



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 2

Man on a Mission

But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.”

– Acts 9:15-16 NLT

- **When we last left Saul**

But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus... – Acts 9:1-3 ESV

- Last week's lesson was a cliff-hanger
 - The persecutor is on the warpath
 - He's got the backing of the high priest
 - He's carrying letters of authorization
 - Saul, a man on a mission

Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations...” – Matthew 28:18 NLT

*“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me **everywhere...**”* – Acts 1:8 NLT

“...in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” – Acts 1:8 NLT

- The disciples had not left Jerusalem
 - God was working...
 - ...but they weren't **going**

- God's power was on **display...**
...but they refused to be **displaced**

*And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the **disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem**, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. – Acts 6:7 NLT*

*A great wave of persecution began that day, sweeping over the church in Jerusalem; and all the believers **except the apostles** were scattered through the regions of Judea and Samaria. – Acts 8:1 NLT*

Saul was going everywhere to destroy the church... – Acts 8:3 NLT

*...the believers who were scattered preached the Good News about Jesus **wherever they went**. Philip, for example, went to the city of Samaria and told the people there about the Messiah. – Acts 8:4-5 NLT*



Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. – Acts 8:5 ESV

*...when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, **they were baptized**, both men and women. – Acts 8:12 ESV*

*Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that **Samaria** had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John... – Acts 8:14 ESV*

*Then they laid their hands on them and **they received the Holy Spirit**. – Acts 8:17 ESV*

*Now when they (Peter and John) had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, **preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans**. – Acts 8:25 ESV*

*Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “**Rise and go toward the south** to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is a desert place. And he rose and went. – Acts 8:26 ESV*

And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. – Acts 8:27-28 ESV

...like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living. – Isaiah 53:7-8 ESV

- The Ethiopian is a Jewish proselyte
 - o And a Yahweh worshiper
 - o Who happens to own a scroll of Isaiah
 - o But he has questions

“Was the prophet talking about himself or someone else?”

So beginning with this same Scripture, Philip told him the Good News about Jesus. – Acts 8:35 NLT

- o The eunuch believed and was baptized
- o And took the gospel back to Ethiopia
- o “the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away” – vs 39

Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea. – Acts 8:40 ESV

- **Meanwhile, back to Saul**

Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus... – Acts 9:3 ESV

- Why Damascus?
 - o Easy answer: Christ-followers lived there
 - o But Damascus was 135 miles away
 - o A six-day journey on foot
- How many believers lived in Damascus?
- How did the gospel get there?

On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. – Acts 2:1 NLT

*At that time there were devout Jews **from every nation** living in Jerusalem. – Acts 2:5 NLT*

Parthians, Medes, Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, the province of Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and the areas of Libya around Cyrene, visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism), Cretans, and Arabs. – Acts 2:9-11 NLT

And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved. – Acts 2:47
NLT

- These people eventually returned home
 - Some returned to Damascus
 - Where they shared the gospel
 - Others believed and were saved
 - But this was not good news to Saul

[Saul] requested letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, asking for their cooperation in the arrest of any followers of the Way he found there. He wanted to bring them—both men and women—back to Jerusalem in chains. – Acts 9:2 NLT

*As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul! Saul! Why are you **persecuting me?**” – Acts 9:3-4 NLT*

- Don't miss the focus of Jesus' question
 - Paul saw “the church” as his victim

I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it... – Galatians 1:13 NASB

I persecuted the church of God... – 1 Corinthians 15:9 ESV

I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. – Philippians 3:6 NLT

- But the church is the body of Christ
 - ~ Paul was attacking a **movement**
 - ~ But the church is a **manifestation...**
 - ...of Christ's abiding presence
 - ...of the Holy Spirit's power
 - ...of the fulfillment of God's promises

Look at Jesus's high priestly prayer:

“I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.

“I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one.

“I am in them and you are in me.

“May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me.” – John 17:20-23 NLT

- **Blinded by the light**

- The Pharisee was about to be enlightened
- By the “light of the world”

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” – John 8:12 ESV

Saul picked himself up off the ground, but when he opened his eyes he was blind. So his companions led him by the hand to Damascus. He remained there blind for three days and did not eat or drink.

- Saul was intelligent
educated
knowledgeable of God’s Word
well-versed in the Mosaic Law
and zealous for God
- But he was blind to the truth
 - o Jesus said of the Pharisees...

“They are blind guides leading the blind...” – Matthew 15:14 NLT

“Blind guides! What sorrow awaits you!” – Matthew 23:16 NLT

“Blind fools!” – Matthew 23:17 NLT

“You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life.” – John 5:39 NLT

- o Saul’s **physical** blindness symbolized his **spiritual** blindness

“The knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them.

“In them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled: ‘You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people’s heart has grown callous; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn, and I would heal them.’” – Matthew 13:11, 14-15 BSB

- **I once was blind, but now I see**

- Saul is led into Damascus

- He remains there for three days
- He spends his time in prayer and fasting
- And he is given a vision from God
- God sends Ananias to heal Saul

“Go over to Straight Street, to the house of Judas. When you get there, ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying to me right now. I have shown him a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and laying hands on him so he can see again.” – Acts 9:11-12 NLT

- **When God's will doesn't make sense**

“But Lord,” exclaimed Ananias, “I’ve heard many people talk about the terrible things this man has done to the believers in Jerusalem! And he is authorized by the leading priests to arrest everyone who calls upon your name.” – Acts 9:13-14 NLT

*But the Lord said, “Go, for **Saul is my chosen instrument** to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. And I will show him how much he must suffer for my name’s sake.” – Acts 9:15-16 NLT*

- Fools for His sake

But to those called by God to salvation, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. This foolish plan of God is wiser than the wisest of human plans, and God’s weakness is stronger than the greatest of human strength. – 1 Corinthians 1:24-25 NLT

- **Discussion Questions:**

Read 1 Cor. 1:18-25. How did Saul's personal experience impact what he wrote?

Why do we need to see ourselves as God's chosen instruments?

Saul wasn't chosen because he was worthy, but he wasn't rejected because he was unworthy. Why is this important?



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SPRING SERIES 2026 – WEEK 3 HOMEWORK

WEEK 3 – I Saw the Light

In this lesson, we're going to skip ahead a bit and leave Saul in Damascus. We will return to him in week four, but for now, we want to see what was happening elsewhere in the church. It's important that we recognize that God was working through some of the other leaders in the early church and preparing the way for Saul's ministry to begin.

- Take time this week to look over pages 65-96 of the PDF containing Ken's Devotionary™ on the Book of Acts.
- Read Acts 9:32-43. While Saul was busy in Damascus, what was the apostle Peter doing? Make a list of his “accomplishments” and where they take place.

Why are these two events significant and why is it important that they took place in Lydda and Joppa?

- Read Acts 10:1-8. What is unique about this man named Cornelius? What sets him apart?

What is he told to do in his vision?

- Read Acts 10:9-16. Why is Peter so upset by the vision he sees and the command given to him by God? What is it that God is trying to tell Peter?
- Read verses 27-33. Peter, while a follower of Jesus Christ, was also a faithful Jew who was committed to keeping the Mosaic Law and would have shunned any association with Gentiles. So why would this assignment have been so difficult for him?

Summarize in your own words what Peter has to say to his Gentile audience.

What has Peter learned from the disturbing vision God gave him?

According to verses 44-48, what was the result of Peter's message?

- Read Acts 11:1-18. How does Peter explain the events that took place at Cornelius' house to the rest of the apostles?

What was their response, and why is it significant?

- Read Acts 11:19-30. What do these verses describe and why would it have anything to do with Saul?

How could God be preparing the way for the launch of Saul's ministry as His chosen instrument?