

## Under House Arrest

Judges have been handing down sentences involving house arrest with electronic monitoring in America since 1983. The alternative has served effectively for crimes in which prison population would not have been appropriate. The Apostle Paul was under house arrest when he wrote the New Testament book of Philippians. In today's Templates of Truth, we discover an extraordinary consequence to Paul's chains and consider what effects our lives would hold under similar circumstances.

Paul had committed no crime. He was in Jerusalem preaching the gospel when an angry mob of Jews assaulted Paul and would have beaten him to death had Roman soldiers not saved his life by arresting him. Awaiting trial, he was transported to Caesarea where he remained for two years with no resolution to his case. Exercising his right as a Roman citizen, Paul was then transported to Rome for an appeal before Caesar. By the time he wrote his letter to the church at Philippi, Paul was in his fourth year of Roman custody.

The restraints imposed on Paul were somewhat liberal while in Rome. Paul was allowed to stay in a private residence, free to receive visitors, and he carried on his ministry of teaching & preaching the gospel, as well as writing letters to the churches he had started across Asia Minor. There were no electronic monitoring devices in Paul's day, of course, but he was chained to a Roman guard 24/7. While some might see this experience as a denigrating blow to Paul's ministry, the divine element is best summarized by the Apostle himself – *my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else* (Philippians 1:12-13).

The praetorian guards were the most elite military officials of Caesar Augustus. They represented the highest and most prolific security detail that could have been assigned to Paul. But, Paul could not eat, sleep, visit with friends, write, speak or carry out any daily routine without a short chain connecting his life to a Roman guard. While that may appear to be a gross invasion of privacy, God used it in a most magnificent way. Those guards heard every word of Paul's sermons, every letter Paul dictated to his scribes, and every prayer Paul offered from his knees before God. Surely in the late evening hours, those guards would question many of the things they heard come from the Apostle's keen wisdom and insight of God's Word. Paul had many private moments when just one-on-one, those guards were captivated by a personal witness from this great man of God. Many apparently believed in Christ, shared their experience with others, and even *those (among) Caesar's household* (4:22), had come to know Christ as a result. What a crown for a chain!

How would it be with you and me? The sophisticated technology of monitoring devices today would afford the same close surveillance for us under house arrest as Paul had in his more physical, primitive circumstances. If that were the situation with you, what would "big brother"

see and hear? What would the private details and activities of your life reveal? Would that which exposed your life help or hinder your cause before God? If we lived according to Paul's example, the monitors would reveal a person deep in the study of God's Word, fervent in the prayers before God's throne, and passionate about the proclamation of God's truth. Our words, activities and behaviors would never be in contradiction to our profession of faith and allegiance to Christ. There would be no incongruence between our public life and our private life.

Paul's imprisonment reminds us that we should live each day as if under serious observation and scrutiny by those who keep a watchful eye on our lives – because many do. More importantly, Paul's chains remind us of the true meaning of personal integrity – what a person does when no one is watching...but God.

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide in Christ. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in the Lord Jesus.

© Copyright 2011 – All Rights Reserved – Renewal Resource Services, PLLC