

The Inscrutable Question: Stream of Consciousness: Conscience: Introduction: Definitions of *Suneidesis*

E. Conscience:

A. Introduction

1. The conscience is the compartment where norms and standards and one's scale of values related to the absolute principles of Bible doctrine are stored.

2. The Greek word for "conscience" is:

συνείδησις / *suneidesis* / - "to know with an absolute standard"

3. We get expanded definitions from the dictionaries and lexicons:

Vine, W. E. *An Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words.* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), 220:

The witness borne to one's conduct; that faculty by which we apprehend the will of God; that which is designed to govern our lives.

Spicq, Ceslas. *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament.* Vol. 3. (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 332-335:

The word **συνείδησις / *suneidesis*** / goes back to the writings of 5th century B.C. Greek philosopher Democritus but practically disappears from literature only to reappear in the first century in Philo, Josephus, and Plutarch. Absent from the Synoptic (Gospels), it is used quite frequently by Paul as a central element of ... his moral theology in the major epistles and the Patorals. It also appears in Hebrews and 1 Peter where it is part of the common Christian vocabulary.

Paul made **συνείδησις / *suneidesis*** / into the interior faculty for personal discernment of good and evil, the practical rule of conduct and motive for action. Having abolished the law, and thus morality based on the observance of an external rule, Paul substituted an individual norm. He took a word that was in the popular vocabulary and ... distinctively enriched the concept.

Friedrich, Gerhard. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.* Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Vol. 7. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), 904-905:

In conscience two egos are in juxtaposition and opposition in one and the same person, knowing and evaluating the same facts but from different standpoints. These two egos are controlled by different orders. The one order, in virtue of its quality of truth, goodness, and beauty, is affirmed and is to be affirmed; it contains within itself an imperative, an "ought." The other is a factual but negated force which destroys the good order by falsehood, evil, and disorder. The ethical elements of tension within the one person result from the different natures and operations of the orders.

The Analytical Greek Lexicon. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), 391:

συνείδησις / *suneidesis* /: An inward moral impression of one's actions and principles.

Acts 23:1 - And Paul, looking intently at the Sanhedrin said, "Brethren, I have lived with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day."

Romans 9:1 - I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 1:12 - Our proud confidence is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you.

The inward faculty of moral judgment.

Romans 2:14 - For whenever Gentiles, having not the content of the law, constantly do by instinct the things of the law, these ones not having the law are a law to themselves.

4. Being a “law unto themselves” means that the Gentiles were able to produce human good or the morality of the Law without knowledge of the Law. Furthermore, this verse implies that they did a better job instinctively than the Jews did with the Law.
5. Man is born with a natural instinct for establishment, even though he lives in the devil’s world. Therefore, if the Gentiles could produce the same morality as the Jews who had the Law, it made the Jews look bad.

Romans 2:15 - The very ones who demonstrate the work of the law written in their streams of consciousness, their conscience [**norms, standards, and scale of values for morality and establishment**] confirming the testimony, and their thinking alternately accusing or defending it.

6. Gentiles had souls with norms and standards like the Jews. The Jews spent years learning the Law from which they developed their norms and standards. Now along came the Gentiles who had not even studied the Law but produced the same morality by instinct. “Accusing or defending,” demands norms and standards by which right and wrong can be sorted out. Because the Gentiles had norms and standards residing in their conscience, they could say of one another, “He’s right,” or “He’s wrong.” That destroyed the use of the Mosaic Law as an instrument of justification before God.

[The inward moral and spiritual frame of reference.](#)

Titus 1:15 - To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled.

Hebrews 9:14a - How much more will the blood of Christ purify our consciences from dead works [**counterproductive activities**] to serve the living God.

7. Salvation is entirely the work of God. It is the work of the Father in judging our pre-salvation sins, of the Son in being judged as a substitute for our sins, and of the Holy Spirit in common and efficacious grace.
8. This is why the way of salvation is faith alone in Christ alone with no human works added to it.
9. After salvation, the new believer may use the three spiritual skills to purify his conscience from dead works and establish new norms and standards based on grace.
10. Divine power and human power are mutually exclusive. Execution of the Christian way of life requires divine power. Otherwise, energy of the flesh destroys grace orientation in the conscience and results in dead works.