

Series: 2 Corinthians
Title: The Rejoicing of Our Conscience
Text: 2 Cor 1: 12-14
Date: March 16, 2017
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“The Rejoicing of Our Conscience”—is our subject.

In our text, Paul speaks of the believer’s rejoicing two times. He speaks of our rejoicing as two things. First, the apostle Paul says the rejoicing of a believer’s conscience is from the way we minister. This applies to Christ’s preachers; but also to all God’s saints because we all minister to one another

2 Corinthians 1: 12: For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward. 13: For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end.

Secondly, the apostle Paul say “The Rejoicing of Our Conscience” is one another. God’s saints rejoice in faithful preachers who Christ has made faithful in their ministry and conduct. And God’s preachers rejoice in faithful believers who Christ has made faithful in their ministry and conduct.

2 Corinthians 1: 14: As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also *are* ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.

So the rejoicing of our conscience is twofold. One, believers rejoice with a clear conscience from the way we minister. Two, believers rejoice with a clear conscience in one another.

God’s saints rejoice in Christ, giving Christ all the glory, by rejoicing in what Christ has created in each of our brethren. Everything we see here is of Christ’s creating. This fruit is produced by Christ by Christ creating us anew and purging our conscience.

A WORD ABOUT THE CONSCIENCE

First, this rejoicing is the testimony of a clear conscience within—**“For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience...”**

The word “testimony” means “witness.” The testimony, the witness, is from our conscience.

The “conscience” is the voice within us that distinguishes between what is truth and a lie; what is morally good and morally bad. The conscience commends that which is true and condemns a lie; the conscience commends good and condemns that which is bad. The conscience is involved in moving us to do that which is good and moving us to repent from that which is bad.

God determines true and false; right and wrong. Therefore, we all being the creation of God—the law is written in every man’s heart by nature—even the fallen nature of a depraved sinner has a conscienceness of right and wrong.

Romans 2: 14: For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: 15: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;

Every fallen sinner has the law written on our hearts by nature. In his conscience, the fallen sinner knows when he is doing right or wrong. So all men are without excuse. But without the Spirit of Christ regenerating a sinner, the conscience remains defiled.

Titus 1:15: Unto the pure all things *are* pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving *is* nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.

Thus the fallen sinner looks no further than himself. He is his own moral compass because he thinks himself god.

Therefore, he accuses others for certain sins but in his conscience, he excuses himself for the very same sins with no remorse. In himself, he may take notice of what he considers bad sins but takes no notice that sin is all he is and does. So he does not repent. His defiled conscience speaks a lie, speaks peace to him, when truth is, he is under the wrath of God.

Left to himself, the sinner grows harder and harder in sin, until his conscience is seared, so that he excuses himself in all sin, even when his chief sin is his vain religion.

On the other hand, when the Spirit of God creates a new spirit within the believer, he purges the conscience with the blood of Christ.

Hebrews 9:14: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

No amount of our works can do this. Even Old Testament sacrifices could not purge the conscience of those who offered them.

Hebrew 9:9: Which *was* a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;

Hebrews 10:2: For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

The only way we will stop trying to offer God sacrifices for our sins and rest in Christ is for Christ to purge our conscience. Then Christ makes us hear him in the gospel. He makes us know we are helpless sinners. He makes us know we are saved by Christ and his works. This is when Christ pricks the conscience in one he redeemed, making us hear Christ in that still small voice within. Remember Pentecost as the apostle Peter preached Christ and him crucified to the people?

Acts 2: 37: Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?

Then Christ tells us what to do, through his messengers preaching his word, through the Holy Spirit bearing witness with our spirit, he says, "Repent, believe on Christ, and be baptized confessing that Christ has remitted your sins. Continue under the gospel worshipping Christ."

By this purging of our conscience, we are made to draw near to Christ in faith.

Hebrews 10:22: Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

By purging our conscience, we are made willing to be baptized publicly. Baptism is the answer of a good conscience toward God.

1 Peter 3:21: The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

If any here has heard the gospel and believe on Christ then the answer of a good conscience toward God is to be baptized publicly.

From then on we are led to do what Christ would have us to do through the gospel through the Holy Spirit by Christ bearing witness in the purged conscience. Isaiah called it “*hearing a word behind thee.*”

Isaiah 30: 20: And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: 21: And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left. (Isa 30:20-21)

This is “being led of the Spirit and walking after the Spirit, rather than the flesh.” God will make his child hear him in the still small voice of his purged conscience.

Let me give you an example from first Kings 19. God said he would send adversity and affliction to his child. We have to endure that. So we are not to look for God’s voice in the painful providence. We see it in Elijah. When Elijah complained that all faithful men had perished and he was the only elect left, the LORD commanded him to stand upon the mount before the LORD and the LORD passed by. The LORD sent out a strong wind and rent the mountains and brake in pieces the rocks—but *the LORD was not in the wind.* After the wind the LORD caused an earthquake—but *the LORD was not in the earthquake.* After the earthquake the LORD caused a fire—but *the LORD was not in the fire.* And after the fire *a still small voice.*

1 Kings 19: 15: And it was *so*, when Elijah heard *it*, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, *there came* a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?

Brethren, when Christ speaks you will hear that still small voice of conscience within and thus Christ will move you to hear and obey him. He will make it so that you cannot do otherwise. He told Paul, “*It is hard, impossible, to kick against a pricked conscience.*” So do not be moved by the strong winds, fire and earthquakes. Often we must go through the trial. A difficult path does not always mean we are to turn another way. But you will know when God speaks to you because God speaks to his child in Spirit, through his gospel, in the inner man, with that still small voice within, called the purged conscience.

A CLEAR CONSCIENCE IN OUR MINISTRY AND CONDUCT

By this work, Christ causes his minister and all his people seek to conduct ourselves free of a guilty conscience. To be free of a guilty conscience, in our ministry and conduct, involves what Paul says here:

Simple and Sincere

One, to have a clear conscience in our ministry and conduct is to be open and honest toward all regarding the gospel of Christ—**2 Cor 1: 12...in simplicity and godly sincerity,**

“*Simplicity*” is “the virtue of one who is free from pretense and hypocrisy; not self-seeking, not doing thing of with double mind with an ulterior motive, but being open and truthful toward all according to the scriptures. “*Godly sincerity*” is “purity, honesty, virtue of heart, which Christ creates in the new man:

2 Peter 1: 3: According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

Not Fleshly

A clear conscience involves not using anything of the flesh in our ministry and conduct—**2 Cor 1: 12...not with fleshly wisdom.**

It means not using our word rather than God’s word; not appealing to flesh by putting a part of salvation in the hands of men; not adapting our doctrine to what will earn us money or glory or a bigger following after ourselves. By Christ purging his conscience and continually showing him mercy, upholding him and preserving him in faith, Paul said,

2 Corinthians 4: 1:...as we have received mercy, we faint not: 2: But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

A preacher who turns to using fleshly wisdom has fainted. He has wilted under the pressure. Perhaps it is the pressure of wondering where his next penny will come from so he goes after financial gain. It may be the pressure of pastoring a small congregation so he changes in order to get a following after him. It may be pressure of receiving no recognition so he changes to receive glory and applause from men. Whatever the case may be, he has fainted under the pressures of the ministry. The apostle Paul would have too were it not for Christ giving him mercy and making him renounce fleshly wisdom.

By the grace of God

To have a clear conscience in our ministering and conduct is by depending upon God alone to freely give us his message and keep us and make it effectual—**2 Cor 1: 12:...by the grace of God,**

2 Corinthians 2:17: For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

Notice, Paul said we preach of sincerity of God. Everything is of God's free and sovereign grace. He chose us, redeemed us and regenerated us and preserves us by grace. Likewise, he calls his minister, sends us and gives us the message by grace. We depend on his grace to make it effectual in us and in those who hear us.

2 Corinthians 4: 5: For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. 6: For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 7: But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

In the World and the Church

To have a clear conscience means this is our ministry and our conduct in the world and toward the saints—**2 Cor 1: 12...we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.**

God's saints do not conduct ourselves one way in the world and another way among God's saints but the same; the only difference is, we minister more abundantly toward our brethren, God's saints.

Manifest by the Truth

By this manner of ministry and conduct, we commend ourselves to the conscience of other faithful believers with the truth we preach—**2 Cor 1: 13: For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end;**

The things Paul wrote and preached he himself lived. The people read and acknowledged his gospel to be true—they believed on Christ. And they acknowledged the apostle Paul to be sincere in his life, in his ministry, in all his conduct according to the very word he preached. It is by this truth that God applies our preaching and conduct to the conscience of his people making us to know in our conscience who is Christ's preacher and who is not.

2 Corinthians 4: 2...by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

2 Corinthians 5: 11: Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

Be sure to understand what it means for us to be made manifest in conscience of our brethren by the truth. By Christ purging the conscience, God's people know and acknowledge two things in their own purged conscience:

One, we know when we hear the truth of Christ according to the scriptures. If a sour note is sounded, God makes us know in our purged conscience that it is false. We know when we hear the truth according to the word of God and when we are not hearing it.

Two, and just as important, Christ makes believers know when a preacher's conduct is honest or when it is deceitful and cunning for selfish gain.

Brethren, compare what men say to the word of God. And just as important, pay attention to a man's manner and conduct. We are not talking about isolated falls but his overall ministry and conduct. Does he preach the truth according to God's word in all his doctrine? Does he align himself with faithful men or reject them for unfaithful men? Is he a giver or a taker? Does he benefit himself or benefit God's people? Does his ministry result in unity among brethren or division and confusion? Christ said his people will know false prophets by their fruits—this includes both the word they preach and their manner of life as well as those who hear and follow them.

Matthew 7: 15: Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. 16: Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 17: Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

A grape tree does not produce thorns. Neither does a fig tree produce thistles. When Christ has created a man anew, Christ has created him *a good tree*. Therefore, *every good tree bringeth forth good fruit*. But left to himself, a man is *a corrupt tree*. Therefore, *a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit*.

The apostle Paul was able to rejoice because Christ had given him the testimony of a clear conscience in the gospel he preached and the way he conducted himself toward the saints. And Christ gave the true saints at Corinth the same witness in their conscience. They knew that Paul had both preached the truth and dealt honestly with them and with all men. And Paul knew those at Corinth who Christ had purged because they were faithful to Christ and to him in the way they ministered and in their conduct.

REJOICING IN ONE ANOTHER

Therefore, by Christ bearing witness in our purged conscience, he causes his saints to rejoice in one another.

Faithful brethren rejoice in faithful ministers—**2 Corinthians 1: 14: As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing,...**Part of the brethren were true saints and acknowledged Paul's gospel was according to the word of God and they thanked Paul and rejoiced in him and defended him]

Likewise, Christ's faithful minister rejoices in faithful brethren—**2 Corinthians 1: 14...even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.**

This rejoicing in brethren is rejoicing in Christ because he alone created us and not we ourselves. We rejoice in our brethren that Christ created them anew inwardly by his grace. He made them rest in Christ as their Righteousness and Holiness. He made them faithful to Christ and faithful to brethren and faithful in the world. The good tree and the good fruit is all of Christ's creating! Thus by making us rejoice in him, Christ makes us rejoice in our brethren who rejoice in him. This is one way Christ keeps his people from being deceived by deceitful workers.

REMEMBER THIS

Let's always exercise ourselves to have a clear conscience. The apostle Paul said,

Acts 24:16: And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.

1 Timothy 1: 5: Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and *of* a good conscience, and *of* faith unfeigned:

This includes being careful not to wound the weak conscience in new born believers. Ask yourself not, “Am I free to do this?” You very well may be. But ask, “Will this run the remote risk of offending a weak brother’s conscience or setting a bad example for one young in the faith.” If it might offend, it is not worth doing. If we err, Christ will let us know in our conscience,

1 Corinthians 8: 12: [For] when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.

Philippians 1:10...approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

Two, rejoice and thank and defend those Christ has made faithful! By doing so, we glorify Christ for creating them! Chiefly, rejoice by being the same toward them.

Titus 2:7: In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine *shewing* uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, 8: Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

Amen!