

Please go to the book of Philippians...

If you're chained (the chains attached to the hands were iron handcuffs) to someone 24/7... everything is exposed. Attitudes, opinions, body functions, quirks, temperament, personality... even thoughts leak out into the open eventually.

For two years the Apostle Paul is chained to the most elite Roman Guards in the Roman army... there is almost nothing they haven't discovered about this old Jewish man. He's awaiting trial so you think maybe.... Just maybe Paul will watch what he speaks about, worry about what might cause to look guilty... the people he sees or writes to. No, not Paul... he writes in...

Philippians 1:12-14

"I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, (13) so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. (14) And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear."

Paul is saying... My brothers, I want you to know that what has happened to me has helped to spread the good news. The Roman guards are really a captive audience... they know that I am here in jail because I serve Christ. The best part is most of the Lord's followers have become brave and are fearlessly telling the message... because I'm here chained to these guards!

Paul doesn't let his prison shackle his thankfulness, his prayers, his joy, his confidence, his faith, his purpose and his witness.

Because he was the freest... most thankful man in chains... (Read 1:18-20)

The Gospel is being preached... your prayers are effective... the Holy Spirit will deliver... but I'm leaving the method of deliverance to Christ... Because

Philippians 1:21

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Gain = profit, advantage, trading something)

Paul is saying the power behind my contentment in my life is this ... **If I have Christ I have everything I need!** I live independent from my circumstances... they don't have control... Christ does... and that makes me free!

Rejoicing helps us lean into the life of Christ

Philippians 4:4

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice."

Not sometimes... not often... not when I feel like it... not when I'm actually happy... always.

The Greek word for rejoice here means: Well off, cheerful, calmly happy it's also used as a greeting or a goodbye to wish someone to be well... to "Go and rejoice".

But the two root words add to its meaning... they mean favorably disposed (willing) and to lean forward into something.

So when I rejoice... I delight in God's grace and lean into it... I'm going to own this... I can lean into His grace and be thankful for it... for Him.

But always? I mean... always? Is that even possible? The Greek word here for always means: Every when, that is, at all times.

Paul explains it further (Chapter 4:11-13)

I am not complaining about having too little. I have learned to be satisfied with whatever I have. I know what it is to be poor or to have plenty, and I have lived under all kinds of conditions. I know what it means to be full or to be hungry, to have too much or too little. Everywhere I've been... everything I've experience... Every challenging situation, every hard circumstance... I've learned that at all times **Christ gives me the strength to face anything.**

Along with this short verse are two others (both short) that speak to us today.

1 Thessalonians 5:16

"Rejoice always."

John 11:35

"Jesus wept"

Rejoicing doesn't mean we deny our pain, our sadness, our grief... Joy is not an escape from the pain of life; instead it is a reinvestment in life from a different, healing perspective. The joy of the Lord is our **strength**. We lean into grace, His favor as sons and daughters and we find a place to stand during difficult times.

Hebrew for strength: A fortified place, a defense... a rock

Contentment is about owning it, taking authority over my situation... rejoicing, giving thanks, and showing gratitude!