

**The substance of a sermon preached by Mr. L. R. Broome,  
at Rotherfield Anniversary, on 18th May, 1966**

**Text:** *"Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck" (1 Timothy 1. 19).*

With the near departure of the Apostle Paul, he having almost finished his course, the Holy Spirit now enables him to lay the burden of the ministry upon his son in the faith, Timothy. These affectionate Epistles shew how he did it, leaving no doubt at all as to the gravity of the warfare it would entail. Not only does Paul command the manner of the doctrine, and lay open the truths he is to declare, he also warns of the other side, and of the things he must expect from those who will oppose themselves, understanding not what they say nor whereof they affirm. Showing how some will disappoint, whilst others will endure sound doctrine, he lays emphasis on faith, the faith – he calls it, to which Timothy is bidden to hold fast with a good conscience. Nothing is to be declared which does not lie foursquare with conscience, and he is therefore to "shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness." So that faith and a good conscience are to go hand in hand in his ministry.

In this he touches upon common ground in them both, and indeed, when we come to conscience, common to all men, this remaining ember of the Fall speaks on the side of right. What a remarkable monitor it is! Mr. Recorder, as Bunyan calls it, a prompting, speaking voice, never we believe, finally stifled, though seared as with a hot iron. Conscience we all have, no matter what age we may be, and again this is remarkable, that all our consciences lean in the same direction, that is to the good and not the evil. And why should this be? and from what source does

this prompting come, if it be not from God who gave it? Why is it that children blush when conscience finds them out? That blushing may fade as we get older and learn to control our cheeks, but when grace is given conscience has a new and blessed ally and is indeed drawn closer to the right, even to the Word of God where it is that faith is fed.

There can be no faith apart from knowledge. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Therefore Timothy is bidden to "Preach the word," and when faith is given in that preaching, it is then that conscience does her part, and marks any departure therefrom. Knowledge may be slender at first, and often is, but as it grows so does faith. Continual preaching of the Word is seen to be a necessity, because founded upon the truths revealed in the gospel of the grace of God, which is our hope. So that when Paul exhorts to a holding of faith and a good conscience, he lays bare the vital need for Timothy to watch every movement of his conscience to ensure that it answers to the sum of his knowledge and consequently his faith in the Word. This implies the possibility of losing this hold, a fact Paul does not hide from him, and for the strengthening of this command, he goes on to give many injunctions here and elsewhere, to continue in the faith, and to hold fast the form of sound words with faith and love, in which work conscience will readily assist him. This sheds a light upon us, so that we too can see the connection.

There is a secret response within the breast regarding the things we preach, for they must also lie foursquare with the things we have handled and tasted of the Word of God, and therefore with our conscience. They must not go beyond it; must not be fables, or endless genealogies; must not be but half truths, all mercy and no justice; nor rest upon creature power. It must rest entirely on the Word, and conscience will maintain a close watch and speak,

perhaps never so gently in the pulpit. And it is upon this ground that you believers believe also; conscience, with knowledge and faith, enables you to take heed what you hear, what you read, how and what you pray. When the Word drops as the dew upon your heart, conscience approves it well. Doctrine distils and commandments are pleasant; then it is you may say with the Apostle Paul, "Out of a pure conscience" – a good conscience – "a conscience void of offence toward God."

The Word condemns you as a sinner. Does your conscience really witness to this? Not because you have heard this all your lives and expect to hear it again; not as a nominal truth from which some manage so often to escape; but as an abiding fact which conscience accepts, and faith asks of knowledge the way of salvation, "What must I do?" How easy it is for us to number ourselves for convenience sake, among sinners! to follow a trend, and it may well be there are some here today who are bound up in this strong delusion; you have heard the gospel long enough, your hair is grey enough to testify against you as having been solemnly associated with Bible truths and gospel hymns most, if not all your life, and yet tomorrow you would as readily blot your conscience again if it meant some gain in this world's goods, or as readily cover over what conscience tells you is wrong, or practise a deceit, and sear your conscience and do despite to the truth. And after all you are not really a praying person, you have not to take the sermon to your bedside – to your God – nor your walk this day. That pen of yours which has written a lie, that tongue of yours which has told one, that eye of yours which has conveyed one, what has conscience to say about this? No, so far you can manage that, no blush should appear on your cheek.

But if knowledge with faith be yours you will not be able to vacate conscience like this, nor will you be able to go home as if

nothing has happened, as if conscience merely sounded that all was well. You will take home two things and not one, and these will be faith and conscience. Now where these lie together, there will be something to confess, and knowledge to be asked for. Good faith will be ever ready to open up and say, "Here is a way of relief for you," and good conscience will be only too ready to listen, for faith will lay knowledge before you, knowledge of the mercy seat, knowledge of Him who sits upon it, and the reason He does. Conscience will say, "Yes, I believe you faith." It will not demur and decline the humble way. Words may come hard, but sighs, even groans, are equal in the sight of our great High Priest. The Word tells us so, and have we not proved it? Good conscience will not say, This is the wrong counsel you are giving me. It will believe, "If we confess our sin," and faith will say, "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin." Thus does faith open up to such a sinner the knowledge of his doubly-lost condition, by birth and actual sin, and at the same time the form of sound words. And how sound they are! It is the old pathway.

In verse 5 Paul points Timothy to the ends he must keep in view, and one of these is faith unfeigned, and this for himself and then for his hearers. Faith in the heart, which conscience does not condemn, because it knows truth and believes it. This is to be Timothy the preacher's standard; if it is not, his conscience will tell him so; he too will have to face the silent monitor. "Some," says Paul in the next verse, have "swerved aside"; beware you do not; go not after them; hold not back the truth on account of them; decline not faithfulness for the sake of popularity; hold faith and a good conscience. It is a heart-searching thought as one stands before congregations. Do I know the reality of true repentance? and does my conscience answer well on the matter? For knowledge says it is one of the gifts Jesus is exalted to give. It is also the seed of the gospel, which has been used many times of

God to awaken a thought in a careless hearer and startle him in his seat. The more so if such should be on the borders of eternity by reason of very age. And to the young also; what a vital point it is for conscience to work on. What a blessed ally then is this faith to conscience, but how powerless is the last without the first. I believe the question of the reality of our sorrow for sin will ever be an anxiety, yet what other guide have we than conscience until God's consolations are felt in the soul? To this end therefore the Holy Spirit increases knowledge, and faith lays open the way; conscience quietly accedes. Not all at once but line upon line. You desire to repent but cannot; you have no command over your heart Godward, and yet holding faith and a good conscience you are enabled to press through many a crowd of fears and now and then touch the hem.

Gospel messages stir you up, faith urges you on, conscience bears sweet witness and you venture in unto the King. You make no headway elsewhere. Conscience will oppose you in Bypath Meadow, or in your silence. She will dig and probe and insist on confession and good is the smile of her approval when she gets it. Have you ever got up off your knees having poured out your heart thus and conscience frowned? And does she complain when you ask for a spirit of godly sorrow? Faith too will say, "Well pray for repentance"; so will the two work well together. And it will all be so real; no feigned faith is here. And so will you progress, as so many of you well know, and this has been to you the revelation of God to your soul through a knowledge of the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

And by what means too? Sovereignly the prodigal is allowed to wander; Peter is left to say, "I know not the Man"; David to walk on the housetop in the cool of the day; Abraham to deny his wife; all in due season to be brought back to conscience and

God's sound words. What a test to be thus left of God for a season as was Hezekiah, "to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart." It may only be a little matter; only one wire is needed to snare the rabbit – it may be but a thread which trips you, but you look back after conscience and faith have done their work and say, "Oh that I had seen it before it took me." The eye is capable of tripping the body, so is the tongue, the hand as well as the foot, as you well know. So hold fast faith and a good conscience, Timothy. The worthies may fall and so may you. They found restoration only in the path of repentance, nor will you or your hearers find any other way back!

It may be you are in this place today. Ah! conscience is not restful is it? You are where you ought not to be and you know it. You have an objective before you which conscience says should not be there. You want to adjust things but the voice says, "No." Dark clouds of providence gather, you are rebellious. You say, "I will leave it all and get out of it; I will put my hand to it, and surely I shall have enough money to pay my fare to Tarshish." And so you may; but remember it was a different Jonah the fish vomited up on dry land; and it will be your mercy to get back to the firm ground of faith and a good pardoned conscience again. Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, as some of us have sad cause to know. Faith will say, "It is here in the Word." Conscience will say, "And what reason I have to know it!" Should, therefore, you be thus close behind one of the rebellious sons of Zion, may the Lord be pleased to use these words of mine to close up the last avenue of escape to you and at the same time heal your conscience. I hope it may be so for I have not premeditated such words as these. O listen, then, to that ally within. Jonah even went as far to profess that he feared God and admitted that the storm was raging on his account. Conscience was at work you see, but where was faith?

But then in this same chapter is the "faithful saying," "worthy of all acceptance." This also Timothy is to preach. And to whom if it be not sinners? And to whose guilty conscience will it indeed be acceptable if not to such as you? And how will conscience receive these tidings? Well, the answer lies within each heart that has come this way. Now faith and conscience must work together once more. And what a worthy store for unworthy sinners to draw from! Faith is at home here. The precious blood of Christ is her delight, nor does conscience fail to see how vital and how blessed is this form of sound words; indeed she asks for it to be sprinkled upon her. Great knowledge is here, for "without the shedding of blood is no remission." Some religiously-minded person may think that they can bring this truth to their aid on a dying pillow, after they have seared their conscience throughout life, but let such remember that only one of the two thieves was blessed with pardon on the cross. Do not think the precious blood of Christ is at your call. You will need the "We indeed justly," before you hear the blessed "Verily."

You are able to remember the time your prayers were first made through the blood of Christ; the great difference which this made, how it was as a shield between God and your soul. Conscience did not condemn your petition, did she? Nor did the gospel – the knowledge – the faith. Were they not all in harmony? Great is this mystery of the faith which Paul tells Timothy is to be held in a pure conscience. The pure word is not to make us start aside, for what is a pure conscience, if it is not one wholly resting in the blood of Christ? O how blessed this is, the plea may be in a ditch even, or in a barn, in your own kitchen, anywhere, but how wonderful is the interposition of the Holy Spirit to bring such help as this when you are at your worst. Thus are you purified from dead works by the heavenly Teacher teaching within you, to make you more hungry for the knowledge

upon which faith is to feed. And it may well be that your mind is directed to search more closely for light on the atonement. You may have said you could not understand Leviticus. Now you are drawn to it. It is always a help to meet those who have been led into this good Book of the Law. Others may say, "I like Hebrews." Yes, and so do many of us; but is not one the unfolding of the other, and all to the purpose of showing how God would walk among His people, then and now? One word will cover the whole and that is – blood. What was the difference between Abel's sacrifice and that of Cain? Blood. What is the hallmark on a sinner's cry? Blood. But some will say that is very old fashioned. I am glad it is, for this holding faith and a good conscience has stood the test of generations, and is likely to; it will stand the test of a dying hour. You will not want less than the blood of Christ to die on, will you? If you have searched Leviticus you will have come to that blessed word "sprinkling." Here is a place for conscience and faith to sit down together. Just the "tip of the right ear; the thumb of the right hand; the great toe of the right foot." This is the application for which conscience will ask – only a touch, Lord! Yes and it is that touch which restores. Have you never come this way, and got up from your knees with your shoulders straighter than when you went down, and your heart much less heavy? Conscience will well approve this. This is the way of peace, she will say, the way I long have sought; now I know the secret. And every one of these touches has in it the earnest of pardon, though you may not be able to read your full pardon as some are favoured to do; these healing touches are the sure foretaste, firstfruit of the whole. What a labour for faith and conscience there is to stand here together – they were given to the Lord, and surely conscience humbly returns hers, and yet holds it fast. The firstfruits were not for common use, and these favours are not for idle talk. No, they are for the true Levite, born of God, for does not faith and good conscience sometimes

agree to invite those "that fear God to come and hear what He hath done for my soul"?

"Holding faith, and a good conscience"; it is as if the aged apostle is putting the trumpet afresh into Timothy's hand. And here again we may turn to Leviticus to supply us with knowledge. What similarity between the jubilee and the gospel trumpets. How attractive it is to conscience; small wonder she wants to get to the places where these trumpets are sounded, but for her it must be a certain sound, a solemn sound, a joyful sound. These set the bondmen free, slaves are liberated, debts are cleared, not by payment but by pardon; in a word the poor have the gospel preached unto them. How well conscience can put in her claim here, and believe what is so deeply felt, and wonder at the suitability of the book from whence this knowledge comes. Poor therefore you may be, but your ear is listening. How different from your poor neighbour fast asleep in the pew; what will conscience say to this? If the gospel sounds in your ear will you not put in a claim, a true claim, that you are indeed poor, and will conscience object or say you are getting down too low? Or will she deny that you are in fact destitute of all good in yourself? And yet what will faith spy out in the Word about the poor and the needy? You have the answer already in your conscience. What a great mercy that you have, and that you can listen restfully to what I believe is the gospel trumpet, your own conscience bearing you witness. Unless one has come this way they cannot set the trumpet to their mouth with a "thus saith the Lord."

But we said that Paul warned Timothy of the other side of the matter. The second part of this text sets before him solemn examples and proofs from actual and named cases of those who have made shipwreck because they have "put away concerning faith." Are not these heavy tidings? And does your conscience

seek to avoid them, or does faith again spy out the Word, and find a suitable plea: "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe"? Yes! faith embraces this sound word, and conscience only too readily holds it, uses it as her own. Thus they work together.

We must leave it for the present. May the Lord grant His blessing.

Amen.