

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XVIII

March 8, 2009

No. 10

Who Cannot Live The Conscientious Life ?

Jerry Fite

Paul claimed, *“Herein I also exercise myself to have a conscience void of offence toward God and men always”* (Acts 24:16).

The conscience is that part of our moral makeup which sits in judgment upon all we do based upon what we know to be right. When we do that which we know to be wrong it pricks us by “accusing” our actions. We do not feel the pains of a guilty conscience we do that which we know is right. We are “excused” (Romans 2:15).

To live a conscientious life, one must do more than just stay awake or be aware of one’s surroundings. One must care about those inner thoughts which bare witness to one’s actions and like Paul, try to keep a conscience “void of offense”. The conscientious will not stray from one’s inner moral compass, but will strive to conduct one’s life in accordance with its bearings toward that which is right.

Consider for a moment the characteristics of those who cannot live a conscientious life. By observing the negative, hopefully

we will appreciate the positive qualities of a conscientious life.

One cannot live a conscientious life if he or she is self-centered. “...Conscience, I say, not thine own, but the other’s” (I Corinthians 10:29). Part of doing right is making sure we do not embolden another by our actions to do that which they believe to be wrong. We move beyond our own conscience which may have ruled something as a “liberty”, and refuse to be an obstacle in doing what is right as another exercises judgment in their own mental courtroom. Life in the conscientious lane is not for the selfish.

A spiritual coward cannot live the conscientious life. There are times in the life of the Christian when one must suffer for that which they know is right. “For this is acceptable, if for conscience toward God a man endureth griefs, suffering wrongfully . . . but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye shall take it patiently, this is acceptable with God” (I Peter 2:19-20). The world will not always applaud or pat you on the back for being a Christian. You will at times have to suffer persecution at the hands

of the world for living godly (2 Timothy 3:12). The coward will run from the pain. The conscientious will brace oneself for the hurt, for he or she will not change course from what is right before God.

The conscientious life is not for the spiritual lazy. Notice Paul spoke of “exercise” when he highlighted his conscientious life before God. Paul is no spiritual “couch potato”. Doing what is right before God, or living honorably before man, Paul was “always” engaged. He, in all good conscience, could have kept persecuting Christians in ignorance (Acts 23:1, 26:9) But a conscientious life demands truth as the standard. Knowing the truth demands action upon our part.

In laziness we might see the process as a vicious cycle. Learning more truth will demand doing more truth if my conscience is to be void of offense. But the conscientious will embrace the exercise, and consequently will become less self-centered and more courageous to face the consequences of doing what is right.