

Is Conscience A Safe Guide?

Introduction:

- A. popular admonition: “Let your conscience be your guide.”
- B. This is used to justify religious division.- John 14:6
- C. Is conscience a safe guide? - Acts 23:1

I. What is “conscience”?

- A. “con” “with”; “science” “to know” - “to know with oneself”
- B. Thus “conscience” is a consciousness of guilt or innocence. - Hebrews 10:2
- C. The function of conscience is to bear witness of one’s guilt or innocence to that person himself as he compares his own thoughts words and actions to whatever standard of right and wrong he has accepted. - Romans 9:1; John 8:9; e.g., governor on engine

II. Can conscience alone safely guide?

- A. Man is incapable of guiding himself.- Jeremiah 10:23; Judges 17:6; 21:25; Isaiah 53:6
- B. Some consciences are incapable of exerting the proper influence.

1. weak- 1 Corinthians 8:7

a. ignorant - Ibid

b. fails to exert enough influence- 1 Corinthians 8:10-12

2. defiled

a. violated - 1 Corinthians 8:7

b. filthy minded - Titus 1:15

3. seared - 1 Timothy 4:2; Ephesians 4:17-19

C. Saul of Tarsus exemplifies the problem.

1. He persecuted disciples of Christ “unto the death.”- Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-2; 22:4

2. Yet his conscience approved.- Acts 23:1; 26:9

3. This did not free him from guilt.- 1 Timothy 1:15

III. Is conscience ever a safe witness?

A. Before Saul learned the truth his conscience was unsafe. - 1 Timothy 1:13-15

B. After he learned the truth, his conscience bore proper testimony. - Acts 24:14-16

Conclusion:

A. Conscience, to bear proper testimony, must itself be properly guided.

B. That guide is not human feelings but divine revelation. - 2 Corinthians 5:7; Romans 10:17