

When Does Your Conscience Cease to Be Your Guide?

Intro:

1. You've heard the expression, "Let your conscience be your guide".
2. It's generally a good rule - but sometimes you may need to make exceptions to it.
3. So - when is the time to let your conscience be your guide & when should it not be your guide?

I John 3:11-22

I. When Should Your Conscience Be Your Guide?

A. When it reminds you to do God's will.

1. **I Tim 1:5 - The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.**
2. **I Tim 3:9 - They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience.**

B. When it produces sorrow for your sin - which leads you to repentance & a turning back to God. In talking about sorrow, the Living Bible paraphrases **II Cor 7:9** very well - **Now I am glad I sent it, not because it hurt you, but because the pain turned you to God. It was a good kind of sorrow God wants His people to have . . .**

II. When Should Your Conscience Not Be Your Guide?

A. **v18-22** - When you rely on conscience alone to determine your relationship with God.

From the New International Version

Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.

From Pastor Steve

Express love not just by words, but by actions & sincerity; for then we will know that we are of the truth & can have our confidence before Him even when our conscience gives us doubts; for God overrules our conscience because He knows everything. Now loved ones, if our conscience is clear we can have confidence before God when we pray. We will get the ready answers because we obey His commands & do the things which please Him.

1. Some of us allow our emotions to rule us!

- a. We feel bad physically or down emotionally, so we wonder if God still cares about us. Where is He when you need Him? After all, some scriptures make us look pretty bad!
- b. **v6 - No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.**
- c. **v8 - He who does what is sinful is of the devil . . .**
- d. **v9 - No one who is born of God will continue to sin . . .**
- e. **Rom 3:23 - for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God . . .**
- f. The verbs in all of these passages are in the present or continuous tense. So it is the sin habit, the sin orientation, the sin lifestyle, the rebellious attitude to God & His way that brings about these results!

2. Your conscience is just like a computer - it puts out only what you program into it. Your conscience is taught!

- a. **ILL: The hardened criminal or the psychopathic killer.**
- b. God, who sees not only what you do but knows the thoughts & intentions of your heart, can be a better judge of your character than your conscience can!

B. When you believe you must do enough good things for the Lord to accept you.

1. The righteous lifestyle comes as a result of being God's child - not a reason for it! **Eph 2:8-10 - For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.**
2. So - when you commit yourself to the Lord, His Holy Spirit gives you the power to live victorious Christian lives after you become His child!

III. How Can You Know the Difference?

A. **v14** - When love becomes the main expression of your life.

1. **v16 - Love's example** - the cross.
 - a. The Lord said, **The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.** - **Jn 10:11.**
 - b. Then - He went to the cross! - **Jn 3:16.**
2. **v17 - Love's expression** - give of yourself to meet the needs of others. If you have enough material possessions to meet your own needs, you have enough to share!
3. **v14 - The result** - love produces eternal life!

B. But - the absence of this love is hate!

1. I John is full of contrasts. There's no middle ground in I John! God is saying in **v14 & 15** that the lack of love is hate. Refusing to help is hating!
2. You & I think in terms of neutrality don't we?
 - a. "I don't care for the guy so I'll just ignore him". "Of he stays out of my way, I'll stay out of his". I don't hate the guy, I just don't care to associate with him".
 - b. But - doesn't **does not love** in **v14** & **hate** in **v15** both result in death? In **v15** hate is the same as murder.
 - c. In **Matt 5:21-28** the Lord said the attitude of your heart is the same as the crime. It's often the seed that produces the act!
3. **v12** - The example of Cain.
 - a. **Heb 11:4** says Abel's offering was of faith which made him righteous.
 - b. **v12** says Abel's deeds were righteous & Cain's were evil.
 - c. The ultimate expression of hate is murder! Murder came as a result of Cain's attitude.
4. **v13** - This is why the world hates Christians.
 - a. **Jn 3:20** - our deeds show them up.
 - b. **Eph 2:10** - The Lord chose us to do good works.
5. **v17** - How is this hate expressed? By refusing to help your brother when you have the ability to do so.
6. **Jam 2:14-16** - When you ignore your brother's need your faith becomes invalid & love is not in you!

If your conscience accuses you even when you are expressing love - God says you are righteous. Confess your doubt of God's grace & clear up your conscience!