QUIETING THE TROUBLED CONSCIENCE, GOD’S WAY

Since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them. Romans 2:15

A couple who used counterfeit student bus passes in college, has sent the bus company a check for $428.50 (USD) saying that they no longer wanted to live with the guilt of what they had done. Richard and Susan Thompson, the couple involved, also added ten percent interest. In his letter of apology, Richard told how he had been a graphic art student and subsequently produced the fake bus passes that his girlfriend—now his wife—and he had used.

“At the time,” he wrote, “I thought it was a challenge, but now I regret it.” And what caused the Thompsons to go public, even to the extent of having the story printed in the newspaper? Was it simply that he was older and more mature? No, scores of people have skeletons in their closet which never bother them.

The answer, simply put, is that their values and sense of right and wrong have changed. “Since that time,” said Richard, “my wife and I have committed our lives to Jesus Christ, and it is He who has reminded us of this wrongdoing, and it is He who wants us to make this right.”

My hat is off to anyone who has the courage to abide by the convictions of his conscience which was awakened by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Hebrews 9:14, in the New Testament, speaks of having your conscience cleansed by the blood of Christ to serve the living God. The following are guidelines that will help you bring this whole issue of conscience into focus:

Guideline #1: Your conscience gives you an innate sense of right and wrong, which is usually in conflict with what is accepted in society. That’s why some have called conscience the voice of God. Anthropologists will tell you that they have never discovered a people group anywhere who did not have some sense of right and wrong. Paul spoke of this, saying that the natural man has the works of the law written on the heart, and the conscience bears witness to what is right and wrong (see Romans 2:15).
Guideline #2: Your conscience is only as valid as your understanding of what is right and wrong. “Don’t confuse me with the facts; my mind is already made up,” reads the message on a bumper sticker. This is why you must decide who says what is right or wrong. When you acknowledge that God has revealed timeless truth in the Bible, then a knowledge of what He expects programs your conscience.

Guideline #3: Your conscience can be destroyed or silenced. Following World War 2, thousands of men and women viewed the atrocities such as the concentration camps where 14 million men and women died and asked themselves, “How could individuals be so cruel, so inhuman?” It’s the question we still ask, reading of the atrocities in Bosnia and in Africa. And that’s how “I was only following orders; I’m not responsible,” say those who have silenced their conscience by denying personal guilt or involvement. Not true, says the world—who for a change is in agreement with God.

Guideline #4: Your seared and nearly dead conscience can be restored by God’s grace. That’s why a couple would send the bus company the money for the bus passes which had been forged. That’s why confession to each other and to God is so important. That’s what Grace is about.

A closing thought: Thank God for a conscience that is sensitive to issues involving right and wrong. Just as a leper is in constant danger because he can’t feel pain, so is the individual who has no knowledge, no feelings, regarding right or wrong. Thank God your conscience is sensitive. Keep it that way. It’s a blessing from the Almighty.

Resource reading: Romans 2:1-16