

April 14, 2024

Acts 22:22-23:11

"A Consideration Of Zeal And Of Conscience"

PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Zeal can be a great thing or it can be the worst thing about you. Consider [Acts 22:3-4](#), "He continued, I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strictness of our ancestral law. I was **zealous** for God, just as all of you are today. I persecuted this Way to the death, arresting and putting both men and women in jail." (Emphasis mine) Sincere, but sincerely wrong. Yet another example of zeal that did not work out as planned was the time king David attempted to move the ark of God to its proper place. In his zeal to get this done David did the right thing the wrong way. This incident ended in a miserable failure for David and the death of a man named Uzzah. See [II Samuel 6](#). Later David did move the ark to the city of David. This time in his zeal, David did the right thing the right way. [Romans 12:11](#) on the other hand gives us some encouraging instruction that is all wrapped up in zeal, "Do not lack diligence in zeal; be fervent in the Spirit; serve the Lord." Doesn't get any more plain than that about what godly zeal looks like in shoe leather.

Let's consider the "conscience."

Bad/defective conscience:

[I Corinthians 8:7-12](#); "Food will not bring us close to God. We are not worse off if we don't eat, and we are no better off if we do eat. But be careful that this right of yours in no way becomes a stumbling block to the weak. For if someone sees you, the one who has knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, won't his weak conscience be encouraged to eat food offered to idols? So the weak person, the brother or sister for whom Christ died, is ruined by your knowledge. Now when you sin like this against brothers and sisters and wound their weak conscience, you are sinning against Christ."

[I Timothy 4:2](#), "through the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are seared."

[Titus 1:15](#), "To the pure, everything is pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; in fact, both their mind and conscience are defiled."

[Hebrews 10:22](#); "let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed in pure water."

Good conscience:

[I Timothy 1:5](#), "Now the goal of our instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith."

[I Timothy 3:9](#), "holding the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience."

[II Timothy 1:3](#), "I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience as my ancestors did, when I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day."

[Hebrews 9:14](#), "how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works so that we can serve the living God?"

[Hebrews 10:22](#), "let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed in pure water."

[Hebrews 13:18](#), "Pray for us, for we are convinced that we have a clear conscience, wanting to conduct ourselves honorably in everything."

[I Peter 3:16](#), "Yet do this with gentleness and reverence, keeping a clear conscience, so that when you are accused, those who disparage your good conduct in Christ will be put to shame."

Application:

Misplaced zeal and misguided matters of conscience are detrimental to others and to the Kingdom of God. On the other hand those who have a holy zeal to serve and honor God along with a good conscience are truly instruments in the Redeemer's hands that He can and does use for good. Consider your zeal/passions and your conscience as measured against the truths of Scripture. Do this often, if a man like the Apostle Paul could and did sometimes get it wrong, so can we. "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you." [James 4:8a](#).