

Conscience

"...Written on their hearts..."

In addition to the observable evidence of God's existence, power, character and achievements, we were *born* with a relatively healthy sense of right and wrong. We did not come into this world with cauterized consciences; we become desensitized with time. *"They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts"* (Ephesians 4:18). (See also Acts 28:27; 1Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:15.)

"...God made men right, but they have found many sinful ways" (Eccl. 7:29 NLV).

From the cradle to the grave we are pressured, browbeaten and deceived into believing that godliness is only for the naïve and intellectually challenged. But, all of us were born with a God-consciousness that faithfully testified about his existence and his moral laws. A friend of mine recently said to me: "I do not remember my parents ever telling me what was right and what was wrong; I just knew."

I like philosopher Martin Buber's phrasing of this truth: "The law is not thrust upon man; it rests deep within him..." That's because God put it there. We are born with it. Only you and the Lord know what you did with your inborn, primordial God-awareness. If you nurtured his presence in you from the beginning, you do not doubt his existence now. You are not asking for proof, because you already have it.

God's word says that, in the innermost part of their being, even depraved people know when they are doing wrong. *"...they know God's righteous decree that those who do such [evil] things deserve death..."* (Romans 1:32). People will be without excuse because *"...the requirements of the law [of God] are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness [are still speaking up] ..."* (Romans 2:15).

"The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men [humans] who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them."

"For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men [humans] are without excuse."

"For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools... They exchanged the truth of God for a lie... Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind..." (Romans 1:18-22, 25, 28). (cf Romans 2:4-8.)

What, then, will we believe: our eyes or the lies, our conscience or our closed mind? We have an open mind for everything else. Why not for God? The Lord says he made all of us intelligent enough to plainly see his hand in the created things around us and in us.

Did you notice that passive *godlessness* is in the same class with active *wickedness*? Simply leaving God out of our daily lives – whether or not we believe in him – is as

weighty as wrongdoing. We offend God when we fail to acknowledge him, when we fail to subordinate ourselves to him. God wants us to be involved with him.

“They [ancient Israel] cried out to the Lord and said, ‘We have sinned; [because] we have forsaken the Lord...’ (1 Samuel 12:10). ♦♦