

In his book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, psychiatrist, author and survivor of the Nazi regime, Viktor Frankl wrote: "We who have lived in concentration camps can remember those who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from man but one thing, the last of human freedoms – to choose one's own way." Jeremiah chose his own way as did St. Paul. Today, Paul in his letter to the Romans encourages his readers to do likewise.

On any given day, we can look at our world and view it as a prison created by human sin. We can assess the violence, the inhumanity and the injustice and decide that sin seems to have taken the upper hand and has the world and all its peoples in a stranglehold. Caught up in the grip of overwhelming evil, we might be tempted to blame Adam and throw up our hands in helpless defeat. But St. Paul will not allow this negativism. Rather than concentrating on sin and its consequences, Paul invites his readers to consider the "how much more" that is God's grace. Paul uses Adam as an image of fallen humankind, enslaved under the dominion of sin and death. He holds up Christ not only as the symbol of redeemed humankind but also as the one through whom we have been freed from sin and freed for life in the Spirit. Paul emphasizes that the gift of freedom given to us through Christ far surpasses Adam's transgression.

Like the prisoners in Frankl's concentration camp who freely chose their own attitude and were kind and giving despite circumstance, Paul challenges believers to choose grace and allow that grace to transform their attitudes toward God, toward self, toward others, toward the world. Anyone can be negative; anyone can give up in the face of sin. But the graced person freely chooses another path, and that choice can make all the difference.

The challenge of Christian life is to let the risen Christ shape our very self and let his life be our life. Jesus calls us to embrace a spirit of joy and hope and to be ministers of joy and hope to our fragile world.