

"For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward." 2 Corinthians 1:12

Can we say this about ourselves? Can we "rejoice" that we have our "conversation" in the world and with our brothers and sisters in Christ in "simplicity and godly sincerity" that are from God? Paul was speaking straight from his heart to the hearts and minds of his friends in Corinth. He was also speaking to you and me and every other believer through the centuries. Paul was an example to Christians of how they should conduct their lives on earth.

Notice several highlights of this verse.

1. Paul was rejoicing. The word means "boasting." That's something many Christians would think is wrong. It is in some cases, but not in this one. The word "boast" is *kauchesis*. It means "to boast, be proud, to glory, the matter or cause for glorying or boasting." This is what Paul is proud to say.
2. Paul's "conscience" testified. The word "conscience" is *suneideseos*. Literally, the word translates as "a knowing with." Dr. Vine wrote, "i.e., a co-knowledge (with oneself), the witness borne to one's conduct by conscience, that faculty by which we apprehend the will of God, as

that which is designed to govern our lives." A conscience is a person's "own internal witness". Each of us has one. Some are more sensitive to its voice than others. Christians should have a very sensitive conscience because they are practiced in listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit. I believe the Spirit works with our own conscience to speak to us about what's right and wrong, what's good and bad, what's holy and unholy, what's true and what's false.

3. The Spirit of God led Paul in his writing of this letter. That's why it's included as part of Holy Scripture. Paul is telling the truth when he writes about the "testimony" of his conscience. The word "testimony" is *marturion*. It is a noun. The literal translation would be: "the testimony of the conscience of us." The word means, "testimony, witness, evidence, proof, the declaration which confirms or makes something known." Paul is speaking about how his conscience is "proof" of what he is saying. He knew it was true deep in his soul. No matter what anyone else said or thought, Paul knew. That's the way of the conscience. Others may try to fool us. We may try to fool ourselves. But when we are quiet and honest with ourselves, we know what's true about us and what's not true. We may fool others, but we don't fool ourselves for long.

Our conscience is an important part of our lives. It's easy to get carried away with what other's think about us. It's easy to be confused by our own thoughts and perceptions. God has given every person a powerful internal tool called the "conscience." Listen to it.

Listen to the Spirit and the Truth of God's Word. They will guide you into all truth. Listen to the Christ Who is "in" you.

4. Paul's conscience testified about his "conversation" in the world. The word is *anestraphemen*. It comes from the words *ana* ("back") and *strephe* ("to turn"). The idea is "to turn back, return." It is in the passive voice here and speaks to the way someone conducts themselves. It indicates what kind of life a person lives. It means "to conduct one's self, to behave, to live in the sense of the practice of certain principles." Paul is speaking honestly about the way he lived his life. It's one thing to boast in speech and written word. It's quite another to boast by one's actions. The phrase "actions speak louder than words" is true. Paul's conscience was proof to him and others about the way he conducted himself.

5. Paul speaks about two locations for his conduct. One is "in the world." The other is "more abundantly to you-ward." Paul lived his life in two worlds. One was the world around us: the cities and towns, the stores and markets. Paul knew that conducting himself well to the unsaved world was important to his testimony as representing Christ. The other world Paul lived his life was his relationship with brothers and sisters in Christ. He could honestly boast about the way he conducted himself in both worlds.

You and I also live in two worlds. There's the physical world and the spiritual world. We exist in both worlds simultaneously. You are always "conducting" yourself in those two worlds throughout your day. One minute you are relating to the physical; the next minute you are relating to the spiritual. It happens in our homes, our extended family, our jobs, schools and community involvements. Paul could say that his conscience was a testimony to how he conducted himself in the world and "especially" to the Corinthians. The most important relationships we have in life are with other Christians. These are people with whom we will spend eternity. Christ has made us a "spiritual family." There is no stronger bond!

6. Paul's conduct and relationship with others was "in simplicity and godly sincerity." Notice the two things Paul pointed out as important in our behavior before the world and fellow Christians: "in simplicity and godly sincerity." "Simplicity" is *hagioteti*. It comes from the root word *hagios* (holy). It is an inherent or acquired moral holiness. It deals with the way one's mind and soul direct one's moral actions. What you are inside shows itself on the outside. Again, we may fool ourselves for a time, but our conscience will tell us what we really believe as will our actions towards others. The phrase "practice what you preach" is a truism.

I've spent most of my ministering life in the workplace with a mixture of saved and unsaved. One of the most often complaints by unsaved about saved is they don't practice what they preach; that they're "hypocrites." Paul is saying clearly here that he was not a hypocrite; that he practiced what he preached. That's what every Christian should be able to say about themselves. It's a boast we should be able to echo with Paul; not in pride but in fact.

"Godly sincerity" is *eilikrineia*. It was used for unmixed substances that were unalloyed and pure. It comes from the words *heile* (the shining or splendor of the sun) and *krino* (to judge, discern). It means "sincere, pure, unsullied, free from spot or blemish to such a degree as to bear examination in the full splendor of the sun." Paul used the word in other writings for moral and ethical purity. The idea was of an uncorrupted, pure Christian behavior in the light of God's judgment. That's something when a Christian can say the way they conduct themselves in the world and with other believers passes the judgment of God's light!

Notice that "simplicity" and "sincerity" are "by the grace of God." They are not from ourselves. They are not something you and I can work up in our own power and intelligence. They must come from God. They must! We do not have the power, wisdom, knowledge or ability to be truly holy and pure. No way! The Christian must rely on God for everything. Being a Christian means living a life dedicated to and depending on God's strength. If we try to live out God's expectations

for His children in our power, we will fail. Only God can live a holy and pure life through us. Our strength to lead a Christian life comes from Christ "in" us. We need Him just like Paul did.

7. Paul gives God the credit for everything he accomplished. Paul was not trying to make himself sound great or special. He wanted everyone reading the letter to know it was because of God's Grace that he had lived a life of which he could boast: "not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God." There is no possible way you, I or anyone else can live a life of holiness and purity in the world and with other Christians from the wisdom of this world. You've read and heard the wisdom of people in the world. Their wisdom doesn't hold up. It can't under the pressure of real living. Life is hard but God is full of Grace and Power and will get us through anything if we'll commit our plans and actions to Him. Let God be God in our lives! Let Him show us the way. He knows best. What lasts in this life and the next is the power of God's Grace! God knows what's true. He knows what will work. He knows that the Holy Spirit will take His Perfect Word and do a Holy work in our hearts and minds. He knows that "if" we obey His Word and the leading of His Spirit, we will be able to "boast" with Paul that "we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God."
-

Taking God's Grace to the World!

Copyright © , [Mark McGee](#) , 1990-2008 /