

CONVICTING VOICE

ENSLAVING VOICE

Within that garden of splendor and amazing beauty was a tree that tested Adam and Eve's minds. A plant would examine man's use of the powers that elevated him above all the other creation. God gave this elevated being *moral discrimination*.

Man was given the freedom to choose. But, he was not given the freedom to choose the consequence of his choice; that was predetermined and irrevocable.

God went a step further in giving man a special hearing gift. His choice *could be influenced* by special voices. Each would encourage a choice that was opposite the other. Each would come to man in a subtle or supernatural way. God graciously unfolded the issues related to the amazing gift of moral choice. Reason would help discern which voice was speaking.

Those voices could be heard through two very highly specialized ears – additional wonderful gifts. The voice of Satan would be heard through the senses of self-pleasure, excitement, eyes, ears, feelings, touch, etc.). The voice of God would be heard in a highly developed area of the mind called conscience, where conviction, reason, association, memory, etc., work together.

God went still another step further. This is where it gets serious. By man's choices he could sharpen or dull the sound of each voice. It would be possible to eventually silence completely one voice while in a fully conscious state. The final end, the ultimate outcome, of that *gift of choice* would cause man to either be fully like Him or totally like Satan.

Expositor White saw this quite clearly: "All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that ***when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses***. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, *sin will become hateful to us.*"^[1] That's what God craves.

At that remarkable point, our own impulses exclude, automatically, Satan's influences.

- We choose Him.
- He works on the mind.
- The will (choice center of the mind) becomes changed.
- It eventually ceases to respond to Satan.

Jesus was at that point when He said: Which of you convinceth me of sin? (John 8:46).

Choices Can Degrade

The demoniacs were almost fully controlled by Satan and his host until Jesus supernaturally released their control of these men's wills. They were powerless to respond to anything but the voice and spirit of the devil (Mark 5:1-13). Total possession is described in Revelation 20 where the wicked have been raised. In the face of glory, Jesus and the New Jerusalem in all its splendor, it says: "And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of saints about, and the beloved city" (Revelation 20:9). They are ready to fight God and all that He stands for.

Paul gave Timothy a fascinating sign of the end of time: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; *having their conscience seared with a hot iron*" (I Timothy 4:1-2).

That was a definitive statement by the Holy Spirit. Man's conscience would be irrevocably damaged. Paul had earlier noted to the Romans what people would do: "And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a *reprobate mind*, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them" (Romans 1:28-32).

After a certain period of time, God will give someone with a seared or evil conscience over to a reprobate mind. That means the mind cannot be renewed, because the person has for so long chosen Satan's ways over God's ways that it is not possible for them to change. This should be a warning for all who persist in sin.

Notice: *God gave them over to a reprobate mind*. This portrays divine abandonment. There is no longer any hope.

Knowing that conscience is the voice of God, heard amid the conflict of human passion (Satan's voice),^[2] it is reprehensible to note that the Catholic Church states that *it* stands between God and conscience.^[3] They decree that inner morality comes from conscience submission to the church, eliminating that beautiful work of the Spirit!



"But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first. As has just been said: Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion" (Hebrews 3:13-15 – NIV).

The Bible expresses the importance of maintaining a pure conscience: "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and *toward men*" (Acts 24:16).

How do I train my conscience?

It was once said that a clean conscience is the best pillow. When we heed that inner voice, it brings peace and harmony.

Paul gave us some remarkable insight: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 9:1). His conscience bore witness to the truth of Jesus Christ. The Spirit helps the conscience, convicting it of right and wrong, approval or condemnation.

That conscience can be trained and molded to respond to the voice of God by knowledge from God's Word: "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2). As you implant God's thoughts into your mind, the conscience functions more and more in a Godly way. Regularity in sensitizing the mind to the Word brings peace: "Blessed *is* the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psalm 1:1-3).

Peter advised us to hold onto a good conscience (1 Peter 3:16). It is a prize to maintain so that we can enjoy inner peace.

We are invited to listen to the voice of God through our conscience and through His Word. There, the renewing power to the soul will come.

There are three ways in which the Lord reveals His will to us, to guide us, and to fit us to guide others. How may we know His **voice** from that of a stranger? How shall we distinguish it from the **voice** of a false shepherd? God reveals His will to us in His word, the Holy Scriptures. His **voice** is also revealed in His providential workings; and it will be recognized if we do not separate our souls from Him by walking in our own ways, doing according to our own wills, and following the promptings of an unsanctified heart, until the senses have become so confused that eternal things are not discerned, and the **voice** of Satan becomes so disguised that it is accepted as the voice of God."[4]

Yes, there are two voices. Satan always speaks loudly. He wants every sensory input to thrill with ecstasy. He likes the individual to be awed at pleasure, music, amusement, even sensory-designed worship.

Why doesn't God shout and thunder and make sure with flashes of lightning that we know who is speaking? He just doesn't work that way. God's final appeal is to that part of the mind that distinguishes us from all other creatures. When we choose by conviction, it is a rational

decision. It truly preserves our freedom. That's what God wants. When we respond to sensory pleasure, we do so as a slave to feelings. That is more like an animal responding to sensory stimuli. That degrades the high thinking ideals that God has for each one. Freedom to choose is not an impulse. It is a high and noble act of the mind. Choosing freely the convictions of that inner voice elevates us to be in harmony with the Eternal.

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References:

- [1] *The Desire of Ages*, p. 668 (emphasis added).
- [2] *The Faith I Live By*, p. 58.
- [3] *Advent Conscience vs. Conscience in Its Practical Workings, The Supremacy of Conscience*.
- [4] *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 512 (emphasis added).