

**The Holy Spirit**  
**Acts 22-23**

**Pastor Ken**

**January 25, 2026**

**“The softest pillow for a good night’s sleep is a clear conscience.” (Pastor Ken)**

*<sup>1</sup> Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, “My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day.” <sup>11</sup> The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, “Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.” (Acts 23-NIV)*

A few years ago, a taxi driver and travel writer named Brad Newsham decided that he was fed up with unethical travel. A kind of travel that offered hedonistic haves’ tail-spinning through the world of have-nots, leaving behind but a few measly dollars.

“There came a point,” Newsham says, “where I realized in my 20’s, I was having grand adventures. But now I am an adult, asking, what is my responsibility?”

\*How do I live my life and feel good about my travel adventures?

\*How do I have a clear conscious about how I spend my money and time?

Newsome goes on, “I think it is unethical to go places and have experiences and not give something back.” What impact did this have on the travel writer? Newsom, now he enjoys a new kind of travel. On one such trip he raised \$26,000 in donations and formed a “back-pack nation” of travelers to fan out and distribute money to those in need.

Your life faces daily the tugging and the pull to be moral, ethical, and concerned about others. The part of your heart and soul that constantly speaks to this, is your **Conscience**.

In all of Paul’s efforts to preach Christ and tells Jews and Gentiles about Christ’s atoning death, Paul announces that his efforts to do just that have been done with a clear conscious.

*Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, “My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day.” (Acts 23:1-NIV)*

Part of being made in the image of God is possessing the ability that draws us to God’s highest standard. Then continually being reminded of what that standard demands that you do. Your conscious does just that.

This standard kicked in when Adam and Eve sinned. What was their first reaction? They hid. Fled. Withdrew. The experienced guilt and shame.

That’s a conscience at work.

Fully activated. Sensitive to right and wrong. What was left after Adam & Eve sinned? They lost their favored member status. They lost that fellowship with God. Conscience is what was left after Adam and Eve sinned.

Each of us has a conscience. We may not be able to understand it, and we certainly cannot control it, but we know we all possess one.

**Conscience is that internal voice that sits in judgment over our will. (Ray Stedman)**

It's the street preacher holding the sign saying, "the end is near." Our conscience tells us whether we are ready or not for the **end of the age** and the **end of time**.

In cartoons, our conscience has a name-Jiminy Cricket.

I sat today with a longtime friend who is healing and blossoming in his marriage. Years ago, he and his wife struggled. Maybe, they were even on a path to divorce. I felt God tell me to travel across the country and provide some marital coaching. I sat today, like Paul with a good conscience because I had obeyed the Lord's prompting.

*Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, "My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day." (Acts 23:1-NIV)*

Conscience can be compared to the idiot lights on the dashboard of your old Chevy or Honda telling you the oil pressure and water pump need attention. Conscience is the squeal of the breaks telling you to change your brake pads. Conscience is the lurching of the engine telling you to get it serviced.

The sad truth is so many never listen to the indicators telling them their conscience is calling for a change of habit, time to take responsibility or even let go of bitterness or start to forgive.

Now, when the dashboard lights register hot in your Chevy or Honda the brakes squeal - you can do a couple of things. (1) Respond accordingly or (2) take out a ball bean hammer and smack the heck out of them.

#Conscience is the dad whose heart finally comes alive to Jesus Christ after the unfortunate death of his son.

#Conscience is the young lady in youth group telling her youth pastor she has been cheating in class.

#Conscience is the employee willing to risk losing his job by confessing he is watching NCAA basketball tournament on work time-well, (maybe that illustration hits too close to home during March Madness?)

Let's move on for the sake of guilt! Anyway, you get the point.

Conscience has motivated letters to professors.

Calls to the police department.

The return of stolen money to parents.

We all have a conscience.

It affects our actions every day- from the small things like the guilt of running a **red light** to the remorse of not staying **faithful** to your spouse. Ok, I think I have made my point. All that Luke describes in Acts 21-23 today, about Paul's efforts to do Christ's will, has been done in a good conscious.

*So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man. (Acts 24:16-NIV)*

The apostle Paul has been away from home and Jerusalem for about 20 years. Paul has traveled over 15,000 miles, teaching in Jewish synagogues, planting churches made up of Jews and Gentiles. Then returning to many of those locations to encourage and strengthen new believers whether Jews, Romans, or Greeks.

It has been about 25 years since Jesus Christ died in Jerusalem, the town that Paul has returned to. These will be the last days Paul ever sets foot in Jerusalem again. Paul arrives a free man and leaves under Roman protective custody (not arrested) as he is almost executed by his own people-the Sanhedrin. (Acts 23:1-11)

***<sup>10</sup> The dispute became so violent that the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them. He ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force and bring him into the barracks. <sup>11</sup> The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome." (Acts 23-NIV)***

Paul steals away under the cover of night and is protected by hundreds of Roman soldiers as they take him to the coastal town of Caesarea. There he will begin his journey to Rome that will eventually land him in a Roman prison for two years.

***<sup>31-33</sup> The soldiers, following orders, took Paul that same night to safety in Antipatris. In the morning the soldiers returned to their barracks in Jerusalem, sending Paul on to Caesarea under guard of the cavalry. The cavalry entered Caesarea and handed Paul and the letter over to the governor. (Acts 23-MSG)***

Let's go back to Paul's arrival in Jerusalem. Paul is celebrated by James the half-brother of Jesus and other leaders of the mostly Jewish Jerusalem church.

*<sup>17</sup> When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brothers and sisters received us warmly. <sup>18</sup> The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and all the elders were present. <sup>19</sup> Paul greeted them and reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. <sup>20a</sup> When they heard this, they praised God. (Acts 21-NIV)*

For several days Paul tells the Jewish church leaders about his 20 years of preaching about Jesus Christ atoning death. 20 years earlier Paul leaves Antioch in Acts 13, after James the apostle is killed, and Peter is imprisoned. Acts 13-21, offers the details and experiences Paul has on 3 missionary journeys to Asia, Europe, and Turkey.

During those travels Paul tells the Jews-God's people the long awaited for Messiah-Jesus Christ has **come and gone**.

For 33 years God in the flesh, the son of God-Jesus the second member of the trinity came in the flesh.

*Now, the word became flesh and took up residence among us. (John 1:14)*

... Jesus breathed human air, slept in a human bed, obeyed his parents, played with his friends, struggled through puberty,

... Jesus sat in Torah class (although he himself created the curriculum, Torah scrolls and even the teacher), Jesus may have smiled at Rebekah a neighbor girl in Torah class and thought, I will get her a good husband. I think my best friend Benjamin will do.

... Jesus loved. Jesus healed. Jesus delivered. Jesus fed families. Jesus taught the teachable. Jesus walked on water. Jesus stared at the stars.

... Jesus was born in Bethlehem and crucified and rose from the dead in Jerusalem.

Jesus, Paul, ... and Pastor Ken came announcing to Jews they can have their sins forgiven and can receive through faith and repentance eternal life. If they want to keep practicing Judaism of circumcision and Judaism keeping the 613 laws of Moses, **they are welcome to do so**.

They are free to check the Hebrew dietary menu daily. They are free to not work on the Sabbath.

So, as long as they know Christ saves, not circumcision.

God prefers our love, not our law keeping.

God wants us to fall in love with Jesus the Lord and not Moses the lawgiver.

Finally, God's salvation through Christ is available to sinners, tax collectors, prostitutes, thieves, Gentiles, Greeks, Romans and **not just Jews**.

After Paul is done telling James and associates about the miracles, healings, deliverances, and salvations all over the Roman world, James breaks the bad news to Paul. Jerusalem Jews are up in arms, not that you preach to Gentiles, but that you are telling Jews to forsake the law.

**Paul and Jesus were accused of telling the Jews to forsake the law.**

*<sup>21</sup> They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs. (Acts 21-NIV)*

James and the leaders suggest that Paul go practice the Moses law of the Nazarite. This should quiet the Jews. James tells Paul these Jews are legalists. They love the Lord, and they love the law. They love the teaching of the Messiah; at times it seems like they love the teaching of Moses more.

*<sup>20</sup> When they heard this, they praised God. Then they said to Paul: "You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law. (Acts 21-NIV)*

Paul does just that in Acts 21:22-27.

But this did not help squash the rumors that Paul taught that Jews in Berea and Thessalonica they should turn away from Moses.

**The mob became so violent that Paul had to be carried to safety.**

*<sup>35</sup> When Paul reached the steps, the violence of the mob was so great he had to be carried by the soldiers. (Acts 21-NIV)*

When the soldiers carry Paul into the barracks for protection, Paul asks the captain of the guard if he can go back out and speak to the crowd.

*<sup>40</sup> Standing on the barracks steps, Paul turned and held his arms up. A hush fell over the crowd as Paul began to speak. He spoke in Hebrew. (Acts 21-MSG)*

For the next several minutes Paul turns his defense into his testimony, and this is found in Acts 22. We know this as one of 3 times Paul tells his Damascus Road story.

I was on the road to Damascus to arrest Christians. A bright light, brighter than the sun, I have come to know as Jesus Christ knocked me down. Jesus called me out. Scales fell off my eyes. Jesus told me he has a plan for me to preach Jesus, not persecute Jesus.

Jesus went on and I am to go to Damascus to meet a Christian named Ananias who will pray for my healing. I was then baptized. Received the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. Was welcome into the Damascus church and ate with my new brothers and sisters. In Acts 22, we are reminded how powerful our story is.

**Tell others how your life has changed since you met Jesus.**

At the end of Paul's testimony, the crowd erupted and started screaming. Throwing their cloaks around and tossing dust in the air.

*22-25 The people in the crowd had listened attentively up to this point, but now they broke loose, shouting out, "Kill him! He's an insect!*

*Stomp on him!" They shook their fists. They filled the air with curses. That's when the captain intervened and ordered Paul taken into the barracks. By now the captain was thoroughly exasperated. He decided to interrogate Paul under torture in order to get to the bottom of this, to find out what he had done that provoked this outraged violence. (Acts 22-MSG)*

The commander once again took Paul into the barracks and began to interrogate Paul for why the Jews were so up in arms. Paul started getting beaten with lashes when he yelled at the Roman guards, what are you doing, I am a Roman?

*The commanding officer was frightened when he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had had him tied up. (Acts 22:29b-NET)*

Paul slept a night in the barracks and was released, so the next day he could stand before the Sanhedrin and the Roman commander and here why the Jews hated Paul. Wanted him dead!

Now, we get to round two of Paul's preaching, but it ends in the same results. Paul purposely incites the Sadducees and Pharisees with rhetoric that gets them at each other's throats over the resurrection.

This time there is conspiracy amongst 44 Sanhedrin who bound themselves with a solemn oath to not eat or drink until they kill Paul. This plot is described in Act 23 by Luke. Let's hit pause and get away from the angry and hostile 71 Jewish lawyers, called the Sanhedrin.

They are bent on killing Paul like they had killed by the Romans Jesus.

**Conscience is one of Paul's favorite words. He uses it over 20 times in his writings.**

Can I give you a verse to memorize about your conscience? Take **Hebrews 10:22** and commit it to memory and meditation and watch what God does in your heart.

**Guilty conscience - let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience ... (Hebrews 10:22a-NIV1984)**

Conscience is your magnetic compass pointing you to the moral high ground of true north. **Conscience is your inner baseball umpire calling balls and strikes, in regard to Christ-centered living.**

As Psychologist Eric Fromm muses, “our conscience is tragic and paradoxical because it is often the weakest when we need it the most.”

Conscience is that part of our soul (mind, will and emotions) that moment-by-moment evaluates your attitudes and actions. “Conscience is the inner voice which warns us that someone may be looking.” (H.L. Mencken)

Back to Paul’s defense before the Sanhedrin. **Paul’s announcement that he was on trial because of Jesus’ resurrection was like pouring gasoline on a fire. (Acts 23:6)**

Again, the Sanhedrin goes after Paul. They want him dead.

*The commanding officer feared that the Sanhedrin would tear Paul to pieces, he ordered the detachment to go down and take him away from them by force, and bring Paul to the Barracks a 3<sup>rd</sup> time. (Acts 23:10)*

Let me offer you some additional reading to review the times Paul almost lost his life. Guided and guarded by God, Paul could not be killed.

**Paul is no stranger to those wanting to kill him. (Acts 9:23, 9:29, 13:50-51, 14:5, 14:19, 18:16, 20:3, 20:19)**

*The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, “Have courage, for just as you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so must you testify in Rome.” (Acts 23:11-NET)*

Paul was not under Roman arrest; he was under God’s arrest. And God’s plan could not be stopped. Take courage, your life is under God’s protection and provision. You cannot be taken out until you have completed your purpose.

**Like Jesus and Paul, we, too, are familiar with trials of betrayal, suffering, mockery, humiliation, and abuse. (James 1:2)**

Sing it with me...” What can wash away my sins, nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again, nothing but the blood of Jesus?”

The blood was being shed and poured out for Jews and Gentiles; they have an option. The blood is already shed and available to you...and you have an option.

**When we fail to apply the blood to a guilty conscience we commit spiritual suicide.**

We end up living in a chamber of horrors begging for relief. Be free dear one. Come to Jesus who welcomes the application and use of His shed blood,

***<sup>22</sup> Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. (Hebrews 10-NIV1984)***

Heavenly Father,

Today, I declare my desire to have a clear conscience. I accept the reality that no human effort on my part will do. I rely totally on You, Father, that if I draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, You will sprinkle, You will wash, and You will cleanse my sinful and guilty conscience.

You can cover my pile of sins and cancel my pile of sins by the blood of Jesus Christ. By the power of the Holy Spirit, I receive it as done. I am clean. I am free. I am washed. Thank You that I can overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of my testimony.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.