

PRISONER OF CHRIST JESUS

(A Thanksgiving Meditation)

- Paul was on his way to Jerusalem with an offering for the poor saints in Judea. On that Journey the Holy Spirit witnessed in every city that prison and hardships were waiting on him in Jerusalem (Acts 20:23).
 - When he came to Tyre the brethren urged him not to go on to Jerusalem (Acts 21:4).
 - At Caesarea a prophet named Agabus took Paul's belt, tied his own hands with it, and said: "The Holy Spirit says that 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles' " (Acts 21:11).
 - Paul responded that not only was he ready to be imprisoned, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 21:13).
 - While Paul was in the temple worshiping God, the Jews seized him and tried to kill him (Acts 21:31)
 - Even though Paul had committed no crime he was arrested by Roman soldiers and put in prison (Acts 22:24).
 - While in prison more than 40 Jews took a vow that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed him (Acts 23:12 - 13).
 - Paul was taken to another prison in Caesarea and was kept there for two years because the Governor hoped to receive a bribe from him (Acts 24:26).
 - When a new governor came to power he wanted to take Paul to Jerusalem in order to do the Jews a favor. To avoid be assassinated, Paul had to appeal his case to Rome (Acts 25:10).
 - Later Paul learned that if he had not appealed to Rome he would have been let go (Acts 26:32).
 - On the way to Rome they were beset by a terrible storm, went 14 days without eating, and ultimately were shipwrecked on an island (Acts 27:13 - 44).
 - The soldiers wanted to kill Paul and the other prisoners to keep them from escaping (Acts 27:42).
 - On the island Paul was bitten by a poisonous snake that would normally have killed him (Acts 28:3 - 6).
 - In Rome Paul dictated four letters from prison that are a part of our Bible. In every letter he makes reference to the fact that he was in chains: Eph. 6:20; Phil. 1:7, 13, 14, 16; Col. 4:3, 18; Phile. 1:10, 13.
 - **Paul, however, never considered himself a prisoner of Rome, but rather a prisoner of Christ Jesus. (See Eph. 3:1; 4:1; Phile. 1:1, 9).**
 - Since Paul felt that Jesus wanted him to be a prisoner, he looked upon his chains as an asset, rather than a liability. Please consider: **"Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly."** (Phil 1:12-14)
 - Each of Paul's prison letters reflects happiness and joy. The Philippian letter, for example, contains the word "joy" five times (1:4, 25, 22:2, 29; 4:1) and the word "rejoice" eleven times (1:18, 18; 2:17, 17, 18, 18, 28; 3:1; 4:4, 4).
- Paul's inspired example is not just for Thanksgiving, but also every other day of the year. **"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-- think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me-- put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you."** (Phil 4:8-9)