

2 Timothy 1:3 Serving God with a clear conscience

The apostle Paul often spoke of having a good conscience toward God, including in his defense before the council (**Acts 23:1**) and in his defense before Felix (**Acts 24:15-16**). Paul is saying that his service to God is sincere and that he can approach God without knowingly hiding wrongdoing or acting hypocritically.

2 Timothy 1:3: “I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience”

- **Grammatical Usage:** “**clear**” or in the Greek, “kithara” meaning, “pure”; “**conscience**” or “syneidēsei” meaning, “discernment”.
- **Literal Interpretation:** I thank God in serving Him, like my family, with a pure discernment....
- **Contextual/Comparison:** God keeps His Word: God continually uses His Word. If we desire to serve God with a "**pure conscience**," we do well to learn what we can about the conscience and its bearing on Christian living. A good place to begin is with...

I. THE CONSCIENCE DEFINED**A. UNDERSTANDING THE CONSCIENCE...**

1. A **Christian conscience** is a person's inner discerning awareness quickened by the Holy Spirit, informed by God's Word, demonstrated in actions and reactions.
2. Thus the conscience is **like a watch**
 - a. It can serve a useful purpose, but only **if properly set**
 - b. If set incorrectly (i.e., if misinformed about what is good or bad), then the conscience will lead us astray!

B. THE CONSCIENCE MAY NOT ALWAYS BE A RELIABLE GUIDE...

1. Paul had served God with a good conscience throughout his life (**Acts 23:1**)
 - a. Even at a time when he was persecuting Christians! (**Acts 26:9-11**)
 - b. He **thought** (his conscience guiding him) that he must oppose the name of Jesus
 - c. His conscience **worked properly**, but it had been **set incorrectly**
2. Thus it is imperative that we ask ourselves:
 - a. "Is what we 'consider' morally good or bad 'actually' good or bad?"
 - b. "Are our moral judgments based upon God's absolute truths, or our own 'think so'?"
 - c. I.e., "Has our conscience been properly 'set'?"

God desires that we have a good conscience regarding our faith, i.e., a pure conscience (**1 Timothy 1:5; 3:9**). So consider a few thoughts related to...

II. THE CONSCIENCE DEVELOPED

A. **HOW A PURE CONSCIENCE IS MADE POSSIBLE...**

1. We are all sinners, so how can we possibly have a pure conscience? (**Romans 3:23**)
2. A clean conscience is made possible **through Jesus' blood**
 - a. Old Testament sacrifices and ordinances were insufficient (**Hebrews 9:9; 10:1-4**)
 - b. The blood of Jesus can cleanse one's conscience (**Hebrews 9:14; 1 Peter 3:21**)
3. In confessing Jesus as Savior, surrendering our lives to Him, we make an appeal for a good conscience, trusting that the blood of Jesus will wash away our sins (**Acts 2:38; 22:16**) and the Holy Spirit reign in our hearts (**2 Corinthians 1:20**)

B. **HOW A PURE CONSCIENCE IS MAINTAINED...**

1. A good conscience is **maintained by obedience** to God's will
 - a. Note that failure to do what we know is right is sinful (**James 4:17**)
 - b. Failure to abstain from what we know is wrong is also sinful
2. **Conduct with godly sincerity** makes for a good conscience (**2 Corinthians 1:12**)
 - a. Doing what you know is right with all sincerity develops confidence
 - b. The more you do what is good and abstain from what is wrong, the better and purer your conscience will be!

By God's grace, even the rankest of sinners can have their conscience cleansed. But we should also note that it is possible to have...

III. **THE CONSCIENCE DESTROYED**

A. **MUCH HARM CAN BE DONE TO THE CONSCIENCE...**

1. We can **violate** our conscience, which is **sinful** (**Romans 14:22-23**)
2. We can **defile** our conscience, leading to **unbelief** (**Titus 1:15**)
3. We can **sear** our conscience, leading to **apostasy** (**1 Timothy 4:1-2**)

B. **IGNORING OR VIOLATING THE CONSCIENCE IS DANGEROUS...**

1. A **guilty** conscience can soon lead to a **hardened** conscience
 - a. Resulting in willful disobedience to God
 - b. Manifesting itself in willful disregard to family, friends and the fellowship of the saints
2. A **hardened** conscience can lead to a heart of **unbelief** (**Hebrews 3:12**)
 - a. The deceitfulness of sin hardens one's heart
 - b. A hard heart can begin to question what one once believed

IV. **GOD PROVIDES A WAY TO RESTORE A CLEAR CONSCIENCE**

- A. Confession and repentance (**1 John 1:9**)
- B. Renewal and peace (**Psalms 51:10; Isaiah 26:3**)

➤ **Conclusion:** “**Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves**” — **2 Corinthians 13:5**