

God used Paul's "imprisonment" to influence some of Rome's most powerful, most influential movers and shakers... with the gospel! Every 4 to 6 hours, Paul looked at the end of his chains and saw people that needed to know about Christ... and he's thankful for this... he rejoices! Paul knows that the Roman guards are actually chained to him!

Paul shows us that...Chains don't have to hold you captive; they can be opportunities for freedom

Two huge questions here...

1. *What are you chained to that is in fact... chained to you?*
(What authority is chained to you?... depending on how you see it, what power is chained to you?)
2. *How can you turn around a difficult position to advance the Gospel?*
(How do we live as free people... in the middle of confinement... of hard times?)

Again, a lesson in contentment is crucial to these questions. Paul was a prisoner, but he didn't think of himself as a prisoner of Rome... or anybody else than Christ! He knew he belonged to Christ. To Paul **contentment**, living life knowing and trusting that God is in control was to live in opposition to the attitudes, methods, beliefs and opinions of this world...

The attitude that says... "Enough" is not enough to make me feel content. Not having enough money to make feel secure... not enough praise to me feel wanted... valuable... worthy. I want more than "enough" ... I'm not settling for less... Give me more... then I'll be content.

For sons and daughter... contentment is not settling for less... its living for more... we need to live for something... for someone. This is where thankfulness, gratitude and humility fuel our heart.

Philippians 2:1-8

*"So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any **participation (fellowship, partnership, communion)** in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, (2) **Complete my joy** by being of the same mind, having the same **love (Agape)**, being in full accord and of one mind. (3) Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. (4) Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. (5) Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, (6) who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, (7) but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. (8) And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."*

Paul says my joy is full... like a net crammed with fish, bursting, alive and so satisfying, when you live contently, with grateful hearts, minds and spirits... humbly together as one. He reminds us Christ was truly God. But he did not try to remain equal with God... Instead Jesus gave up everything, became a slave, became like one of us... God sends His Son into the world of darkness, bound by chains of sin and brings the light of Salvation... Christ was humble... He submitted to the Father's plan.. He obeyed His Father and even died on a cross.

Paul says... that humility frees us from the power of the chains that others put on us!

The kind of humility that Jesus modeled for us helps us...

Live as forgiven people

Live as thankful people

Live as favored people

Live as one people

Live like people who have been freed from their chains by the Gospel... the Good news!

Luke 2:10

"And the angel said to them, 'Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.'"

Paul knows this story... this Good News of Great Joy helps him... thankfully, gratefully, contently... endure chains as if they weren't there. He knew to who/what he was chained to... he recognized the power and authority of Rome. He also knew the real authority was in the Gospel message... the Good News and the power it has to set captive people free.

Romans 1:16

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."