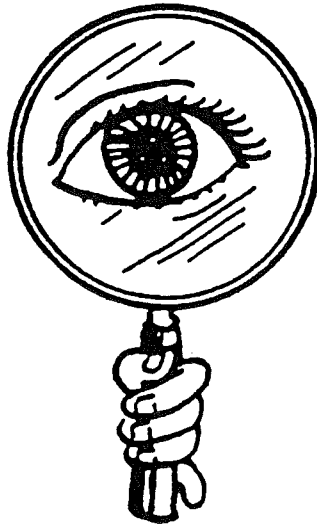


POWER IN CLEAR CONSCIENCE

I Kings 22:1-14



YOUR CONSCIENCE HAS:

- ◆ Opposition
- ◆ Temptation
- ◆ Conviction
- ◆ Affliction
- ◆ Retribution

“Micaiah was told, “agree with the others who are predicting success for Ahab”. But Micaiah said, “as surely as the Lord lives, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak” (I Kings 22:13 & 14)

Bill Kirk

“POWER IN CONSCIENCE”

Text: I Kings 22:1-14

Subject: “The Power And Reward Of A Clear Conscience”

Introduction

Question: Is the condition of your conscience that important to God?

Answer: Hear with your heart:

- ◆ **Acts 23:1** “And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, men and brethren, I have lived in all good **conscience** before God until this day”.
- ◆ **Acts 24:16** “And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a **conscience** void of offence toward God and men”.
- ◆ **I Corinthians 8:12** “But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak **conscience**, ye sin against Christ”.
- ◆ **Titus 1:15** “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”.
- ◆ **I Timothy 4:2** “Speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their **conscience** seared with a hot iron”.
- ◆ **John 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”.
- ◆ **II Corinthians 1:12** “For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our **conscience**, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward”.
- ◆ **I Timothy 3:9** “Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure **conscience**”.
- ◆ **II Timothy 1:3** “I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure **conscience**, that without ceasing I have remembrance of you in my prayers night and day”.
- ◆ **I Timothy 1:19** “Holding faith and a good **conscience**, which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck”.

(And Finally-Hebrews 13:18)

- ◆ “Pray for us, for we trust we have a good **conscience** in all things willing to live honestly”

Question: What is the conscience?

- ◆ The word “**Conscience**” is used 32 times in the Bible.
- ◆ The word “**Conscience**” comes from the Greek word (SUNEIDESIS) which means:
 - #1. “To understand”
 - #2. “To see completely”
 - #3. “To be aware of”
 - #4. “To be informed about”

Fact: Webster defines “**Conscience**” this way:

“The feeling inside of you which tells you whether something is right or wrong” (**In Other Words**)

- ◆ Conscience is the “**inner judge**” or “**inner witness**” that approves when you chose right (and disapproves when you do wrong).

Conscience Is Like A Window

- ◆ A window lets light in.
- ◆ God’s Word is the light.
- ◆ The cleaner the window (our conscience) the more light can shine in (the Word).
- ◆ If the window gets dirty, the light gets dimmer and dimmer.
- ◆ The light can be completely shut out and leave someone in total darkness.
- ◆ It’s not the lights fault, (It’s the window that either lets the light in or shuts it out).

(The Beauty Is That:)

- #1. The cleaner our windows (the conscience), the more light (the Word) can get in.
- #2. And, the more light that gets in, the more sensitive and stronger our conscience becomes.
- #3. And, the more sensitive and stronger and responsive and obedient our conscience becomes (the more joyful and healthier we become).
- #4. And, the more healthier and joyful we become, the more we'll enjoy this life and glorify God in the process.
- #5. And, the more we glorify God through obedience, the more we'll see God reward us; He will even reward us double for our trouble.

(And This Is The Beauty Of Our Text In I Kings 22)

(Rev. Sam P. Jones Said Over 100 Years Ago)

“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 in 1886-a circuit riding preacher who ministered 100 years ago in St. Louis, Cincinnati, Chicago, Atlanta, Nashville, Waco and other cities in America).

(Rev. Harrington C. Lees Said 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. Lees, preaching at the famous Keswick Convention between 1875-1957)

(Grasp The Setting Of Chapter 22)

(In V. 1), there were 3 years of peace between Syria and Israel.

(In V. 2), Jehoshaphat visits King Ahab.

(In V. 3), Ahab tells Jehoshaphat, we need to go to war again, and capture Ramoth in Gilead.

(In V. 4), Ahab asks Jehoshaphat to join him in battle to capture this one more city:

(In Other Words)

- ◆ There has been a truce between Israel and Syria for 3 years.
- ◆ After 3 years, Ahab becomes concerned about one more city just east of the Jordan river.
- ◆ He is worried about Ben-Hadad flexing his muscles again.
- ◆ So, he has it in his heart to capture Ramoth-Gilead one of the chief cities of the tribe of Gad, a city that had been lost to Syria).

(And Then It Happens)

- ◆ Out of nowhere, in v.2, King Jehoshaphat, King of Judah shows up.

Question: Why is Jehoshaphat visiting the evil King Ahab (his enemy?)

Answer: Because the son of Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, had married the daughter of Ahab & Jezebel named Athaliah.

(In Other Words)

- ◆ A boy with a godly heritage marries a girl with a wicked heritage, and the wicked influence prevails.

(So Jehoshaphat Shows Up At Ahab's Palace)

Question: And what does wicked Ahab do?

Answer: In verse 4, he asks Jehoshaphat to go with him into battle to take Ramoth-Gilead.

Question: What does Jehoshaphat say to wicked Ahab?

Answer: (V. 4) "I am as you are, my people are yours and my horses are yours"

(But Just One Request Ahab)

(V. 5) "Let's inquire of the Lord first, to be sure its God's will to go into battle"

Question: How does Ahab respond?

Answer: (V. 6) He gathers his 400 false prophet "Yes" men of the state religion, who say, "Go ahead boss, you're the victor".

◆ And Jehoshaphat gets nervous and says in (v. 7): "Isn't there a true prophet of God we could ask first before we head out to battle?"

Question: How does Ahab respond to the suggestion?

Answer: (V. 8) "There is one man by whom we may inquire of the Lord, but I hate him" (Why Ahab?) "Because he never prophesys good".

Question: What does Jehoshaphat say?

Answer: (V. 8) "Please Ahab, let's get the advice of this true prophet Micaiah before we go to war".

- ◆ So in v. 9, wicked Ahab summons Micaiah to a meeting ("Go officer and get Micaiah out of prison")
- ◆ In V. 10, both kings of Judah and Israel sit on their high chairs in royal apparel (very intimidating)
- ◆ In V. 11, Zedekiah makes a pair of horns and runs around boasting of Ahab's soon victory
- ◆ In V. 12, all the 400 prophets yell out, "Go up to Ramoth-Gilead and take the city"
- ◆ In V. 13, we now have a problem:
- ◆ In V. 13, Ahab's messenger tells God's man, Micaiah, this message:

"All the other prophets (400) have told Ahab that if he goes up to battle, all will be well. I advise you Micaiah, be sure when you appear before the king, to say the same thing".

(In other Words Micaiah:)

- #1. "Tell the king what he wants to hear".
- #2. "Tell the king what his yes men said".
- #3. "Tell the king he will win the war in Ramoth-Gilead".
- #4. "Tell the king something good, something that will flatter his ego and get the battle going and you'll get out of prison".

(And How Does Micaiah Respond?)

(V. 14), "And Micaiah said, as the Lord liveth, what the Lord says to me, that will I speak".

(In Other Words)

- #1. "My conscience is more important than my release from prison".
- #2. "My conscience is more important than the king's approval".
- #3. "My conscience is more important than, "How to win friends and influence people".
- #4. "My conscience is more important than appeasing the majority of 400 men in the cult of a state religion". **(In Other Words Ahab)**

- ◆ "What the Lord tells me to tell you, that's what you will hear".

(And In Verse 15)

- ◆ Ahab inquires of Micaiah, "Do we go to battle or not?"

Question: How does conscience (Micaiah) reply?

- ◆ In v. 15, with sarcasm, Micaiah says, "Go ahead".
- ◆ In v. 17, a parable about sheep being scattered without a leader.
- ◆ In v. 19-23, how God will get Ahab to fall in battle.
- ◆ In v. 28, Micaiah says, "If Ahab returns from battle alive, then the Lord hasn't really spoken to me".

Question: But pastor, what about my conscience?

Question: Pastor, how can I live with a clear conscience?

Question: Pastor, what should I expect from life if I honor my God-given conscience?

Question: Pastor, how can I be true to my conscience?

Question: Pastor, how can I make changes where changes are needed?

Question: In plain vanilla, what encourages all of us to obey conscience – no matter what?

(Write Down 5 Words Today)

- ◆ 5 secrets from the conscience of Micaiah.
- ◆ 5 secrets revealed from Scripture.
- ◆ 5 secrets that build solid men and women.
- ◆ 5 secrets that make strong believers.
- ◆ 5 secrets that God will honor.

I. Secret #1 – Conscience Has “Opposition” (V. 8)

Question: How does Scripture describe Micaiah’s reception?

Answer: Wicked Ahab testifies himself in V. 8:

“And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, there is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord, but I hate him”.

Question: Why did Ahab hate Micaiah?

Answer: Because Micaiah told the truth whether the king liked it or not:

(Notice Verse 16)

“Ahab says, how many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but which is true in the name of the Lord”.

Question: What’s the application here?

Answer: That if you honor your conscience, you’ll tell the truth, and when you live for the truth – expect opposition.

II. Secret #2 – Conscience Has “Temptation” (V. 13)

Question: Pastor, will I be tempted to defile my conscience?

Answer: (V. 13) Ahab’s messenger says to Micaiah, “The 400 prophets said good things, be like each one of them and do the same”.

(In Other Words Micaiah)

- ◆ “Surrender yourself to temptation”.
- ◆ “Yield yourself under pressure”.
- ◆ “Give in to the pressure of the majority”.
- ◆ “Sell your conscience for the price of the moment”.
- ◆ “It’s your chance and opportunity to be released from jail”. **(In Other Words)**
- ◆ Temptation is common to all (no one escapes).
- ◆ Temptation is a part of ordinary life.
- ◆ Temptation is unavoidable so expect it.

III. Secret #3 – Conscience Has “Conviction” (V. 14)

Question: What shows us how to respond to temptations?

Answer: The conviction of Micaiah in v. 14:

“And Micaiah said, as the Lord liveth, what the Lord says to me, that will I speak”.

(In Other Words)

- ◆ Everyone responds to temptation in one of two ways:

#1. Like the 400, we can butcher our conscience for lack of conviction (or)

#2. Like Micaiah, we can strengthen our conscience by honoring our convictions.

“What we need above all is a revival of Christian conscience, and courage to testify in the court of a hostile world”. (Clarence Edward Noble Macartney – 1879-1957 – from his sermon “The wisest Fool and Other Men of the Bible”)

“My prison shall be my grave before I will budge a jot, for I owe my conscience to no mortal man” (William Penn when he was in the Tower of London) (Pg. 4 of 6)

“Moss shall grow on these eyebrows before I surrender my principles or violate my conscience” (John Bunyan’s reply in Bedford jail when offered release if he would promise to cease preaching)

“It is neither safe nor wise to do anything against conscience” (Martin Luther’s reply at the Diet of Worms when he was asked to recant and deny what he had written and taught in his books)

(Paul Describes Ahab In I Timothy 4: 1 & 2)

“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”.

(This Is Ahab – “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 I Timothy)

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

- #1. This conscience will practice delusion without concern.
- #2. This conscience will practice sin without conviction.
- #3. This conscience will indulge in sin without restraint.
- #4. This conscience will carry on a system of fraud without wincing.

(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 Result Being:)

- #1. This person no longer feels any conviction or pricking of their conscience.
- #2. This person has yielded themselves over sin.
- #3. This person allows no light to expose their soul.
- #4. This person remains unchanged until they willingly humble themselves before God so grace can go to work.

IV. Secret #4 – Conscience Has “Affliction” (V.27)

“Feed him with the bread of affliction”

Question: How was Micaiah treated for his conviction to truth?

- #1. He was hated. (v. 8)
- #2. He was punched in the face. (v. 24)
- #3. He was taken back to prison. (v. 26)
- #4. He was afflicted with food and water rations. (v. 27)

Question: Why did Ahab hate Micaiah?

Answer: Because Micaiah warned him about the consequences of bad choices?

Question: What’s the application here?

Answer: That it is foolish to get angry with someone who tells you the truth about yourself.

◆ It is absurd to reject a warning from God (or someone) wanting to save your life.

Illustration: Would you ignore a train crossing barrier?

Illustration: Would you ignore a draw-bridge light?

Illustration: Would you ignore a lighthouse on a rock shore line?

Illustration: Conviction of Conscience

In John Wesley’s journal, he writes how he read Thomas a Kempis “Christian Pattern” at the age of 22 (before his salvation).

Wesley states; “I began to see that true religion was seated in the heart, and that God’s law extended to all our thoughts, as well as words and actions”.

Wesley writes; "I was, however, very angry with Kempis for being so strict".

(In Other Words, Wesley Is Confessing)

- ◆ That the sense of a guilty conscience recoils in anger from whatever God uses to expose our sin.

V. **Secret #5 – Conscience Has "Retribution" (Vs. 37 & 38)**

Question: Does God vindicate His Word, Micaiah, and everyone who stands for truth?

Question: Does God really teach us that there are consequences to our choices?

Question: Does God have the power to honor His truth in your life either now or later?

- ◆ Micaiah was faithful to conscience in spite of the majority.
- ◆ Micaiah was faithful to conscience in spite of insults and injury.
- ◆ Micaiah was faithful to conscience in spite of darkness in the dungeon.

Question: What about Ahab?

Answer: In v. 30, he disguised himself in battle (and) he put the king's robe on Jehoshaphat to cover his own trail (and hide). (But in v. 34)

- ◆ A stray arrow hit Ahab in the heart and proved that Micaiah's words were true and his conscience was honored. **(In Other Words)**
- ◆ We can run, hide in the crowd, but we can never run from conscience.
- ◆ The truth of God penetrated through the breastplate of Ahab in hiding.
- ◆ The question is: How can we get Micaiah on our side?
- ◆ How can your conscience be your friend and not your justice?

(Only One Way)

- ◆ Listen to your conscience in all matters pertaining to your life.
- ◆ Listen to the voice of God in your conscience.
- ◆ Listen to the voice of truth that will save your life (now & forever)
- ◆ Let God's Word convince you of sin.
- ◆ Let God's Word bring you to the cross for forgiveness of every sin.

- #1. Gossip, whispering and slander (Does your tongue exercise itself in destructive activity?)
- #2. Sports (Are you addicted to meaningless games?)
- #3. Stocks and Bonds (Does your heart rise and fall with the economic climate?)
- #4. Cars (Do you lust after the latest, or newest, or oldest or fastest or whatever kind of vehicle?)
- #5. Food (Do cravings and lack of discipline run wild?)
- #6. Antiques and collectibles (Do you really believe you can take your toys to heaven with you?)
- #7. Unforgiveness (Do you harbor a grudge because someone hurt you or hurt someone else you love?)
- #8. T.V. (Are countless hours being wasted in front of the one-eyed demon?)
- #9. The internet (Do you surf the net until you drown in computer waves?)
- #10. Work (Has a workaholic spirit stolen your time with God, family, friends and yourself?)
- #11. Talking (Do careless, useless, un-edifying words pour from your tongue?)
- #12. Success (Do you live for position, power, prestige, titles, a name, etc?)
- #13. Money (Are you dominated by getting more, and more and more in your hands?)
- #14. Relationships (Do you crave (lust after) a warm body because you haven't found your security in God first?)
- #15. Prayerlessness (Have you been going so fast that time with God is gone?)
- #16. The Word (Dominant on the shelf?)
- #17. Addictions (To alcohol, tobacco, drugs, things that rob your divine potential?)

AMEN!!

Bill Kirk, Pastor
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