8

The Contented Prisoner

Key References: Acts 28:16-31; *The Acts of the Apostles*, chap. 43, pp. 447-460; *The Bible Story* (1994), vol. 10, pp. 125-127; 135-142; 157-160; Our Beliefs nos. 17, 11, 12.















power**text**

"I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:11-13).

Sabbath

DO Do the activity on page 61.

power**point**

We can choose to serve God in the most difficult circumstances.

Have you ever wondered, How much worse can things get? *And then you decided you would just make the best of it. Were you able to see God at work, even in your bad circumstances? Continue learning about Paul who chose to serve God while still a prisoner, and the wonderful results of his commitment.*

On arriving in Rome

I overheard Julius, the Roman centurion escorting us, tell Paul that he would release him if he could. Paul told him he wouldn't change anything, because God had a work for him to do in Rome. He said he was *content* with that. His positive attitude continues to amaze me.

Once we were in the city, Julius made arrangements for Paul to live in his own house with one guard rather than stay at the imperial prison with the other prisoners. He found us a furnished house. At last Paul can live in a little comfort. He will be under house arrest. That means he will be constantly chained to a soldier. But he can freely preach to all who come through the door.

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Sunday

READ Read Acts 28:14, 15 and this week's story, "The Contented Prisoner."

REVIEW Review the power text.

THINK In your Bible study journal, write out or tell the story from the guard's perspective.

PRAY Pray that you'll serve God in all circumstances.

Monday

READ Read Acts 28:16-20.

THINK Think what it must have been like to be falsely accused, as Paul was.

DO Do something nice for someone who has falsely accused you or has treated you unkindly.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Pray that you'll always want to do good to others.

Tuesday

READ Read Acts 28:21-23.

THINK Think of Paul who was under house arrest and probably chained to a Roman guard.

REACT Would you feel like doing things for others while you were "chained"? Do you think Paul could have used being chained as an excuse not to serve others?

APPLY Make it your goal to do something kind for someone especially if it requires you to sacrifice something or to put up with difficulties.

REVIEW Review the power text.

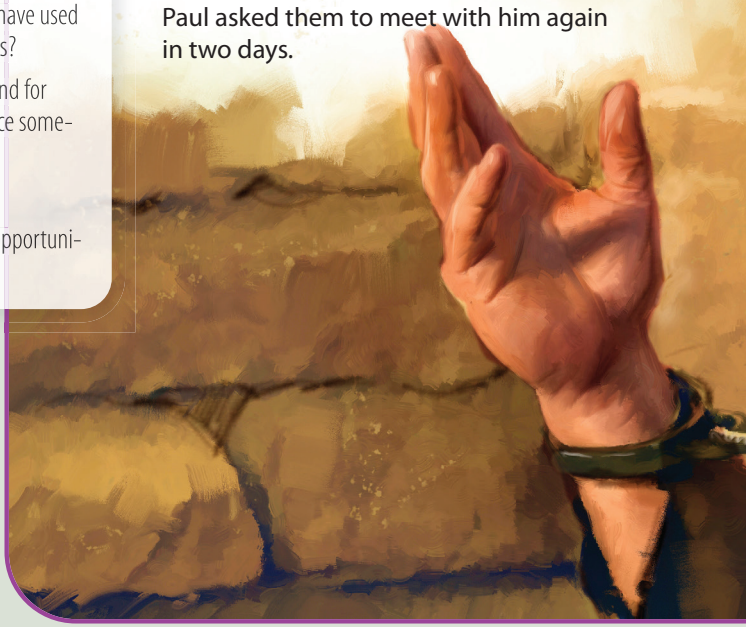
PRAY Pray for a humble heart to recognize opportunities to serve those who need your help most.

Three days later

Paul had inquired about the Jewish community here in Rome when he arrived. He discovered that there was once again a large population of Jews. He sat reminiscing about his friends Priscilla and Aquila, whom he had met when they were banished from Rome years before. He repeated his belief that you can serve Christ anywhere under any circumstances. I had to agree with him.

Today Paul decided it was time to meet with the Jewish leaders. He wanted to make sure they got the truth about what had happened in Jerusalem. When they arrived, he stated carefully and simply the reason for his imprisonment. He was surprised that they hadn't already heard the details from the Jews in Jerusalem.

They were curious about his belief that the Messiah had come. Instead of having to answer questions about his arrest, he was asked to explain to them why he thought Jesus was the Messiah. Paul asked them to meet with him again in two days.



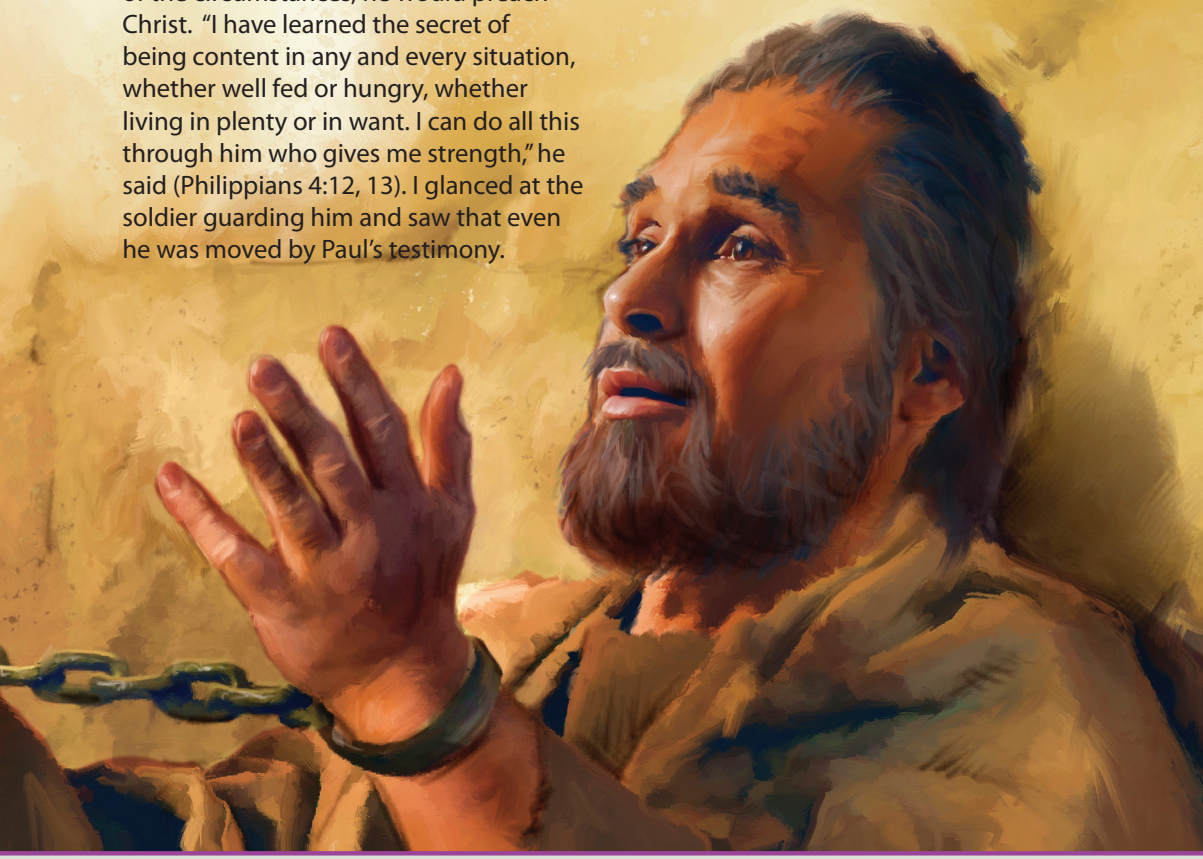
Two days later

Paul stated boldly to the Jews that Jesus Christ of Nazareth was the Messiah whom the prophets wrote about. The Roman Jews asked thoughtful questions. Some believed, but in the end, most were unconvinced. Paul reminded them of Isaiah's prophecy about their unbelief (Isaiah 6:9, 10). Finally he said that salvation would go to the Gentiles. It didn't seem to matter to most of these people listening to him.

I could tell Paul was disappointed. The important thing is that he used every opportunity to tell what he knew. As he sat there in chains, he said that regardless of the circumstances, he would preach Christ. "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength," he said (Philippians 4:12, 13). I glanced at the soldier guarding him and saw that even he was moved by Paul's testimony.

Two years later

The Jews from Jerusalem arrived today. Their delay in coming has allowed the work to blossom everywhere. Paul has had time to write letters of encouragement to the churches he established. He has sent workers to these churches as well as to places he was not able to go. A leader in chains. I now understand why Paul said two years ago that he was content in any circumstance, no matter how difficult. I have seen our Lord strengthen him for the work, even though his health is feeble.



8

Wednesday

READ Read Acts 28:24-28.

TALK Talk with an adult about the verses quoted from Isaiah 6:9, 10. Why do some believe and others don't?

REACT What can you do to help those who don't believe in God's Word to come to an understanding of it?

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Ask God to help you serve even the ungrateful.

Thursday

READ Read Acts 28:30, 31.

THINK Are there any situations in your life that make it seem impossible to serve others?

APPLY Try to apply the principle of the power point this week when you encounter a challenging situation.

PLAN Plan ways to serve in difficult circumstances.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Praise God that He will help you serve Him even in difficult circumstances.

Friday

READ Read Philippians 4:11-13.

THINK Think about how you can apply these words in your own life.

CREATE Alone, or at family worship, make a wall hanging of the verses you just read.

SHARE Discuss what these words mean to each member of the family.

SAY Repeat the power text from memory.

PRAY Renew your commitment to Jesus and decide to serve Him wherever He calls you.



Timothy, Mark, Demas, and Tychicus have been staying with us. Mark has made a dramatic turnaround. He has matured in the Lord very well. And he is completely devoted to Paul. We have had a steady stream of visitors to this house. Heads of state probably don't receive as many people! If I didn't insist that he stop

and rest, Paul would talk with people all night, every night!

After I repeated it once again today, he looked at me as if he wanted to argue. Instead he said, "You've been more than a physician—you've been a faithful friend." Lately he's been introducing me as "my beloved physician." I've been grateful for the time with him these past years. I've learned so much about trusting God and continuing to serve Him in spite of the difficulties.

