

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

DEVO

APRIL 28 - MAY 2, 2025



MONDAY

Read **Acts 9:1-5; Acts 22:1-21**

Scanning the scene at Calvary's cross—suspended excruciatingly between heaven and earth—Jesus interceded for His executioners, “*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing*” (Luke 23:34). Though we have no indication that Saul of Tarsus was there, I wonder if Jesus had the future Apostle Paul in mind amidst His appeal.

Before his dramatic conversion, Saul was the Church's “public enemy #1”—he viewed Christianity as heresy, a threat both to Judaism and God Himself. Following Jesus' resurrection, Saul officiated Stephen's stoning (Acts 7) and was bent on persecuting and imprisoning believers. Ironically, Saul's pre-conversion behavior anticipated Caesar Nero's. Nero was crowned in AD 54; ten years later, he began scapegoating and torturing Christians. Paul, by then the Church's leading church-planter and New Testament's most prolific writer, was eventually executed by Nero.

Paul's dramatic conversion to Christianity—this week's centerpiece—testifies to God's amazing ways. It brings to mind Jesus including Levi (Matthew) and “Simon the Zealot” among His closest disciples. Tax collector Levi collaborated with Rome, exploiting countrymen in earning his living. As a Zealot, Simon was militantly anti-Roman—normally, he would have been Levi's murderous enemy. Yet in Christ, Simon and Matthew became brothers, united by Jesus' example and teaching.

Until his road to Damascus journey and redirection by the Savior, Saul was Israel's rising religious star, a “*Hebrew of Hebrews ... [and] Pharisee, ... faultless [in Law-keeping]*” (Philippians 3:5-6). God used him mightily but, remarkably, as “the apostle to the Gentiles” (Romans 11:13). Why this calling for Paul? As a Roman citizen, Paul could travel freely and communicate effectively throughout the empire. He was highly educated, hailing from multi-cultural, cosmopolitan Tarsus. Moreover, the apostle's zeal equipped him for persevering while enabling Christianity's spread throughout the Mediterranean region.

Saul's conversion—like Levi's and Simon's earlier—speaks to the unifying power of Jesus' mission. The Lord's call transcends human divisions, emphasizing that God's grace and purposes are for all regardless of backgrounds. Jesus reminds us that unity is possible when we focus on something greater than our differences. Such a powerful reminder is needed today more than ever!

QUESTIONS

What was the ironic relationship between Paul (formerly Saul) and Caesar Nero? What does the relationship between Levi (Matthew) the tax collector and Simon the Zealot illustrate regarding Christ? Why was Paul's mission to minister particularly to the Gentiles?

PRAYERS

International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES)

Emre now serves as the National Director for IFES in Turkey and continues in his leadership role at the church in Antalya where Pastor Tim Fearer ministered before coming to Glenkirk. Pray for wisdom as he cares for his family as well as his ministry.

TUESDAY

Read **Acts 9:3-5; Ephesians 1:22-23; Revelation 19:6-9**

When Saul of Tarsus first met the risen Christ, he was knocked to the ground. This brings to mind the Judas-led posse seeking to arrest Jesus at the Garden of Gethsemane. Upon encountering the company, Jesus asked whom they sought. They replied, “*Jesus of Nazareth.*’ ... *‘I am He,’ Jesus said ... [upon which] they ... fell to the ground*” (John 18:5-6). Jesus’ Self-identifying “**I AM**” statement—using God’s covenant name (Exodus 3:14)—overpowered His assailants.

When Saul experienced such divine power amidst flashing heavenly lights, he was left blinded—more on this Friday. Most relevant today, however, is Jesus’ intimate, personal identification with His followers, the Church. Per the Lord’s related question to Christianity’s then foremost enemy, “*Saul, why do you persecute Me?*” (Acts 9:4, emphasis added), Jesus took Saul’s oppression of His followers deeply personally—viewing such as attacks on Himself. Thus, God’s declaration, “*[The one] who [troubles My people] touches the apple of [My] eye*” (Zechariah 2:8).

This incident underscores why God created humankind in the first place: to “*betroth you to Me forever*” (Hosea 2:19). He is the God who “*loves [His people] with an everlasting love*” (Jeremiah 31:3). Accordingly, the Savior “*stand(s) at the door and knock(s) ... [eager to] come [into fellowship] with [those who will receive Him]*” (Revelation 3:20).

Jesus’ relationship with His Church—His “*Body*” (Ephesians 1:33) and “*Bride*” (Revelation 19:7)—is foundational to Christianity. The true Church is an extension of Christ Himself, unified in purpose and mission, ministering His love and teachings to a desperately fallen world. This relationship represents a covenant of love, commitment, and eternal unity—mirroring marriage’s intended intimacy and devotion.

Personifying His teaching to “*love your enemies*” (Matthew 5:44), Jesus mercifully shepherded the misguided Pharisee Saul into saving faith and God’s eternal family. God’s love is deep and sacrificial—He longs for a close, spiritual connection with His own in Christ. Do you ever take this for granted? Sadly, I sometimes do. Instead, let’s embrace such good news (“*Gospel*”) and let resultant gratitude and joy embolden our walks with Christ, our love and witness toward others, and all that we do!

QUESTIONS

Which of Jesus’ cited displays of power most resonate with you? How does Jesus identify personally and intimately with His followers, the true Church? Why did God create humankind in the first place?

PRAYERS

International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES)

Praise God for access to a quality media studio, where Emre writes and records worship songs while also doing translation and voice-over work for a children’s animated Bible-teaching video series (produced in the U.S.).

WEDNESDAY

Read **Acts 9:5**; **Acts 26:1-29**

Saul's question for the powerful, risen Son of God—"Who are you, Lord?" (Acts 9:5)—is simultaneously profound and contradictory. Calling another "Lord"—if heartfelt—indicates subjection and devotion to their eminence, rule, and leadership. How could Saul call Jesus "Lord" while seemingly not knowing Him? Saul's query answers Jesus' own "Who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16:15) question aimed earlier at His disciples. The one who would become Paul later answered his own question decisively: "Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:11).

Saul's use of "Lord" suggested both respect for the divine authority confronting him and budding submission to Christ. Paul knowingly wrote later, "No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3). The exchange in Acts 9:5 shows Saul moving from ignorance to initial recognition of Jesus' divine identity.

This encounter on the road to Damascus speaks to themes of revelation, identity, and surrender. By calling Jesus "Lord," Saul acknowledged the authority of the Redeemer, even though he didn't yet fully understand the depth of his own question—much less Jesus' majesty. This moment encapsulates the human experience of encountering the divine—concurrently humbling, disorienting, and enlightening. For Saul, this revelation shattered his previous worldview and set the stage for his calling as a servant of Christ.

The risen Messiah did not condemn Saul, despite this Pharisee's history of persecuting Christians. Instead, He revealed Himself and compassionately redirected Saul's zeal toward a new, redemptive purpose. This highlights Jesus' grace and ability to transform even the most antagonistic opponent. This verse and its context foreshadow Saul's future as the apostle who would minister particularly to the Gentiles. His question and subsequent actions set the stage for a regenerated life of faith and service.

God's grace can transform even the hardest hearts. Saul's messianic encounter and related question invites reflection on our own Christian experience and challenges us to ask, as Saul did later, "What shall I do, Lord?" (Acts 22:10). How have your encounters with the Savior reshaped you? Who needs to know your "before Christ and post-redemption" story?

QUESTIONS

What is strange about Saul of Tarsus' first question of the risen Christ, "Who are you, Lord?" (Acts 9:5). How did this anticipate Saul's own conversion? What is most surprising regarding God's use of Saul?

PRAYERS

International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES)

Pray for Emre's travels to newly developed and growing campus ministries at universities across the country. May he be a faithful shepherd to the young leaders whom he is overseeing and discipling in each location.

THURSDAY

Read **Acts 9:6-19; 1 Timothy 1:12-16; Proverbs 21:2**

Some maintain that God's grace is irresistible, that one must respond obediently to His call. Those disagreeing—emphasizing our free will—might refute this by citing examples like Jonah's fleeing from God and Moses', Gideon's and Jeremiah's initial resistance as God commissioned their respective ministries. However, Abram's response to “[leave] your people and your father's household to the land I will show you” (Genesis 12:1) was immediate and decisive. So, too, was the response of several disciples to Jesus' “invitation”: the Lord separately directed both Levi (Luke 5:27) and Philip (John 1:43) to “Follow Me.” His calls of Simon and Andrew, James and John were similarly firm.

Saul of Tarsus' call appears to have been compelling, even irresistible. Upon encountering Jesus, he endured temporary blindness and a complete reversal both of his Damascus mission and his life's work thereafter. Jesus' admonition, “Now get up and go” (Acts 5:6), feels like God's exhorting Moses as the Israelites were pinned between Pharaoh's army and the Red Sea: “Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the Israelites to move on” (Exodus 14:15). God desires fellowship, but expects us to act when His will has been demonstrated clearly.

I wish I could say that I've always responded faithfully and promptly to God's “still small voice” (1 Kings 19:12, KJV) spurring me toward action. Unfortunately, I can be caught up in “my agenda” (clearly

more important than managing all Creation!) and/or submit to personal comfort. Sometimes I need reminding: we're called not to comfort, but to faithfulness.

Saul was an unlikely candidate to transform into the Church's champion. Ananias—chosen to facilitate Paul's entrée into God's family—couldn't believe what the Lord was doing here, given the future apostle's antagonistic history (Acts 9:13-14). Saul's dramatic, improbable conversion into Paul underscores how “the LORD looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7) and how, with God, “mercy triumphs over judgment” (James 2:13).

The risen Savior knew that Saul sincerely sought to do God's will—he simply needed an about-face. When the LORD looks on your heart, what does He see? Where does your life need some fine-tuning, perhaps even redirection?

QUESTIONS

Do you believe God's grace is “irresistible”? What biblical stories either support or challenge this opinion? How does Saul's renewal underscore how and why “the LORD looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7)?

PRAYERS

International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES)

Continue to pray that a “family visa” will be granted for Emre, his wife, Feven, and their 2-year-old son, Joah. Because Feven was born in the Netherlands, the couple has been anxiously awaiting this essential visa for more than four years now.

FRIDAY

Read **Acts 9:8-9; John 9:35-39; Hosea 6:1-2**

Upon his life-changing, redirecting encounter with the glorified Christ, Saul was blinded “for three days” (Acts 9:8). Was this emotionally-induced trauma manifesting itself, or something else? Threeness, three days, and blindness are significant, recurring scriptural themes.

Three, of course, can represent the triune Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The magi presented three gifts to the infant Jesus, characterizing three aspects of His roles and mission: gold for a King; frankincense (incense) representing prayer for our Great High Priest; and the embalming spice, myrrh, for our substitutional Sacrifice. There were three crosses at Calvary, some suggesting one each for salvation, rejection, and associated personal choice. Humans can be characterized as triune among body, soul and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

Threeness can portray preparation and fulfillment. Jesus was three days in the tomb just as Johah spent three days in the fish’s belly (Matthew 12:40). Abraham journeyed three days with Isaac to Moriah—the location of Jerusalem’s future temple and the mountain range containing Golgotha (Calvary), Jesus’ crucifixion site—where he intended to sacrifice his son. Blindness pictures the fallen human condition apart from Christ. Jesus healed multiple blind people, renewing them. Light (Acts 9:3) often symbolizes truth and insight;

it exposed Saul’s spiritual blindness, illuminating his reset understanding of the Messiah.

“Three days” is most meaningful to me personally. My own father was in the worst spiritual condition possible: a “good man” by virtually all accounts, he self-identified as heaven-bound. My various attempts to dissuade him here failed right up to his hospice deathbed. There Dad had become noncommunicative. I asked if he wished to pray with me, two winks meaning “yes.” He blinked twice and I led him in the sinner’s prayer, Dad silently blinking in step. He died three days later, those days perhaps needed by God to fully convince him of his need for a personal Savior.

Has God ever had to knock you down and/or disable you to get your attention and reset your course? Have you thanked Him recently? Whom do you know appearing spiritually “blind,” needing “three days” of your loving attention to help them recognize Jesus Christ?

QUESTIONS

What was the significance of Saul being blinded “for three days” (Acts 9:8)? Which of the “threeness” examples offer you new insights? What’s the relationship between where Abraham intended to sacrifice Isaac and Jesus’ crucifixion site, Golgotha (Calvary)?

PRAYERS

International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES)

Ask the Lord to guide and guard Emre and his American colleague, Pam, as they visit many U.S. ministry partners—including Glenkirk church—this coming July! May they be encouraged and bring encouragement wherever they go, especially during their time with us.



These devotionals are written by a team of Glenkirk volunteers who represent a range of beliefs within the evangelical spectrum. As such, some of the expressed views may not necessarily represent those of pastoral leadership. If you find yourself challenged by a devo, explore why that might be and, should you have questions or concerns, please reach out to Pastor Kate Wallace Nunneley at KNunneley@GlenkirkChurch.org. If you are interested in joining those who pen Glenkirk devotionals, please contact Pastor Kate.

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