



Power From on High

Series: Power From On High
Title: How a Good Conscience
Responds to Sin
Lesson: 124

Text: Acts 23:2-5
Date: Feb. 15, 2026

Acts 23:1 Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, “Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day.”

Why did Paul begin his defense by focusing on his conscience?

1. He framed his defense as an issue of faithfulness to God, not criminal behavior.
2. He challenged the Council’s authority.

2 The high priest Ananias commanded those standing beside him to strike him on the mouth.

The New Testament mentions three men named Ananias.

- There was Ananias the husband of Sapphira back in Acts 5:1.

- There was also Ananias of Damascus who was sent by God
Acts 10:9-19

- Ananias the high priest.

“strike” [typtō] -

3 Then Paul said to him, “God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Do you sit to try me according to the Law, and in violation of the Law order me to be struck?”

“whitewashed wall” ^{was} - Ezekiel 13:10–16

Paul unmasked Ananias as a religious fraud.

4 But the bystanders said, “Do you revile God’s high priest?”

5 And Paul said, “I was not aware, brethren, that he was high priest;

Why did Paul not recognize Ananias as the high priest?

1. Paul had been away from Jerusalem for many years.
2. The meeting was too chaotic and informal.
3. Paul had vision problems. (Gal, 6:11)
4. Paul spoke ironically or sarcastically.

Is unintentional sin the same as intentional sin?

1. _____ **sins** - These sins are committed out of ignorance, mistake, or lack of full awareness.

Numbers 15:22–29 ‘But when you **unwittingly fail** and do not observe all these commandments, which the Lord has spoken to Moses, 23 even all that the Lord has commanded you through Moses, from the day when the Lord gave commandment and onward throughout your generations, 24 then it shall be, if it is

done **unintentionally**, without the knowledge of the congregation, that all the congregation shall offer one bull for a burnt offering, as a soothing aroma to the Lord, with its grain offering and its drink offering, according to the ordinance, and one male goat for a sin offering.

25 'Then the priest shall make atonement for all the congregation of the sons of Israel, and they will be forgiven; for it was an **error**, and they have brought their offering, an offering by fire to the Lord, and their **sin** offering before the Lord, for their **error**. 26 'So all the congregation of the sons of Israel will be **forgiven**, with the alien who sojourns among them, for it happened to all the people through **error**.

27 'Also if one person sins **unintentionally**, then he shall offer a one year old female goat for a **sin** offering. 28 'The priest shall make **atonement** before the Lord for the person who goes astray when he **sins unintentionally**, making **atonement** for him that he may be **forgiven**. 29 'You shall have one law for him who does anything **unintentionally**, for him who is native among the sons of Israel and for the alien who sojourns among them.

Psalms 19:12 Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of **hidden faults**.

Luke 23:34 But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they **do not know what they are doing**." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.

1 Timothy 1:13 even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet **I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief;**

2. _____ sins - These sins are committed knowingly, deliberately, and rebelliously.

Numbers 15:30–31 ‘But the person who does anything **defiantly**, whether he is native or an alien, that one is **blaspheming the Lord**; and that person shall be **cut off** from among his people. 31 ‘Because he has **despised** the word of the Lord and has **broken** His commandment, that person shall be completely **cut off**; his guilt will be on him.’ ”

Hebrews 10:26 For if we go on **sinning willfully** after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

Although God never excuses sin, He responds to unintentional sin with mercy, and intentional sin with judgment or discipline.

5 And Paul said, “I was not aware, brethren, that he was high priest; for it is written, ‘YOU SHALL NOT SPEAK EVIL OF A RULER OF YOUR PEOPLE.’ ”

What is the connection between verse 1 and verse 5?

Verse 1 is Paul’s claim to a good conscience.

Verse 5 functions as a lived-out illustration of verse 1

What are the signs of a good conscience?

1. _____.

**A. He didn't become _____
when confronted.**

**B. He immediately _____ and
_____.**

**Godly believers with mature consciences don't defend sin,
they are quick to acknowledge it and turn from it.**

**C. He was _____ to the
authority of Scripture.**

Exodus 22:28 “You shall not curse God, nor curse a ruler of your people.

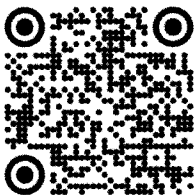
Proverbs 4:20–21 My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings. 21 Do not let them depart from your sight; Keep them in the midst of your heart.

D. He showed _____ toward flawed authority.

Respect for authority is a biblical principle, not an endorsement of _____.

Discussion Guide

1. When you look at Paul's sharp response to Ananias in verse 3, how can we tell the difference between righteous indignation and sinful anger in our own life?
2. Paul sinned unintentionally and then responded with humility when corrected. How do we usually respond when we realize we are wrong? Do we get defensive, minimize our sin, blame others, insult them, or confess and repent?
3. Share examples of unintentional sins and blind spots that are common today and how do we recognize them?
4. How does Paul's immediate submission to Exodus 22:28 challenge our own posture toward Scripture when it confronts our attitudes, words, or treatment of authority?
5. What does Paul's respect for a deeply flawed leader (Ananias) teach us about how to speak about politics, church, or workplace authorities we strongly disagree with?



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ANSWERS: Unintentional, Intentional, Humility, defensive, confessed, repented, submissive, respect, character