

# RENEWING YOUR MIND: Reclaiming Your Conscience from the Enemy

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Let me expose one of the enemy's most devious and effective strategies to drain the power from our lives. After causing us to look back in regret, he then partners with our own consciences to condemn us! In this way he uses our God-given internal compasses against us. Our consciences are designed to keep us in God's will, but the enemy twists the signals they are sending and interprets them as condemning us.

## **His Perfect Design & Purpose**

God graciously endowed every human being with an internal guidance system called the conscience. It's an internal security system that sounds the alarm whenever we step out of the love walk and harbor deadly emotions such as bitterness, lust, envy, anger, and any other sinful attitude or behavior. Our consciences blare at us to quit the offending behavior and jump back into the river of God's love. As John the apostle put it, "our heart condemns us" (1 John 3:20). If we don't repent of the wrong we are doing, we begin to feel shame, blame, and guilt instead of love, peace, joy, and so on. Our hearts condemn us because our consciences are trying to rescue us from the tormentors. Love and condemnation do not work together. One has to go; the other will reign supreme.

This is why Paul wrote so often about the conscience. One time he was giving his testimony, and "looking earnestly at the

council, [he] said, ‘Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day’” (Acts 23:1, emphasis added). On another occasion he said, “I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men” (Acts 24:16, emphasis added). In his letter to the Romans, he said even people who have not yet heard the gospel have experienced a level of God-given awareness of the principles of righteousness, “their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them” (Rom. 2:15, emphasis added).

He wrote about being subject to ruling authorities “for conscience’ sake” and about brothers and sisters in the Lord who have a “weak conscience” (Rom. 13:5; 1 Cor. 8:12). He wrote of having a “good conscience,” a “pure conscience” (1 Tim. 1:5; 3:9), and even said, “But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, 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” (2 Cor. 4:2, emphasis added). It is possible to “sear” our consciences and to “cleanse” them (1 Tim. 4:2; Heb. 9:14). It is possible to have an “evil” conscience—that is, one made accustomed to wrongdoing (Heb. 10:22). Peter wrote of the nobility of believers suffering unjustly, “For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully” (1 Pet. 2:19, emphasis added).

The work of our consciences is good, but when the enemy is able to warp what our consciences are telling us, turning them from a righteous warning to a merciless judgment, he employs God’s own weapon against our minds and bodies. This quickly turns to self-hatred, which erodes the health of even committed Christians.

A study in *Psychological Reports* looked at the effect of self-directed compassion on the relationship between bitterness and depression. More than 300 participants completed a questionnaire that assessed their forgiveness, the level of

grace and love they held toward themselves and their levels of depressive symptoms. Results showed that the more compassion and forgiveness we hold toward ourselves, the less depression we experience and the easier we find it to forgive others.

The authors of that study had discovered a biblical truth: that the antidote for self-condemnation is confidence toward God. A powerful passage in 1 John 3:20–24 (KJV) shines a bold light on the method of escape from this deceptive plan: “For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.”

Notice the specific steps to overcoming this common problem:

We recognize that our hearts are condemning us.

We declare that God is greater than our hearts and knows everything.

We have confidence toward God.

We know that we will receive any good thing we ask of Him.

Our part of the deal is to walk the love walk by keeping His commandments and doing the things that are pleasing in His sight.

The primary ways of staying in the love walk are believing in Jesus Christ and loving each other.

By keeping these commands, we dwell in Him, and He in us.

We know for certain that He abides in us because we have His Spirit.

As a result, we stop experiencing needless condemnation from our consciences! This is an amazing way to banish the enemy's accusations and a powerful principle we can apply in many areas of our lives daily. If you have fallen into a cycle of condemnation, holding on to bitterness and self-hatred (or any other sinful habit), then instead of entertaining fiery darts of the devil—which encourage resentful thoughts—cast those thoughts out. Philippians 4:6–8 says we are not allowed to worry about anything. If a thought occurs to us that does not conform to the qualifications of the love walk, cast it out! Do not tolerate it for one minute.

### **Forgiveness = Breaking Bitterness**

Multiple studies have confirmed the life-giving effects of forgiving ourselves and others and the fact that bitterness is disastrous for the body, mind and emotions. Bitterness causes stress, and stress interferes with normal, healthy body processes. Stress hormones can inhibit a process called *anoikis*, which kills diseased cells and prevents them from spreading. That means when we harbor grudges, disease gains a greater foothold in our bodies. Chronic stress also increases the production of certain growth factors that increase in our blood supply, which can speed the development of cancerous tumors.

We literally decide moment by moment what our physical health will be. Approximately 15 minutes after the onset of stress, cortisol levels rise, and they remain elevated for several hours. Stress can also enhance weight gain and fat deposition through changes in feeding behavior. Chronic stress is known to alter the patterns of how people eat, their dietary preference and the rewarding properties of foods.

When we entertain stressful thoughts, we shape our mental and

physical health. It's as simple as that. But when we flood our minds with thoughts of mercy and forgiveness, it enhances our health in every regard. Dodie Osteen, wife of the late, great John Osteen and mother of Joel Osteen, told me years ago about how she had to forgive others as part of her supernatural healing from stage IV liver cancer, during which doctors gave her just a couple of months to live.

Some people discover that the one they have to "forgive" is God. Many people, including Christians, hold grudges against God even though He has never done anything wrong. He brings life, not death, yet people still say foolish things like, "God gave my mom cancer to teach her a lesson." That is just bad theology. God is not a child abuser. He loves us and heals us. It is Satan who steals, kills and destroys, Jesus revealed (John 10:10).

Satan's goal is to tear us down in every area of life, but research confirms that God's antidote of forgiveness impacts our health very positively in three major areas: physical, mental and social (relational).

I am reminded of a profound truth shared by Holocaust survivor Corrie ten Boom in her book *Tramp for the Lord*. Of her fellow concentration camp survivors, she wrote the ones able to forgive Nazi forces were the ones able to return to normal life after the war.

## **Prayer and Declarations**

God, I commit to forgive quickly and fully. I will not hold on to bitterness and let my heart condemn me. I choose to exercise my forgiveness regularly so that forgiveness becomes part of my love nature. Only in You am I able to walk this through. Express Your mercy through my thoughts, attitudes, and actions today. Help me never to slip back into resentment. I also banish self-hatred, which has corroded and corrupted my inner life for too long. Lord, I love myself as You love me.

You made me to be a carrier of Your love! I embrace my original identity in You as a fearfully and wonderfully made—and now redeemed—child of God. In Jesus' name, amen.

I will not fall into the trap of the enemy to use my conscience to condemn me. When I sense God's righteous correction, I will repent and change my behavior, walking free of the enemy's accusations.

I will not hate myself but will see myself as God sees me—as a cherished child, strong and mighty unto great works, forgiven and righteous before Him by the blood of the Lamb.

### **Divine Health In the End Times**

God's plan for believers in all times is that we walk in greater and greater health, even if we are present on earth during the great falling away. The Bible indicates many times that when things worsen around us, Christians only grow brighter and stronger. Paul said that when the culture around us becomes crooked and perverse, Jesus' followers "shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15). God's love imparts not only spiritual health but the highest level of physical and mental health. For believers who walk in love with Jesus and others, wellness will actually accelerate as we near the end of the age. In a famous passage, Paul wrote beautifully about how believers act and speak in the power of God's love. "Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech," he began, indicating a vibrancy and robustness inside and out (2 Cor. 3:12). He continued a few verses later, "Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," (v. 17). Christians usually spiritualize this verse to mean liberty in worship, but this liberty is all-encompassing and includes things like freedom of physical movement, facility of thought and freedom from emotional or mental shackles or weights. Paul then added, "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory,

just as by the Spirit of the Lord," (v. 18, emphasis added). How amazing is that? As we walk "by the Spirit" we go "from glory to glory." This is why the writer of Hebrews could confidently encourage us, "Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus," (Heb. 12:1–2). While others are falling apart, love-fueled believers will be running at marathon levels!

While darkness and dysfunction may increase, light and glory will always increase for those who accept God's love. We will again see days like those of Charles Finney, when entire cities were converted through his revival meetings. We will see out-pourings of the Spirit like the ones described in the book of Acts, but they will be happening all over the globe at the same time.

Nothing in all of history can compare to the move of God that will come upon the earth in those last days for all who will receive it—and this revival will include top levels of physical and mental health. Right now, the best thing we can do for our minds, bodies and souls is learn to walk in the empowering, cleansing, strengthening love of God, which has the power to transform your life in every way.

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