

The Good Conscience
1 Timothy 1:18-19
January 10, 2021

Back in March 11, 2011, a circuit court judge in Clay County, Kentucky, named R. Cletus Maricle, was permanently disbarred. He was not only disbarred, but was sentenced to 15 years and 10 months in prison.

Why? Because R. Cletus Maricle and 7 other Kentucky officials were found guilty of voter fraud. Some people cheat. They will do anything to secure their power. These eight people paid others to vote for their political candidates. They did this in the election years of 2002, 2004 and 2006. This group of eight spent about \$400,000 to bribe 8,000 voters to vote for their candidates to secure their election.¹ Why? Through their election, these eight would secure their power and influence. They were all found guilty and served their time.

If we cannot have a fair election in this country, it would be very sad. In order to have democracy we need to be able to have a fair election. We need to be able to trust our election process. Fair election is what guarantees freedom. What is equality in its true sense? What assures human equality, at least among the adult citizens of a country? We are not born equal. We are not born with the same IQ. We are not born into the same family or raised in the same way? We don't have the same education. We don't have the same income. We don't have the same living standard. So, what makes everyone equal? Wouldn't it be one person one vote, at least for the adult citizens?

I just hope and pray that we have a fair election in this country.

God has given us conscience, an inner voice that guides our behaviors.

The Bible calls the conscience a law written on the heart. Because it is written on the heart, you cannot get rid of. It's always there. It lives with us. You can argue with your conscience. You can harden your conscience. You can deny your conscience. But you can never get rid of your conscience. Socrates described conscience as the wife from whom there is no divorce.

We all know the basic rule of goodness to live by. Tell the truth. Do not steal. Do not harm. Respect one another. Honor your parents.

¹ <https://www.kentucky.com/news/local/crime/article44083659.html>

We don't need to post these principles on the public buildings. We know them. When we were young, we needed to learn these basic principles. We needed to etch them in our hearts. And we needed to learn to honor them by practicing them. When we are grown up, these principles should be part of us. They should be the pattern of our lives. We should live by them.

Living by good conscience is so important that Paul claimed in Romans 2:13-16 that people who have never heard the gospel will be saved by following their good consciences. The law written on their hearts will be credited to them as righteousness on the Day of Judgment.

Paul says: "For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous in God's sight, but the doers of the law who will be justified. When Gentiles, who do not possess the law, do instinctively what the law requires, these, though not having the law, are a law to themselves. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, to which their own conscience also bears witness; and their conflicting thoughts will accuse or perhaps excuse them on the day when... Jesus Christ will judge the secret thoughts of all."² Following good conscience, following the law written on the hearts, is how we should live each and every day. Paul even says that the ones who have never heard the gospel will be saved by following their good conscience.

But this good conscience can be weakened or deadened by neglect or willful disregard. How does it happen? When you violate your conscience, you will be disturbed in your heart. You will know you did something wrong. You will feel the discomfort. But if you keep on repeating it, you get used to it. You don't feel the discomfort anymore. Whatever the sinful act that may be, it becomes part of your character. It no longer bothers you, because your conscience has been compromised, weakened, and calloused.

The same thing happens with the society. What was once despised by the society becomes a part of it when many people accept it or endorse it. That very despised behavior slowly enters into the society and begins to spread. Through the help of the mass media more and more people begin to accept it. Soon, it becomes prevalent in the society. And the moral conscience of the society becomes deadened.

Sometimes we think we can commit a "small" sin and just move on in life. We don't think about it as a big deal. We move on. But the truth of the matter is

² Romans 2:13-16.I

that the death of a conscience starts with small things that become larger things. When we do something we know is wrong, yet continue in that path and try to cover it up, that is the sure way to harden our conscience.

What shape is your conscience in? Is it tender and responsive? Or is it dull and unresponsive? The Bible warns of those who have their consciences seared “with a hot iron” (1 Timothy 4:2 NKJV).

All of us are familiar with the Holocaust, and the fact that six million Jews were murdered at the hands of Adolph Hitler. Over the entrance of Auschwitz, one of those concentration camps, do you know what you find? You find these bone-chilling words of Hitler, who wrote: “I want to raise a generation devoid of conscience.” Can you imagine? He wanted to raise a generation that defiles conscience.

Out of moral conviction the world stopped Hitler. I hope we never see a generation devoid of conscience.

If you want to live with a clear conscience, and die with a cleansed conscience, surrender your heart to the Son of God, submit your life to the Word of God. Let it challenge you. Let it nurture you. Let it transform you, so that your conscience can be your guide all the way to the presence of God when you meet him face to face. May we live this year and every year with a good and clear conscience!