



A MESSAGE OF HUMILITY AND
HOPE FROM THE LIFE OF PAUL

THE *CHIEF* OF SINNERS

BAND OF BROTHERS / SPRING 2026

BAND of BROTHERS

SPRING SERIES 2026 – WEEK 6

On the Road Again

For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

– 1 Thessalonians 1:5-7 ESV

- **Jesus Christ**

- Paul and the early church were not spreading a book
- They were spreading a message about a **Person**

*But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, **preaching the Lord Jesus.*** – Acts 11:20 ESV

- Paul's first sermon made this abundantly clear

And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying "He is the Son of God." And all who heard him were amazed. – Acts 9:20-21 ESV

Lord – kyrios – κύριος

- Lord, master, sovereign
- He has authority, He rules, and He is sovereign

- **God's Will Clarified**

But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." – Acts 15:1 ESV

- Acts 15 opens with conflict
 - This is not a minor disagreement
 - Major implications are at play
 - Requiring circumcision would be adding requirements to Jesus

- The issue wasn't really circumcision – it's **authority**
 - Who decides what saves?
 - God or tradition?
- Remember Paul's message
 - **Jesus is Lord, Son of God, Messiah**
 - If Jesus is Lord, He **defines** and **completes** salvation
 - Paul and Barnabas are trying to present clarity

*And after Paul and Barnabas had **no small dissension and debate with them**, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question. – Acts 15:2 ESV*

- This disagreement was serious, public, and unresolved
- The church doesn't rush a decision but sends it to Jerusalem
 - The Jerusalem Council begins
 - Peter speaks to what God has already done

*Brothers, you know that in the early days **God made a choice among you**, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, **who knows the heart**, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he made no distinction between us and them, having **cleansed their hearts by faith**. – Acts 15:7-9 ESV*

- "God made a choice among you..."
 - Salvation is not a human invention
 - God acts first
- Salvation for the Gentiles was God's idea
 - It was not Paul or Peter's idea
 - Salvation was for both Jew and Gentile alike
- Man looks for the external signs
- God cares about and fully knows the heart
 - He confirmed salvation for the Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit
 - God does not give His Spirit to the unsaved
- **GOD** cleansed the Gentiles' **hearts**
 - **No distinctions**
 - Same faith
 - Same cleansing
 - Same standing

*Now, therefore, **why are you putting God to the test** by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But*

we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will. – Acts 15:10-11 ESV

- Circumcision was never able to save Israel
- It cannot save the Gentiles
- To require it is to misunderstand salvation
- Salvation is:
 - By grace alone (Sola Gratia)
 - Through faith alone (Sola Fide)
 - In Christ alone (Sola Christus)

- **God Directs Paul's Path**

- Paul and Barnabas are sent to Antioch
 - They tell the Gentiles they do not need circumcision
 - Paul and Barnabas split (15:39)
 - Silas joins Paul

Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening churches. – Acts 15:40-41 ESV

- Even disagreement does not derail God's mission
 - Barnabas goes to Cyprus
 - Paul goes to Syria and Cilicia
 - God is directing Paul every step of the way
 - Even if he doesn't realize it

And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. – Acts 16:6-7 ESV

- Paul is actively moving forward
 - He is being obedient to what the Lord called him to do
 - He's preaching and strengthening churches
- However, the Holy Spirit forbade them to speak the word in Asia and Bithynia
 - Why would the Holy Spirit stop Paul from preaching the gospel there?
 - Paul had the right message and motive, and was being obedient
 - God still said no
- God's "no" is often about timing
 - Asia and Bithynia were not bad/wrong places
 - They needed the gospel as much as any other city
 - God's "no" doesn't always mean "never"

- Sometimes it means “not yet”
- God is showing Paul that the gospel moves forward because God governs it
 - Not because we control it
 - Paul was sovereignly being directed by God

- **The gospel goes to Macedonia**

*And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, “**Come over to Macedonia and help us.**” – Acts 16:9 ESV*

- God had temporarily shut the door on Asia and Bithynia for a reason
- God’s previous “no” now makes sense
- God wanted Paul and Silas to go to Macedonia
 - This was not Paul’s choice but God’s direction
 - The gospel was advancing into new territory

*And when Paul had seen the vision, **immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia**, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. – Acts 16:10 ESV*

- Paul couldn’t wait to go
- He doesn’t bargain with God
- He doesn’t respond with:
 - “Let me think about it”
 - “Let me pray about it longer”
 - “Let me see what else happens”
- Paul concludes that this was God’s will and obedience was the only option
 - Obedience wasn’t conditional for Paul
 - It’s not based on comfort or convenience
 - It’s based on **submission to God’s authority**
- How often do we attempt to negotiate with God’s will?
 - Often, we delay or look for alternatives
 - We ask God to change the timing or cost
 - The way we respond to God’s will reveals what we believe about His authority

*But **be doers of the word**, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. – James 1:22
ESV*

- **Lydia and the jailer**

*So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days. And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. One who heard us was **a woman named Lydia**, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. **The***

Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. – Acts 16:11-14 ESV

- God brings Paul exactly where he needs to be
- Philippi is not accidental
 - o God is advancing the gospel into Gentile territory
 - o Philippi was a Roman city with no Jewish context
 - o Lydia (Gentile) hears the gospel...
...and her whole household believes
- Lydia's conversion immediately produces fruit
*And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, **come to my house and stay.**" And she prevailed upon us.* – Acts 16:15 ESV
 - o Lydia does not remain a private believer
 - She opens her home and supports Paul's mission
 - It's here that the Philippian church begins
 - Through God's direction, an amazing partnership in the gospel begins

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your **partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.** – Philippians 1:3-5 ESV

*Even in Thessalonica **you sent me help for my needs once and again.*** – Philippians 4:16 ESV

- Lydia was a partner in the gospel whose faith would strengthen the church for years to come
- o But God's will isn't always accomplished through favorable circumstances
 - Sometimes, He uses suffering and hardship

*About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. and **suddenly there was a great earthquake**, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately **all the doors were opened**, and everyone's bonds were unfastened. When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, "**Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.**" And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, "**Sirs, what must I do to be saved?**" And they said, "**Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.**" – Acts 16:25-31 ESV*

- Paul and Silas are beaten, imprisoned, and publicly humiliated
 - Yet God is still being worshiped
 - They know God’s purposes are not derailed by suffering
 - God brings an earthquake but not to free Paul
 - To confront the jailer
- **What must I do to be saved?**
 - This is not just the jailer’s question
 - It’s one we all have to answer
 - “How am I made right with God?”
 - The answer has never changed
“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved”
 - Many of us believe Jesus saves, but live as if we still need to earn it
 - The gospel does not call us to add to Jesus...
...but to surrender ourselves to Him
 - Stop trying to earn what Christ has already secured
 - Trust Jesus enough to obey Him fully

- **Discussion Questions:**

What are some “add-ons” to the gospel that God never required?

Share a time when you clearly heard God’s will but tried to negotiate the timing, cost, or outcome.

Do you believe Jesus is Lord enough to surrender control, or only Savior enough to forgive your sins?



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SPRING SERIES 2026 – WEEK 7 HOMEWORK

WEEK 7 – The third time's a charm

This will be Paul's third missionary journey. We will examine the three years he spent in Ephesus. The themes and doctrines found in the Book of Ephesians will shed light on some of the issues he faced during his extended stay in that city.

- Read through pages 165-196 of the PDF containing Ken's Devotional™ on the Book of Acts.
- Read Acts 18:22-23. After his second missionary journey, Paul returned to Antioch in Syria, but he didn't stay there long. Where did he go and what did he do when he got there?
- Verses 24-28 introduce a man named Apollos. How is he described?

Why did Priscilla and Aquila pull Apollos aside, and what did they do to help him?

What did Apollos say to the Jews and how do you think this message was received?

- According to verses 1-10 of Chapter 19, what did Paul encounter when he first arrived in Ephesus?

What was the essence of his teaching?

How was it received?

- Read Acts 20:11-20. Why do you think God allowed Paul to do some of the “extraordinary miracles” he did in Ephesus? What was taking place in that city that made these out-of-the-ordinary events necessary?

What does the response of the evil spirit say about his view of Paul’s authority as an apostle of Jesus?

What was the result of the embarrassing interaction between the sons of Sceva and the evil spirit?

According to verses 18-20, what changes did coming to faith in Christ produce in the Ephesians?

Read Ephesians 2:11-13. How did Paul compare their former condition with their new life in Christ?

- Read Acts 19:21-41. Describe what happens in Ephesus as Paul prepares to leave town.
- Read Acts 20:1-16. What are your takeaways from Paul’s miraculous raising of Eutychus from the dead? What does it say about Paul’s God-given authority?

In verses 17-38, Paul meets with the elders from Ephesus. Summarize the message he gave them:

What do his words reveal about his perspective on his calling, ministry, and life?

Now, read Ephesians 4:17-24. What similarities do you find in Paul’s address to the Ephesian elders and what he wrote to the entire church body?