

CONSCIENCE

1Pe.3:13-17

Everyone has a conscience. All have felt it's sting, it's soothing approval, or it's neutral position.
And most of us are curious about how it works.
Since God created us, He is the one who created our conscience. By studying what He has revealed to us, we gain understanding about this unique quality of mankind.

WHAT IT IS

God has created us with a conscience so we won't self-destruct.

As wounds cause pain to the body, so a guilty conscience causes pain to the soul (inner man).

Both warn that something is wrong; something threatening has happened.

Both indicate something need to be done to remedy the situation.

Both are unpleasant, but necessary to avoid further injury or destruction.

Conscience is the "mechanism" by which we distinguish between what is right and wrong.

It condemns or commends our actions and thoughts.

It bears witness for or against us. Rom.2:14-15, 9:1 (cf. Joh.8:9)

It is "impressed" or "programmed" by input.

From nature (instinct). 1Co.11:14

By our surroundings, culture, and society.

By teachings and instructions.

By what others do by way of example.

IT CAN BE FOUND IN VARIOUS STATES OF CONDITION

Blameless. Act.24:16 (actions consistent with what conscience allows)

Good. 1Ti.1:5,19 (avoiding violations)

Weak, wounded. 1Co.8:7,12 (not able to function properly at all times)

Defiled (polluted). Tit.1:15 (full of bad "input;" it is unable to function properly)

Evil (condoning wrong) Heb.10:22 (allowing one to do what is known to be wrong)

Seared. 1Ti.4:1-2 cf. Eph.4:18-19 (repeated violations rendering it useless)

Violated (damaged). Rom.13:5, 1Co.10:25,27 (abused; in danger of becoming ineffective)

LIKE ALL 'MECHANISMS,' IT NEEDS PROPER CARE

It is no better than taught. Act.23:1

It needs input of the knowledge of Christ and His ways. Mat.11:28-29

It needs input derived from the lives of godly people (examples). Phi.3:17, Eph.6:1

It needs input from good books, and other acceptable media.

One must filter out the vain philosophies of men. Col.2:8

One must avoid repeated violations (which damage the conscience). Repeated violations gradually desensitize. They diminish the pain of conscience: render it insensitive.

We must be aware that radical changes most often will be repelled; but small changes, which cause only minor discomfort, are often ignored.

Listen to your conscience. Act.23:1

If you think it to be wrong, it is wrong (for you). Rom.14:22ff

[Note: Your conscience is not to be a guide for others; nor their's for you. 1Co.10:29, Rom.14:2-5. Such restrictions are exasperating for all concerned and will only cause problems.]

INSTANCES OF PANGS OF CONSCIENCE

Accusers of the adulterous woman when they were made to examine themselves. Joh.8:1-11
Adam when he was made aware of his sin by God. Gen.3:9-11
David when his sin was brought out in the open by Nathan. 2Sa.12:7
The Jews when they understood that they had crucified the Messiah. Act.2:22-23 (37)
Saul of Tarsus when he realized he was fighting against God, not for Him. Act.9:5 (11b)
Peter when he was confronted by Paul concerning his hypocrisy. Gal.2:11

THE PAIN MUST BE DEALT WITH

Pain is necessary to impress urgency. The greater the pain, the greater the need.

Those mentioned above sought remedies; they strove to make things right.

But not all seek remedies; some seek to avoid the pain by other means.

Many refuse to think about it; wishing it didn't happen.

Some try to live with the pain, tolerating it as best they can.

Others will blur the distinction between right and wrong. Tit.1:15

'PREVENTION IS WORTH A POUND OF CURE'

Live so as to maintain a good conscience. 1Ti.3:9 (Paul, Act.24:16)

Let every little pang cause concern. As David 1Sa.24:5

Learn to recognize sin (packaged in so many tempting ways). Heb.5:14

Work diligently to avoid the pangs of conscience. 1Pe.3:15-16

Enjoy the peace that a clear conscience affords.

When it comes to the guilt of sin, Jesus offers a clear conscience to those who obey the gospel.

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, who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him. 1 Peter 3:21-22