

MSB251

MORE Seed and Bread

BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

Otis Q. Sellers, Founder - David R. Hetteima, Director

GOD'S GIFT OF CONSCIENCE

By John C. Ribbens

God in His infinite grace and wisdom has endowed every living man with the gift of pure conscience. Conscience is that God-given faculty flowing out to man providing him with the innate knowledge that in His sight some actions are intrinsically immoral and evil. Failure to respond to a God-given conscience has led some men to experience some tragic consequences. The fact of conscience operating within men acts as a divine barrier against the many forms of evil, which are so prevalent in the world today. Had God not chosen to give individual men the gift of conscience, he could not claim superior morality to the animal or beast. Animals do not possess the gift of conscience. Men lacking a God-given conscience would be void of the knowledge that in God's sight adultery, murder and deceit are sins. The fact of a conscience within man serves as "a still small voice" reminding him that vile affections and immoral behavior are sinful.

Dr. E.W. Bullinger defines conscience as that which serves as a person's own witness and the testimony to one's own conduct born of consciousness; for a man's conscience will never condemn the facts that he knows to be right. The only conscience worth having is that which springs from a pure heart and of a faith unfeigned (1 Tim. I: 5). God's gift of conscience acting on behalf of every individual is such that it provides each person with instant and continuing knowledge that the commission of certain acts of lawlessness and disobedience are patently wrong and inexcusable. Sinful acts are not limited to deviant sexual behavior but to all acts, whether physical or mental, which are contrary to the judgments of God. God's gift of conscience is such that it provides that individual with clear knowledge that unholy and profane conduct is improper and is an offense against a just and holy God, such as the murder of father or mother and the behavior of whoremongers (or fornicators) that defile themselves with mankind. These latter sinful acts committed by some males and females often lead to debilitating disease and

premature death.

We need to understand that this superior fact of conscience is resident within all men on the basis of equality apart from man's ethnic origin. Whether an act of prostitution is committed by an African, a Chinese, or an American bears no relation to the level of responsibility he or she possesses. For centuries past men have been guided, in the absence of a written book we call the Bible, with clear knowledge that some acts which they have committed are not only immoral and impure, but an offense against a thrice Holy God.

We are presently living in a period of time which the Apostle Paul has described in 1 Timothy 3:1 as "perilous times." They are called perilous or grievous times because of their debilitating impact on men's lives. They concern the immoral behavior of millions of men living today who have fallen victim to the "acquired immuno-deficiency syndrome" (AIDS). The result of this behavior is such that it not only effects the health of the individual, but invariably results in untold misery and grief in the lives of friends, family and other innocent individuals. The "polite" term for immoral behavior is called homosexuality or lesbianism, otherwise called female homosexuality. In the most explicit language possible the Apostle Paul declared, **For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves the recompense of their error which was meet** (Rom. 1:26-27).

It is precisely the commission of these immoral acts among males and females that led God in the days of Abraham and Lot to destroy the ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. It was in the days of Abraham, following the flood of Noah, that **the Lord said, because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is grievous: . . . Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven and overthrew those cities and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground** (Gen. 18:20, 19:24-25). This act of destruction of sinful men and the land whereon they dwelt was entirely appropriate and in keeping with the character of the Judge of all the earth (Gen. 18:25). God is not punishing men today even for

the commission of certain crimes, which seem to exceed those committed in the days of Abraham.

The Apostle Paul in writing to Timothy declared, "**This know also that in the last days perilous times shall come**" (2 Tim. 3:1). These are times of great ferocity and no one reading 2 Timothy 3:1-8 can fail to observe the prevalence of these present conditions which have caused many to disparage of life itself. Paul's description of the character of "evil men and seducers" is cause for alarm. The Apostle Paul, in writing to "Timothy, my own son in the faith" (1 Tim. 1:2), said, **Now the end (goal) of the commandment (teaching, the charge or mandate) is love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned** (1 Tim. 1:5). A pure heart is one that has been totally committed to serving and loving Christ. This heart is one that honors, obeys, and loves God, regardless of the present turmoil and strife about him. A good conscience is one that professes to abstain from every form of evil and to live a life of faith guileless.

People speak of a love for God today, but on their own terms. The unfeigned faith and a clean life which honors God is one in which there is no room for immorality, lies, or deceit. This truth is made exceedingly explicit in 1 Timothy 1:9-11, where the apostle declares, **Knowing this, that the law is not made (laid down) for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly, and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.**

This potent dissertation concerning the behavior of ungodly and immoral men cuts to the very core of sin in men's lives. Sin is not only in defiance of God, but it is brutal, vicious, mean, and totally unbecoming to a man claiming to have a true relationship to God.

Bear in mind Paul's explicit words found in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, where he says, **Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.** Paul's words to the Corinthians and to Timothy express the character of a broad segment of men living today. Men

such as these will not be privileged to stand under divine government. Men's predilection favoring explicit act of immoral behavior has become symptomatic of a decadent civilization. Paul's words to Timothy sound a solemn warning to all men living at this present time: **Now the Spirit speaketh expressly** (in words that cannot be misunderstood) **that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils** (demons); **speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron** (1 Tim. 4:1-2).

The phrase, "some shall depart" is a translation of the Greek word *aphistemi*. It signifies a strong departure from the faith bordering on a revolt against God's word. We are witnesses to a host of men living today who give voice to false teaching and, basically speaking, doctrines of demons. Plainly speaking, they speak lies in hypocrisy with abject disregard for the truth. The word "seared" is a translation of the Greek word *kauterjazo*. It occurs only once in Scripture, and its meaning cannot be disputed. It means to cauterize, to make insensitive or to deaden. This is the state of some men's conscience which has been cauterized by reason of repeated sinful and immoral acts. It is because of this insensitivity to God's gift of conscience that we are now witnesses to what men call "senseless crimes" or criminal acts, which defy human explanation. The Apostle Paul speaks in Romans 1:32 of "they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." The phrase "they which commit" is a translation of the Greek word *prasso*, meaning to practice. This is exactly the characteristic of these men who find seeming delight in committing acts of sexual aberration.

The first reference of the word "conscience" (*Gk. -suneidesis*) is found in John 8:9. This account concerns a woman taken in adultery (John 8:1-11), in the very act. Hovering around this woman stood a group of self-righteous Pharisees who sought an occasion to falsely accuse the Lord Jesus of failure to uphold the law. In a searing indictment of these Pharisees who were looking for something of which to accuse Jesus, we are told, "but Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground, as though He heard them not" (John 8:6). Men have long conjectured about what and why He wrote on the ground. The answer lies in the words of the prophet Jeremiah who wrote, **O Lord, the hope of Israel, all that forsake Thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from Me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters** (Jer. 17:13).

What an embarrassment this must have been for those self-serving Pharisees! No sooner had He lifted up Himself when He said, **He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her** (John 8:7). Note carefully their response: **And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience went out one by one . . .** When Jesus had lifted Himself up, and saw none but the woman, He said unto her, **Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? . . . go and sin no more** (John 8:9-11).

God's gracious gift of conscience is one of man's most valuable treasures. A proper response to this God-given faculty can yield enormous blessings for which we give reverent thanks to our God.

END

ISSUE NO. MSB251
Published Mar. 30, 2001