

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

JULY 17 - 21, 2023

GLENKIRK'S GRAND ADVENTURE



Jesus' Power is Everywhere

VBS 2023

JULY 17-21

GLENKIRKCHURCH.ORG/VBS



MONDAY

Read **Acts 9:1-19; Philippians 4:13**

Jesus' Power Gives Us Strength!

This is Vacation Bible School (VBS) week at Glenkirk. Each devotional this week parallels that day's VBS emphasis. Our overarching theme: Jesus' power is everywhere! We start with the story of Saul of Tarsus—who became the Apostle Paul, the New Testament's most prolific penman and church planter—and Ananias—an otherwise unknown, initially reluctant servant whom God used mightily.

Saul's conversion is one of the Bible's most amazing turnarounds. He was a living proof that no one is beyond God's reach, grace and love. Born Saul of Tarsus, Paul's earlier life was drenched in legalism per his orthodox Jewish upbringing. Ascending within Israel's religious hierarchy, Saul's early career featured extensive persecution of Christians (Acts 8:3). Believing himself righteous, Saul was actually God's hopelessly lost enemy. It took Jesus' blinding intervention amidst Saul's Damascus journey—a trip purposed toward capturing Christians for trial in Jerusalem—to convert Saul into the Apostle Paul.

Ananias, like others in the fledgling church, knew Saul as Christianity's leading antagonist. Imagine Ananias' concerns when God told him to visit blinded Saul, be an instrument of his healing, and welcome him as a newly-minted Christian brother! Pre-Christian Saul would

have sought Ananias' execution as a heretic. Understandably, Ananias struggled with God's aims here: *"This man ... has done [much evil ... wishing] to bind all who call on Your name"* (Acts 9:13-14).

Have you ever had to do something you didn't want to do, something you feared might go horribly wrong? After breaking my femur years ago, the post-surgery nurses insisted that I get up from bed the next day and begin assisted walking. I complained, "I can't," but they persisted. So I did, putting me on track for a full, quick recovery.

God's ways are infinitely higher than ours (Isaiah 55:9). He sometimes calls us to difficult things. But, unlike us, God knows the future and uses our circumstances for His kingdom purposes. And Jesus' power gives us the strength to endure challenges if only we trust and walk with Him throughout. God used Ananias' faithfulness to launch Paul's Christian career. What might God, in Christ, be calling you to do?

QUESTIONS

Why was Ananias concerned when God told him to go to Saul and be the instrument of his restored sight? Why does God sometimes call us to do hard things? How did God use Ananias' faithfulness?

PRAYERS

For Vacation Bible School (VBS)

Give thanks to the Lord for blessing Glenkirk Church with the privilege to serve Him through this year's Vacation Bible School. May His saving light shine brightly through the power of His Holy Spirit.

TUESDAY

Read **Acts 27**; **Psalm 31:24**

Jesus' Power Gives Us Hope!

Yesterday we considered Saul's conversion story and Ananias' related challenge as God's chosen "sponsor" to the Church's formerly leading antagonist. Years later, the Apostle Paul (formerly Saul) was being transported to stand trial before Caesar for "[stirring] up riots among Jews throughout the world" (Acts 24:5). Paul's accusers—former colleagues who were now foes—characterized him before authorities as a menacing threat to Rome's highly valued civil peace.

As the prisoners' ship sailed toward Rome, a furious storm imperiled both crew and on-board captives. This gave Paul opportunity to demonstrate his Christian faith and accompanying "peace of God, which surpasses all understanding" (Philippians 4:7). An angel had assured Paul that "there will be no loss of life among you" (Acts 27:22), which he shared with worried co-travelers. Normally in such circumstances, Roman crews would kill all prisoners to prevent escapes. However, Paul's confident hopefulness and discernment influenced them to follow his cool-headed lead, sparing all and enabling their escape from the shipwrecked vessel.

In many ways, Paul was powerless in the stormy sea. He was an inexperienced sailor. Guards held him prisoner. And he couldn't stop the crashing waves and howling winds. But Paul had Jesus' power on his side!

We might feel as powerless as Paul could have felt otherwise in such perilous circumstances. All of us face inevitable “storms” of a world still reeling from the pandemic, in a country wrestling with strife and division. Things can feel turbulent, dark and confusing, leaving some feeling hopeless. The more we express and live out our faith, the more we might face criticism and marginalization in an increasingly post-Christian culture.

Yet God promises to strengthen us with His power. Paul himself wrote in Philippians 4:3: *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!”* We can trust that God’s promises are true because, like Paul, we have Jesus’ power on our side. Today, celebrate that truth, being comforted and comforting others during life’s ongoing uncertainties and trials. Share your faith in an all-powerful, all-knowing, loving God. Share Christ, the One who has conquered sin, hatred, fear and even death!

QUESTIONS

Why was Paul sent as a prisoner to stand trial before Caesar in Rome? What is something in your life you feel powerless to do anything about? If you could tell a person who didn’t know Jesus something about Him, what would you say?

PRAYERS

For Vacation Bible School (VBS)

Let us pray for every person who has made VBS possible: the administration, set-up volunteers, Bible teachers, assistants, parents, and especially the children. May God give us all wisdom, strength and love to serve each other.

WEDNESDAY

Read **Acts 3:1-4:31; Isaiah 40:29**

Jesus' Power Helps Us Be Bold!

In Jesus' name and power, God used disciples Peter and John to heal "a man lame from birth" (Acts 3:2) who had been begging at Jerusalem's temple gate. The healed man celebrated the miracle so loudly, "walking and leaping and praising God" (Acts 3:8), that a large crowd gathered. Peter, seeing an opportunity, stood up and shared the Good News ("Gospel") of the Redeemer: that He had died for their sins and that they, like everyone, needed to repent and claim Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord.

The priests on hand who heard Peter's message didn't believe in the resurrection nor anything supernatural. During those times, ancient Israel's "priesthood" was at least as much political and economically motivated as religious—the Jewish priests were supportive of the occupying Roman government and maintaining the status quo. They were threatened and angered by Peter's Christian testimony, having both apostles jailed. "But many ... who had heard the word believed ... about five thousand" (Acts 4:4).

When brought before Israel's senior officials the next day, Peter and John again preached the Gospel boldly. These officials marveled at their ability, knowing that the disciples "were uneducated, common

men ... *And they recognized that they had been with Jesus*" (Acts 4:13). Moreover, "*seeing the man who was standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition*" (Acts 4:14).

Israel's angry leaders threatened them, commanding that they remain silent regarding Jesus. Despite Peter's and John's stated refusal to comply, however, the court let them go. These apostles returned to their Christian friends, sharing what had happened. These believers then joined in praising God, praying the He would enable them to "*continue to speak Your word with all boldness*" (Acts 4:29).

We all need courage when it comes to standing for and professing what we believe. Fortunately, however, we do not need to stand in our own power for such faithfulness. Isaiah 40:29 reminds us, "*[God] gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless.*" Jesus' power—demonstrated by His faithful submission to brutal, sacrificial crucifixion and subsequent, glorious resurrection—helps us be bold!

QUESTIONS

When is it difficult, or unpopular, for you to talk about Jesus? Who boldly told you about Him? With whom could you share the Gospel?

PRAYERS

For Vacation Bible School (VBS)

Pray for the families participating in VBS. May this be a blessed time. Lord, protect them and give them peace so that God's seeds may fall on fertile ground and bear fruit.

THURSDAY

Read **Luke 24:1-35; Romans 8:1**

Jesus' Power Lets Us Live Forever!

God created us for a loving relationship with Him. However, God's "very good" (Genesis 1:31) creation "fell" (corrupted) when Adam and Eve were deceived and rebelled, sinning and separating humankind from God. Resultant, inherited sinfulness, the world's fallenness and Satan's efforts account for the problems surrounding us. However, God loves us so much that Jesus Christ, God the Son, came to earth on a rescue mission. He paid the price that God's justice requires, being crucified in our place. The Man Jesus rose from the dead, defeating death and sin as "the Way" of salvation (restored, right relationship with God) for those believing upon and following Him.

Today's story commences the very day of Jesus' resurrection with two disheartened believers walking toward Emmaus. They were downcast because their hoped-for Messiah had been brutally crucified and entombed three days earlier. Amazingly, reports of the empty tomb from colleagues—including even an angel's account (Matthew 28:2-7)—did not encourage them. Moreover, Jesus had repeatedly predicted His resurrection to the disciples.

Interestingly, though Jesus' disciples did not anticipate the resurrection, His enemies apparently did. Jewish officials convinced Pilate to post extra security at His tomb (Matthew 27:62-66). When the dispatched

guards later reported what happened there, authorities bribed them to claim that His corpse was stolen (Matthew 28:11-14).

On the road to Emmaus, Jesus, initially unrecognized, taught His despondent followers, fully revealing Himself to them during pre-dinner prayer. Like many later, these travelers experienced the risen Lord personally! Because He rose, defeating death, Christ's followers are promised eternal life. These two then eagerly shared this good news with others.

People might question our faith and even argue about theology and related matters. But they cannot legitimately contest these evidences of the Gospel's authenticity: the empty tomb and lives changed by Jesus' saving power. *"The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you (if you follow Christ)"* (Romans 8:11). Are you walking with the Savior, God's Spirit indwelling you as a sort of "down payment" on eternity? How have you seen Jesus' power change your life and the lives of others?

QUESTIONS

What does the cross mean to you? Jesus' empty tomb? Do you have Jesus Christ's power, through the Holy Spirit, living in you today?

PRAYERS

For Vacation Bible School (VBS)

Let's pray that every person who participates in the VBS program is filled with the Holy Spirit and becomes a beacon of God's good will wherever she or he goes.

FRIDAY

Read [Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-35](#); [John 15:12](#)

Jesus' Power Helps Us to Be Good Friends!

Today we consider Jerusalem's newborn Christian church. After Jesus died and rose triumphantly from the tomb, He ascended back to heaven (Acts 1:6-11). Jesus' initial followers—the first Christians, those with Jewish roots—formed an inner circle. But this is key: they did not try to keep anyone out; they invited everyone they could to join them. Jesus' followers and friends told as many people as they could about Him; the early church grew.

Despite growth, however, Christians represented a minority of Jerusalem's population, much less that of the region. This small band of believers had to stick together and support each other. Jesus' power transformed them into good friends. Before turning to Christ, many of these had not known each other. Some of these new friends were former enemies: Jesus' twelve disciples included former tax collector Matthew—despised by fellow Jews for collaborating with Rome—and Simon “the Zealot”—previously of a guerilla group fighting Rome's occupation of Israel.

Yesterday we addressed changed lives as key evidence of the Gospel's impact. Matthew's and Simon's newfound Christian brotherhood is one example. Another confirmation: when Jesus was seized to be tried for crucifixion, only John among the original twelve supportively

witnessed His execution. Judas hung himself and the others hid in fear. Yet later the surviving disciples proclaimed Jesus boldly, willingly dying for their belief. Why would former cowards subsequently become so brave? They had experienced the risen Christ and received His power through the Holy Spirit.

Today's featured Acts readings share how these new Christians related to one another as loving friends, enjoying fellowship, helping one another. They generously shared what they had, grateful for God's provision and salvation in Christ.

These new Christians had been given a gift: Jesus Himself! And gifts—which, if truly gifts, must be given and received while never earned—are meant to be shared. They shared Christ with each other and “*gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus*” (Acts 4:33) to new friends, potential new brothers and sisters in Christ. What better friend or gift could there be?

QUESTIONS

What is a good friend? How can Jesus' power in you help you be a good friend? With whom will you share this gift?

PRAYERS

For Vacation Bible School (VBS)

Heavenly Father, today we pray for your mercy and grace over all of us. Please bless us and guide us—government authorities, parents, teachers, and spiritual leaders—to have God's interest for our VBS children and their generation.

Sources

- This week's devotionals draw some text and themes from "Rocky Railway: Jesus' Power Pulls Us Through," Vacation Bible School Curriculum (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2020).

