



A MESSAGE OF HUMILITY AND  
HOPE FROM THE LIFE OF PAUL

# THE CHIEF OF SINNERS

BAND OF BROTHERS / SPRING 2026

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SPRING SERIES 2026 – WEEK 3

## I Saw the Light

*This fulfilled what God said through the prophet Isaiah:*

*"In the land of Zebulun and of Naphtali, beside the sea, beyond the Jordan River, in Galilee where so many Gentiles live, the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light. And for those who lived in the land where death casts its shadow, a light has shined."*

– Matthew 4:14-16 NLT

- **Light in the darkness**

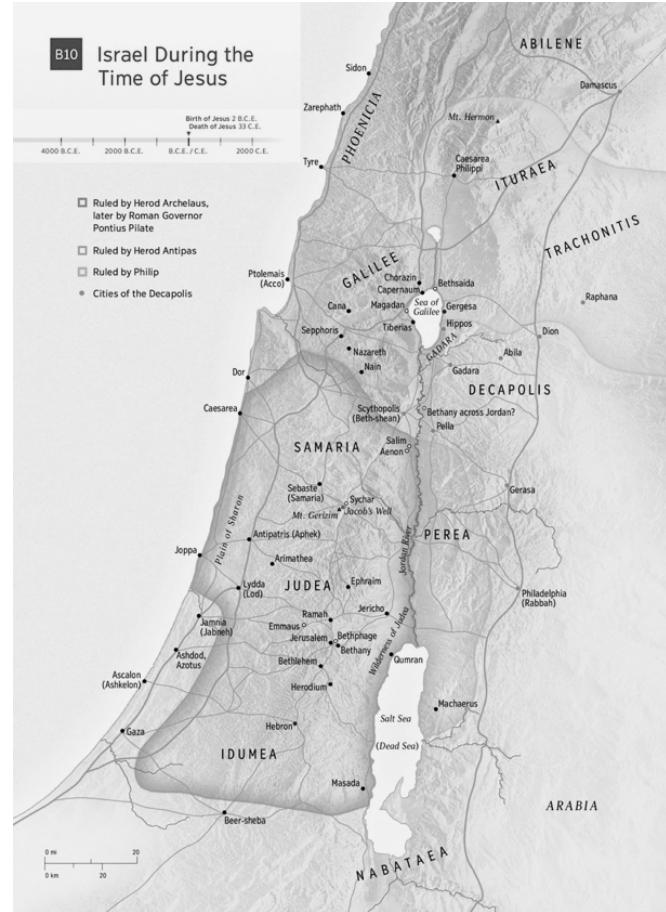
- Saul encountered the risen Christ on the Damascus Road
  - He was left blind and confused
  - His wisdom, knowledge, and intellect were of no use
  - He had encountered “the light of the world”
- But the gospel was on the move
  - As a result of Saul’s persecution
  - And despite the disciples’ failure to obey Christ’s command
- The nations were being reached
  - The Gentiles were coming to faith

- **Meanwhile, back in Jerusalem**

- Luke shifts from Saul to Peter
  - He is not done with the disciples
  - He is preparing the foundation for Saul’s future ministry
  - The gospel is about to move an unexpected way

*Now as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda. There he found a man named Aeneas, bedridden for eight years, who was paralyzed. – Acts 9:32-33 ESV*

- God prepares Peter
  - o This is a big step for the apostles
    - For the first time, they are moving beyond Jerusalem
    - God is getting them out of their comfort zone
  - o Peter encounters Aeneas
    - His name is Greek and implies
    - He was a Gentile or a Hellenistic Jew
    - He was not what Peter expected
    - As a law-abiding Jew, Peter struggled with the idea of God's salvation for everyone
  - God is preparing Peter for something
    - He uses the healing of Aeneas to draw more people to Himself
    - He is showing Peter that salvation is not confined to cultural or ethnic boundaries
    - Peter's walls of separation are under assault



*Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity. In those days she became ill and died, and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him, urging him, "Please come to us without delay." So Peter rose and went with them. And when he arrived, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping and showing tunics and other garments that Dorcas made while she was with them. But Peter put them all outside, and knelt down and prayed; and turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. And he gave her his hand and raised her up. Then, calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. – Acts 9:36-42 ESV*

- **From physical death to spiritual life**
  - o Dorcas was a beloved person in the community
    - She had somehow become a believer
    - Dorcas is her Greek name
    - Tabatha is her Aramaic name
    - She too was either a Gentile or a Hellenistic Jew

- She was known for her good works and acts of love for the poor
- But she became ill and died
- Peter is sent for
  - He miraculously raises Dorcas from the dead
  - Why does Luke include this story?
  - What is God doing here?
    - He is preparing Peter for the inevitable
    - He is giving Peter proof of His glorious, unrestrained power
    - If God can raise the **physically dead**, He can raise the **spiritually dead**
    - Including Gentiles
  - Bringing Dorcas back from the dead was not done for her sake
    - It was for the sake of the Gentiles in Joppa
    - Her resurrection was a major reason people in Joppa believed in Jesus

*And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.* – Acts 9:42 ESV

- Peter saw God work in both Jews and Gentiles
- **Something doesn't make sense**  

*At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God. About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, “Cornelius.” And he stared at him in terror and said, “What is it, Lord?” And he said to him, “Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea.”* – Acts 10:1-6 ESV

- Cornelius is a **Roman** Centurion
  - He represents Roman authority/oppression
    - He is a Gentile, outside of the covenant people of God
    - But he's described as a God-fearer
    - He is a Jewish proselyte – a convert to Judaism
    - Cornelius fears God, but he still needs Christ

- **Peter's Vision**

*The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. And there came a voice to him: “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.” But Peter said, “By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.” And the voice came to him again a second time, “What God has made clean, do not call common.” This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.* – Acts 10:9-16 ESV

- Peter still doesn't understand
  - o Even after all he has seen God do
  - o God is asking him to do the unthinkable
    - Leviticus and Deuteronomy make it clear that Peter should not eat these animals
    - He thinks this is a test
  - o Peter's refuses to eat and his refusal is sincere
    - He appeals to his lifelong obedience to the law
    - Should he follow the law or obey the voice of God?
  - o God's response changes everything

*“What God has made clean, do not call common.” – Acts 10:17 ESV*

- The Law always pointed forward
- Now it had been fulfilled
- But Peter still did not understand

***Peter was very perplexed. What could the vision mean? – Acts 10:17 NLT***

- Not because God was unclear
- But because the implications were unacceptable
- God doesn't fully explain the vision...
  - ...but still expects obedience
- Peter acts out of trust, not understanding

*And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Behold, three men are looking for you. Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them.” And Peter went down to the men and said, “I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your coming?” And they said, “Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say.” So he invited them in to be his guests. The next day he rose and went away with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him. And on the following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. – Acts 10:19-24*

*And he said to them, “You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me.” – Acts 10:28-29 ESV*

- o Peter still doesn't understand...
  - ...but is being faithful to the Lord
- o He doesn't grasp the full scope of what God is doing...
  - ...but he obeys

*So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.” – Acts 10:34-43 ESV*

- **Gentiles hear the good news**
  - Unknowingly, Peter shares the gospel with the Gentiles
    - o This is why God sent him to Caesarea
    - o To Peter, something unexpected and amazing happens
  - The wall of separation is removed
    - o The Holy Spirit falls on the Gentiles
    - o The same way He fell on the disciples at Pentecost
    - o God was clarifying the vision
    - o Salvation was for both Jew and Gentile alike
  - The gospel moves forward
    - o It finally clicks for Peter
      - The church fell silent
      - Worship replaces argument
      - They glorify God
      - God did what only God could do
- **But what about Saul?**
  - More on that next week!
- **Discussion Questions:**  
Why does the fact that we have so little control over God's redemptive work humble and threaten us?

Why is it vital to obey God before fully understanding Him? Why do we delay obedience until God explains Himself?

Why does clarity often come after obedience, and how does that reveal whether we trust God's character or our own understanding?





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SPRING SERIES 2026 – WEEK 4 HOMEWORK

#### **WEEK 4 – The Pharisee gets schooled**

In this lesson, we'll revisit Saul's stay in Damascus and see what God had in store for him after his unexpected encounter with the resurrected Messiah. This week's homework is going to require you to read a variety of Scriptures that cover this part of Saul's life. Some of these passages may be new to you, and what they reveal about Saul might be an eye-opening experience for you.

- Read pages 57-64 of Ken's Devotionary™.
- Over this week, set aside time to read the following passage in order, then write down what you learn from your reading.

Acts 9:17-22

Acts 26:19-20

