Ac 8:1) "And Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles."

Not only was Paul involved, we find in Acts 9:1-2 that Paul was zealously attacking the church. He was breathing threats and murder against the disciples. He was pursuing saints, even in other cities, so that he could have them put to death or imprisoned.

(Ac 9:1-2) "Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, {2} and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem."

Yet, in spite of doing these atrocious things, Paul says that he has lived with a good conscience all his life up till this day. In his mind, he was staying true to what he believed was right to do. His sense of right and wrong, based on his training, was wrong. In his mind, he was doing what was right. He was staying true to what he believed to be right. Therefore, he had not violated his conscience. Unfortunately, his altimeter was giving him wrong readings.

In the movie Pinnochio, there is a character named Cricket who sings a song to Pinnochio. He says that all you have to do is listen to your conscience. There is a problem with that statement.

The problem with that song is our consciences give us readings according to their calibration. If the conscience is not calibrated according to God's word, it will give erroneous readings. If we applied Cricket's theology to Paul, we could say it was okay to murder one another because of religious preference? Paul's conscience was not upset over it.

Look at another example. This example comes from a quote by Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton in an article in *Frontline*. He was addressing how a gay Catholic should make decisions with his conscience, and he calls it "primacy of conscience."

"That is what we call primacy of conscience--beyond anything else, I must respond to God for what I do, what choices I make. And within your struggle, when you make certain choices that you do it in as careful a way as possible and you're doing this out of your own deep conscience convictions. You're not condemned by God, you can't be, if you really follow your conscience."²

In another article by freelance writer, Church Colbert, he quoted Gumbleton speaking on the issue of primacy of conscience.

"How then does a person deal with the teachings of the church and stay faithful to the teaching?" the bishop asked. Every person has to come to a point of personal growth where we fully integrate sexuality into our whole lives -- not repress it. Each person, struggling to be a whole person, must deal with this very serious question of conscience... For an increasing number of us, it's the church's very own teaching -- a carefully informed conscience as the ultimate guide in every moral decision -- that empowers us to remain good, faithful gay Catholics and be sexually active, in spite of hurtful pronouncements from the Vatican. Primacy of conscience is the gay Catholic's way through the double standard in church teaching about homosexuality. Following one's conscience is also a good practice for anyone."

How can these people be following their conscience and live such a perverted lifestyle that is in direct contradiction to the explicit word of God? Their instrument has been improperly calibrated. Their instrumentation is telling them it is okay, when in reality, they are about to crash. The word of God says in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 that homosexuals shall not inherit the kingdom of God. It says, "such were some of you, but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.

(1 Cor 6:9-11) "Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, {10} nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. {11} And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God."

As we look at Paul and his statement that he has lived with his life with a perfectly good conscience, his belief and value system was the Law. He zealously defended the Law and how the Pharisees interpreted the matters of the Law. In killing Stephen, he did not violate his conscience. In persecuting Christians, he did not violate his conscience. Our consciences are not

² Thomas J. Gumbleton, interview with *Frontline*, "Sexuality: Bishop Thomas Gumbleton," *The Choice 2000: The Pope and the President*, PBS.

truth. Our consciences can mislead us. The Catholic bishop is mistaken. The word of God must be our ultimate guide, not our consciences. Our beliefs and value systems must be based on the word of God. Then, our consciences help us do what is right. Our consciences insist that we do what we believe is right and avoid what we believe is wrong.

2. Characteristics of a conscience

Let's take a look at some characteristics of our consciences:

A. Everyone has a conscience.

Both believers and unbelievers have one; both Jews and Gentiles have one. In Romans 2:15, Paul talks about the unbeliever and his conscience.

(Ro 2:14-15) "For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them,"

B. Consciences bear witness to us.

Our consciences bear witness according to what is in the heart. Paul makes a clear distinction in this verse between the heart and the conscience. The conscience bears witness according to what is written in the heart. Remember last week, I said that love must first flow or spring up from a pure heart. There is a progression. If we want to have love from a clean conscience, it must come first out of a pure heart. (Ro 2:14-15)

C. A conscience can be weak or strong.

Paul wrote in 1 Cor 8:7 that a person can have a weak conscience. Those with weak consciences in those passages would only eat vegetables. They were not free to eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols. He says that there is only one God and there is no such thing as an idol. Everything has come from God and is sanctified by prayer and the word. Therefore, everything is clean and okay to eat. But, those who are weak in conscience will only eat vegetables.

(1 Co 8:7) "However not all men have this knowledge; but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat *food* as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled."

D. A conscience can be good or bad.

Paul says in Acts 23:1 that he lived his life with a perfectly good conscience. This is in contrast to a bad conscience. Obviously, some people have a bad conscience.

(Ac 23:1) "And Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, "Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day.""

E. A conscience can be defiled.

We find in 1 Corinthians 8:7 that our consciences can be defiled. A defiled conscience is the opposite of a clear conscience which is one of the requirements for a church leader (1 Tim 3:9).

(1 Cor 8:7) "However not all men have this knowledge; but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled (moluno)."

(1 Ti 3:9) "but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience."

There are two Greek words that are used and translated into our one English word defiled. The first word for defiled is moluno (Strong's G3435), which means to soil. It comes from the root word melas which means black. In 1 Corinthians 8:7, when Paul says that their weak conscience is defile, he uses the word moluno, meaning soiled.

The second Greek word for defiled that is used is for defiled is found in Titus 1:15. It is the word miaino (Strong's G3392), which means to sully or taint, or to contaminate.

(Tt 1:15) "To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled (miaino) and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled."

When we lived in Acworth we had a well. When it rained, there was an underground stream that fed into the well and it became muddied. The water coming in would be reddish. It became soiled or moluno. If for some reason, lead, arsenic or another toxic chemical or material got into my well water, I would say that it was contaminated. There is a difference in soiled and contaminated. Neither one is good for drinking, but there is a difference. Our consciences can be dirtied up and they can also be contaminated.

How do you know if your conscience has been defiled? How do you know if it has been contaminated? What are the signs that Scripture gives? Here are the signs of a person with a defiled conscience.

Four Signs of a Defiled Man: (Tt 1:10-16)

(Tt 1:10-11, 15-16) "For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, {11} who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach, for the sake of sordid gain....{15} To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. {16} They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient, and worthless for any good deed."

1. **Nothing is pure to them.** – They will constantly be suspicious of others. They will have unbelief. (Suspicious, Unbelief)
2. **They know God, but their deeds deny Him.** They will be living a lifestyle of hypocrisy. They will be saying one thing, but doing another. There is a double standard in their life. (Hypocrisy) They will have some of the following types of deeds evident in their life.

- Detestable; (empty talkers and deceivers)
 - Disobedient (rebellious)
 - Worthless for any good deed
 - Religious appearance (those of the circumcision)
3. **They upset people by their teaching and words.** Their teachings will upset people. It causes controversy. The teaching of God's word needs to bring conviction and change in our life, but it should not bring fear, condemnation, doubt, etc. It should not be upsetting people. The kingdom of God is not about food and drink, but about righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.
4. **They have impure motives.** (Sordid Gain) They will have wrong motives for doing things. God wants our hearts to be pure and things to be done out of love. A defiled person is looking for unreasonable, unlawful or corrupt gain. To cheat on your income taxes is a sign of a defiled person. He has an impure motive for unlawful gain. His motivation is not to render unto Caesar what is Caesar's, but to keep some of it back for himself.
- F. **Our consciences can be seared.** (1 Ti 4:1-3) The word seared is *kauteriazō* (Strong's G2373), which means to render insensitive. We get our English word cauterize from it. It is to burn or char, to leave a scar.

(1 Ti 4:1-3) "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, {2} by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, {3} men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods, which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth."

Three Signs of a seared conscience:

There are characteristics of a seared conscience. Paul calls these characteristics landmarks. Look at the following landmarks of a person with a seared conscience.

1. **They fall away from the faith.**

Paul says in 1 Timothy 1:19 that we need to keep faith and a good conscience because some have rejected these and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. I have met people that have fallen away from the faith. At one time they were walking with the Lord and now, they have totally left the faith. They know the truth, but have left the Lord, and some of them left because of a seared conscience. (Others have left because they have been offended by someone in the church.)

(1 Ti 1:19) "keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith."

The Titanic was considered unsinkable. No one believed it would sink. The first few lifeboats that were released were half empty. The passengers were not taking it seriously. Many people do not take their consciences seriously. The passengers were down below partying. Today, many people are more concerned about having a good time, partying, seeking the pleasures of life than keeping a clean conscience. But the Titanic did sink. Paul says that we will suffer shipwreck if we reject a good conscience.

Some people think that the Titanic sank because of massive tears. The Titanic did not have massive tears. It had a few tears along the side where the iceberg had opened it up. We think that it is the big things that are going to sear our conscience. Yet, it was a few little holes that sunk the unsinkable Titanic. The small things that we allow into our lives can sink our boat. We will suffer shipwreck in regard to our faith if we don't pay attention to the small tears in our conscience.

When I ministered at the prison, there were lots of people there that never intended to do the things they did. It always started out as little things. Most drug addicts did not start out on the hard stuff. They started out with little things. The little holes will sink your Titanic.

Another fact about the Titanic's sinking was that they received six warnings about the icebergs from other ships that were in the area. Most of the time, there are advance warnings. We need to take heed to the warnings that God gives us. How does our conscience get seared? It gets seared because we do not pay attention to the warnings that we get. We violate it over and over and over and it becomes seared. If you don't pay attention to the still small voice and take heed, your Titanic could sink.

Where do we get most of these warnings? We find them in the word of God. The word of God warns us so that we don't get ourselves in trouble. Look what Psalms 19 says.

(Ps 19:11-13) "Moreover, by them Thy servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward. {12} Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults. {13} Also keep back Thy servant from presumptuous sins; Let them not rule over me; Then I shall be blameless, And I shall be acquitted of great transgression."

We must avail ourselves to the word of God in order to receive these warnings. If you are not spending time daily in His word, you might as well be on the Titanic. You are in dangerous seas. Do you know that the Titanic did not even receive the 6th and last warning that the other ships sent her. The radio man was at a cocktail party down below and was not at his post. Are you at your post? Are you watching on the ramparts to see what the Lord will say? Are you spending time with the Lord every day? If you are not, your conscience could be getting defiled without you even knowing it. You may be heading for an iceberg that could shipwreck your faith.

2. They pay attention to deceitful spirits.

A deceitful spirit is one that deceives you. A person with a seared conscience opens himself up to deceitful spirits.

(1 Ti 4:1) "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,"

There are many ways that we can be deceived. For instance, Paul says in 1 Cor 6 that we are not to be deceived, that fornicators, adulterers, drunkards, idolaters, etc., shall not inherit the kingdom of God. There are many people in church today that are deceived. They are unrepentant and living in sin, but think that that they are no worse than others. They believe that God grades on the curve and that they are going to make it. How have they become so deceived? By deceitful spirits.

(1 Cor 6:9-10) "Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, {10} nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God."

People believe that they are ugly or that no one likes them. They think that they are dumb or stupid. God says that you have been wonderfully made. God says that He has given you a sound mind. God loves you so much He gave His life for you. People can be deceived in so many areas and often times it is because of a seared conscience that they have opened themselves up to deceitful spirits. Want more discernment? Keep a good conscience!

3. They pay attention to doctrines of demons.

Paul goes on to say that a person with a seared conscience opens himself up to the doctrine of demons. This is why it is so important for teachers to have clean consciences. We need pure instruction from the Word of God. We need good discernment about what is good instruction and what is not. We need to make sure that leaders in the church have a clean conscience.

(1 Ti 4:1) "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,"

In 1 Timothy 3, we are given the qualifications for elders and deacons. A man cannot serve as a deacon unless he has a good conscience. When someone's conscience is seared or defiled, it opens them up to deceitful spirits. That is why it is so important for men and women of God in the ministry to be so careful about what they watch in the movies or on TV, what they read in books and magazines, what they look at in magazines or on the internet, where they go, etc. We must be careful not to sear or defile our consciences.

(1 Ti 3:9) "but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience."

Sometimes people come up with things that are so contrary to God's word and you wonder how it is that they can get this. I read to you the statements by the Gay Catholic Editor. He has obviously paid attention to deceitful spirits. He is deceived and his doctrine obviously reveals that. These homosexuals believe that Jonathon and David were also homosexuals, because Jonathon's love was better than that of a woman. That is a deceitful and demonic spirit that is propagating that lie. They say that Jesus and the Apostle John were homosexual lovers because John was the one that Jesus loved. John laid his head on Jesus' breast in an act of physical love for one another. This doctrine is the doctrine of demons. It grossly violates the word of God and is abominable.

Paul gives some examples of doctrines of demons. Some people were forbidding marriages. There are some churches that forbid their leaders to marry. Listen, marriage is a great thing. When God created Eve for Adam, He said it was good. He also said that it is not good for man to be alone.

Some people advocate abstaining from certain foods. One of the things that I have been careful about is what I say about foods. I believe that all foods are lawful to eat. I will eat almost anything set before me. However, I do not believe that all foods are profitable. I choose not to eat certain foods on a regular basis because they are not healthy for me. I believe that a low sugar diet is far healthier than eating and drinking in lots of sugars. I believe that fresh grains and

vegetables are the way to go. I believe that organic, non-genetically-modified foods are the healthiest, which is one reason we have a garden and orchard. But I can eat a brownie with you and not be in any condemnation.

When Paul speaks of the goal of his instruction being love from a pure heart and a good conscience, we now understand why. For the purpose of purity in our doctrine, we must have a good conscience.

3. Gaining a good conscience.

In the O.T. a conscience could not be cleansed, however in the N.T. we have a better covenant. The book of Hebrews tells us a little bit about the blood of Jesus versus the blood of animals.

(He 9:8-15) "The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed, while the outer tabernacle is still standing, {9} which is a symbol for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience, {10} since they relate only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation. {11} But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; {12} and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. {13} For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, {14} how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? {15} And for this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance."

There are several reasons why the O.T. laws and rituals did not cleanse the conscience. They were all external works instead of internal works. Christ does a work on the inside of us. He cleanses and changes us. The Law and the rituals could never cleanse us on the inside. I believe that this is why there is not much attention placed on the conscience in the O.T. God never puts something over us that we cannot do something about. We can do something about our conscience now and so He gives us some instructions about it.

How do you cleanse your conscience? You must come under the blood of Christ. You must receive His payment and His cleansing from our sins. We must receive His cleansing of our consciences. Peter tells us this.

(1 Pe 3:21-22) "And 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, {22} who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him."

He says that baptism is an appeal to God for a good conscience. He is NOT saying that the actual dipping of someone in water is going to cleanse you internally. That would be no different than the O.T. rituals, which could only cleanse you externally. He is saying that baptism represents our conversion to the Lord. We are buried with Him. Our sins are buried with Him. Our old self

is buried with him. We are raised up from the dead into a new creation. Old things passed away, behold new things have come. Baptism is a picture of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Our conversion to the Lord is an appeal to God for a clean conscience. Our water baptism is an act of obedience signifying our faith.

4. Maintaining a good conscience

Paul is quoted in Acts 24:16 as saying that he does his best to maintain a blameless conscience before God and before men. It is important to know that if you don't maintain a blameless conscience before your fellow man, you will not maintain one before God. It is a principle. He says that if you cannot love your brother who you can see, how can you love God whom you can't see. We must maintain a good conscience before both men and God.

(Ac 24:16) "In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men."

How do you maintain a good conscience? Paul gives us some instructions about that as well. Let's take a look at some of these principles.

a. Stay in Subjection to Your Authorities.

He says that it is important to stay in subjection for our conscience sake. Did you know that it is important to follow the rules of road for conscience sake? Did you know that it is important to follow the tax rules for conscience sake? There are all kinds of authorities in our lives. We need to stay in subjection to our authorities. There are governmental authorities. There are parental authorities until we leave and cleave. There are spiritual authorities that we need to be in subjection to. This is important for conscience sake.

(Ro 13:5) "Wherefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake."

At the Cobb County Jail, they had a rule that Chaplains can only see one inmate at a time. It was for our protection. I used to see two to four at a time because it multiplied my time efficiency. But it divided my conscience. When I learned about consciences, I repented and began to see only one inmate at a time.

b. Live in holiness, godly sincerity and in the grace of God.

Paul makes this statement in 2 Corinthians, that the testimony of his conscience was that in holiness and godly sincerity and in the grace of God he conducted himself in the world and towards the believers in Corinth. When we live in holiness, Godly sincerity and in the grace of God, we will keep a good conscience.

(2 Cor 1:12) "For our proud confidence is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you."

The Apostle Peter also says to live in holiness. He says that we should keep a good conscience so that those who slander us will be put to shame, when they see our good behavior. Good behavior and a good conscience go hand in hand.

(1 Pe 3:16) "and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame."

c. Be careful to protect your conscience.

In 1 Cor 10:28, Paul wrote about food that had been sacrificed to idols. He said don't ask questions about it, but to eat what is set before us. If we have knowledge that it was sacrificed to idols, we should not eat it for the sake of the one who told us and for conscience sake.

(1 Cor 10:27-28) "If one of the unbelievers invites you, and you wish to go, eat anything that is set before you, without asking questions for conscience' sake. {28} But if anyone should say to you, "This is meat sacrificed to idols," do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for conscience' sake;"

d. Conduct yourself honorable in all things.

The writer in Hebrews tells the church to pray for them for they have a good conscience since they desire to conduct themselves honorably in all things. When we do things that are honorable at all times, we will maintain a good conscience. Ask yourself a question? Is this an honorable thing that I am about to do? Is this activity honoring to God? Are these activities honoring to other people? Are these words and what I am saying honoring to God? Are my words and what I'm saying honoring to other people? Is it honoring the one I am talking about? To maintain a good conscience, conduct yourself honorably in all things.

(He 13:18) "Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things."

e. Bear Up Under Sorrows When Suffering Unjustly.

Peter says that when person is suffering unjustly and bears up for the sake of conscience, it pleases God. The man will find favor with God. How do you bear up? You continue to stay under the load. You continue to do what is right, even though you are suffering for doing it. Are you suffering for sharing your faith? Keep sharing it.

(1 Pe 2:19) "For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly."

f. Repent of all known sins.

The book of 1 John tells us clearly that we all sin. If anyone says they do not sin, they lie and the truth is not in them. It goes on to say that if we sin, we have an Advocate with the Father. We are to confess our sins, and He is faithful and just and will forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Part of maintaining a clean conscience is to regularly repent. When the Holy Spirit brings conviction, we need to quickly repent.

(1 Jn 1:9) "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Conclusion and Applications

Today, we have looked at 1 Timothy 1:5 and how the goal of Paul's instruction was love that came from a good conscience. We looked at the definition of conscience, and found that it is an awareness of a moral standard that we have established in our own lives. A good conscience is when your actions and convictions line up with one another. A bad conscience is when your actions do not match what you believe to be right in your heart. For our conscience to truly help us live righteous lives, it must be calibrated properly with the Word of God.

We also looked at the characteristics of our consciences. Everyone has a conscience. God gave this to all men to help us live righteous lives. Our consciences can be weak or strong, good or bad, they can be defiled, and they can be seared. Those who have defiled or seared consciences are vulnerable to deception and demonic doctrine.

We looked at how to gain a good conscience, and that is by receiving Christ's payment for our sins. The Old Testament sacrifices of bulls and goats did not cleanse us on the inside. In our New Covenant with God, made with the blood of Christ, our consciences are cleansed, and we have a fresh start.

We saw that it is important to maintain a good conscience. We are to live submissive lives to our authorities, and to live upright lives. We must always pay attention to and obey our consciences, so that we do not sear them.

Our first application is for those who may not have ever received Christ into their lives. You want to have a clean conscience, and to be forgiven of your sins. If you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that He died for our sins, and was raised on the third day, and you are willing to make Him Lord of your life, you can receive Christ today. You simply need to ask Jesus to come into your life and to forgive you of your sins. Tell Him that you want to follow Him, and yield your life to Him. He will come in, forgive you, cleanse your conscience, and seal you with His Holy Spirit.

Our second application is for those who have not maintained a good conscience. Confess that to the Lord. He promises to forgive you and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. Then, allow the Word of God to be the final authority in what you do, and let your conscience work under the authority of the Word of God. Fill your mind with the Word of God and be committed to always being obedient to God.

Closing Prayer

Father God, thank You for the wonderful gift of a conscience. Thank You for Paul's example and for his instructions about our consciences. Help us to live our lives with a good conscience, just like the Apostle Paul did. Help us to calibrate our conscience with a proper understanding of Scripture. Help us to be sensitive to that inner voice and obey our conscience. Help us to properly maintain a good conscience. Help us to have love that flows out of a pure heart and good conscience. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Discussion Questions

- In your own words, explain what a conscience is. Explain what a good conscience is.
- Why is our conscience not the ultimate guide in what is right and wrong?
- How do we know if our conscience is not giving us an accurate reading?

- In Deuteronomy 6, whose responsibility was it to help establish good consciences?
- Why is 2 Tim 3:16 important when discussing our conscience and right versus wrong?
- Have you ever met someone with a seared conscience? How did you know it was seared?
- Have you ever met someone with a defiled conscience? How did you know it was defiled?
- How did Paul and his team deal with leaders that did not have a good conscience?
- Of the six ways given to maintain a good conscience, which one is most challenging?

Love from a Good Conscience (1 Ti 1:5)**Introduction (1 Ti 1:5)****1. Definition of conscience (Ac 23:1, 7:58, 8:1, 9:1-2, 1 Cor 6:9-11)**

- Our conscience is an awareness of a moral standard that we have established in our own lives. A good conscience is when your actions and convictions line up with one another. A bad conscience is when your actions do not match what you believe to be right in your heart.

2. Characteristics of a conscience

- A. Everyone has a conscience. (Ro 2:14-15)
- B. Consciences bear witness to us. (Ro 2:14-15)
- C. A conscience can be weak or strong. (1 Co 8:7)
- D. A conscience can be good or bad. (Ac 23:1)
- E. A conscience can be defiled. (1 Ti 3:9, 1 Cor 8:7, Tt 1:15)

Four Signs of A Defiled Man: (Tt 1:10-16)

- 1. Nothing is pure to them.
- 2. They know God, but their deeds deny him.
- 3. Upset people by their teaching and words.
- 4. Have impure motives.

F. Our consciences can be seared. (1 Ti 4:1-3, 3:9)

Three Signs of a seared conscience:

- 1. They fall away from the faith. (1 Ti 1:19, Ps 19:11-13)
- 2. They pay attention to deceitful spirits. (1 Ti 4:1, 1 Cor 6:9-10)
- 3. They pay attention to doctrines of demons. (1 Ti 4:1)

3. Gaining a good conscience (He 9:8-15, 1 Pe 3:21-22)**4. Maintaining a good conscience (Ac 24:16)**

- A. Stay in Subjection to Your Authorities. (Ro 13:5)
- B. Live in holiness, godly sincerity and in the grace of God. (2 Cor 1:12, 1 Pe 3:16)
- C. Be careful to obey and protect your conscience. (1 Cor 10:27-28)
- D. Conduct yourself honorable in all things. (He 13:18)
- E. Bear Up Under Sorrows When Suffering Unjustly. (1 Pe 2:19)
- F. Repent of all known sins. (1 Jn 1:9)

Conclusion and Applications