

BEWARE OF SEARING THE CONSCIENCE

1 Tim 4:2 “Having their conscience seared with a hot iron.”

Conscience is that mysterious voice in man which acts somewhat like a moral gyroscope for the soul. God created this voice within us, but it is not God Himself speaking, for there is such a thing as an erring conscience. The law of God is written in our heart, and conscience is intimately connected with it. The real nature of conscience is very mysterious and puzzling to us, but its presence in the breast of every human being is another proof for the existence of God.

We carry with us through life our own little court, a judge and jury, which either condemns our acts and conduct, or else applauds them. There is no appealing the verdict in the case of a guilty conscience.

Our inward monitor is not knowledge itself, it is that voice which prods us to act according to the knowledge we possess of good and bad. A disturbed conscience is a terrible thing indeed, and can prick and torment us and rob us of all peace in life. The troubled conscience of Judas drove him to suicide. The woman taken in adultery was not stoned to death by her accusers because they were “convicted by their own conscience”. The jailer at Philippi “came trembling” because of his aroused conscience.



Imagine what that means when Paul, in our text, says of false teachers who “speak lies in hypocrisy” that they have “their conscience seared with a hot iron.” There is a warning here for all of us.

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1. SEARING SCARS THE CONSCIENCE

Paul told Timothy by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in v.1-3 that there would be an apostasy in the church in the latter times.

(Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils,² speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience

seared with a hot iron,³ forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.)

The devil is always behind every false doctrine. These false teachers would not only deceive themselves but would draw others into their apostasy. Among other false teachings they would “forbid to marry and command to abstain from meats.” Naturally such false teachers would also deny the fundamental doctrines of the Bible, especially justification before God by faith in Jesus Christ alone. Certainly they would teach that there are many things to do and avoid in order to get to heaven. And all these false doctrines would be taught in hypocrisy, pretending they are teachers of God when they are actually of the devil.

No one can resist the Holy Spirit and reject the truth of God without some effect upon the soul. But instead of saying with the Emmaus disciples, “Did not our heart burn within us?” these apostates must say, “Did not our conscience burn within us?”

The inner voice rebels when we turn from God and His Holy Truth and it begins to burn like fire in the human breast. It is no light matter to sin against the conscience.



As in branding, scars will be formed on the conscience which will remain for life. Such false teachers can never live at peace with themselves anymore, they are burnt and scarred. Such a fire always leaves a mark.

Are we not, to some extent, in the same danger as these fallen souls? How often have we turned our backs when the Lord beckoned us to do His work? How many times do we divert our gifts to pleasures and worldly

things instead of wholeheartedly supporting the church and her mission program? Do we always love His Word as we should, and gladly hear and learn it? We cannot do these things without disturbing the conscience. How many little scars do we have on our inner man? When we think of our past life, we recall many things we should have done, and there are things we did do which bother us and cause a little burning sensation in our hearts. In a greater or lesser degree we all have trouble with our conscience because of our sins. But there is still another great danger in searing the conscience.

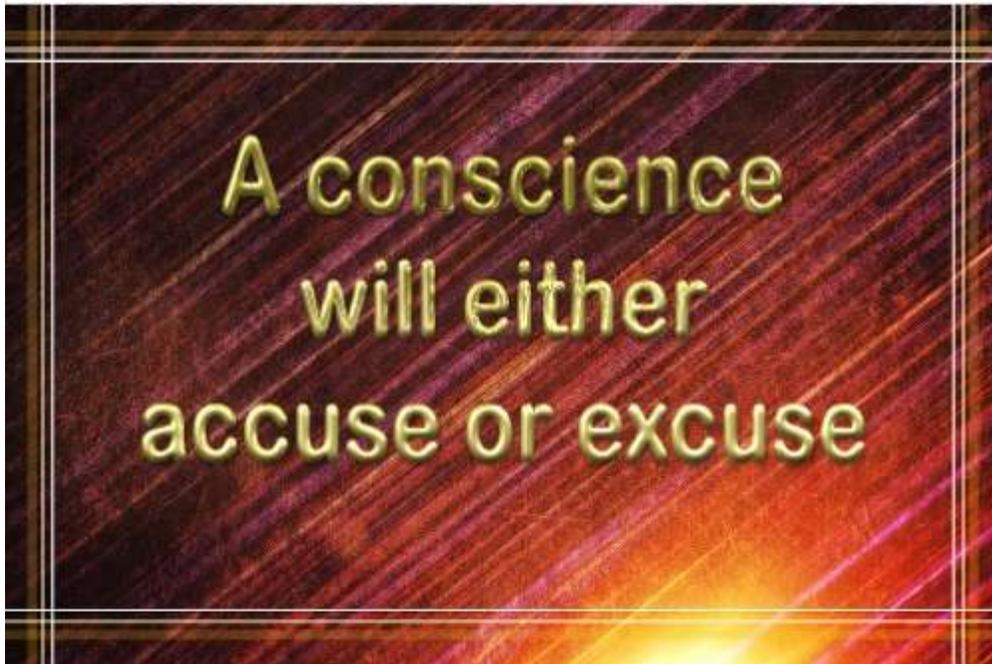
2. SEARING DEADENS THE CONSCIENCE

We can understand how a person might fall into error and teach a false doctrine, for we all have our frailties and weaknesses. But after being shown the error from the Word of God, we ought to accept the correction with thanks and repent of the error. However, if, after being shown the error from the clear Word of God, a person persists in the false doctrine and stubbornly refuses to accept correction, that person has assumed a soul-destroying attitude and is on the road to damnation.

What happens to the conscience of such a false teacher? It finally becomes so seared by constant burning that little or no pain is felt; it is like cauterizing a wound to deaden the pain. The same effect is produced in those who persistently accept and adhere to the false teachings.

These things happen today. Adherents of those religions who deny the Trinity and deny that Christ is "God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God" often canvass the neighborhoods trying to gain the unwary. When these people are urged to reconsider their false doctrine and way of life, it is often like talking to a dead person. It seems they have seared their consciences into insensibility.

This process of deadening the conscience is also going on within the churches. Some members do not attend public worship anymore, despise the Lord's Supper, give little or nothing for the support of the Lord's work. It is frustrating to talk with them. They resist, they argue, they promise no change. How difficult it is to recall a fallen away church member: It seems as though they have cauterized their consciences into numbness. **Beware of searing the conscience!**



Is there no way to have a good conscience in this sin-cursed world? There is, but only when we can be assured that the same God who put this little voice in us is ready and willing to forgive us all our sins. AND HE IS. He gave His own Son in our stead on the cross and laid all our sins on Him. Only when we put our faith and trust in Jesus and His Word can we have forgiveness of sins and a good conscience. We can never have peace in our heart trusting in our own works and deeds.

“Peace be unto you” was the Easter greeting of Jesus. He was actually saying, “I bring you the message which gives you peace and a good conscience before God.” God is at peace with us in Christ, and that knowledge alone can quiet the human breast.

“The peace of God which passeth all understanding” means God has forgiven our sins in Jesus. He is no more angry with us because of sin. He wants to be “Our Father.” This is the only way we can depart this life in peace. Jesus is my peace.

Having God as our Father and Friend in Jesus, and being assured that we shall surely dwell with Him in glory forever, we are indeed the happiest of people on earth. May the Holy Spirit, for Jesus’ sake, keep us from falling into gross sins. And may we always retain a good conscience, for this is one of our most precious possessions in life.

AMEN

PRAYER. Before thee, O Lord God, do we acknowledge all our sins and iniquities. When we think of our past sins our conscience begins to trouble

us and we become disquieted. But in our Savior's blood and merits we always find peace and rest for our hearts and souls. Help us keep a good conscience all our days through Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. AMEN