

**Matters of Conscience:  
A Synopsis of Findings and Guide to the Use of the Paper**

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## **Matters of Conscience: A Synopsis and Guide to the Use of the Paper**

The subject of this monograph is an important issue in American culture, in the Church and in the heart of every man, believer and non-believer alike, every day. Does this statement seem like a sweeping over-generalization to you? Awareness of media reporting and news commentary of the hour, a knowledge of the state of the theologically conservative Church in America, and an understanding of what the New Testament teaches about conscience coalesce to establish that it is, in fact, not an overgeneralization or overstatement, at all.

### *The Growing Absence of Conscience in American Culture*

Americans, Christian and non-Christian alike, are puzzled and frightened by the sudden rash of unprovoked violent crimes and, in particular, the mass shootings of the innocent from Columbine to the present. The victims have been children, athletes, movie and concert attenders, co-workers and friends, senselessly slaughtered at school, at work, at entertainment venues, at athletic contests and at church. This Satanic work has been done by men, and tragically in some cases by boys, who were never suspected of mental or spiritual defect, at least not to the extent demonstrated by their heinous actions.

The media is flooded almost monthly with the scenes of the carnage for days following each incident, with law enforcement officers doing their best to calm the people in the communities where these brutal executions occur and answer the questions, “Why did this happen?” “How could this happen?” Often, they give

partial, unsatisfying answers. In other cases, they give evasive, feckless explanations, while they attempt to defend the incompetence of the officers who had been on sight or first called to the scene of the unfolding horror.

Pleas for the elimination of the private ownership of firearms, for greater mental health services in our schools and communities, and the requisite evening-after candlelight prayer vigils fill the newscasts. “Do these monsters have *no conscience?*” both the interviewers and interviewees often ask on national television. “How could this happen, especially in America, our beautiful, brave and good country. Isn’t she ‘the city set on a hill,’ a beacon of light morally for all the nations?”

#### *A Lack of Clarity about Conscience in the Church*

A world apart from such tragedies is another crisis over *conscience—the crisis in the Church*. Though not a crisis of life or death physically, this crisis has rent the Bible-believing church into factions in America for decades now. For the Evangelical and Fundamentalist Christian Church, a solid seventy years of cultural shift in America has brought with it a re-examination of nearly every cultural conviction held by theologically conservative Christians, who self-identify as being born again and believe the Bible is the inerrant word of God and therefore their guide for faith and practice.

These convictions that have come under scrutiny are about divorce and remarriage, television-movies-media entertainment, the beverage use of alcohol and the recreational use of less potent drugs, marijuana being the chief among them.

This re-examining has also included the shift from a more semi-formal outward attire for worship for both men and women to casual attire, in the past normally only worn during relaxed social events or recreational activities by Christians, and of course the use of rock and roll music, in all its varied forms, for both personal Christian listening and public Christian worship.

The newer perspectives, more closely aligned with the culture on all of these issues, were once all rejected by the overwhelming majority of conservative Christians in America, as recently as fifty years ago. But now, they are routinely promoted in pulpits, on blog posts and in the seemingly endless flood of books about how to live life as a Christian in the twenty-first century “with relevance and impact.” It is said that these things are all simply a matter of personal preference. They are just *matters of individual conscience*. That is how the wildly divergent perspectives among believers about these practices is now explained. These are certainly not, it is argued, clear matters of right or wrong established by Scripture. Everyone’s preference must be viewed as equally valid, to be equally esteemed as right for the individual, even if not right for all believers.

But what about the Scripture’s emphasis on the greater discernment of the spiritually mature, the elders, those particularly knowledgeable in the Word and wise in the matters of the Christian life, as so identified in Hebrews 5:13-14? Shouldn’t their perspectives be given greater weight and be the source of informing the sense of right or wrong of others who are less mature, both for the individual believer and for the local assembly as a whole? Even more weighty is the purpose of

redemption, which is to yield a holy life in the believer and in the church corporately, as stated in Ephesians 5:25b-27 and Galatians 1:3-5.

...as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless (Ephesians 5:25b-27).

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from *this present evil age* [italics added], according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen (Galatians 1:3-5).

What is set before us in these passages is the demand for greater discernment about right and wrong for the glory of Christ in the Church forever, specifically with reference to issues affecting the Christian in the current culture., i.e., “the present evil age.” These support the more familiar emphasis of Romans 12:2, which reads, “And do not be conformed to this world [the age], but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

The moral content of one’s thoughts, disposition, actions, and affiliations must be carefully assessed while being compared with the teaching of Scripture to form a right conscience on any matter of cultural relevance or practice. And in reality, most matters in life as they touch culture are *not* without moral content, good or bad, especially those touching on worship and daily Christian behavior.

### *The Warfare in the Heart of the Christian about Conscience Daily*

And for the individual believer, daily he or she struggles to discern right and wrong personally by the use of the Scriptures, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit. In this spiritual warfare, there is a voice in his

heart. It is *his* voice, his conscience, saying, “Choose this way!” or “Choose that!” But is it *just* his voice? Is it God’s voice too? Or, is it both? Even more concerning, could it be Satan’s voice speaking through his or her conscience, misleading him at the time of choice or condemning him through a sense of false guilt, rising up unexplainably after God’s complete forgiveness and cleansing recently sought for those very sins?

How can the Christian be sure that his feelings of guilt or righteousness over what he has done are valid? Certainly as fallen creatures, our conscience is not infallible in its judgments, whether those judgments are commendations or condemnations. When looking to sources outside himself for guidance in this confusion, the believer may think of his pastor who probably enjoys listening to classic rock music most of the time, who spends countless hours scrolling through You Tube videos and articles about his personal hobbies, who is a huge fan of Facebook and spends hours interacting with others on it and who drinks a beer or two, or three, most evenings at home “to relax,” including after church on Sunday nights. With reference to alcohol, if his pastor drinks it, it must be ok, right? Besides, Jesus turned water into wine for everybody at the wedding in Cana, it says in the New Testament, so that pretty much settles the matter. Or does it, really? So much grief, loss economically from missed work and accidents, damage to family relationships, and devastation to health comes from addiction to alcoholic beverages today which are far more potent in intoxicating content than that consumed daily as a beverage in the first century. Why should a serious Christian have anything to do

with such an addictive and potentially damaging substance? But Christian leaders and writers disagree about drinking alcohol, so the immature Christian just shrugs his shoulders and thinks, “This must just be one of those things pastor calls *a matter of conscience*. So, since it is just a *matter of individual conscience*, I should be satisfied with the perceptions of my own conscience on this matter and not worry about anybody else’s view or practice.” Right? Or wrong?<sup>1</sup>

### *The Value of Examining Συνειδησις Now*

The questions raised in these opening paragraphs focus us sharply on the importance of a detailed consideration of the teaching of the New Testament on the subject of *conscience and the term for it in Koine Greek*, συνειδησις. A right perspective on the topic must be based on a careful, exegetical consideration of the

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<sup>1</sup> Andy Naselli and J.D. Crowley teamed up recently to produce a helpful, shorter book written on the popular level, but with careful thought and strongly based on good research, entitled *Conscience: What It is, How to Train It, and Loving Those Who Differ* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2016), 157 pp. This book was distributed recently to the 12,000 attendees at the biennial conference of Together for the Gospel. D.A. Carson warmly commends the book in its forward saying, “It is a pleasure and privilege to recommend it. . . . Read this book yourself and give a copy to your friends” (p.14). Andy has long been associated with Dr. Carson as his research assistant and more recently as editor of some of his publications. Andy also serves as a professor at the Bethlehem College and Seminary in Minneapolis, Minnesota and elder at the Bethlehem Baptist Church. J.D. Crowley is long-time missionary to Cambodia, whose work in church planting, translation, and commentary writing is extensive. Naselli and Crowley give an evenhanded treatment of the subject, but face the challenge of the limitations of both the size of the book and some Evangelical assumptions, e.g., that many long-embraced worship-style and lifestyle Evangelical positions are held by those with a “strong conscience,” i.e., more Biblically knowledgeable and generally better informed, and others rightly belong in the list of adiaphora, i.e., those things not required of or forbidden to Christians. In fairness, the purpose of the book is not to address specific areas of disagreement among believers, particularly the authors’ disagreements with more culturally conservative Christians, but to provide a good understanding of the subject of conscience in the New Testament. The many figures and charts in the book, as well as many of the explanations of important Scripture passages on the subject are an excellent contribution to that end.

thirty instances in the Greek New Testament where the word συνείδησις occurs in its varied contexts.

Table 1 – New Testament References to συνείδησις

Biblical References	Greek Text	English (NASB)
Acts 23:1	Ἀτενίσας δὲ ὁ Παῦλος τῷ συνεδρίῳ εἶπεν· ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί, ἐγὼ πάσῃ συνειδήσει ἀγαθῇ πεπολίτευμαι τῷ θεῷ ἄχρι ταύτης τῆς ἡμέρας.	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.”
Acts 24:16	ἐν τούτῳ καὶ αὐτὸς ἀσκῶ ἀπρόσκοπον συνείδησιν ἔχειν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν καὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους διὰ παντός.	“In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience <i>both</i> before God and before men.”
Rom. 2:15	οἵτινες ἐνδείκνυνται τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου γραπτὸν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν, συμμαρτυροῦσης αὐτῶν τῆς συνειδήσεως καὶ μεταξὺ ἀλλήλων τῶν λογισμῶν κατηγορούντων ἢ καὶ ἀπολογουμένων.	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.
Rom. 9:1	Ἀλήθειαν λέγω ἐν Χριστῷ, οὐ ψεύδομαι, συμμαρτυροῦσης μοι τῆς συνειδήσεώς μου ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ.	I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit.
Rom. 13:5	διὸ ἀνάγκη ὑποτάσσεσθαι, οὐ μόνον διὰ τὴν ὀργὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ διὰ τὴν συνείδησιν.	Wherefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience’ sake.
1 Cor. 8:7	Ἄλλ’ οὐκ ἐν πᾶσιν ἡ γνώσις· τινὲς δὲ τῇ συνηθείᾳ ἕως ἄρτι τοῦ εἰδώλου ὡς εἰδωλόθυτον ἐσθίουσιν, καὶ ἡ συνείδησις αὐτῶν ἀσθενῆς οὕσα μολύνεται.	However not all men have this knowledge; but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat <i>food</i> as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.
1 Cor. 8:10	ἐὰν γάρ τις ἴδῃ σὲ τὸν ἔχοντα γνώσιν ἐν εἰδωλείῳ κατακείμενον, οὐχὶ ἡ συνείδησις αὐτοῦ ἀσθενοῦς ὄντος οἰκοδομηθήσεται εἰς τὸ τὰ εἰδωλόθυτα ἐσθίειν;	For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols?
1 Cor. 8:12	οὕτως δὲ ἁμαρτάνοντες εἰς τοὺς ἀδελφούς καὶ τύπτοντες αὐτῶν τὴν συνείδησιν ἀσθενοῦσαν εἰς Χριστὸν ἁμαρτάνετε.	And thus, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.
1 Cor. 10:25	Πᾶν τὸ ἐν μακέλλῳ πωλούμενον ἐσθίετε μὴδὲν ἀνακρίνοντας διὰ τὴν συνείδησιν.	Eat anything that is sold in the meat market, without asking questions for conscience’ sake;
1 Cor. 10:27	εἴ τις καλεῖ ὑμᾶς τῶν ἀπίστων καὶ θέλετε πορεύεσθαι, πᾶν τὸ παρατιθέμενον ὑμῖν ἐσθίετε μὴδὲν ἀνακρίνοντας διὰ τὴν συνείδησιν.	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.



1 Cor. 10:28	ἐὰν δέ τις ὑμῖν εἴπῃ· τοῦτο ἱερόθυτόν ἐστιν, μὴ ἐσθίετε δι' ἐκεῖνον τὸν μνηύσαντα καὶ τὴν συνείδησιν·	But if anyone should say to you, "This is meat sacrificed to idols," do not eat <i>it</i> , for the sake of the one who informed <i>you</i> , and for conscience' sake;
1 Cor. 10:29	συνείδησιν δὲ λέγω οὐχὶ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἀλλὰ τὴν τοῦ ἑτέρου. ἵνατί γὰρ ἡ ἐλευθερία μου κρίνεται ὑπὸ ἄλλης συνειδήσεως;	I mean not your own conscience, but the other <i>man's</i> ; for why is my freedom judged by another's conscience?
2 Cor. 1:12	Ἡ γὰρ καύχησις ἡμῶν αὕτη ἐστίν, τὸ μαρτύριον τῆς συνειδήσεως ἡμῶν, ὅτι ἐν ἀπλότητι καὶ εἰλικρινείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ, [καὶ] οὐκ ἐν σοφίᾳ σαρκικῇ ἀλλ' ἐν χάριτι θεοῦ, ἀνεστράφημεν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, περισσοτέρως δὲ πρὸς ὑμᾶς.	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.
2 Cor. 4:2	ἀλλὰ ἀπειπάμεθα τὰ κρυπτὰ τῆς αἰσχύνης, μὴ περιπατοῦντες ἐν πανουργίᾳ μηδὲ δολοῦντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ τῇ φανερώσει τῆς ἀληθείας συνιστάνοντες ἑαυτοὺς πρὸς πᾶσαν συνείδησιν ἀνθρώπων ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ.	but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.
2 Cor. 5:11	Εἰδότες οὖν τὸν φόβον τοῦ κυρίου ἀνθρώπους πείθομεν, θεῷ δὲ πεφανερώμεθα· ἐλπίζω δὲ καὶ ἐν ταῖς συνειδήσεσιν ὑμῶν πεφανερῶσθαι.	Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences.
1 Tim. 1:5	τὸ δὲ τέλος τῆς παραγγελίας ἐστὶν ἀγάπη ἐκ καθαρᾶς καρδίας καὶ συνειδήσεως ἀγαθῆς καὶ πίστεως ἀνυποκρίτου,	But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.
1 Tim. 1:19	ἔχων πίστιν καὶ ἀγαθὴν συνείδησιν, ἣν τινες ἀπώσάμενοι περὶ τὴν πίστιν ἐναυάγησαν,	keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.
1 Tim. 3:9	ἔχοντας τὸ μυστήριον τῆς πίστεως ἐν καθαρᾷ συνειδήσει.	<i>but</i> holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.
1 Tim. 4:2	ἐν ὑποκρίσει ψευδολόγων, κεκαυστηριασμένων τὴν ἰδίαν συνείδησιν,	by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron,
2 Tim. 1:3	Χάριν ἔχω τῷ θεῷ, ᾧ λατρεύω ἀπὸ προγόνων ἐν καθαρᾷ συνειδήσει, ὥς ἀδιάλειπτον ἔχω τὴν περὶ σοῦ μνείαν ἐν ταῖς δεήσεσίν μου νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας,	I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day,
Titus 1:15	πάντα καθαρὰ τοῖς καθαροῖς· τοῖς δὲ μεμιαμένοις καὶ ἀπίστοις οὐδὲν καθαρὸν, ἀλλὰ μεμιάνται αὐτῶν καὶ ὁ νοῦς καὶ ἡ συνείδησις.	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.
Heb. 9:9	ἣτις παραβολὴ εἰς τὸν καιρὸν τὸν ἐνεσθηκότα, καθ' ἣν δωρὰ τε καὶ θυσίαι προσφέρονται μὴ δυνάμεναι κατὰ συνείδησιν τελειῶσαι τὸν λατρεύοντα,	which <i>is</i> a symbol for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience,
Heb. 9:14	πόσῳ μᾶλλον τὸ αἷμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὃς διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου ἑαυτὸν προσήνεγκεν	how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered

	ἄμωμον τῷ θεῷ, καθαριεῖ τὴν συνείδησιν ἡμῶν ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἔργων εἰς τὸ λατρεῖν θεῷ ζῶντι.	Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?
Heb. 10:2	ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἂν ἐπαύσαντο προσφερόμεναι διὰ τὸ μηδεμίαν ἔχειν ἔτι συνείδησιν ἁμαρτιῶν τοὺς λατρεύοντας ἅπαξ κεκαθαρισμένους;	Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins?
Heb. 10:22	προσερχώμεθα μετὰ ἀληθινῆς καρδίας ἐν πληροφορίᾳ πίστεως ῥεραντισμένοι τὰς καρδίας ἀπὸ συνειδήσεως πονηρᾶς καὶ λελουσμένοι τὸ σῶμα ὕδατι καθαρῷ.	let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled <i>clean</i> from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.
Heb. 13:18	Προσεύχεσθε περὶ ἡμῶν· πειθόμεθα γὰρ ὅτι καλὴν συνείδησιν ἔχομεν, ἐν πᾶσιν καλῶς θέλοντες ἀναστρέφεσθαι.	Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things.
1 Pet. 2:19	τοῦτο γὰρ χάρις εἰ διὰ συνείδησιν θεοῦ ὑποφέρει τις λύπας πάσχων ἀδίκως.	For this <i>finds</i> favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.
1 Pet. 3:16	ἀλλὰ μετὰ πραύτητος καὶ φόβου, συνείδησιν ἔχοντες ἀγαθὴν, ἵνα ἐν ᾧ καταλαλεῖσθε καταισχυνθῶσιν οἱ ἐπηρεάζοντες ὑμῶν τὴν ἀγαθὴν ἐν Χριστῷ ἀναστροφὴν.	but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always <i>being</i> ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;
1 Pet. 3:21	ὃ καὶ ὑμᾶς ἀντίτυπον νῦν σώζει βάπτισμα, οὐ σαρκὸς ἀπόθεσις ῥύπου ἀλλὰ συνειδήσεως ἀγαθῆς ἐπερώτημα εἰς θεόν, δι' ἀναστάσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ,	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,

Virtually all of the major English translations of the New Testament render the term συνειδησις by the word “conscience,” which is in itself helpful to right biblical interpretation. The contexts in which the word occurs are also helpful, providing vital nuances of the meaning of this word in the New Testament. Other more precise considerations of the synonymy of the New Testament relevant to the subject and some of the grammatical details of these passages offers more light on the subject as well.

Close consideration of all of these passages also answers another profoundly important question. What are the primary *emphases* of the New Testament on this

function of the human heart called *conscience*? Or, is there a particularly strong emphasis on conscience in one specific part of the Christian life and service, in contrast to the popular preoccupation with the subject, i.e., the need for believers to adapt to each other because of the varied levels of knowledge informing their conscience about right and wrong. Should the varied views of Christians about cultural practices or doctrinal matters, e.g., continuationism or cessationism with reference to the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit for believers, just be accepted as an inevitable result of the phenomenon of conscience in every believer?

Answering these questions will bring us face to face with the several emphases for Christian life and service brought forward by the use of the term *συνειδησις* in the Greek New Testament. Further, the subject requires that the relationship between *συνειδησις*, the knowledge of Scripture, and spiritual maturity be examined closely, to answer the question whether each man's perception of right and wrong through conscience is equally valid before God, and should be used as the touchstone to determine what should be the individual person's attitudes, disposition, words and behavior. In short, is the believer always ultimately left primarily with the subjective conclusions of his own conscience in determining the nature of his obedience, or does God through Scripture intend a significantly more objective method in determining what is right and wrong in one's attitudes, disposition, thoughts, words, and actions?

### *A Summary of Meaning*

The New Testament teaches that the conscience is a distinct function of the inner man. It is resident in all men as a gift from God, but is especially acute in its functioning in the regenerate man. It urges the believer to do the right thing according to the Law of God written in the heart and also illuminated in the Scriptures. Once a Christian takes action by thought, feeling, disposition, or behavior, his conscience will either commend or condemn that action. Its witness will either bring guilt or joy depending on the quality of the action, and will urge repentance if there has been sin committed. Having a good conscience as a Christian is often equated with conforming to the Faith, emphasizing both the centrality and reliability of the believer's conscience to guide him daily as he walks with Christ. Human conscience is neither infallible nor omniscient, but it is to be trusted and is to never be willfully violated by the Christian. He must do all he can to have a conscience void of offense toward God and men and never be the cause in any way of another believer violating his conscience.

After considering the principal contributions of the lexicons, an examination of the passages that include the term, as they group themselves thematically, should follow. There are three themes that are developed by these passages, allowing the Scriptures to speak for themselves about the greater and lesser emphases given to each theme. These thematic passage groupings are (1) the essential functions of συνειδησις; (2) συνειδησις in the unregenerate man, including

the moment of his salvation; and (3) συνειδησις in the regenerate man. This will be followed by (4) some ministry implications.

Table 2—Descriptors of συνειδησις in the New Testament

Biblical References	Descriptors	Regenerate	Unregenerate
Acts 23:1	perfectly good ἐγὼ πάσῃ συνειδήσει ἀγαθῇ	Yes	No
Acts 24:16	blameless ἀπρόσκοπον	Yes	No
Rom. 2:15	their thoughts alternately accusing or defending τῶν λογισμῶν κατηγορούντων ἢ καὶ ἀπολογουμένων	No	Yes
Rom. 9:1	in the Holy Spirit ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ	Yes	No
1 Cor. 8:7	not all men have this knowledge Ἄλλ' οὐκ ἐν πᾶσιν ἡ γνώσις	Yes	No
1 Cor. 8:7	weak ἀσθενῆς	Yes	No
1 Cor. 8:7	defiled οὖσα μολύνεται	Yes	No
1 Cor. 8:10	strengthened οἰκοδομηθήσεται	Yes	No
1 Cor. 8:12	when it is weak ἀσθενεῦσαν	Yes	No
1 Cor. 8:12	wounding their conscience τύπτοντες αὐτῶν τὴν συνείδησιν	Yes	No
1 Tim. 1:5	good ἀγαθῆς	Yes	No
1 Tim. 1:19	good ἀγαθὴν	Yes	No
1 Tim. 3:9	clear καθαρᾶ	Yes	No
1 Tim. 4:2	seared κεκαυστηριασμένων	No	Yes
2 Tim. 1:3	clear καθαρᾶ	Yes	No

Titus 1:15	defiled μεμιάνται	No	Yes
Heb. 9:9	cannot make the worshipper perfect μὴ δυνάμεναι...τελειῶσαι τὸν λατρεύοντα	No	Yes
Heb. 9:14	cleanse...from dead works καθαριεῖ...ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἔργων	Yes	No
Heb. 10:22	having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience ῥεραντισμένοι τὰς καρδίας ἀπὸ συνειδήσεως πονηρᾶς	Yes	No
Heb. 13:18	good καλὴν	Yes	No
1 Pet. 3:16	good ἀγαθὴν	Yes	No
1 Pet. 3:21	good ἀγαθῆς	No	Yes

### *Some Ministry Implications from the Study of Συνειδησις*

#### For the Interpretation of the New Testament

A fresh look by theologians and pastors at the heart of man in the theology of the New Testament is probably in order at this point in the academy, with the goal of the results trickling down in our Christian college classrooms and our churches.

While there is value in considering whether man is bi-partite or tri-partite in his immaterial being, interpreters will probably be better served in thinking in terms of functions of the inner man, rather than parts. A reading of the New Testament makes apparent that the interplay between all the functions of the inner man are constant. The thoughts, empathetic and sympathetic reactions (emotions), dispositions, qualities of character, desires, choices, and moral-spiritual judgments are constantly intermixing to bring a result, all effected by the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit. Central to all of these functions is the conscience, as the internal

teacher, exhorter, judge and jury of the inner man, a particularly forceful channel for God's communication to the believer in daily life by the Holy Spirit.

A renewed emphasis on a good conscience also should be asserted as the benchmark for Christian ministry, due to the emphasis that Paul gives this in his ministerial practice and overall ministerial theology.

The theology of conscience taught in the New Testament affirms that it is a universal phenomenon in all men. The New Testament equates it with living life truly in the Faith. Its centrality to sanctification is second only to the concept of love as the heart of the two greatest commandments. The authority of conscience is absolute, when guided by the Spirit and Scripture. Its dictates must never be violated. Though the conscience of the unbeliever and believer alike is malleable depending on the influences on it, it is to be viewed according to the New Testament as a reliable guide in life, fully capable of directing the believer in the true way, when he is strong in conscience due to a thorough knowledge of the Word of God.

#### For the Church

The theologically conservative church in America has been hurt by assigning too much of a determinative role to the conscience of the individual believer in settling the right or wrong path to holiness for Christians. The rising tide of popular opinion and common practice, often an expression of the conscience of the immature in Church, has been given far too much sway in determining what the Church looks and acts like in this early part of the twenty-first century.

While varying views about Christian behavior, the importance of certain ideas in Scripture, and worship forms and practices are inevitable because of the

levels of knowledge of the Word of God, the variety of Christian communities within the Biblical church in America and varying levels of spiritual maturity among believers, this should not deter the leaders of the Church from a serious search.

This fresh search will be for the moral nature or content of *everything* Christians think and do. We are called upon to “examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22). Even more, we are challenged to “approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory of God” (Philippians 1:9-11). We are long overdue for an “excellence reset” in the theologically conservative church in America, all the way from the far right fundamentalists to the leftwing evangelicals, clear across the full spectrum of those who claim that salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone is the only way of salvation, and the that the Word of God is the inerrant revelation of God for believers for faith and practice. An historic word for this “excellence reset” is revival.

#### For the Believer

The teaching of the New Testament on the conscience of the believer requires a new birth of self-examination and a refocus on holiness among the people of God, rather than cultural adaptation. A truly biblical separation, not cultural adaptation, is the secret to impactful evangelism, as the light of godly example shines forth in the dark world and into the dark hearts of the lost.



For the believer to year after year bemoan his lack of Bible reading, prayer, and overall inability to make serious progress in holiness is an affront to Christ, the compassionate “Holy One” (so named in Luke 4:34; Acts 4:27). It is right for believers to say they have a good conscience, a strong conscience, a pure conscience, a clear conscience, a blameless conscience. Yes, we will always have the flesh and sinful failure, but this is not to be the daily norm for the believer. Those of us who teach must teach sanctifying grace and as well as saving grace so those we serve will live a life of spiritual triumph, joy, and fruitfulness, as their conscience assures them that they are walking faithfully with Him.