



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 4

## Saul of Arabia

*But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone; nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.*

– Galatians 1:15-17 ESV

- **Priming the pump**

- God used Peter to prepare the way for Saul's ministry
  - o But God was also preparing Peter
  - o All the disciples had a lot to learn
  - o Their ministry was leaving the confines of Jerusalem
    - Lydda, Joppa, Caesarea, Samaria, Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch

*Meanwhile, the believers who had been scattered during the persecution after Stephen's death traveled as far as **Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch of Syria**. They preached the word of God, **but only to Jews**. However, some of the believers who went to Antioch from **Cyprus** and **Cyrene** began preaching to the Gentiles about the Lord Jesus. The power of the Lord was with them, and **a large number of these Gentiles believed and turned to the Lord**. – Acts 11:19-21 NLT*

*When the church at Jerusalem heard what had happened, they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw **this evidence of God's blessing**, he was filled with joy, and he encouraged the believers to stay true to the Lord. Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and strong in faith. **And many people were brought to the Lord**. – Acts 22-24 NLT*

*Then Barnabas went on to Tarsus to look for Saul. When he found him, **he brought him back to Antioch**. – Acts 11:25 NLT*

- **The missing years**

- Luke provides an abbreviated chronology
  - Saul ministered in Damascus – Acts 9:19-22
  - He was forced to escape – Acts 9:23-25
  - He visited Jerusalem – Acts 9:26-28
  - The Jews tried to kill him – Acts 9:29
  - He returned to Tarsus – Acts 9:30
  - Barnabas takes him to Antioch – Acts 11:25
- From persecutor to preacher
  - God transformed Saul

*And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; and taking food, he was strengthened.* – Acts 9:18 ESV

***For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.” And all who heard him were amazed and said, “Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?”***

***But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.*** – Acts 9:19-22 ESV

**For Saul...**

- ...the **dead martyr** was now the **risen Messiah**
- ...“the Way” became a **lifestyle**, not a **liability**
- ...Christians became **allies**, instead of **enemies**
- ...the Jews became **foes** rather than **fans**

***When many days had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him, but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night in order to kill him. but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket.*** – Acts 9:23-24 ESV

- Saul had more than one enemy

***At Damascus, the governor under King Aretas was guarding the city of Damascus in order to seize me, but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall and escaped his hands.*** – 2 Corinthians 11:32-33 ESV

**Aretas IV Philopatris**

- King of the Arab Nabataeans
- From roughly 9 BC to 40 AD
- Saul was saved about 35 AD
- His kingdom included Mount Sinai

- Why is this important?
  - Saul had been to Arabia
 

*...the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ....when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone; nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. ...after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him for fifteen days. – Galatians 1:11-18 ESV*

### **Rough timeline**

35 AD	Saul is saved & baptized
36 AD	Leaves for Arabia
39 AD	Returns to Damascus
39 AD	Goes to Jerusalem
40 AD	First missionary journey

- Why Arabia?
  - ~ Saul was a good Jew
  - ~ He had been a zealous servant of God
  - ~ He knew the stories of Scripture
  - ~ Especially the ones about Mount Sinai
- **The story of Elijah** – 1 Kings 19
  - A hero of the Israelite faith
  - A powerful champion of Yahweh
  - The slayer of the prophets of Baal
  - The object of Jezebel's wrath
    - He had killed the prophets of Baal
    - Queen Jezebel put a bounty on his head
    - He sought refuge in the wilderness
    - God sent him to Mount Horeb (Sinai)
    - He claims to have been jealous (zealous) for the Lord

*And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. – Galatians 1:14 ESV*

*...as to zeal, a persecutor of the church. – Philippians 3:6 ESV*

*I became very zealous to honor God in everything I did... – Acts 22:3 NLT*

- **Saul: the false god killer**
  - He could relate to Elijah
  - As Yahweh's servants, they were to...

- ...protect the honor of God's name
- ...promote His Law
- ...preserve the purity of His people
- ...and punish idolaters
- But both had suffered for doing so

*“...I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.” – 1 Kings 19:14 ESV*

*Saul stayed with the believers in Damascus for a few days. And immediately he began preaching about Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is indeed the Son of God!” – Acts 9:21-22 NLT*

- Saul had been enlightened
  - ...but his fellow Jews were still in the dark
- He had seen the truth
  - ...but they were still blind
- He expected them to accept his message
  - ...but instead, they argued with him

*Saul’s preaching became more and more powerful, and the Jews in Damascus couldn’t refute his proofs that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. – Acts 9:22 NLT*

- Their disbelief left Saul confused
  - He eventually left Damascus
  - And headed for Arabia, just as Elijah had
- God visited Elijah at Sinai – 1 Kings 19:11-13
  - ...but the Lord was not in the wind. – vs 11
  - ...but the Lord was not in the earthquake. – vs 11
  - ...but the Lord was not in the fire. – vs 12

- **A period of preparation and practice**
  - A 3-year residency program
    - That included ...Old Testament Survey
      - ...Doctrinal Studies
      - ...Eschatology
      - ...Pneumatology
      - ...and Theology
    - Taught by Jesus

*I received my message from no human source, and no one taught me. Instead, I received it by direct revelation from Jesus Christ. – Galatians 1:12 NLT*

*I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was*

*caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. — 2 Corinthians 12:1-2 NLT*

- Paul is talking about himself
  - ~ He is recounting a personal experience
  - ~ To qualify his apostleship
  - ~ He received revelations from the Lord

Paul wrote Galatians	49 BC
Paul was saved outside Damascus and left for Arabia	35 BC

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**14 years**

*And I know that this man — whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows — was caught up to paradise and heard **inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell.** — 2 Corinthians 12:3 NLT*

*arrētos* – ἄρρητα

- unspoken, unspeakable, not of human origin

“which man may not utter” – vs 4 (ESV)

“words too sacred to tell” – Amplified Bible

- **Divine instructions and a divine calling**

*“...rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.” – Acts 26:16-18 ESV*

- Saul began his ministry in Arabia
  - But he later returned to Damascus
  - Just as Elijah had

*And the LORD said to him, “Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus.*

*And when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria. And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king over Israel... – 1 Kings 19:15-16 ESV*

*When many days had passed [three years], the Jews [in Damascus] plotted to kill him, but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night in order to kill him, but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket. – Acts 9:23-25 ESV*

*At Damascus, the governor under King Aretas (of Arabia) was guarding the city of Damascus in order to seize me, but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall and escaped his hands. – 2 Corinthians 11:32-33 ESV*

- Saul was an equal-opportunity offender
- The persecutor was now the persecuted
- And the fun was just beginning

- **Discussion Questions:**

How does today's lesson support what Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:16?

Compare Saul's first sermon in Acts 9:20 with he preached to King Agrippa in Acts 26:22-23.  
How has his message matured?

What role does revelation (time in the Word) play in our preparation and transformation?



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SPRING SERIES 2026 – WEEK 5 HOMEWORK

### **WEEK 5 – Road Trip**

This lesson will cover what happened after Saul escaped from Damascus and returned to his hometown of Tarsus. He will hook up with Barnabas and begin a ministry in Antioch of Syria and then the two of them will be commissioned to take the gospel to “the nations.” This lesson will cover Saul’s first missionary journey as he and Barnabas take the gospel to the Gentiles. In this lesson, we want to establish the unique difficulties Paul faced as he birthed these new congregations, which had little understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures and faced severe opposition. We will look at key verses from the letter he wrote to the church in Galatia, and see how Saul began to apply all the revelations he received from Jesus.

- Take time this week to look over pages 89-120 of the PDF containing Ken’s Devotionary™ on the Book of Acts.
- Read Acts 11:30. Summarize what takes place in these verses.
- Read Acts 12. What are the three main events recorded in this chapter?

James was one of Jesus' disciples. What do you think is significant about his execution by Herod? How do you think it impacted the rest of the disciples?

Verses 6-19 record the miraculous rescue of Peter. What jumps out at you in this divine deliverance of one of Jesus' disciples?

Verses 20-25 describe the death of Herod. What do these verses tell you about the sovereignty of God, and how should they encourage us to trust Him more?

- Read Acts 13. Barnabas and Paul get commissioned to go on their first official missionary trip. Verse 5 states that they "proclaimed the word of the Lord." Verse 7 says that Sergius Paulus "sought to hear the word of the Lord." What do you think Luke is referring to when he says, "the word of the Lord"?

Verse 12 states that the proconsul "was astonished at the teaching of the Lord." Is this different than the "word of the Lord"? It is important to remember that there was no New Testament at this time. So, what is Luke referring to (Think about last week's lesson)?

- Read Acts 13:13-41. What are the key points in Paul's sermon?

How does he take the Old Testament Scriptures and reveal Jesus as their fulfillment?

Look closely at verses 38-39. Remember that he is speaking to a Jewish audience. How do you think they received this message?

How did they respond in verses 44-45?

- Read Acts 14. What part of this passage impacts you the most and why?