UNDERSTANDING FAITH SERIES

FAITH AND THE CONSCIENCE

We are looking at faith, and what it means and what it requires. In Heb. 11:6 says without faith its impossible to please God. We must understand what the bible says about faith and the difference between faith and presumption.

II Tim. 1:5 *I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you.* The bible talks about genuine faith. There is a faith that is genuine. The other aspects are mental accent or presumption.

Lets look at other verse in I Tim. 1:5 *Whereas the aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith.* Look at all these words that describe faith, genuine faith, sincere faith.

Look at verse 19 *Holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting conscience, certain persons have made shipwreck of their faith.*

And also I Tim. 3:9 *They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.*

Note that all the 3 verses in I Tim. 1 verse 5, I Tim. 1 verse 19 and I Tim. 3 verse 9 relate to conscience and faith. There is a relationship between our conscience and faith. If you remember about 2 weeks ago we mentioned the difference between rhema and logos. How that faith is produced through that rhema that we hear from God. And the rhema can come from meditating on the logos of God. And then we

mentioned how unless we have a rhema from God that it would be presumptuous for us to do anything.

This morning we look into a guiding system that God has placed inside our spirit so that we could know whether we have the faith or not. How do I know I really had the faith for something? Is it because I just had a mental conviction? Is it because I am mentally convinced? Or is it because I have a carnal confidence in it. How do I know that I really had the faith and its not mental accent or my desire? If you notice in exercising faith on something that we have to regard more to what is going on in our spirit than what is going on outside. And every time before you exercise faith in some area, we have to examine inside us. Take for example a person who said I am believing God for a hundred oil wells. I don't even know if his back garden had enough place for one oil well. And they don't even know how deep they have to go. So a person just say I am believing God for a hundred oil wells. And that person is very confident, very optimistic. Faith is optimistic but not all optimism is faith. And that person goes about with great confidence.

How does that person knows that it is his own confidence, his own mental conviction and not the Spirit of God? If that same person were to examine his inward spirit, he will pray and be still enough to hear what is in his spirit. He needs to check the inward witness within and know what his spirit man senses or feels about it. He needs to check what his spiritual senses sense. If that person did not have the faith nor is it the will of God, if that person examines himself, he will sense that there is something hollow within his heart. Moreover inwardly he won't have that peace of God, the joy of God. His inward spirit is troubled about it. Definitely that person is not exercising faith. That person is just having a mental conviction.

If you really are in the oil business, you need to exercise faith for that. You can listen inside your spirit that there is a confirmation inside your spirit. Lets come closer to home. What about the person who is exercising faith for a house or a car? Then that person examines himself or herself. If you check inside you if there is no inward confirmation and if it is only your head, but your spirit is not going along, you can never pull it through. It is the spirit man that has dominion over circumstances. But at other times when really God has put a revelation in your

spirit, a rhema in your spirit there is an inward knowing.

There are some things God has spoken in my spirit that are not manifested yet. But there is an inward knowing and I know that I know that it is coming to pass.

The word conscience in the Greek is *suneidesis,* which means an inward knowing of something. And that is the aspect that we want to talk about that the world calls conscience. It says in I Tim. 1:19 *Holding faith and a good conscience.* Verse 18 says *You may wage a good warfare.* Lets fight a good warfare having faith and a good conscience. Faith must work together with the conscience in order to be successful. For example, here am I meditating on the Word of God. But God's Word has not sunk into my spirit yet. As long as God's Word has not been received into the spirit man my conscience cannot bear witness to that act of faith yet. However as I meditate on the Word of God and spend time in worship, one day that Word of God enters into my spirit. And inside me there is a conviction that there is a knowing, there is an impartation in my spirit. And my conscience shouts out, "Alleluia it is done." Then I can act in faith. As long as your conscience don't bear witness to what you want to exercise faith on you can't act yet. Faith and conscience work together. Your conscience will tell you the time to act on God's Word.

That is the reason why sometimes a person meditating on healing suddenly may get a revelation in his heart that by the stripes of Jesus he is healed. He removes his clutches and medicine and comes out healed completely or gradually. The conviction that healing is the will of God has come into his heart. Yet the Word of God may not have penetrated into the spirit of others watching this man acting on the Word and getting healed. And when that happens they didn't manifest a healing. Their consciences don't bear witness to the Word of God concerning healing yet. It is God's will but their consciences don't bear witness yet. They have the knowledge that it is God's will. But they don't have the actual faith to exercise faith in God's will yet. And so as they try to remove their clutches their consciences protest. When your conscience protests you have to pay attention. Either the timing is wrong or your faith level is not there yet.

See there are different faith levels. Last year you may have faith for certain things and this year you may have faith for more things. Our faith grows. This year your conscience may not permit you but this year your conscience may permit you to exercise faith on a greater thing. Our conscience is not only the guide to whether something is sin or something is not sin. Our conscience is also a guide to the different levels of faith in our life, whether we actually have the faith for something. Something may be right but yet you don't have the faith level to move into it yet. Your conscience will protest. Every time you try to move into that direction your conscience will say no. The next time you want to exercise faith examine your conscience.

If you say I don't have time to do all those things then you might as well don't do it. If you don't have time to examine the spiritual world, how can you be exercising the spiritual principles to accomplish things in the natural? If you want to accomplish things in the natural you have to spend time in the natural area to train your natural skill, to sharpen your natural talent. If you want to do something in the spirit world from the spirit perspective using and applying spiritual principles we have to examine our spirits. We have to spend time waiting on God to examine what is going on in our spirit. Otherwise Paul says in I Tim. 1:19 there will be shipwreck. A shipwreck is when you have launched into the sea. And out there the storm comes forth and your ship don't have the ability to pull through the storm it will be wrecked by the storm and you float back to shore with a piece of plank losing everything. And shipwrecked faith is dangerous because you may get so discouraged that you can never even be at the level where you started. I know people who shipwrecked their faith where before their faith level is this high. And then they try to move into a higher level and at this height their conscience yells, protest. But they persist and as they try there is no faith level there. The storms of life come, the winds of the enemy come they are discouraged. They float back to shore on a piece of plank. They managed to get back to shore. And you would expect that they come back to the faith level that is there. I am sorry many of them come down right here to zero, worse than when they started. They are disheartened and they are not even abnormal.

See before the shipwreck they at least had the ship. After the shipwreck there is no more ship. All they have is a piece of plank. There you are you start again with the raft. Therefore we have to examine ourselves whether you are in the secular world

or in the ministry whatever you are doing from God you have to always be sensitive to what goes on in your conscience. Your conscience speaks to you everyday telling you whether something you are doing is right or not. On a business deal, on the job you are supposed to take, on finances hat you believe God for. Your conscience will bear witness to it. Or whether you should take the purchase of that car your conscience bears witness with you. And if you don't pay attention to your conscience you get into trouble 5 years later don't blame God. Too many people blame God for the decision they themselves made. They ask God why didn't He warn me. God said I did. God will always say I did. He does warn us but we don't hear through our conscience.

In I Cor. 8:7 *However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through being hitherto accustomed to idols, eat food as really offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.* Noticed here that there is such a thing as a weak conscience. If there is a weak conscience then there is a strong conscience. Paul is talking about those with a weak conscience. Who is he talking about? Paul is talking in reference to idol food. He says that there are those who realize that idol is nothing, and they are conscious of God rather than of the idols. So somehow along the way the food that is given to them has been offered to idols and they eat it and it does not harm them. But another person whose conscience is weak comes along and sees that happening and when he wants to eat it his conscience tells him his faith level is not there. And when he eats it and his conscience still say no but because of the other person whom he saw eating, he just followed along. Paul says that such persons' conscience will be wounded.

In I Cor. 8:10 *For is any one sees you, who have knowledge, at table in an idol's temple, might he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols?* Notice that person is going to eat not because his conscience tells him but because he saw another person do it. He is obeying circumstances and not obeying his conscience.

Verse 11 and 12 *And so by your knowledge this weak man is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. Thus, sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.* See their conscience is weak and it gets wounded. When you disobey your conscience you wound your conscience. Conscience can be wounded.

Lets analyze this case. This is a specimen although it applies to idol worship the principles apply to that. First there are 2 persons "A" and "B" "A" has knowledge and consciousness that idols are nothing. And his conscience bears witness at his faith level. "B" has no knowledge, no consciousness of this authority that God has given and also "B" conscience is weak. "A" eats food offered to idols and no harm comes to him because his conscience permits it. "B" does it but as he was going to do it his conscience screams. His faith level was not there to do it. As his faith level is not there his conscience tells him not to do it. Our faith level is witnessed to by the conscience. Your conscience will tell you your faith level. Its funny when in a sense we obey our conscience for it is alright for some particular persons to do it but its not alright for some other person to do it. Its not because its not alright for you to do it. But rather the time for you to do it is not there. You can do the right thing in the wrong time and its wrong. It is alright to eat, no problem but it is the wrong timing because the faith level is not there.

So the conscience is sensitive to both the rightness of the action and the timing of the action. It can be the right thing but in a wrong time the conscience also will tell you. Just to make it clear here, as far as I am concerned idols food are nothing. It has no natural or spiritual effect on your life if you have the consciousness of that. And you don't know what people did with that meat that you bought. Whether they have prayed to some dumb idols before they sell it in the market we don't know. So don't bother just give thanks and eat it. But for the sake of testimony we do not when we are aware of something that is offered to idols and its part of the whole worship you refrain. You refrain not because that food will do something to us but rather for the sake of your testimony. Here is where we are talking about the principle of the faith level and the conscience. Notice that the weak brother wounds the conscience.

There are many things the bible talks about the conscience. Lets turn to Heb. 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 with pure water.* I didn't know there was an evil conscience until I read God's Word. What is an evil conscience? It is a conscience that has been polluted, that has been defiled by wrong teaching and

wrong facts.

Lets look at Titus chapter 1:15 *To the pure all things are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure; their very minds and conscience are corrupted.* See our conscience can be defiled. What happen when a child is born into this world is that his or her conscience is pure. Every baby born into this world has a pure conscience. But as you grow up in life you are given the wrong teaching and the wrong facts. And as you go through life the wrong teaching keeps emphasizing that something is right even though it is wrong. And then you begin to believe the wrong things and you act on the wrong things. The first time you acted on it your conscience protested. The second time you acted on it your conscience still protested but its now weak. The third time you act on it your conscience still protested but it has gone weaker. The more you act on it the weaker the signal he sends you until it reach a point where it does not protest any more. Every time it protests it has been shouted down by the wrong teaching.

And it reached a point where the reverse starts taking place is now evil. And you could do the wrong thing and there is no conscience. You don't feel wrong any more. At first you did it you feel wrong but now you don't feel wrong any more. Let me give an illustration. There are people out there who could kill without any feeling. They can just take a gun and just shoot you. Human lives are worthless to them. There are criminals out there who are professional killers. They will shoot you down and nothing bothers them. What made them so cruel? The first time they killed someone they probably could not sleep. Then the second time they kill, it bothers them to some extend. The third time they kill, it still bothers them but not as much. The fourth time, the fifth time until their conscience stops protesting and then they can kill without any problem. That's how the conscience becomes evil, becomes defiled. And at the same time they kill they are given the wrong teaching. They justify the killing.

Do you know that before any human being wants to do something wrong, he or she has to justify it in his or her mind? Why do we justify our wrongdoing and ourselves by using our minds? It is because deep down our consciences protest. Every human being who does something wrong have to convince himself with reason why he should do it. Even someone who murder or rob they will have to

give reasons to themselves, justify their actions to themselves not to any other person. Those who kill another they will say this person is giving so much trouble might as well get rid of this guy. We give ourselves reasons to do the wrong thing. Why do human beings do that?

God has put universal conscience. And that conscience is so tender it needs to be nurtured. If the conscience is not obeyed it gets seared. Lets look at I Tim. 4:2 *Through the pretensions of liars whose consciences are seared.* Their own conscience seared it gets sick until it gets no more feeling. If you are a guitar player, and you press the cords with your left hand, you will notice that the edge of our left hand fingers there is always a thick layer of skin. But if you are not playing for several months that layer of skin drops off and it leaves a normal layer. With that thick layer of skin you can't feel with the tips of your finger any more. That thick layer of skin and there are no nerves inside you can't feel anymore. In the same way the conscience gets seared its gone dead and you can't sense right or wrong any more. Faith has to move with a conscience all the time.

Notice in I Cor. 8 why is the conscience weak? It is due to the lack of knowledge. The positive application is this. Our conscience can be trained by knowledge. Sometimes it is not only the wrong teaching or wrong doing sometimes it's the wrong custom and culture. Like for example in India which is illegal now its one of the old Indian custom when the husband dies the wife has to be burned too. And they can do it without any conviction that it is wrong. Why because the culture has deadened it. So wrong teaching and wrong knowledge can come in any form. It can come through books. It can come through the educational systems. It can come through customs or even culture. There is no problem with culture as long as it does not contradict the Word of God. Retain your cultures, be as you are, there is no problem with that as long as it does not contradict God's Word. But when the cultural customs contradict the Word that's where the choice has to be made. There are a lot of things that are unessential which are not necessary to fuss or fight over. Some people have gone to the extreme until they have eradicated their culture totally. God wants you to know the beauty of your customs and your culture. Retain it as much as you can and just be as you are.

But there are some acts that is interesting. Lets take brother X and brother Y. Brother X has no background of alcoholism. As far as brother X is concerned he has no problem whatsoever. But brother Y has an alcoholism problem, was delivered and set free. And that put a restriction on brother Y. It says don't ever touch alcohol at all his conscience tells him that. See God knows he can't handle it at all. For me I believe that its good to keep away from all those things. What happens for example if it is a lady X and a lady Y. It's a custom and its also true in a sense like some ladies after they give birth they do take some wine. So lets take lady X and lady Y. Both of them gave birth. Lady X has no problem with alcohol. But lady Y has been delivered from alcoholism in the past. Now lady X is given a little bit of this wine and she just take this little bit and it warms her up. The conscience of lady X does not tell her that is wrong. But lady Y she has a problem with alcohol and her conscience tells her don't touch it. When you look at both of them you say isn't it funny why it is alright for one to take wine and not alright for the other to take wine. In theology there is a division called situational ethics. Something it may seems to be okay for this person but not okay for another person. It is not a case of double standards. It's a case of the spirit knowing what is right and wrong for a person. Nearly half the world has a problem with alcohol. So how shall Christians stand? Don't have any thing to do with it. So faith and conscience must work together.

Lets look at Acts 23 we see how Paul operated faith in his life. In verse one *And Paul, looking intently at the council, said, "Brethren, I have lived before God in all good conscience up to this day."* If Paul was in a group of a hundred people and ninety-nine of them do something but he was the only odd one out because his conscience says don't do it, he would rather obey his conscience than to obey the majority. He would rather obey his conscience than to just follow blindly. The conscience is so important to Paul.

Acts 24:16 *So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward God and toward men.* Paul says he is moving in his whole life and ministry to obey his conscience. That's what we should do.

Rom. 2:15 *They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness.* He is talking about the conscience that God has placed

in each human heart that bears witness to the Word of God.

Rom. 9:1 *I am speaking the truth in Christ, I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit.* Our conscience has a voice that bears witness to the things of the Spirit. Here is where we tie the leading of the Spirit and faith in the Word together. The Spirit can't lead you unless you are also sensitive to the inward witness of your spirit that is a part of your conscience. Your conscience is utilized by God to lead you in the everyday circumstances of your life, the daily things that you do the right or wrong that the Word does not cover specifically. Is it all right for you to take this job or not? The bible doesn't tell you that. It tells you what kind of commandments to follow. If it is a company that makes an honest living its not hard to make a decision. If it is a business that is involved in evil the Word tells you clearly to keep away from it. What if you have to choose among 10 honest companies? How can you tell which one is from God? There is where the Holy Spirit guides your conscience to the right one. Your conscience will guide you to the specific details of the things to do everyday. It may even be so detailed so to some times tell you it is not alright to see such and such a person. So detailed is the leading that it is marvelous to behold such great detail that God leads us. That is the inward witness that is a part of the conscience The Holy Spirit leads.

Now here is where it ties up to the Word of God. The conscience has to be educated by the Word of God. See the conscience is weak or strong in directly proportional to the knowledge that we received. If you have no knowledge your conscience is weak in these areas. If you have knowledge your conscience is strong in these areas. So the Word of God trains our conscience. And the Word of God when it comes inside us produces faith and then your conscience tells you that's alright. That's how faith, the Word is related to the conscience. The conscience is related to the leading of the Spirit. And you can see the harmony of both working with the conscience of the central theme like Paul says I obey my conscience.

As we close turn to the book of Heb. 10:22 *Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience.* Notice here he says having full assurance of faith. You cannot act on something in faith unless you got full assurance of faith. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction

of things not seen. We need the full assurance. And where in the Spirit can we get that full assurance? Assurance comes from a cleansed conscience. A conscience that is pure and undefiled, sprinkled, can bear witness with faith. Sprinkle with what? Heb. 10 tells us that is the Blood of Jesus Christ. Heb.10: 19 *Since we have the confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus.* Then in chapter 9:14 *How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience.* The blood of Jesus cleanses and purges our conscience. That is the first thing to know. The blood must cleanse the conscience. Whenever you have disobeyed your conscience you have to ask for the blood to cleanse it. The moment you commit one sin no matter how small, it interferes the leading of the Spirit instantly. If you just have one tiny sin it will interfere with your hearing in the Holy Spirit because one tiny sin will defile your conscience. And your conscience has a role and a part involved in hearing from the Holy Spirit. That is why if you want to be a hundred percent all the time doing what the Spirit wants you to do your conscience must be clear.

Supposing you have done something wrong and your conscience tells you that it is wrong. I am not talking about the Ten Commandments. I mean you have said a wrong word that has caused damage to the body of Christ. Or you spoke roughly to your children or to your father. Let me tell you how fussy the Spirit can get at you. The Holy Spirit will even rebuke you and tell you that you are not supposed to raise your voice with you children. Nobody in the world will tell you that but the Holy Spirit will tell you that. To the children the Holy Spirit will tell you is wrong to speak to your daddy that way. Nobody will tell you that but the Holy Spirit will. When the Holy Spirit tells you that your conscience says that right is wrong.

If you don't put it under the blood and you try to move into the Spirit, that sin will interfere with the leading of the Holy Spirit. Lets say you try to get a prophecy from God or if you try to get a word of knowledge or a word of wisdom everything becomes blank. You can't move with accuracy. Just one tiny dot of sin can affect our accuracy to hear from God. Other areas will also be affected. One thing that is done will affect all the other areas. So in order to move into that area the first point must be clear. You have to have your conscience purged and cleansed by the blood.

And the second thing we have seen in I Cor. 8 that you have to have your

conscience cleansed by the Word of God. The bible calls it in I Tim. 3: 9 *holding the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience*. As we go through this series on faith we need to see how faith and the conscience work closely together. If you say you are exercising faith then make sure that your conscience is in line with it. If you conscience doesn't go along with that something is wrong. Full assurance of faith can only be exercised with a cleansed conscience. If you have that conscience supporting you bearing witness with you go for it. Whatever the circumstances go for it because in the midst of that storm you will not be shipwrecked. Your conscience will pull you through. Come what may you have an inner assurance that you are doing the right thing. If you know that you are in the center of God's will that spirit of fearlessness that comes into you. There is something that comes into you that you couldn't care even if heaven and earth fell apart. You know that you are doing the right thing and it's the will of God.