GLENKIRK CHURCH **WEEKLY DEVOTIONS**

DEVO

MARCH 16 – 20, 2026

Monday

Read **Philippians 4:10-23; Galatians 2:11-14; Acts 15:36-40**

The Apostle Paul has always attracted heat, both during his 1st century ministry and since. Not only was he hounded by Jewish officials for turning from Judaism to Christ, but was imprisoned by Rome for sparking riots due to his forceful teaching. Even the fledgling Jerusalem church was wary of Paul's ministry initially, given his pre-conversion history as Christianity's enemy (Acts 9:26). To this day, Paul remains controversial—his nuanced, authoritative epistles fuel modern debates over sexuality along with Church gender roles and governance.

Paul was a man of conviction, his principles prompting him even to call out the Apostle Peter for waffling on former Gentiles professing Christian faith. Paul parted with colleague Barnabas over John Mark (who later penned the Gospel According to Mark) abandoning their Pamphylia mission trip. Paul wrote sharply regarding Judaizers—legalists claiming that Gentile male converts must be circumcised and adopt other Jewish rituals to follow Christ legitimately—*"I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves [become eunuchs]!"* (Galatians 5:12).

Paul was a man of heartfelt convictions. But today's featured Scripture reveals his tenderheartedness toward the Philippian church, an affection he expressed elsewhere in his epistles toward Christian coworkers. He was grateful for their support: *"I rejoiced … [due to] your concern for me"* (Philippians 4:10); *"it was kind of you to share my trouble"* (v. 14); *"no church [supported] me … except you" (v. 15); "you sent me aid"* (v. 16). He blessed them for their bond and faithfulness (vv. 19-23).

But make no mistake: Paul was no pushover. He *"[spoke] the truth in love"* (Ephesians 4:15), never submitting to "sloppy agápē"—soft-pedalling the Gospel merely to spare feelings. He knew that "tough love," if loving, was love indeed. Paul's love showed itself in convicted courage—speaking what people needed to hear, not merely what they wanted to hear. Paul loved others deeply while refusing to "love people right into hell."

How "Paul-like" are you and I in our everyday lives? Do we ever default to comfort instead of faithfully sharing the Gospel and our hope in Christ? Does our behavior reflect biblical teaching that the unsaved face God's judgment?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Why do you think the Apostle Paul found himself in conflict so often? What very direct, even coarse, wish did Paul express regarding the Judaizers plaguing him and the Philippian church? What is "sloppy agápē"?

PRAYERS

Father, please help us to always share the truth in love. Grant us a Spirit-enabled boldness tempered with personal humility and a heart burdened for the lost. Show us those we know whom You are calling.

Tuesday

Read **Philippians 4:11-12, 18; 1 Timothy 6:6-8; James 1:2-4**

In today's featured Scripture, the Apostle Paul shares something that would sell lots of books and prompt lucrative speaking engagements in contemporary America: *"I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances"* (Philippians 4:11). Paul's approach to contentment, however, wasn't a "grin and bear it" stoicism nor the result of a rah-rah, self-help pep talk. Paul's contentment was a profound shift borne out of coming to know the Savior, resting in Him, and surrendering obediently to doing God's will.

Contentment and its sibling, joy, differ markedly from the contemporary conception of "happiness." Happiness is an emotion that ebbs and flows with external circumstances. Contentment, however, dwells in the sufficiency of right relationship with God in Christ. It's awash in the peace of knowing Jesus and appreciating God's goodness, His abundant provision and the joy of the Lord's eternal promises. Contentment and accompanying joy are not fleeting emotions, but the fruit of a heart set on serving God in Christ.

Paul realized that if his contentment was tied merely to comfort, his *"god [would be] his belly"* (Philippians 3:19). By detaching joy from worldly wealth or freedom, Paul became untouchable by enemies and captors alike. Paul *"learned to be content"*—contentment isn't a trait inborn to a fallen person but a heartset forged through the heat of personal trials, a byproduct of God's ongoing sanctification process. Even God's Son learned in this fashion: *"[Jesus] learned obedience from what He suffered"* (Hebrews 5:8).

Paul reminds us that if we're waiting for our circumstances to improve before feeling contentment and joy, we haven't actually learned "the secret" yet. Faith-based contentment is a "spiritual muscle" that must be exercised in the heat of hardship so that joy can become a permanent resident rather than a fleeting visitor.

Across Scripture, contentment is never portrayed as resignation—it's wisdom. It's the clarity that comes from knowing Jesus Christ and, thereby, that God is enough, that God is present, sovereign, good, and loving throughout every season of the believer's life. Paul's contentment and joy undergird his famous declaration, *"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me"* (Philippians 4:13), tomorrow's emphasis.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What's the relationship between contentment and joy, and how are these different than happiness? What does "faith-based contentment is a 'spiritual muscle'" mean? How is Christian contentment not "grin and bear it" stoicism but, rather, wisdom?

PRAYERS

Almighty Lord, please forgive us for complaining, worrying, and expressing discontent when challenges arise. Help us see Your purposes, love, and wisdom in permitting the trials we face. Enable us to *"learn to be content whatever the circumstances"* as Paul had learned.

Wednesday

Read **Philippians 4:13, 19-20; 2 Corinthians 11:23-27, 12:7-10**

It wouldn't be too surprising to hear either Superman or a narcissist claim *"I can do all things,"* the first half of Paul's famous Philippians 4:13 declaration. But the critical modifier here follows: *"... through Him (Christ) who strengthens me."* Paul's statement is not New Age religions' internal "Christ consciousness" nor the "name it, claim it" trappings of "prosperity Gospel" advocates. Remember: Paul penned this while in a Roman prison cell.

Philippians 4:13 is perhaps the most misquoted biblical "tough guy" line in contemporary culture. It's often used as a motivational slogan for hitting a personal best in the gym or winning a championship. Paul is not asserting a supernatural ability to succeed at his hobbies; he is claiming a God-given ability to endure his life despite its extreme challenges. Paul's *"all things"* include his present hunger, thirst and poverty due to imprisonment along with earlier floggings, stonings, shipwrecks, and being hunted by enemies as per 2 Corinthians 11:23-27.

Paul is saying, "I have the strength to be hungry and not complain. I have the strength to be in a hole and not lose my joy." It is a declaration of spiritual invincibility in Christ, not worldly "success." He isn't white-knuckling his way through trials; he is plugged into a Power—God the Son Himself—who exists outside of Paul's physical body while indwelling the Apostle.

The wisdom here is that if you can *"do (endure) all things through [Christ],"* you are truly and finally free. If you don't need "plenty" to be happy, then the threat of "want" or prestige lose their power over you. Paul is telling the Philippians—and us—that true strength is the ability to remain exactly who you are in Christ, regardless of whether the world is giving you a crown or a cross.

Anyone can be happy when winning. It takes God-enabled spiritual maturity to be unbreakable when it appears you are losing. Paul claims the strength to be content even when circumstances might otherwise crush him. Philippians 4:13 is not about self empowerment, but godly perseverance. It's not about accomplishing all things, but about remaining faithful in all things.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What were the *"all things"* Paul could *"do"* (endure) in Christ? How were Paul's contentment and ability to endure extreme trials an expression of freedom? Do you find yourself unbreakable and content even while "losing"?

PRAYERS

Loving God, thank You for providing the power to endure all things in Christ! Please give us hearts more like Jesus' heart—faithful, kind and steadfast even when external circumstances are challenging. Equip us to be better reflectors of Your goodness and love.

Thursday

Read **Philippians 4:17-18; Matthew 6:20-21; Leviticus 2:2, 3:5**

"Not that I seek the gift (financial, ministerial support), but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit" (Philippians 4:17). In today's featured passage, Paul characterizes two essentials of Christianity: 1) God's purposes in calling us to give tithes and offerings; and 2) the nature of God-given, agápē love.

There are practical reasons for us to generously support Glenkirk, including enabling the work of its various ministries—supporting God's work and workers—and caring for the poor and vulnerable. But the related spiritual gains endure beyond these. Cheerful giving acknowledges God as the Source for all good things, for *"the earth is the LORD's, and everything in it"* (Psalm 24:1)—we are merely stewards of God's provision. Generous giving fosters faith and trust, affirming God as an abundant Provider while weakening greed's grip. And giving is worship which matures the individual giver while strengthening a church community marked by generosity.

Agápē is self giving love—seeking the good of the other without self interest. Paul emphasized that his relationship with the Philippians was not transactional—his joy wasn't in the *gift* (money), but in the *fruit* (spiritual growth) that it produced in them. He celebrated their generosity as an act of worship and not a personal benefit, calling it *"a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God"* (4:18). Because Paul loved the Philippians, he felt joy in their *"stor[ing] up … treasures in heaven"* (Matthew 6:20).

Paul was united to the Philippians via their common bonds: grateful Christian sacrifice wrapped in agápē love. The related biblical principles represent their mutual, God-honoring ties: generous stewardship of time, treasures and talent; faithfully honoring God's provision; compassion toward the weak and marginalized; trust in God and His promises; eternal transformation, being formed into increasing Christlikeness; and heaven-stored spiritual treasures, the joy of knowing Christ, making Him known and anticipating eternity with Him.

Jonathan Kopke wrote, "Tithes and offerings are not God's way of raising money; they are His way of raising children." Paul knew the Philippians as brothers and sisters in Christ, Kingdom co-heirs. But he also loved them as good parents love their children, desiring only their best.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What were the *"all things"* Paul could *"do"* (endure) in Christ? How were Paul's contentment and ability to endure extreme trials an expression of freedom? Do you find yourself unbreakable and content even while "losing"?

PRAYERS

Our Sovereign Giver of every good gift, thank You for Your abundance in Christ! Forgive us when we default to discontent or selfishness when we overlook the sufficiency of Your provision. Give us grateful, generous hearts that carry Your love to a world desperately needing Jesus.

Friday

Read **Philippians 4:20-22; Acts 26:1-29**

Paul closes his "epistle of joy" with amazing encouragement, *"All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household"* (Philippians 4:22). Did Paul boldly witness to those close to Nero, the Roman emperor who later would behead the imprisoned Apostle? Did God use Paul to take the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the highest levels of the Roman world? Pastor Chuck Smith speculated, "I am certain Paul witnessed to Nero, and I believe Nero's [intensified persecution] of Christians may have been the result of rejecting Paul's message."

Note that *"Caesar's household"* didn't necessarily mean Nero's blood relatives. It included the network of imperial slaves and freedmen—accountants, bureaucrats, servants and elite soldiers (the "Praetorian Guard")—who ran the empire's administration. Paul wrote earlier in Philippians 1:13, *"... it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and [others] that I am in chains for Christ."* As Paul was bound to a different soldier every few hours, he literally had a captive audience. These guards would return to Caesar's palace spreading the Gospel message.

Proclaiming the faith to soldiers and government officials—or anyone he met—was Paul's continuing pattern. Acts 13:7-12 shares the first recorded conversion of a Roman official: Proconsul Sergius Paulus was saved upon seeing Paul's power over a sorcerer. Paul's teaching converted Dionysius, a member of Athens' supreme court (Acts 17:34). Corinth's city treasurer, Erastus, was mentioned as a believer in Romans 16:23. Paul witnessed boldly and publicly to Roman-installed governors Felix (Acts 24) and Festus (Acts 24-25), as well as King Agrippa II (Acts 26).

Ironically, while Nero sat on the Roman Empire's throne as the most powerful man in the world, Paul—his prisoner—was successfully inviting Nero's staff to a different Kingdom. By the time Nero began his brutal persecution of Christians in 64 AD, Caesar's own household already contained believers who viewed Jesus, not Nero, as Lord.

As we close Philippians, reflect upon Paul's steadfast commitment to knowing Jesus and making Him known. I share the Gospel from time to time, but not as often as I might. And you? Hopefully, God won't use imprisonment to prompt us to even greater faithfulness.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What do you think of Chuck Smith's comments that Paul's witnessing to Caesar Nero sent Rome's Emperor into an anti-Christian rampage? Which conversion of Roman officials under Paul impresses you most? What will it take to get you to share the Gospel more faithfully?

PRAYERS

Amazing Creator, we marvel at what You did through Paul to build Your Kingdom. Please grant us a measure of the faith, passion, and perseverance which Paul displayed. Enable us to be more faithful as Your image-bearers and carriers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Sources

- Jonathan Kopke's quote is from his book, *God's Thrifty Extravagance: Understanding What the Bible Says About Money* (Cincinnati: Forward Movement Publications, 1999).
- Chuck Smith's quote is from his "Philippians 1" sermon, Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa, uploaded as a YouTube video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YgE8qDeEBek, on January 15, 2021.

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 Caitlyn Schan at CSchan@GlenkirkChurch.org. If you are interested in joining those who pen Glenkirk devotionals, please contact Pastor Caitlyn.

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