

2 Corinthians: Encouragement in Troubling Times
"The Soul's Warning System" # 3
2 Cor. 1:12-15
4-24-16 Sun AM

Let me start by talking about the believer's conscience...The human conscience is a warning system placed in man to warn of damage to the soul. Sad thing is that many have been taught to ignore and silence the conscience viewing it as harmful to your self-esteem.

The **NIB Dictionary** describes the conscience as "A person's inner awareness of conforming to the will of God or departing from it, resulting in either approval or condemnation."

Guilt and sin are viewed as something beyond your control and not moral or spiritual. "Conscience" has the idea of knowing oneself. Even unbelievers have a moral sense of right and wrong.

Rom. 2:14, For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

We as believers have a mind or conscience cleansed at salvation from guilt and shame, and renewed by the word of God. Our conscience calls us to live according to God's law. The Bible speaks of a good conscience and a clear conscience.

The conscience can be dull, evil, defiled, seared, and violated.

Heb. 9:14, How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Paul wrote to defend himself from the attacks of false apostles at Corinth. They attacked his integrity, character, motive, and qualifications.

In his defense Paul appealed to the testimony of a clear conscience to their three accusations-

1. They accused him of being a wicked sinner suffering for his sins.
2. They accused him of being a deceiver and a manipulator.
3. They charged he was a false teacher and a liar.

Q- How do you respond when accused falsely? What brings you peace and comfort?

TT- Paul depended on his clear conscience to exonerate him.

How can we have a clear conscience?

I. Live in Holiness and Godly Sincerity (1:12).

The false apostles charged that Paul's suffering was chastening for his sin, but Paul's conduct said otherwise. He had lived in holiness and godly sincerity.

Holiness describes moral purity or pure motives. Paul's life contrasted with the lies of his accusers.

Sincerity describes something held up to the light of the sun for inspection. Paul's sincerity flowed from his holiness and purity of life. Paul said this was by **the grace of God**.

1 Cor. 15:10, But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Phil. 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

What is Paul saying? Our holiness does not come from our own efforts (fleshly wisdom) but in the grace of God.

Fleshly wisdom is the manifestation of sinful man's rebellion against God.

Paul's life before them for 18 months was on display contrasted with the sins of Corinth. There was nothing to back up his accusers accusations. There was no there there!

All this does not mean Paul was sinless and perfect. We don't go to heaven because we are perfect in the flesh; we go to heaven because our faith is in the perfect one.

How can we have a clear conscience...

I. Live in Holiness and Godly Sincerity (1:12).

II. Live Right before Men (1:13-14a).

They accused Paul of being a deceiver and manipulator with ulterior motives. If the first charge is false, then the second can't be true either.

Paul had no hidden agenda there was no deception involved in his ministry. His life and what he wrote were in harmony. He was clear, transparent and straight forward.

Paul's letters were perfectly consistent with who he was in person.

How can we have a clear conscience...

I. Live in Holiness and Godly Sincerity.

II. Live Right before Men.

III. Live in Truth (1:14b).

Paul was right with his life and right before others, but he was also right in his theology and teaching. His accusers charged he was errant in his theology.

You will see as we go through this letter why I believe his thorn in the flesh was these enemies of the cross and not necessarily a physical ailment.

2 Cor. 2:17 For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

Paul was no spiritual con-man twisting the truth for his personal gain. They should have boasted in the Lord and looked forward to the day they would see each other in the day of the Jesus Christ, when they would embrace each in eternal perfect fellowship.

Paul was able to endure physical abuse, false accusations, disappointments and defections with a conscience that did not accuse him though others did.

Application: How can we be like Paul?

1. Learn and meditate on God's Word. A mind renewed by the Word of God is your defense.
2. Pray continually that you would be watchful of temptation.
3. Avoid spiritual pride by recognizing God's grace.
4. Recognize the seriousness of sin and confess and repent.