

# The Awakening of the Conscience

by John Edmiston

## Walking In the Spirit – Series 16 (A Ministry of Eternity Christian Fellowship)

The conscience is a very important part of our being that helps us to line our lives up with God's perspective on things. Conscience is from two Latin roots "con" - alongside/with and "science" knowledge and it means to "know along with". The conscience operates along with our normal senses and a sort of sixth sense, a sense of what is right and wrong, good and evil.

In 1979 I read John Stott's exposition of the Sermon On The Mount and it changed me. My conscience went from being uninformed to informed and from unawakened to awakened. Jesus really woke me up to the fact that I dwelt in His moral Universe.

**Hebrews 5:14 MKJV** *But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, even those who because of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

When the conscience awakes the spiritual senses start working properly. I began to SEE the world differently and have a new perspective on issues such as materialism and competition. I began to HEAR God calling me to a different lifestyle and way of being Christian. I began to TOUCH the solid realities of the Kingdom of God, and to TASTE of the goodness of the Beatitudes.

A literary critic or a unbeliever could have read the same book (or even the Bible) and have been totally unaffected by it. While their eyes would read the book and their mind would understand the words, it would have been like a magazine article that was read one moment and ignored the next. Without an operational conscience the 'solid food' is not digested or understood. The moral sixth sense called conscience must be in working order for the comprehension of spiritual truth.

Let us go on to look at some bible verses about conscience:

### The Operation Of Conscience:

**John 8:9 MKJV** *And hearing, and being convicted by conscience, they went out one by one, beginning at the oldest, until the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.*

**Romans 2:14-16 MKJV** *For when the nations, who do not have the Law, do by nature the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law unto*

*themselves; (15) who show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and the thoughts between one another accusing or even excusing one another, (16) in a day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.*

## **The Good Conscience**

The conscience is one way that God speaks to us. And God's voice is heard most clearly when the conscience is undefiled and pure. When people are committed to doing God's will and walking in honesty, integrity and truth then they will 'hear & see' God:

**Matthew 5:8 MKJV** *Blessed are the pure in heart! For they shall see God.*

**John 14:21 MKJV** *He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me. And he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will reveal Myself to him.*

**John 7:17 HCSB** *If anyone wants to do His will, he will understand whether the teaching is from God or if I am speaking on My own.*

**John 8:47 HCSB** *The one who is from God listens to God's words. This is why you don't listen, because you are not from God."*

**John 10:25-28 HCSB** *"I did tell you and you don't believe," Jesus answered them. "The works that I do in My Father's name testify about Me. (26) But you don't believe because you are not My sheep. (27) My sheep hear My voice, I know them, and they follow Me. (28) I give them eternal life, and they will never perish--ever! No one will snatch them out of My hand.*

**1 Timothy 1:5 MKJV** *But the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned,*

**Hebrews 13:18 MKJV** *Pray for us; for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.*

**Romans 9:1 MKJV** *I tell the truth in Christ, I do not lie, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit,*

## **The Corrupted Conscience**

**1 Timothy 1:19 MKJV** *holding faith and a good conscience, which some have put away and made shipwreck as to faith.*

**1 Timothy 4:1-3 MKJV** *But the Spirit expressly says that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and teachings of demons, (2) speaking lies in hypocrisy, being seared in their own conscience, (3)*

*forbidding to marry, saying to abstain from foods which God has created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.*

**Titus 1:15 MKJV** *To the pure all things are pure. But to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled.*

From the above bible verses we find out that:

1. The conscience acts as a moral arbiter which convicts or excuses us of sin and is a common part of all humanity saved or unsaved (the Pharisees in John 8 and the Gentiles in Romans 2 were not Christians). Because of this inner judge we will be without excuse when we stand before God.
2. The conscience operates at its best and is most accurate when the person is filled with faith and the Holy Spirit and is living an honest and transparent life in obedience to Christ.
3. Christians can ignore their conscience, 'putting it away', and thus ending up in moral disaster so that they make shipwreck of their faith.
4. The conscience can be hijacked by the 'doctrines of demons' and become seared and unresponsive to moral truth. This leads to hypocrisy and deception.
5. The conscience can become defiled and impure so that every thought and every value is disgusting.

Many Christians now have very weak consciences and are barely conscious of their sin. Right and wrong seem to be regraded as unimportant. They are blind to their selfishness, and heedless of the needs of the poor or of the lost. In many churches even basic morality is lacking as couples 'live-in' together without shame or rebuke. This is unacceptable.

The Holy Spirit is holy and when He moves in revival He first convicts the consciences of church members to repent, to put away magic, witchcraft and idols, and to turn away from known sin.

There needs to be a giant shaking and reawakening of the conscience of the Western church if we are to see revival and if we are to enter into the Kingdom of God. We need to come to our senses and to be pierced inwardly over what we have become! We need to accept the Sermon On The Mount as our mandate for living and adopt the commandments of Christ with all seriousness and application. Moral apathy is not a valid Christian option.

Now I do not mean that we go back to the Law and to the ministry of condemnation and of death. Our role is to awaken the conscience so that God's Spirit may move into that person's life and bring love, joy, peace and power. But the Holy Spirit will not dwell in a moral garbage dump. Therefore we need to preach repentance, not so that we can condemn others but so that we can liberate them from sin and from its consequences.

We are allowing far too many believers to make shipwreck of their faith! We are not prodding them to stay away from sin. We are not activating the inner lamp of the conscience for them so that they have a healthy fear of God. Churches are full of ruined lives as a result.

We need to re-tune the consciences of Christians and renew their minds and hearts; repenting of the moral dullness of worldliness and advocating fervent Christ-like commitment to the values of Heaven. Because a good conscience is the one place where Heaven and Earth meet and agree.

## Two Kinds of Conscience

The conscience is one way that God speaks to us and God's voice is heard most clearly when the conscience is undefiled and pure. Christians who are walking in honesty, integrity and truth will 'hear & see' God:

**Matthew 5:8 MKJV** *Blessed are the pure in heart! For they shall see God.*

**John 14:21 MKJV** *He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me. And he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will reveal Myself to him.*

**John 7:17 HCSB** *If anyone wants to do His will, he will understand whether the teaching is from God or if I am speaking on My own.*

The pure in heart, those who love God, who desire to do God's will, and those who have the commandments and keep them – these are the people that God reveals Himself to. These are His flock and they hear His voice and follow Him (John 10:4,9,16,27).

On the other hand there is another darker kind of conscience. One that is demonic, seared and stubborn and which simply refuses to hear God's voice:

**John 8:42-47 MKJV** *Jesus said to them, If God were your father, you would love Me, for I went forth and came from God; for I did not come of Myself, but He sent Me. (43) Why do you not know My speech? Because you cannot hear My Word. (44) You are of the Devil as father, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and did not abide in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own, for he is a liar and the father of it. (45) And because I tell you the truth, you do not believe Me. (46) Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do you not believe Me? (47) He who is of God hears God's Words. Therefore you do not hear them because you are not of God.*

**John 10:25-28 HCSB** *"I did tell you and you don't believe," Jesus answered them. "The works that I do in My Father's name testify about Me. (26) But you don't believe because you are not My sheep. (27) My sheep hear My voice, I know them,*

*and they follow Me. (28) I give them eternal life, and they will never perish--ever! No one will snatch them out of My hand.*

There are the ones who opposed Christ, who would not listen to His teachings or even consider the evidence of His miracles. God's words bounced off them. Miracles had no impact upon them. Jesus Christ himself, in the flesh, made no impression on their consciences. They shut Him out and crucified Him!

When Jesus calls the Pharisees 'sons of the Devil' He is maintaining that they had believed a lie and were children of the lie (or rather children of the Liar – that is Satan). Their inner nature was so hard and far from the truth that they were completely in the Devil's camp. This hardness seems to have led them to completely misunderstand the Scriptures even though they 'pored over them'. Instead their defiled consciences turned godliness into a means of self-promotion:

**John 5:38-47 MKJV** *And you do not have His Word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He has sent. (39) You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life. And they are the ones witnessing of Me, (40) and you will not come to Me that you might have life. (41) I do not receive honor from men. (42) But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you. (43) I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me. If another shall come in his own name, him you will receive. (44) How can you believe, you who receive honor from one another and do not seek the honor that comes from God only? (45) Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you, Moses, in whom you trust. (46) For if you had believed Moses, you would have believed Me, for he wrote of Me. (47) But if you do not believe his writings, how shall you believe My Words?*

So when Jesus became popular their hearts were filled with hatred, rage and anger which kept them in darkness and blinded them to the Truth:

**1 John 3:10-12 HCSB** *This is how God's children--and the Devil's children--are made evident. Whoever does not do what is right is not of God, especially the one who does not love his brother. (11) For this is the message you have heard from the beginning: we should love one another, (12) unlike Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil, and his brother's were righteous.*

**1 John 2:10-11 MKJV** *He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no offense in him. (11) But he who hates his brother is in darkness, and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because darkness has blinded his eyes.*

And James talks of two kinds of inner wisdom:

**James 3:14-18 MKJV** *But if you have bitter jealousy and strife in your hearts, do not glory and lie against the truth. (15) This is not the wisdom coming down from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. (16) For where envying and strife are, there*

*is confusion and every foul deed. (17) But the wisdom that is from above is first truly pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. (18) And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*

Again we see a demonic kind of wisdom and a godly kind of wisdom. Paul adds some understanding to this in his epistle to Timothy:

**1 Timothy 4:1-3 MKJV** *But the Spirit expressly says that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and teachings of demons, (2) speaking lies in hypocrisy, being seared in their own conscience,*

These lying, seducing spirits of demons aim to dull, damage and even sear the conscience so that it becomes totally unresponsive to God! Paul continues and tells Timothy that one of the attack points will be ascetic 'super-spirituality' :

**1 Timothy 4:3-5 MKJV** *forbidding to marry, saying to abstain from foods which God has created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. (4) For every creation of God is good, and nothing to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving. (5) For it is sanctified through the Word of God and prayer.*

And the apostle Peter warns Christians of the opposite extreme – that of gross immorality and lawlessness the defiles the person and crushes the conscience so that the light of God goes out within them:

**2 Peter 2:18-22 ISV** *By talking high-sounding nonsense and using sinful cravings of the flesh, they entice people who have just escaped from those who live in error. (19) Promising them freedom, they themselves are slaves to depravity, for a person is a slave to whatever conquers him. (20) For if, after escaping the world's corruptions through a full knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled and conquered by them, then their last condition is worse than their former one. (21) It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than to know it and turn their backs on the holy commandment that was committed to them. (22) The proverb is true that describes what has happened to them: "A dog returns to its vomit," and "A pig that is washed goes back to wallow in the mud."*

Your conscience is a spiritual battleground. You can choose obedience or disobedience. You can listen to God or you can listen to demons. You can be one of God's sheep who hear His voice or you can be stubborn and unbelieving. To this end we need to take our thoughts captive:

**2 Corinthians 10:4-5 MKJV** *(4) For the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, (5) pulling down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought into the obedience of Christ.*



## The Conscience and the Word of God

What is the secret of powerful, anointed biblical preaching? What did the prophets and apostles have in common? (And what is often lacking today..) They knew the constitution of mankind – and that the conscience is made to hear the Word of God. So when the prophets and apostles spoke they aimed their words at the consciences of their hearers:

**2 Corinthians 5:11 MKJV** *(11) Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men. But we are revealed to God, and I trust also that we are revealed in your consciences. (see also 2 Corinthians 4:2)*

True preaching of the Word of God is sharp and to the point, going deep into people and judging the thoughts and intents of the heart:

**Hebrews 4:12 MKJV** *For the Word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing apart of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

Preaching is not a cultural activity, it is a spiritual activity and the words we choose must line up with the way God wants things said:

**1 Corinthians 2:13 MKJV** *These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

Thus preaching is not impressing people with the wisdom of the world - but is rather the application of the word of God to their hearts and minds and consciences:

**1 Corinthians 1:20-23 MKJV** *(20) Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the lawyer of this world? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? (21) For since, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom did not know God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe. (22) For the Jews ask for a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; (23) but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness.*

Paul's preaching was not in enticing words of human wisdom. Instead it was a practical demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

**1 Corinthians 2:4-9 MKJV** *(4) And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, (5) so that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.*

This is because he wanted people's faith to rest on real evidence that they had observed and would remember - and not on words and arguments that could be forgotten or abandoned when a better orator came along.

Paul goes on to say that his preaching was a mystery to those who were worldly-minded:

**1 Corinthians 2:7-9 MKJV** *(7) But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, which God has hidden, predetermining it before the world for our glory; (8) which none of the rulers of this world knew (for if they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory). (9) But as it is written, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard," nor has it entered into the heart of man, "the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."*

God has prepared wonderful things for us, for our glory, and we can only grasp these wonderful things through the Spirit who reveals them to us.

**1 Corinthians 2:10-12 MKJV** *(10) But God has revealed them to us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God. (11) For who among men knows the things of a man except the spirit of man within him? So also no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. (12) But we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit from God, so that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God.*

The Holy Spirit is given to us so that we might know 'the things that are freely given to us by God'. In other words the Spirit reveals the full blessings of Christ! Growing in Christ includes a growing understanding of how much God has blessed us already, and how much He wants to abundantly bless us in the future.

Now how does this relate to preaching? Anointed preaching follows the Holy Spirit. If the task of the Holy Spirit is to reveal *the things that are freely given to us by God* then, logically, that also becomes the job of the preacher who speaks the words of the Spirit:

**1 Corinthians 2:13 MKJV** *(13) These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

The Spirit-led preacher reveals the things that are freely given to us by God and does so using plain words and Holy Spirit power comparing spiritual with spiritual.

Preaching like this may cause a division between the carnal listeners and the spiritual listeners:

**1 Corinthians 2:14-16 MKJV** *(14) But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (15) But he who is spiritual judges all*



*things, yet he himself is judged by no one. (16) For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.*

In fact true preaching, such as that of Jesus and the apostles, often created a reaction one way or the other as some people were convicted and yet others protested.

**2 Corinthians 2:14-17 HCSB** *(14) But thanks be to God, who always puts us on display in Christ, and spreads through us in every place the scent of knowing Him. (15) For to God we are the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. (16) To some we are a scent of death leading to death, but to others, a scent of life leading to life. And who is competent for this? (17) For we are not like the many who make a trade in God's message for profit, but as those with sincerity, we speak in Christ, as from God and before God.*

So true anointed preaching:

- a) Asks God the Holy Spirit to reveal the blessings of Christ from the word of God.
- b) Receives this wisdom and understanding from God
- c) Preaches that revelation in the demonstration of the Spirit's power aiming for the conscience of the hearers and speaking words from God that pierce to the dividing of soul and spirit.
- d) Does not worry about the reactions of those who object
- e) Continues to preach in sincerity and truth, not watering down God's word or seeking personal financial profit

Now let me be clear that this process does not occur apart from the Bible. Anointed preaching is not some mystical expounding of personal notions. The Holy Spirit wrote the Bible as His primary source of instruction. The Bible is God's inerrant, infallible Word which speaks of Christ on every page. The Bible is the Holy Spirit's textbook and He is our tutor and coach. It is as we humbly and prayerfully study the Bible that the Holy Spirit reveals that which we can speak in order to convict the consciences of the hearers and turn them towards God.

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