



## The Conscience

**The prodigal son cried out, "I have sinned..."**

**The shed blood of Christ was effective in three different directions, upward toward God, inward toward the conscience, and outward toward the devil.**

### **God created man a tripartite**

"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thes. 5:23).

According to the scripture, a person is composed of a spirit, soul and body. The body is the physical vehicle that carries about the spirit and the soul. It has basically five sensory functions, sight, hearing, taste, smell and feeling. By these functions the soul is fed information about its physical environment and enables the soul to make necessary decisions to preserve and enhance natural life.

The center and life of a person is his spirit. When the body stops functioning and is placed into the grave, the spirit departs to creator God. "By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Gen. 3:19). "Thou dost hide Thy face, they are dismayed; Thou dost take away their spirit, they expire, and return to their dust" (Psa. 104:29). "Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it" (Eccles. 12:7). The blood represents the life of the flesh (Lev. 17:11), but the spirit is the life of man.

God breathed into man "breathe or spirit" and man became a living soul. It is in the capacity of the spirit to communicate in the spirit world. God is Spirit.

The three main divisions of the soul are the mind, will and emotions, and in diagram form it lays between the body and the spirit. Because of its advantageous position, it can receive freely information from both the physical world and the spirit world. The emotional part of the soul can be affected by information being fed to it through the sensory functions of the body, or its connection to the spirit within. The mind can be divided into two major parts, the judicial and the executive. Whether thoughts are triggered from the physical world or the spiritual world, the thoughts first come into the judicial portion of the mind. The judicial part has been influenced or shaped by either the outside environment or the spirit environment or by both. (That will be considered later.) After a judgment has been reached, then the executive part of the mind becomes active. It gives the decision(s) to the Will, and the body functions carries out the command(s).

### **The location of the conscience**

It appears to me that the conscience is not located in either the soul or the spirit of the tripartite man. If it was located in the spirit, when the new birth takes places, there would not be any need for its re-education and renewal. If it was located in the soul, then it would be permanently affected by the sin of Adam, and it would have been necessary to experience death and resurrection in Christ.

In my opinion it is a special faculty in contact with the spirit and the soul, but not totally identified with either, and is affected by both. In the spirit the conscience is in contact with the spirit's intuition (knowing) and in the soul its connection is with the judicial portion of the mind.

There are three major players in shaping the conscience, the social system, the religious system, and the written or spoken word of God.

It has been widely published that the "life script" (the way that information is processed in the mind) is already fixed by the age of twelve. Some have declared this age could be much younger. What does this mean? Personal experiences, parental training, relationships, school teachers and peers have contributed certain principles, guidelines, and experiences that cause either pain and joy, all of which have affected the way a person processes information. If the outside environment has been the major contributor of such information, and not an relationship with God or His word, that person has a conscience shaped by the world's system and cannot be trusted.

This "life script" can only be changed by a significant emotional event, such as a consequence of disobedience, or a hand placed in the fire, or an emotional shock, something that so effects the individual that he will never think the same in that area ever again. When he sees a fire, his curiosity will not cause him to place his hand willfully into the fire again. The experience of pain has changed the way he processes information. A parent may say to his child, "Don't play in the street!" Not long afterward the parent sees the child in the street and immediately he retrieves the child. Quickly the parent punishes the child for disobedience. The pain of punishment shapes the way the child processes information. Each significant emotional event shapes in some way how a person processes information.

### **Conscience**

The word "conscience" comes from the Greek word, "suneidesis" (4893), (sun, "with," oida, "to know") and literally means "a knowing with" or co-knowledge with oneself. There is a wide range of opinions on the conscience, how it is influenced and how it functions.

Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words describes conscience as that faculty by which we apprehend the will of God, as that which is designed to govern our lives; hence (a) the sense of guiltiness before God; that process of thought which distinguishes what it considers morally good or bad, commending the good, condemning the bad, and so prompting to do the former, and avoid the latter. Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary describes conscience as a person's inner awareness of conforming to the will of God or departing from it, resulting in either a sense of approval or condemnation. It was pointed out that the term "conscience" is not mentioned in the Old Testament, but the concept does.

New Unger's Bible Dictionary says that the conscience is the awareness that a proposed act is or is not conformable to one's ideal of right and manifesting itself in the feeling of obligation or duty.

James Stalker from International Standard Bible Encyclopedia gives some interesting data. He stated that the aspect of conscience earliest noticed in literature and most frequently referred to at all times is what is called the Sequent Conscience--that is to say, it follows action.

### **The Sequent Conscience:**

1. Judicial: No sooner is a decision formed than there ensues a judgment favorable or adverse, a sentence of guilty or not guilty.
2. Punitive: In the individual's own breast are not only the figures of justice already mentioned, but the executioner as well; for, on the back of a sentence of condemnation or acquittal, there immediately follows the pain of a wounded or the satisfaction of an approving con-

science; and of all human miseries or bliss this is the most poignant.

3. Predictive: There is no instinct in the soul of man more august than the anticipation of something after death--of a tribunal at which the whole of life will be revised and retribution awarded with perfect justice according to the deeds done in the body.

4. Social: Not only does a man's own conscience pass sentence on his conduct, but the consciences of others pass sentence on it too; and to this may be due a great intensification of the consequent sensations.

### **Antecedent Conscience:**

From the Sequent is distinguished the Antecedent Conscience, which designates a function of this faculty preceding moral decision or action. When the will stands at the parting of the ways, seeing clearly before it the right course and the wrong, conscience commands to strike into the one and forbids to choose the other. What conscience commands may be apparently against our interests, and it may be completely contrary to our inclinations; it may be opposed to the advice of friends or to the solicitations of companions; it may contradict the decrees of principalities and powers or the voices of the multitude; yet conscience in no way withdraws or modifies its claim. The great crises of life arise when conscience is issuing one command and self-interests or passion or authority another, and the question has to be decided which of the two is to be obeyed. (End of quote)

The definition of Vine, Unger and Nelson is shallow and incomplete, not really dealing with the workings of the conscience, whereas, Stalker brings to front some interesting viewpoints. I ask you to consider the content of this writing, basing that consideration on the scriptures and reasonable deduction from experience.

## **The Conscience**

### **Evidence of conscience from the beginning:**

Even though conscience is not mentioned in the Old Testament, its manifestation is quite evident in the Garden of Eden. Because of Satan's craftiness, Adam and Eve sinned against the commandment of God. Immediately they sewed fig leaves together, made themselves loin coverings and hid themselves from the Lord in the Garden. Their conscience was pure, having not been exposed to any other shaping forces other than the word of God, reacted to their erroneous behavior and brought conviction. At that point their conscience could be trusted.

It is remarkable how the conscience has been molded by religion. Both major and minor religions have legislated hundreds of regulations upon their converts, and when their converts break those laws, whether they agree with the word of God or not, their conscience is painfully affected. The way you dress, fix the hair, types of food, certain language, types of entertainment, that are defined by a religious system, will shape the conscience of its converts. If those laws are broken, the conscience will be negatively affected. Paul exhorted the Hebrew Christians who were being tempted to return to their former religious practices, "Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience" (Heb. 9:9). Purity of conscience cannot be obtained in religion. Paul argued that if sacrifices of animals could have erased the consciousness of sins, why were they constantly being offered, year after year. Heb. 10:2.

I am convinced that the conscience must be reeducated according to the word of God and that it cannot be trusted until that happens.

### **The blood of Christ and conscience**

The first mention in the Bible of the word "conscience" is by Paul as he defended himself before the religious council of Jerusalem, "Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience be-

fore God up to this day" (Acts 23:1), and the second mention is located in Acts 24:16 as Paul defended himself before the governor Felix, "In view of this (the resurrection), I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men."

Because Paul had been trained religiously by the Pharisee Sect, he thought imprisoning Christians, beating and killing them was the will of God. Paul described himself as a "blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor," the number one sinner, yet he was doing these things because he was ignorant of the true will of God. His conscience was religiously trained to accept this kind of behavior if he was doing it in the name of God. 1 Timothy 1:13, 15. His zeal as a Pharisee was a persecutor of the church. Phil. 3:6.

When he was on his way to Damascus with orders to persecute, bind the Christians, and bring them to Jerusalem for religious judgment, God, in His mercy and grace, struck him to the ground. "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me" (Acts 9:4)? He replied, "Who are you Lord?" Then Paul heard these astounding and life-changing words: "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting..." (Acts 9:5)! Immediately his conscience was awakened to the truth of his actions. He confessed that he was the worst of sinners. A conscience exposed to the gospel of Christ is touched supernaturally to the extent that the person recognizes their miserable condition, and if listened to, will believe in Christ and confess him with their mouth. The awakened conscience cries out, "You are a sinner!"

A sinner In the presence of the Lord and His enlightening word, experiences a flood of guilt in the conscience. He must either choose to acknowledge his sinful condition or turn away. If the sinner continues to turn away from the message of the gospel, the guilt will lessen each time, until finally, there cannot be felt any remorse or guilt. His conscience continues then to plunge into more ensnaring darkness and insensitivity to the word of God.

Once a sinner accepts Jesus as His Savior through an awakened consciousness of the righteousness of God, his conscience, having passed through the gate of salvation, is placed on a long journey of total recovery from its polluted condition caused by the social and religious influences of his past. The journey of Paul's conscience led him to declare that he was blameless before God and men. This should be our destination in the service of the Lord.

The blood of Christ has dealt effectively with a sinner's guilt problem. The guilt problem caused Adam and Eve to hide from the presence of God. Guilt is the consequence of sin and guilt will lead to fear and fear will ultimately bring a person to death.

"Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. 11:22). Even though Paul was a religious man, he possessed an evil conscience. If you study the mid-centuries, there was an intense persecution against certain believers who were not conforming to the religious system of the day. They were unmercifully tortured, burned at the stake, and killed in unimaginable, unthinkable ways. And for the most part, in the name of the church. These religious persecutors possessed an evil conscience! Yet there remains a blood provision from the cross of Jesus. Paul wrote this word: "How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Heb. 9:14)?

Conscience means a co-knowing with oneself. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit and the word of God, your conscience, even if it is evil and polluted, will witness to your mind that you are guilty of sin. This is a fact: The blood of Christ has sufficiently answered the penalty of God's judgment against sin, therefore the mind, having weighed the words of God and judged them properly, relays the fact about the work of the blood of Christ to the conscience, saying, "The sentence has been met

by another, and you are justified in the eyes of God." The conscience accepts the word of God as true and corrects itself.

When the mind is illuminated with the value of the shed blood of the Christ and that it has totally paid the penalty of God's judgment against man, and has satisfied the requirements of a just and pure God, then that blood-revelation cleanses and purges the information center of the conscience so that it can be placed on God's agenda of total trustworthiness. (Definition of Information center: the nerve center, the beach-head position, the initial base for the purging process)

Another outstanding example of the work of the conscience is found in the history of King David. Electing not to go to battle with his commander Joab, he stayed behind in Jerusalem. While strolling on his rooftop in the cool of the evening, he saw a beautiful woman bathing, and sent messengers to inquire about the woman. He found out her name was Bathsheba and was married to Uriah the Hittite. Disregarding the law of marriage, he committed fornication with her, probably justifying himself that a king had certain special executive and sexual privileges. (Otherwise, he could have rationalize that the position of a king was above the law and the law was meant only for the people.) After all he was the law maker and the law enforcer.

After he was told that Bathsheba was pregnant, he hurriedly sent for Uriah, her husband, thinking that while he was in Jerusalem, he would eat and sleep in his own house. To the dismay of King David, Uriah slept at the door of the king's house, and after being questioned about his strange behavior, he replied, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in temporary shelters, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Shall I then go to my house to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? By your life and the life of your soul, I will not do this thing" (2 Sam. 11:11).

The cover-up plan had failed! What a revolting development to King David. He wanted to cover his sin by having Uriah to go in to his wife (this was before blood tests), but here was a soldier so dedicated to his service to the king and the country, that he refused to except any special privileges. In another desperate move, David invited him to dinner and proceeded to get him drunk, hoping that he would forget his patronage, and go in to his wife. But Uriah did not. All the while, in the frenzy of his dilemma, the conscience of David lay in a coma to his wrongs.

David reasoned the only way he could handle his problem, was attempt to create a scenario on the battle field, alert Joab the commander to his plan, and have Uriah fall in battle attacking the city gate. The plan succeeded. Uriah heroically died in battle defending his king and the country. David thinking no one else would know the plot except him and Joab. Wrong!

Uriah died thinking he was defending his king and country, but in fact he was victim of a terrible plot to eliminate him and to cover up the lust of his king. The ramifications of this story is shocking and astonishes the imagination of the mind.

God sent Nathan the prophet with a message to David, "You are a murderer in Israel!" Instantly the word of the Lord erased the cover-up, swept away the deception, exposed the truth to the conscience, and David cried out, "I have sinned against the Lord." Nathan replied, "The Lord also has taken away your sin; you shall not die."

David wrote a song about this horrible mistake he had made and it is found in Psalms 51. "Blot out my transgression...wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin...against You, You only, I have sinned...behold, You desire truth in the innermost being...purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean...wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow...hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities...create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me...and

do not take Your Holy Spirit from me...restore to me the joy of Your salvation." A new heart is needed. The old heart cannot be repaired, remodeled or restored. "Let us draw near with a true heart." A true heart is a new heart. Mankind needed a heart transplant and God gave him one through the Lord Jesus. Even though we have become a new creation, we still have retained the same mind and conscience.

**The conscience is separated into three divisions by the scriptures: the seared, the soiled and the purged conscience.**

"But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods, which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth" (1 Tim. 4:1-3).

"Seared" (Theodoret) implies extreme insensibility; as cauterizing deadens sensation. Rather [kekauteriasmenon], 'branded' with the consciousness of sins against their better knowledge, like scars burnt in by a branding-iron. As a "seal" marks the elect (2 Tim. 2:19), so "a brand" the condemned. The image is from branding criminals." (from Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary). "They bear the marks of their hypocrisy as evidently and as indelibly in their conscience in the sight of God, as those who have been cauterized for their crimes done in their bodies in the sight of men. It was customary in ancient times to mark those with a hot iron who had been guilty of great crimes, such as sacrilege, etc. And the pagans supposed that even in the other world they bear such marks." (from Adam Clarke Commentary)

A baby comes into this world with an innocent and pure conscience, certainly not a corrupt and seared one. It is influenced socially and religiously, and if all of its development is in the environment of gross darkness and wickedness, total insensitivity to sin and wrong can be the outcome. Please take notice of what is right and wrong as it is shaped by society or religion. What was virtuous and acceptable in Athens in many cases would be sinful in Jerusalem; what is admired as heroism in some Arab nations is unacceptable in the USA. To awaken such a conscience to the righteousness of God would require a special miracle.

A generation that lost touch with God and was enveloped by tyranny, darkness and wickedness was the generation of Noah. "Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). A generation that had declined into insensitivity toward God; had their conscience seared, could not be drawn unto God by the righteous preaching of Noah. Peter described this generation: "But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed..." (2 Pe. 2:12).

A seared conscience does not happen over night, but gradually, day by day, resisting God, His word, His interventions, willfully choosing to do wrong, until the twinge of the conscience is totally silenced. It lays between the spirit and the soul, cauterized and unable to perform its intended purpose. The ashes of Sodom and Gomorrah is another biblical example of a people who digressed into a hopeless situation. Lot, having been exposed to the word of God, lived among them "felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds" (2 Pe. 2:8). From Bethel Lot had looked out beyond the city of Ai and saw the rich lands of the Jordan Valley. He settled in the cities of the valley and moved his tents as far as Sodom. Placing his priorities on tangible prosperity, he compromised his lifestyle, even though his conscience kept warning him of impending judgment. When the destroying angels came to Sodom, Lot was sitting in the gate, a place reserved for the elders (leaders) of a city. As the story develops, the scene is painted by unprincipled, wicked and unreasoning self-

willed men, filled with degrading lusts, attempting to defile God's messengers. Their consciences were seared. Swift destruction came from the Lord in the form of fire and brimstone.

The Spirit is speaking clearly concerning the latter days. Because people will depart from the faith, saying by their action, there is nothing to the word of God, His church or His power; and give their allegiance to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, and listen to the hypocrisy of liars who are seared in their conscience, they will be brought into judgment. Liars who are seared in their conscience. Knowing that we live in the last days, it is imperative to be on the alert for such ensnarement.

### **The soiled conscience**

"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" (Titus 1:15).

Paul was addressing to Titus the problem of the Cretians who had come under the influence of the circumcision sect, radical Jews who insisted that believing Gentiles must keep the law in order to be saved. He said that many of these Jews were empty talkers, deceivers, upsetting families, teaching things for monetary profit, liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons, defiled and unbelieving. In addition to that, their minds and consciences were defiled or stained. The word "defilement" meant to the Jew a condition that had been created because of touching a dead body, or being in a house where someone had died. Their behavior testified to the fact of a stained conscience. "Worthless" carries the idea of adulterated, like a bad coin, deficient both in the weight and goodness of the metal, and consequently, not negotiable. They had the name of God's people but were counterfeit.

A defiled conscience is one that once was clean, but now is stained, contaminated or soiled. Mostly, this is a result of holding the truth in unrighteousness, and allowing religious teaching and practice that is against the word of God to go uncorrected.

A stained conscience can be the result of a growing insensitivity to the corruption of our social environment. Profanity, vulgarity, nudity, corporate ladder-climbing, surrounds our daily lives on our jobs, on the streets of our cities, in the magazines, and most of all, through television. A believer is not of the world, but nevertheless, he is in the world. We as believers hear constantly filthy words, and if we are not careful, grow insensitive to it. Outside of our homes, we have to be protected by the Holy Spirit and ask God to form a protection around our minds. But in our homes, we have certain responsibilities and controls. "Blocking vulgarity out" on TV can be the work of maturity, but what about our kids. When the conscience is not affected by the above list, a self examination is in order. Religious persecution is a result of a soiled conscience, such as happened in past history. Before Paul was struck down on the road to Damascus, he was an example of one who possessed a soiled conscience that had been defiled by religion. He persecuted the church in the name of God, thinking he was pleasing God, but instead he was punishing the Lord Jesus. When the light of the Lord appeared to him and he established communication with Jesus, this defilement was sprinkled by the blood of Jesus.

A defiled conscience cannot be trusted. The revelation of the word of God must take precedence over the past religious teaching.

### **The re-education of the conscience.**

"I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship and do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom. 12:1-2).

“This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Ephes. 4:17-23).

Transformation of the mind and conscience will take place because of its exposure to the presence and the word of God. Any thing that is unlike God or contrary to His word, the Spirit of God will highlight that in the conscience and the mind, bringing them together in a co-knowing with the Spirit of God, and remove the defiling stain. From one revelation to another, from one sprinkling of the blood to another, progressively, the conscience and the mind are cleansed. The calluses on the conscience are softened and removed under the rays of the “Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6).

Paul exhorts Timothy to be “constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine" of Christ (1 Tim. 4:6) and to “pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching" (1 Tim. 4:16). Again Paul writes, “Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you" (2 Tim. 1:13, 14). And finally, “You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them...the sacred writings," because “all scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 14-17).

Re-education of the mind and the conscience is clearly set forth by the instructions of Paul to one of his young pastors. Stay under the influence of the word of God, guard it as an irreplaceable treasure, and Timothy you will be saved and will save others through your teaching.

As a believer spends time in the presence of God and in the word of God, a transformation begins to take place in the conscience. The conscience begins a de-constructing and a re-constructing process. The past major influences of our lives that have fixed the way information is processed and that established certain principles contrary to God, must be drastically altered. The Holy Spirit begins changing us supernaturally through the process called revelation. There are two agents in divine revelation: inspiration and illumination. First there comes a quickening in our spirits to read, to do, to mediate, to observe, and as we give attention to this inspiration, God unfolds revelation. Change takes place!

### **The Weak Conscience**

The weak conscience must also be re-educated. If not, it will rob believers of many blessings and limit their freedom in Christ. Paul, addressing the problem of meat that had been sacrificed to idols that was purchased by Christians in the open market, urged that those who believed that idols were nothing and the meat good for food not to judge others that did not. He identified those who could not eat the meat sacrificed to animals as having a weak conscience. Paul writes, “Their conscience being weak is defiled" (1 Cor. 8:7). There is a freedom in knowing the truth, but knowledge of the truth should not turn into a loveless arrogance. Paul comes to this conclusion: “And so, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ" (1 Cor. 8:11). Believers must “speak the truth in love”, and not to become brutal and unfeeling. The Christian is not called to be “truth butchers”, cutting and slicing on the conscience of others, rather he is called to be patient, kind, tender, merciful, considerate and the balm of the Holy Spirit. Brutality of this sort does

not get God's approval.

If godly patience is applied, a weak conscience can be re-educated according to the word of God and be strengthened. With all of its rigid rules, religion produces a weakened conscience, but what religion weakens, the Spirit of God can rebuild.

### **A purged conscience**

"I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 9:1).

A conscience giving truthful witness in the Holy Spirit should be the goal of every Christian. Not only was there an initial "purging of the information center", that penetration of revelation into a soiled or seared conscience when faith entered into the mind through hearing the word of Christ, but a progressive purging as the conscience became exposed to the presence and the word of God on a continual basis. The above scripture reference is not a confession of a convert, but a tested, tried and seasoned warrior of the gospel.

"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 conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you" (2 Cor. 4:2).

Paul's conscience on the witness stand of human behavior was accurate, trustworthy and pure, and was not re-educated through the wisdom of man, but in the grace of God.

In part the purged conscience has been introduced. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit and the word of God, your conscience will witness to your mind that you are guilty of sin. According to the word of God, the blood of Christ sufficiently answered the penalty of sin and its guilt to the satisfaction of God, thus the blood-revelation is established in the mind and in the information center of the conscience. A co-knowing with the Spirit of God and oneself brings peace and joy under the covering of the blood of Jesus. Now the conscience is set on the path of total trustworthiness.

"How much more shall the blood of Christ...purge your conscience from dead works" (Heb. 9:14).  
"There is therefore, no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1).

Condemnation means that after careful examination and investigation you are guilty, therefore, your sentence is this, death! Condemnation vibrates from the conscience. The only relief available is the knowledge of the blood of Jesus and how it pays the price for our sins, and upon our expressed faith, we are placed into Christ Jesus. Christ is not condemned by God, but accepted by God and exalted in the heavens. We have been placed in Christ by God, therefore, we too, are accepted in the Beloved and exalted in Him. These spiritual facts silence the conscience, and we stand in peace before the throne of God. Initially, upon the confession of our faith, we are positioned in Christ on the throne. This was made possible by the blood of Jesus. "Seated in the heavens," is your spiritual position. Because of the imputed or bestowed righteousness of God upon us, we stand blameless and holy in His sight. This transaction is by our faith! Paul writes, "But now in Christ Jesus, you, who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ" (Ephes. 2:13).

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Heb. 10:19). How did this boldness develop. Certainly, not instantly. I am convinced that over a ten year period the word of righteousness worked in Paul, proving beyond a shadow of doubt that the blood of animals did not atone for him anymore, but there was better blood offered once and for all.

The new creation is connected with heaven, being in heaven and in us at the same time. Because in the spirit there is not any distance or separation. There is an eternal present tense, but on earth there is distance and time. The conscience or the mind was not raised to sit in heavenly places.

The salvation of God must be out-worked into our lives and behavior. Progressively, the conscience experiences the purging revelation of God, bringing it into alignment with the conscience of God. The goal is to faithfully expose the conscience to the presence and word of God until the truth prevails and it will genuinely react according to the perfect will of God. And as with Paul we can declare, "I stand blameless before God and man."

A good conscience must be maintained and its trustworthiness cannot be a mere assumption, because it is constantly being bombarded by erroneous information from the world's system and the religious system. Paul writes to Timothy, "Keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith" (1 Tim. 1:19). A conscience must be kept and guarded from the contamination of philosophies that lead to death, that are against the principles of the scripture and the nature of God. In the same measure that we should keep our faith, we should keep our conscience. "Keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame" (1 Pe. 3:16).

Our pursuit after a pure conscience should be a priority in our walk as a Christian. Paul requested this prayer: "Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things" (Heb. 13:18). The desire of the Holy Spirit within us is that our lives would be a testimony of His teaching and guidance. One of the major functions of the Spirit is to guide believers into the truth, and this is done both in the conscience and in the mind.

One of the functions of water baptism is to send a positive message to the conscience that "I am an obedient disciple, publicly making a confession that I will follow the Lord, keep his commandments and learn of His ways. Water baptism is an instituted ceremony by the Lord to testify of the death of the old creation and the resurrection of the new. It speaks out publicly what has happened inwardly. The funeral service of the old man is in water baptism. It is an appeal to God for a good conscience. 1 Pet. 3:21.

### **The ashes of the red heifer Numbers 19:1-10**

Our pursuit after a pure conscience should be a priority in our walk as a Christian. Paul requested this prayer: "Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things" (Heb. 13:18). The desire of the Holy Spirit within us is that our lives would be a testimony of His teaching and guidance. One of the major functions of the Spirit is to guide believers into the truth, and this is done both in the conscience and in the mind.

How is the conscience made acceptable unto God and can be in the presence of God without responding with the sense of guilt?

There are two major players in making this possible: one is the cleansing of the blood. The blood of Jesus constantly cleanses us from all sin and every sin. The believer becomes the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.

Second there is "sprinkling of the ashes of the red heifer." The defilement of sin, disease and death was seen in the Old Testament as something to keep the worshiper out of the presence of God. To rid themselves of defilement, a ceremony that involved the "sprinkling of the ashes of the red heifer" was required. Jesus has not only cleansed us from sin, but also has erased all the defilement of sin, disease and death.

"And not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh" (Heb. 9:12-13).

In Numbers 19:1-10 contains the instructions about selecting an unblemished red heifer to be burnt outside the camp or city. Then its ashes were to be gathered, mixed with water and sprinkled on those who became defiled through touching a dead animal or person. If the ceremony was conducted correctly, when the defiled were sprinkled with the ashes, they were purified and allowed to enter into worship.

The red heifer was to be unblemished, not one black or white hair to be found, without defect and a yoke never to have been placed on it. Eleazar was to sprinkle some of its blood seven times toward the door of the tent of meeting, then all of the heifer was to be burned in his sight outside of the camp. The priest, while the heifer was burning, was to cast into the fire cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet material. He would then wash his clothes, bathe his body in water and return to the camp. A certain man was appointed to gather the ashes of the heifer and deposit them outside the camp in a clean place. Then the ash would be mixed with water as necessary and be used to remove impurity. If anyone touched a corpse, they were required to be ceremoniously cleansed.

Paul reminds the Hebrew believers that the ash of the red heifer cannot remove the defilement of the conscience, because it only was sprinkled on the flesh. Christ then becomes "the ashes of the red heifer" and through faith it is applied to the conscience, cleansing it from dead works.

Comments from Adam Clark's Commentary: The ordinance of the red heifer was a sacrifice of general application. All the people were to have an interest in it, and therefore the people at large are to provide the sacrifice. This Jewish rite certainly had a reference to things done under the Gospel, as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews has remarked: "For if," says he, "the blood of bulls and of goats," alluding, probably, to the sin-offerings and the scapegoat, "and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctified to the purifying of the flesh; 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!" (Heb. 9:13-14). As the principal stress of the allusion here is to the ordinance of the red heifer, we may certainly conclude that it was designed to typify the sacrifice of our blessed Lord.

**We may remark several curious particulars in this ordinance.**

1. A heifer was appointed for a sacrifice, probably, in opposition to the Egyptian superstition which held these sacred, and actually worshipped their great goddess Isis under this form; and this appears the more likely because males in general were preferred for sacrifice, yet here the female is chosen.
2. It was to be a red heifer, because red bulls were sacrificed to appease the evil demon Typhon, worshipped among the Egyptians. See Spencer.
3. The heifer was to be without spot-- having no mixture of any other color: that if there was a single hair in the animal either white or black, it marred the sacrifice.
4. Without blemish-- having no kind of imperfection in her body; the other, probably, applying to the hair or color.

5. On which never came yoke, because any animal which had been used for any common purpose was deemed improper to be offered in sacrifice to God. The heathens, who appear to have borrowed much from the Hebrews, were very scrupulous in this particular. Neither the Greeks nor Romans, nor indeed the Egyptians, would offer an animal in sacrifice that had been employed for agricultural purposes. (End quote)

**Other observations given by Adam Clark's Commentary:**

1. The red heifer with them signifies the flesh of our Lord, formed out of an earthly substance.
2. Being without spot, etc., the infinite holiness of Christ.
3. The sex of the animal, the infirmity of our flesh, with which he clothed himself.
4. The red color, his passion.
5. Being unyoked, his being righteous in all his conduct, and never under the yoke of sin.
6. Eleazar's sacrificing the heifer instead of Aaron, <Num. 19:3>, signifies the change of the priesthood from the family of Aaron, in order that a new and more perfect priesthood might take place.
7. The red heifer being taken without the camp <Num. 19:3> to be slain, points out the crucifixion of our Lord without the city. See also Heb. 13:12-13.
8. The complete consuming of the heifer by fire, the complete offering of the whole body and soul of Christ as a sacrifice to God for the sin of man: for as the heifer was without blemish, the whole might be offered to God and as Christ was immaculate, his whole body and soul were made a sacrifice for sin.
9. As the fire of this sacrifice ascended up to God, so it points out the resurrection and ascension of our blessed Lord. (End quote)

The offering of the red heifer could also reference Romans 12:1: "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship." This a word-picture of the many members of the church offering themselves as one body to the Lord in the form of service.

One more note about the ashes of the red heifer. During the days of Jesus and the twelve apostles, the ashes were separated into three different locations in Israel. One jar was kept at the Beautiful Gate, the Mt. of Olives, and the other in a designated place in Israel. Peter and John were going into the temple at the hour of prayer (9:00 AM) as their practice, when suddenly they were hailed by a cripple. He was asking for an offering. Peter, instead of giving him money, said, "Look on us!" Then he continued, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene--walk!" Peter seized him by the right hand, the one that was being held out to receive money, jerked him up and immediately the man's feet were healed. Having never walked, being over forty years of age, he walked, then leaped and began praising God.

The ashes of the red heifer conspicuously was hidden from view and importance by the miracle of God in the body, soul and spirit. The purification of the conscience and the body were through the Lord Jesus Christ. The cripple, now healed and cleansed by the Lord, could enter into the temple and worship God.

Certainly not by the physical ashes of a rare red heifer, but by the sacrifice of Jesus. Today there are projects going on in Jerusalem trying to locate the ashes of the red heifer, and there have been reports of red heifers being found in modern Israel. Whatever the outcome may be, what was effective under the law to cleanse the defiled, now is of no consequence in the age of salvation. The ashes have been permanently replaced by another and His name is Jesus.

Whatever the condition of the conscience, seared or soiled, there is provision in the blood of Jesus.

Leon Willis