

Diverse Kinds of Conscience.

by Horatius Bonar

The fear of God is the key to a righteous life, and it should guide our actions and decisions in all spheres of life.

Scripture: Genesis 42:18, Nehemiah 5:15, Psalm 119:9, Proverbs 1:7, Romans 14:12, 2 Corinthians 5:9, Ephesians 6:7-8, Colossians 3:23-24, Hebrews 13:18, 1 Peter 2:19

Topics: "Conscience", "Fear Of God"

Description

Horatius Bonar emphasizes the significance of a God-fearing conscience in various aspects of life, drawing from the examples of Nehemiah and Joseph, who acted righteously out of their fear of God. He outlines the importance of conscientiousness in religious, secular, commercial, family, private, and local contexts, urging believers to let the fear of God guide their actions and decisions. Bonar warns against the dangers of a blunted conscience and encourages cultivating a tender and sensitive conscience that seeks God's approval in all things. He stresses that true conscientiousness is not merely about duty but about a heartfelt desire to please God in every area of life. Ultimately, Bonar calls for a life regulated by the fear of God, which serves as a powerful motivator for righteousness.

Transcript

"The former governors....had laid heavy burdens on the people, demanding a daily ration of food and wine, besides a pound of silver. Even their assistants took advantage of the people. But because of my fear of God, I did not act that way." Neh. 5:15

When Joseph was dealing with his brethren he said, "This do, and live; for I fear God" (Genesis 42:18). Such was Joseph's motive. So when Nehemiah kept aloof from the evil ways of others, he gave his reason, "But because of my fear of God, I did not act that way." Here, then, is Nehemiah's principle of action, both in what he did and in what he did not do. The fear of God. This was the one thing that kept him right and prevented his turning aside to the right or left.

Of the unrighteous it is said, The fear of God is not before his eyes. Of the righteous, The fear of God is before his eyes. This is the great feature of difference between the two. It was this that operated, and influenced all his proceedings, that molded his life. He was, as we say, a God-fearing man; and he showed this in what he did and in what he did not do.

He was conscientious, not only as to actual duties, but as to responsibilities. Here then we have true conscientiousness; not merely natural uprightness of character, but the desire to have a conscience void

of offence towards God and man. It is conscientiousness arising from the sense of God's presence, the wish to please Him, the fear of offending Him, the desire to do all that is well-pleasing in His sight. As the love of Christ constrains, so the fear of God makes conscientious. Are we thoroughly conscientious? Is our conscience constantly at work? Not in the spirit of bondage or terror, but in that child-like gentleness and tenderness of conscience that desires to have God's approbation in everything we do, and every word we speak. What a regulator to our life and conscience would be this fear of God! Let us consider the different spheres and operations of conscience. There is,

I. The RELIGIOUS conscience. By this I mean the conscience exercising itself in the things of religion, in religious belief and actings. In our dealings with God, in the service of God, in our testimony for God, let us be thoroughly conscientious, not formal, superficial, perfunctory, but conscientious. If I act religiously simply because others do so, or because it involves my good name, or because of habit, I am not acting conscientiously. Let our religion mold our conscience, and let our conscience penetrate and pervade our religion. I do not merely mean that a religious man should be a conscientious man, but that he should carry his conscientiousness into all that concerns religion. He should be alive, not only to duty but to responsibility.

II. The SECULAR conscience. Though not of the world, we are still in the world. We are hourly coming into contact with the world in public and private. Every movement of our daily life comes, more or less, into contact with the world; it may be collision, or it may be communion and mutual help in common things; let us in all these be thoroughly conscientious, in what we do or in what we abstain from doing. Never let the world say of us, in reference to either word or deed, There goes a religious man without a conscience. In all secular and social things let us manifest a conscientious spirit, and show to others that the fear of God is before our eyes. Let that fear regulate our daily communion and walk. Let a sense of responsibility toward God and our fellow men be ever on edge.

III. The COMMERCIAL conscience. By this I mean conscience throwing itself into all our business transactions, our buying or our selling, our giving or receiving, our bargains, our speculations, whether merchant, lawyer, banker, farmer, tradesman, mechanic, or whatever our worldly calling may be. Let us take counsel with conscience continually. Let the fear of God be before our eyes in the counting-house, the shop, the warehouse, the market, or wherever our calling may place us. Hard driven bargains, advantage taken of men's necessities, grinding of the poor, over-charges, unjust measures, dishonest statements as to goods sold or purchased- these are not things into which conscience can enter. Let every man of business, on whatever scale, be out and out conscientious, having the fear of God before his eyes.

IV. The FAMILY conscience. Into each circle of life, outer and inner, conscience must enter. The fear of God must reign in the family. We must be conscientious in our family dealings, making each member of it feel that we are acting in the fear of God. Let us be conscientious in our family rules, at our family table, in our treatment of our children, and in their education. Be conscientious with them and before them. Never let them say that we do an unconscientious deed. Conscience says to each father and mother, 'Train up your child in the way he should go.' Oh, be conscientious with your children! They know what conscience is, how conscience operates and shows itself. Let the fear of God be stamped on all family arrangements. Servants, be conscientious to your masters, and masters, to your servants.

V. The PRIVATE conscience. I must make conscience of all my individually private actings. I must be conscientious in all personal things, when alone, unheard, unseen. I must be conscientious in my closet as well as in my family. I must be conscientious about my solitary, hidden actions. The fear of God must fill

every chamber of my heart. I must be upright before myself and before God.

VI. The LOCAL conscience. I must be conscientious everywhere, at home or abroad. I must carry my conscience with me when I travel, just as when I was at home. I read sometimes of Christian travelers spending their Sabbath in sight-seeing? I find that some think it no evil to climb mount Sinai or mount Hermon on the Sabbath because these are sacred scenes. They would not climb Snowdon or Ben Lomond, but they would climb these foreign mountains! What sort of local conscience is this? Ought not a Christian to carry his conscience into every place, and when tempted to do abroad on the Sabbath what he would not do at home, to be able to say, "But because of my fear of God, I did not act that way."

Cultivate a tender conscience, an enlightened conscience, a conscience void of offence; not morbid, or diseased, or crooked, or one-sided, or censorious, or arrogant, or proud. But simple, and bold, and sensitive. Beware of a blunted or seared conscience. Shun compromises where principle is concerned; they always leave a stain upon the conscience. Let the fear of God reign in you always and everywhere. Beware of the fear of man. Cultivate the fear of God. The gospel, as well as the law, makes demands on your conscience. Conscience speaks to you in the name of Jesus Christ as well as in that of God.

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