

A Good Conscience

I have held many gospel meetings in Greenway, Arkansas. I will conduct another one in July. I well remember one of the members there, Vernie Golden. He ran a general store for nearly fifty years. He retired in the early 1970s. He died in the early 1990s. We often rode over the countryside, and ate at one of the local restaurants.

The last time I was in a meeting at Greenway, and Vernie was still alive, he told me about a letter he had received in the past few months. The letter said, "I owe you for a pick-sack from 1954. I'm sorry. Here's your money." Enclosed was the money, about \$2.50. The fellow who stole the cotton pick-sack had had this on his mind and conscience for nearly 35 years.

At least this fellow had a conscience. So many in our world today have "seared their conscience with a hot iron" to the point that they do not feel anything when they do wrong. Wrong doing does not bother them at all.

The conscience is to the mind and spirit of a man what pain is to the body – it tells us when something is wrong. In this way it can be very valuable. The Bible speaks about a pure and good conscience. We can only have a proper one when we are doing what we have been taught that is right. Obviously the fellow mentioned above had been taught the difference between right and wrong when it came to stealing. Since he had been taught what was right, his conscience was nagging him to take care of the matter. He probably felt better after mailing that letter than he had in years.

We obviously realize that a person may be taught incorrectly. When this is the case, the person who is doing what he has been taught, even though it is wrong, is not being condemned by his conscience. He thinks he is right. Such was the case with the apostle Paul, when known as Saul of Tarsus, he persecuted Christ and the church. He later said, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." (Acts 23:1) He is saying, "when I persecuted Christ and the church, I thought I was doing the right thing. But, I was wrong. Dead wrong!!!"

Let us make sure we are taught correctly what is right. There is only one way we can know for sure that what we are teaching and living is right. Compare what we believe and teach with the Bible. The great problem in our society is that few people even read their Bible. We must get back to the Bible.

"Study to show yourself approved to God, a workman that does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (II Tim. 2:15)