

# THE CONSCIENCE OF A DISCIPLE

(How Our Conscience Can Be Sensitive Towards God)  
Acts 23:1/24:16



## THE CONSCIENCE DESCRIBED

- ◆ "Weak"
- ◆ "Defiled"
- ◆ "Seared"
- ◆ "Convicted"
- ◆ "Pure"

**"Herein do I exercise myself, to have a conscience void of offence  
toward God and men" (Acts 24:16)**

Bill Kirk

# “THE CONSCIENCE OF A DISCIPLE”

**Text:** Acts 23:1; 24:16

**Subject:** “The Conscience Of A Disciple

“And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men” (Acts 24:16)

## Introduction

(Ever Ask Yourself...)

- #1. How can the conscience of one believer not allow him to go see an “R” rated movie at the mall (while another believer attends the movie and isn’t bothered at all?)
- #2. How can the conscience of one believer not allow him to gossip, slander, hold a grudge and not forgive (while another believer stew, growls, rebukes, keeps score and refuses to forgive?)
- #3. How can the conscience of one believer not allow him to be defiled by sensual T.V., wine, beer, smoking, adultery, carnality and evil associations (while another believer feeds the flesh and doesn’t even feel “convicted” after doing so?) (What happened along the way?)

## In The Setting Of Our Text (Acts 23:1)

1. Paul is under “Military custody” and bound to a Roman soldier who is responsible for him.
2. Paul is discovered to be a Roman citizen and the Roman captain needs official charges for his own records to submit to his superiors.
3. The Roman captain was convinced that Paul had committed crimes but no one seemed to know what they were.
4. The logical thing to do was to let Paul’s own people try him, so the captain arranged a special meeting of the Jewish council (the 70 leading Jewish teachers known as the Sanhedrin).
5. This council was to apply the Jewish Law, try those who violated the law and impose punishment upon the guilty. (And Paul stands before this council he hadn’t seen for nearly 25 years, addresses them as “men and brethren” and says in Acts 23:1:
  - ◆ “I have Lived In All Good Conscience Before God Until This Day”
6. In (v. 2), the high priest Ananias commanded the Levite guard to strike Paul.
7. Paul then gives his defense, is encouraged by Jesus (v. 11), encounters the Jewish conspirators (vs. 12-35), is set free at nighttime and is delivered to the governor and says again: In Acts 24:16:

“Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and men”

- A. “Exercise myself” means: “Do my best to maintain”.
- B. This refers to athletes who go through strenuous training.
- C. Paul is saying he subjects his conscience to vigorous spiritual disciplines so that he might live “blameless”.

**Question:** What is the conscience?

**Fact:** The word “conscience” is used 32 times in the Bible in 30 different verses.

**Fact:** The word “conscience” comes from the same Greek word (SUNEIDESIS) on every occasion, which means: #1. “To understand” #3. “To become aware of”  
#2. “To see completely” #4. “To be informed of”

**Fact:** Webster defines “conscience” as, “The feeling inside you which tells you whether something is right or wrong”.

**Fact:** “Conscience” is the “Inner judge” or “Witness” that approves when you do right (and disapproves when you do wrong).

### It Is Like A Window

1. Conscience can be compared to a window that lets in the light.
2. God’s law is the light, and the cleaner the window is, the more the light can shine in.
3. If the window gets dirty, the light gets dimmer and dimmer.
4. The light can be completely shut out and ultimately leave someone in total darkness.
5. It is not the lights fault (it is the window that lets in the light or blocks it out).

**Fact:** A good conscience is one that lets in God’s light (His Law), so that we are properly convicted if we do wrong. (And confirmed if we do right).

### The Beauty Is

1. The cleaner our windows become, the more law (light) that can get in (and),
2. The more light that gets in, the more sensitive and powerful and protective and stronger and helpful our conscience becomes (and),
3. The more the Holy Spirit will have control, (and we can be led by the Spirit).

**Ever Ask Yourself:** How can someone sit under the Word and the moving of the Spirit and remain unmoved?

**Answer:** Because the window (their conscience) is dirty, and the Law (light) cannot get in to do its job, (Thus...) Multitudes are frustrated, potential is frustrated, and growth is hindered.

### So Let’s Pray For A Spirit Filled Conscience As A Disciple:

- ◆ “God, wash our windows, pour in your law, pull up the shade and search us”.
- ◆ “God, enable us to live transparent so we can live without offence before God and men”

### An Encouraging Quote From Harrington Less 100 Years Ago:

“It is possible for a conscience to be so responsive to the voice of God, so delicately adjusted to the Word of God and its claims, that when even a thing you do not know to be a sin, an enemy you have not even come in full sight of, shall draw near, there shall be the scent of it, the disturbance, the arousing call of it that alarms you and delivers you from the sin even while the enemy is putting the trap across the road in front of you. It is possible; and God calls upon us to so bend and to be so responsive, that when the temptation comes it shall find us awake” (Rev. Harrington C. Less, preaching at the famous Keswick Convention between 1875 –1957).

### How Is Our Conscience Described In Scripture?

(5 Clear Pictures)

#### **I. A Weak Conscience**

“...their conscience being weak is defiled” (I Corinthians 8:7)

“But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ” (I Corinthians 8:12)

**Fact:** Paul teaches us (I Corinthians 8) the principle of conduct regarding things indifferent.

**Fact:** The rule of spiritually mature people will not allow them to indulge in something (even if it is right and lawful) if it could injure another.

**Fact:** The church in Corinth asked Paul, “Is it right for Christians to partake of the meat that has been offered in sacrifice to idols?”

**Fact:** Paul reveals how the meat is “neutral”, but the “weak conscience” of someone could be offended by partaking of the meat.

**Question:** What is a weak conscience?

**Answer:** A weak conscience is one that:

- #1. Is too weak to withstand temptation.
- #2. Is easily led astray by another’s example.
- #3. Is vulnerable until it is more mature in the Lord.

**Question:** How can a weak conscience be defiled?

**Answer:** A weak conscience may be contaminated:

- #1. By being led into the sin,
- #2. Which will result in guilt,
- #3. That will leave it in pain,
- #4. And could easily lead to the partaking of sin which would destroy the soul.

**Question:** What must my rule of conduct be in respect to those who possess a weak conscience?

**Answer:** “If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend” (I Corinthians 8:13)

**Question:** Why is this so important?

**Answer:** “When ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ”. (v. 12)

## II. A Defiled Conscience

“Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled” (Titus 1:15)

**Fact:** Paul refers here to the meat and drink among the Jews.

**Fact:** Some articles of food were deemed as “clean” (and allowed to be eaten) and some were “unclean” (and forbidden).

**Fact:** Paul states; “Unto the pure all things are pure” (or)

- #1. These food distinctions ceased under the Christian dispensation.
- #2. The conscience of the believer need not be troubled over ceremonial observances of certain foods.

**(But Those Unbelieving)**

**“Even Their Mind And Conscience Is Defiled” (Which Means:)**

- #1. The external defilement of meats and foods is a small thing to them.
- #2. The great dread is that their mind and conscience is defiled which means:
  - A. The inner man is corrupted and polluted.
  - B. The inside of man is defiled and becoming worse and worse
  - C. Their heart is becoming more and more decayed the longer they continue in their sin.
  - D. The impure (defiled) conscience discolors everything it touches:
    1. Thoughts
    2. Imaginations
    3. Motives
    4. Deeds

**Remember: The Devil Will...**

Take you further than you want to go,  
Keep you longer than you want to stay,  
Make you pay more than you want to pay.

## III. A Seared Conscience

“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; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron” (I Timothy 4:1 & 2)

“Who being past feeling have given themselves over to every work of uncleanness” (Eph. 4:19)  
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## ("A Conscience Seared With A Hot Iron")

**Fact:** Paul alludes here to the effect of applying a hot iron to the skin.

**Fact:** The cauterized part becomes rigid and hard, and is dead to sensibility.

### (So Are Those Referred To In (Vs. 1-3))

**Fact:** Cauterized skin is likened to a conscience that is seared:

- #1. This conscience will practice delusion without concern.
- #2. This conscience will practice gross sin without conviction.
- #3. This conscience will burn the innocent without compassion.
- #4. This conscience will indulge in sensual sin without restraint.

### (How Can It Be)

- ◆ Because this conscience has become so seared through transgression, that it has lost the true distinctions between right and wrong, error and truth, good and bad. (Repeat)

### (The Results Being:)

- #1. This person no longer feels any conviction or pricking of his conscience.
- #2. This person has yielded himself over to Satan.
- #3. This person allows no light to expose his soul.
- #4. This person remains unchanged until he willingly humbles himself before God.

### A Sobering Quote From Evangelist Sam P. Jones In 1886:

"And I am right in saying upon this occasion that the most fearful sin a man ever committed in this life is to sin directly and to sin persistently against his own conscience. Do you do that thing which conscience says thou oughtest not to do? Do you persist in the evil when conscience cries, "**Stop, don't do it?**" Someone has said that an outraged conscience is the worm that shall never die amid the fires that shall never be quenched" (Rev. Sam P. Jones 1886 – a circuit riding preacher who ministered 100 years ago in St. Louis, Cincinnati, Chicago, Atlanta, Nashville, Waco and other cities in America)

#### IV. A Convicted Conscience

"And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one"  
(John 8:9)

**Fact:** Our text reveals the woman taken in adultery.

**Fact:** The Pharisees had what they considered to a closed case.

**Fact:** When Jesus' accusers compelled Him to render a verdict in public, they tried to force Him into one of two positions:

- #1. If Jesus consented to the Law (and stoned her) the multitude would feel that He no longer sympathized with publicans and sinners.
- #2. If Jesus took issue with the Pharisees and scribes, they would accuse Him of being a lawbreaker and a defamer of the Mosaic covenant.

"Moses commanded...what then sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have whereof to accuse him" (John 8:5 & 6)

**Fact:** The Pharisees had no passion for righteousness.

**Fact:** The Pharisees had no desire to purge Jerusalem of its moral evils.

**Fact:** The Pharisees sole desire was to trap Jesus and make themselves look good.

"He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (v. 7)

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### (In Other Words)

If you are not sinless, how can you condemn this woman?

#1. They filed out shamefacedly one by one.

#2. They confessed their own guilt.

#3. They proved that they were in no position to act as judges of other people.

(Two original manuscripts suggest that Jesus wrote in the dust "The sins of each one of the men standing by")

### What Is A Convicted Conscience?

#1. One that is willing for God to speak to it. (It is open for inspection)

#2. One that is ready to answer the phone when God calls.

#3. One that is walking transparently before God and men.

#4. One that is quick to respond to the initial promptings of the Holy Spirit.

### V. A Pure Conscience

"Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience: (I Timothy 3:9)

"I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience" (II Timothy 1:3)

"Pray for us: For we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly"  
(Hebrews 13:18)

"Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck" (I Timothy 1:19)

### (A Good (Pure) Conscience Is:)

#1. One that knows what is right and follows the light that it has.

#2. One that is purged of sin and finds freedom and power in the blood of Christ

#3. One that responds to God and experiences the cleansing work of Calvary.

#4. One that understands, that, no one can serve God effectively without a pure conscience.

#5. One that sleeps well at nighttime and doesn't have to look over its shoulder and retrace its steps.

### (A Spirit Filled Conscience Pays)

- ◆ "God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34 & 35)
- ◆ "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness" (Isaiah 64:5)
- ◆ "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Hebrews 1:9)
- ◆ "The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger" (Job 17:9)
- ◆ "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in His Holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart". (Psalms 24: 3 & 4)

Altar Call!

AMEN!

Bill Kirk, Pastor