

## Introduction

We are going through the "Freedom Story" series where we are hearing stories of deliverance, how God has brought people out and how He has given them freedom in Jesus Christ. It's a beautiful, beautiful truth. This morning I am pleased to introduce to you Debra. Debra and her family have been part of Houston Northwest for about eight years. She has a very powerful story, and we're glad to hear it today.

Pastor Steve: Debra, I just want to ask you... just tell us a little bit about how you grew up, and we'll just jump right into your story.

Debra: When I was a young child, I lived in Orange, Texas. I have three brothers and a sister. When I was in kindergarten and first and second grade, my parents owned apartments behind our house on the other side of the garage, and they rented them to people. A couple rented one of the apartments, and he would regularly sexually abuse me. After school, when I would leave the building and before I would meet up with my older brother and sister, he would pick me up and take me in the woods. Sometimes I would run to my grandmother's house which was three or four blocks away and find refuge there and feel safe.

Pastor Steve: Just tell us... how did that affect you? I mean, kindergarten and first and second grade... abuse is going to mess with the way that you feel about other people but also about yourself. What was happening inside of you? How did you feel about yourself?

Debra: Well, besides the wrong way to think about sex, I had a very low self-image and I didn't like myself. It played out in just me being shy. I just always felt awkward.

Pastor Steve: That's tough. So then, from that moment, what was going on with your relationship with God at that point? What were you thinking about God in the midst of all that?

Debra: I was raised Catholic and I went to Mass and I recited prayers, but I really didn't know God intimately. If it weren't for my grandmother, I wouldn't even know how to talk to God. When I would lie down to nap with her, after she said her rosary, she would pray for her children and for her grandchildren... that they would love Him. She prayed, "God, let my children and my grandchildren love You and have a relationship with you... Protect them." I thought, "She's talking to God! I didn't know you could talk to God." It was really powerful in my life.

Pastor Steve: Wow. That's good. Being raised in the church and that sort of thing, had you found freedom at that point or did that come later?

Debra: No, it came much later. We moved from Orange to Pensacola, Florida, and I spent my teenage years there. The couple wanted to come and visit us, and I said, "I don't want them to come." My parents said, "Why not?" I told them and, of course, they were very shocked and very saddened. They tried to fix it by sending me to the Dale Carnegie course... and going to a psychiatrist (laughing)... none of it helped really, you know. It wasn't until much later when I married my husband. We were living first in Beaumont and we moved to Houston. Kenny had lost his job. His boss knew that we didn't know anybody and that we didn't have a church home yet, so he invited us to come to their church. I was going to Mass by myself. Kenny didn't really enjoy it or understand it, and he said he would go with me when we started having children. He did but that's not what I wanted. I just didn't want him to come; I wanted us to know God as a family and that was my prayer. I just kept praying for God to heal that in our family and He did. We got invited to go to the boss's church to hear a speaker, and I had never been in a church where people were so open and loving and friendly. I loved the things that he said about God's grace and forgiveness. I was

so drawn to it that we kept going back. But the devil tried to steal it from me and say, "You are Catholic; you've been raised Catholic, and your whole family is Catholic." I was like, "No. I want to know God. I want to know Him in a deeper way than just being Catholic." So we studied with the pastor of that church for a year and then accepted Christ and got baptized.

Pastor Steve: So then tell us how did that change things once you received Christ?

Debra: I just fell in love with God's Word, and I fell in love with Him and the fact that He loved me and didn't want anything back except to love Him back...

Pastor Steve: Wow.

Debra: ... and it was just powerful in my life. I am His child now.

Pastor Steve: How would you characterize that, if there is someone sitting out here and they're hearing how God began to change you and you would say, "This is the big way that it really affected me... or, this is the way that you need to hear how to move forward....What would you say to them?"

Debra: Only Jesus can heal those broken and scarred places in our lives. Amazing blessings come when you surrender to the deeper work of the Holy Spirit when you tell Him those things. It brings healing. He gave me this Scripture (I forgot to tell it in the first service). Romans 15:13 says, *"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so you will be radiant with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit"* He did a work in me.

Pastor Steve: Wow. In the first service, Debra, you talked about Him taking that mantle off of you.

Debra: Yes. When I said, "I feel like your child." He said, "I want you to take off that dark, heavy cloak of shame that you've been wearing and put on My righteousness. I have clothed you with salvation and I arrayed you with My robe of righteousness."

Pastor Steve: Amen. Well Debra, that's a pretty powerful story. Thank you for sharing that with us. We'd like to give glory to God for that... (Clapping) So why don't you let us do that. We've been wrapping up each of these stories in the same way, so we want to give glory to God. So close us out here.

Debra: Yes. I just pray that if you don't know Jesus, that you would. He can change your life and make you whole. My name is Debra and this is my Freedom Story. (Clapping)

Pastor Steve: Amen.

I don't know about you, but these stories have just been so powerful for me. I wish that we had enough weeks where we could hear every single story that has been submitted. They are all just huge and a mark of what God does and continues to do. Glory and praise to Him. I tell you what; let's just pray together and then we'll open up God's Word and we'll see what God has for us today.

"Father, we are so grateful. God, we're thankful for the fact that your Son Jesus Christ brings deliverance and brings hope. Father, for those that are here right now, some who are dealing with shame, some who are dealing with sin, they've just rebelled against You. Father, others who don't even know if You truly exist, God, I pray that in this moment through your Word, your Holy Spirit will be in this place. And God, not

through the power of a speaker, an individual pastor, but Lord only through your supernatural hand, we pray and we ask that You would move and change hearts right now. God, we pray that as You do that that we would be transformed and we might also be delivered to walk into the freedom that You so readily and freely give. Father, we pray this and we ask it in the name of your Son Jesus Christ. Amen."

**Freedom Is....**

## 1. Standing Firm. (v. 1)

Galatians chapter 5 is where we are today. If you have your Bible, I want to invite you to turn over there. If you don't have a Bible with you, that's alright; the words will be up on the screen here in just a moment. Galatians 5 is sort of the turning point in the letter. So we've gone, over the last several weeks, through chapters 1 through 4. So now we get to 5. Paul has been building this tension between slavery and freedom, between Sonship and slaveship, and now he comes to a point where he says, "Alright... It's now time for me to describe to you what freedom truly looks like." That's where we're beginning to head now. What does freedom in Christ truly, honestly, really look like? So, Galatians 5, this is what he says, *"For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything but only faith working through love.*

*"You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion is not from Him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view than mine, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is. But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!*

*"For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another."*

I love prison-break movies. I don't know if you guys like prison-break movies... Anybody ever see "Escape From Alcatraz" whenever you were younger? No... no one saw that. Okay. Well, this is not going to work out real well for me then. Alright... moving on. Just kidding. Other movies out there that I like... prison-break movies like "Shawshank Redemption" – always a great one. Probably my favorite one was "The Great Escape" with Steve McQueen. Anybody ever see that? Yeah; okay. So now I'm starting to understand who I'm talking to here. That's good. Alright. "Escape From Alcatraz" - that's lame... "Great Escape"... okay. I've got it. Here's the thing. I always wondered... why is it that prison-break movies are so fun? I think there's this thing about the fact that we know that we were created to be outside of these prisons and to be free. We know that innately and so therefore anytime that we see people striving toward freedom, we root for them.

It's interesting because right here, this is where Paul really digs in. He says, "Look, I want you to understand what it means to be free." And so he gives us now a description of what freedom looks like, beginning in chapter 5. And this is the first thing that he says, "Freedom is, in fact, what you've been set free for. You have been set free for freedom." This is why God did it and why did He do it? So you can stand firm in it.

Don't move. You are right here; you stand firm in freedom. Now why do I have to stand firm in freedom? Well he says, "You have been set free." "Have been"... It's a completed past action. It's completely done. You can't change it. God has already done everything that you need in Jesus Christ to completely and totally free you. It has been done through the cross. It's over and done with. You can't change it by what you do today. You can't change it by what you do tomorrow. You can't change it by what you did two years ago. It has already been completed. It's over. It's done with. In fact, the Gospel is this: It's that your sin, your shame, your troubles, your temptations, your issues... they have the life expectancy of a beaver dam on an episode of Duck Dynasty. They have been exploded by the dynamite of the cross. They are gone. They are over. They are done with. Stand firm in that. Why? ...Because we try to go back. You see, what Paul is saying is this: It's that for whatever reason, we keep doing something that's weird. The only person who can give power to the sin and the shame that has been in our life is us. Once we've been set free, we are the only ones who can empower it. The thing that Paul is attempting to explain is this. It is that you now have to embrace the new way of life. In the second half of verse 1: *"Do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."*

"Yoke." Now, we don't run around using the word "yoke" much anymore unless we're talking about eggs, and that's not what this is either. Right? "Yoke" What is that? It's that thing that you put on the oxen to pull the plow. What is the yoke? In Jewish culture, the idea was that under Mosaic Law, there was a new way of life. It was called the yoke... "The Yoke of Moses"...and you would walk under this new yoke, this new way of life. That is why whenever Jesus came, He said, "No longer is it about law or rules or regulations." What did He say? "My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Why? It's a new way to live... it's under grace. It's a brand new way of living. That's why in 2 Corinthians, whenever Paul is talking about believers marrying unbelievers, he says, *"Do not be unequally yoked."* Why? Because, look, there's two yokes that are out there. One is the yoke of slavery under law where you're trying to earn God's favor by accomplishing all of these religious activities in order that God will see you as justified. OR... there is the yoke of Christ under grace. And if someone who is under grace and under Christ is married to someone who believes in the Yoke of Moses, the Yoke of Law, the Yoke of Religion... that this is how you earn favor with God... guess what? Two people in a household like that, they're going to always be at odds. So he says, "Don't go back to the yoke of slavery. Stand firm in what you have been given." Once you have been freed, you have been set free for freedom. In other words, you have been set free to stay right here. Don't move. Don't move.

I think a lot of Christians struggle with this. Every week there's a new episode in the news, a new cultural issue that comes up that, really, the whole purpose there is funny... it's just to inflame the culture wars. This week it's one thing; next week it will be another thing. Three years ago it was a different thing. Here's the deal. The thing about that is that sometimes that issue comes up, whatever that issue is, okay? And what happens is that Christians then talk about that issue ad nauseam, and what happens is that people then begin to identify Christianity with a set of rules. Right? "Well we can't do that because that's against what Scripture says." I understand why we think that... why we would even say that... but any time that we stand firm on a rule, do you know what we're doing? We're actually standing firm on moralism; not standing firm on the Gospel. There is a difference. Standing firm for a rule, for a principle, sometimes feels really, really good. Sometimes it can be beneficial, but that's not what Paul is talking about here. "Stand firm," he says. "Stand firm because you have been set free for freedom." Stand firm in what? ... In the freedom that God has given you. Don't fall prey to believing that it's by following this set of rules that God is pleased with you. You understand that you stand firm in the fact that everything that needs to be done for your freedom has already been done in the cross of Christ. It's over. It's done with. ...Period at the end of the sentence. It has been completed. It is past tense. That is where you stand firm because the second that I try to give it value from my own ability, what do I do? Verse 2: *"Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept*

*circumcision...* "(rule-keeping, religion, whatever you want to call it) "... *Christ will be of no advantage to you.*" In other words, it will be of no value to you. Some of your translations say "worthless or of no value." What does that mean?

Several years ago, I went on a mission trip to this little town in Mexico called Palaú, and it's out in the Mexican desert. It was our last day that we were staying there. I had fallen in love with breakfast tacos. I mean, who wouldn't? Right? We were going through the town square on our way out, and one of the taco vendors was there and I was hungry. We were about to pull out of town, so I got out and said, "I'm going to get me a taco... or five... or whatever." (Laughter) So I got me a few tacos and got in the back of the van that we were in. It was just me and about four other guys. We were there on a scouting trip. I was eating those tacos, and man they were good... homemade tortillas... Oooh, it was awesome. I was loving it. On our way out of town, my friend Abraham was bilingual and was the one sort of leading this trip, and Abraham said, "I need to swing by this house." It was the house of a woman that had been hosting us all week in a lot of different ways, kind of helping us out and this sort of thing. He said, "I just need to run in here real quick, tell her 'bye' and then we'll leave." So I'm sitting there enjoying my third or fourth (I don't know how many) breakfast tacos, filling myself up, and he comes back to the van with this very serious look on his face. He said, "Steve, we have to go in." I said, "Okay, what's going on?" He said, "This woman that has been helping us all week... She knew that we would come by to say 'bye'... she has used the last little bit of money that she has, and she's made a giant breakfast feast." (Laughter) Oh, you've been there before. You know you have. (Laughter). I was like, "Okay." He said, "We have to go in and we have to eat. It would be rude not to." Okay... so we go in and we sit down. I mean... it's not like I was having to eat something bad. It looked incredible: Homemade tortillas, rice, beans, chorizo, eggs... and she filled up my plate, sat it down in front of me, and said, "You've gotta eat this." I mean, it was kind of this moment of hospitality, and I said, "Well, hey... I'm happy to oblige." So, I ate every bite on my plate, trying to be a very polite person, and... you know that moment when you're like, "Okay, I'm going to be sick"... But I didn't and it was okay. You know, man versus food has nothing on me. I did it. Alright! And then she says to me, "The road is very long. You have many miles to cover." She grabs the skillet and she begins to move my way, and she just starts to pile it back on my plate. (Laughter) Ooohhh. I ate as much as I could before things got really ugly there. Why did I not enjoy that meal? Because I had already found sustenance myself before I got there to the one who really wanted to take care of me in the first place. Do you want to know why some of us don't find pleasure and grace in the cross? Because we are finding our sustenance spiritually from our own effort and our own belief, so then whenever we show up here and we hear the grace of Christ proclaimed... Do you know what it is? It's like somebody is trying to cram food down our throat and we're already full. Listen to me. Get rid of that nonsense. Stop eating the junk food and come get the good stuff. It's grace. Freedom comes when I stop believing that I have to be filled up with things that I provide, my own ability, my own strength, my own kind of provision, and instead I begin to experience freedom when it comes straight from the hand of God. That's what true freedom is. So then he says, "Stand firm therefore in that. Don't go back to the yoke of slavery."

## 2. In Hope. (v. 5)

So what does that mean? Once you begin to stand firm in this, you need to know how to stand firm. How does that come? It comes through hope. Verse 5: *"For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness."*

You know, in our world, whenever we say, "I hope so"... You know, "Is it going to rain tomorrow?" "I hope so." A lot of times what we're really saying is, "Probably not but I've got my fingers crossed." Right? It's kind of like, around my house, whenever my kids ask me if we're going to do something, I say, "Maybe." I

mean, we all know what's happening when I say "Maybe." (Laughter) A "Maybe" is a "No" just dressed up to keep your feelings from getting hurt. I mean, that's all it is. Right? That's what a "Maybe" is. "Hope so" is a lot of times just a step above a "Maybe". Right? "It might happen; it might not." That's the way that we oftentimes characterize "Hope" in our world. Right? We characterize hope as "Maybe this thing will come to pass." But that is not what biblical hope is. Biblical hope is something that is guaranteed to come to pass. It is a promise. It is a writer of Hebrews declaring, "We therefore can stand firm in hope because we know our God keeps His promises." It is knowing that whatever God has said will indeed be true. So what is Paul saying? He's saying, "There will be a day when you will be completely realized in freedom, and that day will be in heaven."

Let's do something. Everybody just close your eyes for just a second. I want you to just picture, with your eyes closed... I want you to picture heaven. I want you to picture whatever beauty you see, whatever you might imagine heaven looks like, and I want you to see Jesus in your mind's eye. I want you to think about what it will be like to worship Him, to lay your crown at His feet. And in that moment I want you to think that He's standing there basking in glory, and I want you to imagine the love that you feel that comes straight from Him. Do you feel that? Now look at me. The love that you felt in that moment imagining that, you've got that love right now. You see, that's the thing. Many of us believe that our gratification in Christ is delayed. Don't get me wrong. We can't fully understand or experience it this side of death, but the truth of Scripture is this. "It is that we eagerly await, through the Spirit, the hope of righteousness." What does that mean? We get the full righteousness of Christ promised, and the way that it changes us is we get it right now. How can you stand firm in freedom? You know that it will come to pass that one day you will be glorified in Him. Whenever I know what my future holds, I know that I will be glorified, then in that moment I can firm today when temptations and trials assail me because I know the future. I know exactly what is going to pass, so therefore I can stand firm now because I have a promised hope. You see, the Bible says that we will be glorified, but the Bible also says that today we're walking through something called "sanctification." "Sanctification" is the road to glorification. One day we will be perfected but until that happens, guess what? We're walking through a lot of painful circumstances, but God uses those things to sanctify us. How is it that I can walk through a painful disease or losing a job or a child that is rebellious... how can I walk through those circumstances this side of death? Because I hold fast to the fact that I know what God has for me in the future. Do you see what I'm saying? So I walk in that right now, standing firm in freedom, declaring "I don't understand it but I know that my God did not lie to me. He always keeps His promises, and because of that I stand firm in that right now, and then it delivers and it gives me that hope."

### 3. With Faithful Love. (v.6)

So how does that play out for us? Verse 6: If I'm standing firm and I am able to stand firm because of hope, then guess what? "...in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything but only faith working through love." So those people who are standing firm in faith because they know the hope that God has already declared... how do they respond to people around them? They have faith and it works out in love.

I think sometimes about the way that we relate to God and the way that hope plays out in our lives. I think this is basically the big truth that we need to understand. It is that many of us continue to struggle with the fact that the declaration that has been made over us through the cross is a completed act. It's that past tense back in verse 1. We struggle with that every single day, believing that that's true. The Greek tense there is "aorist." It means it is an action in the past that is done that cannot be started again. It's over. It's done with. So you have been set free. It's done. It's over. You've been set free. So that means, therefore, that no amount of religion can make God love me more because I'm already free. And no amount of

irreligion, no amount of rebellion can make God love me less. What do you think about that? Once you are free, you're all-the-way free. Nothing you do can make God take freedom away or give you more freedom because you're free. You're already out there. You're in freedom. So how does that make me respond to people?

I think about the ten lepers in the Gospel of Mark. Do you remember that story? The lepers show up. They want to be healed. Jesus heals all ten of the lepers, but only one comes back after being cleansed by the priest to tell Jesus "thank you." Only one. You know, if that was to happen in a church today, there'd be all kinds of committee meetings afterwards... (Laughter) ... and we would kind of evaluate what took place. Right? And we would say, "You know, I just don't know if that's a really good use of our resources because even though all these people were healed, only one of them really seemed to have a heart change. Maybe we should start to do these other things and maybe we need to have a committee that will study the effectiveness of lepers and ministry to them." The thing that is funny about that is that don't we praise God that Jesus Christ doesn't use a cost-benefit analysis in showing grace? You know what? He doesn't care that you never told Him "thank you" before you He loved you for the first time. He was loving you long before you ever knew how to show gratitude. So once I begin to understand that I'm not in a cost-benefit analysis relationship with Jesus and that He's just pouring that grace out on me, what does that make me do with other people? Once I finally receive that, I stand firm in it because I know my hope and guess what? I begin to try to love other people the way that Jesus has loved me.

Anybody here ever been in a relationship where the longer that you were in the relationship you began to feel as if you were only loved because of what you could do for the person who loved you? Ever been in that relationship before? It's not really love, is it? It's called "being used." Have you ever been the kind of person that uses people for what they can do for you? You see, that's not really a love relationship. This is the truth that we need to understand today. Many people oftentimes view people as an inconvenience... as a problem to be solved... as an interruption, but Jesus saw people as the recipient of His love. What if those of us who have been graced, who have received the grace that comes through the cross, stand firm in that freedom and know the hope to which we have, so therefore we have faith in that so it works itself out... How? In love. I see people around me, and instead of seeing them as problems or projects, I now see them as recipients of God's love, and I am now the vessel for them through His grace. So now what do I do? I just love people in the same way that God loved me. I don't have to worry about a cost-benefit analysis. I don't have to wonder if they're going to be grateful. I don't have to wonder if they are going respond correctly to it. I just love them because that's what God has poured out on me through the cross of Christ, so now I extend it as well. That is a beautiful expression of freedom. Do you know what prison is? Trying to find a way to love people where you can always get something out of it. That will wear you out. When you just start loving people because they are created in God's image, and you have freely received love so now you can freely give it... Praise God for that. That's what the Church is: A family of people who have received the grace of God through the cross of Christ, standing firm in freedom because they know of their hope for tomorrow so now we can love one another, not because of what you can do for me, not because of the gifts that you bring or the amount of money that you can put in the plate or anything else that you can provide for the church... just because you are a child of God, you get loved. We love one another. That's the way that it works.

#### **4. Offensive. (v. 11)**

So Paul explains, "Now this can be offensive." He tells people that actually in the second half of verse 11. He says, "This sort of belief is offensive because people now can no longer manipulate you, take advantage of you, try and get you to do things for you because we're only looking for the angle that we

can work." Once you realize that circumcision or uncircumcision doesn't matter... guess what? There comes this moment where you might be tempted to take advantage of God's grace. There might come this moment where you will be tempted to ignore God's grace, but finally once you receive God's grace, it changes you. But guess what? When you start telling people who are busy constructing an image for themselves that they look good or they act professional... all these sorts of things, and you tell them, "Hey, that's a bunch of phoniness." They don't like that. It offends them. But still... guess what? Paul says, "I'm going to keep proclaiming the offensive Gospel of Christ because we can never build our own standing with God. It only comes through Jesus."

## 5. Our Calling. (v. 13)

So why proclaim this offensive Gospel that expresses itself through love because it's based on a hope that we can stand firm in now? Why? ...Because of the final piece of freedom. Verse 13: *"For you were called to freedom..."* You were called to it.

When we did our series through the Book of Ephesians, we talked about the fact that we had all been chosen... We had been adopted as children into God's grace. Being adopted into the family of God, being a son or a daughter of the King... that means now that you get to walk in the freedom that God so freely gives. You get to walk in that. Think about this: If before the foundations of the earth you were chosen in Him (as Ephesians 1 says) then that means that you were called to freedom before you were ever created. God destines you to walk in this freedom. He wants you to be free, to experience this freedom that comes only from Christ, to put off the temptations, to put off the shame, to put off the guilt, to put off the sin, and to walk in that freedom that comes. Right? Why? Next verse: *"Do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh..."* In other words, don't say, "Well, now I'm free, just whatever I want to do I'm going to do. No, no, no; don't do that. *"... but through love serve one another."* Look at this next verse; this is interesting: *"For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"* You know, that's not how I remembered that. I thought it had two pieces. Wasn't Jesus asked this same question? *"Teacher what is the greatest commandment?"* And He replied, *"The greatest commandment is 'Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength' ...and the second is like it, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"* Why does Paul leave out the first one here, *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength"?* ...Because what he is demonstrating, that part's already been done in Jesus. You don't need to work for that. It's already been completed on the cross. So once you walk in that freedom, you only have one thing left. Receive that freedom and now go love other people like Jesus called you to love them. Why?

I was on staff at a church in east Texas for about ten years. In this church there was a man who was a literal war hero. His name was Roy Chappell. And Roy Chappell was an awesome, awesome man. He served in Tunisia and was actually captured. He was an officer and he became a POW. Why do I tell you that he was an awesome man? ...Because the German Army rued the day that they ever captured Roy Chappell. You know earlier we talked about that movie "The Great Escape" with Steve McQueen? Did you know that Steve McQueen's character in that movie was based on the life of Roy Chappell? ...Because your duty as an officer if you're captured in a time of war, is to do what? Try and escape, so he kept escaping... over and over. And they kept catching him over and over and kept throwing him back in. They would put him in solitary and bring him out for a while and he would escape again. One of my favorites is... I don't know if you've ever seen the movie but what they would do is they were digging a tunnel out from underneath the POW camp. They would put the dirt in the pockets of the men, and then they would go out into the prison yard and they would kind of pull the dirt out and scatter it, slide it down the leg of their pants... do whatever they could to try and get out. Unfortunately for them, whenever they would come out

on the other side of the fence... not in the movie but in real life, in Roy's life... they actually mis-measured and they came up in the middle of a German officer camp, so that didn't work out too well for them. They got thrown right back into the POW camp. But this is the thing... Roy has told me... He said, "This was your duty as an officer. Number one, to try and escape. But number two was to help others get out too. That was your job."

Do you want to know why you've been set free in Jesus Christ? It's not so you can gratify the desires of the flesh. What is it? Jailbreak... Jailbreak. You have been set free because all around you are people who are in prison, and you are to love them in the name of Jesus Christ for one reason and one reason alone... so that they too can discover the glorious Gospel that comes through of the cross of Christ, through the empty tomb, so that they too can also be set free. Jailbreak: Freedom for freedom's sake. Slip them the keys; help them dig a tunnel and get out of here. How do I do that? I love them from a position of freedom. I want nothing in return. I now need nothing back. It doesn't matter if you love me or care about me, scoff me or find me offensive. It doesn't matter because now I stand firm in the freedom because of the hope that I have, and I know now I can love you without wanting anything back. I don't care if you're offended by it because I am here to bring you freedom. I've been called to it so that you too may now walk out. That's why it's been given.

So here's my question. Who are you helping break out right now? ...Or are you? You've got to stand firm first, and once you stand firm in this freedom you stop saying, "It's not about rules, it's not about religion, it's not about any of that kind of stuff, but it's only about the gracious Gospel... Then you can start breaking down walls of false religion, rebellion, and you can start helping people find the truth and they can break out and they can know Jesus. Do you think that the people who sit on this stool that's right here on a regular basis for these "Freedom Story" interviews... do you think that there's ever a time when they're embarrassed? Sure. Do you think there's ever a time when they say, "I don't want to do this." Absolutely. Why do they do it? Jailbreak. They would rather help you break out than worry about any momentary embarrassment that they might experience because you are an eternity that matters to God, so they're slipping you the keys. Today now the answer lies before you. Some of you in this place are already free. Are you walking in that freedom and are you helping others break out, or are you binding yourself back up? Others of us that are here today, guess what? You've never stepped into this because you have believed your entire life that Christianity was just a set of rules. You're here, in fact, because you're just trying to impress somebody: Maybe God or maybe somebody you're with. Walk away from that nonsense and today receive the Gospel: That God has already done everything that you need and you've already been set free, you've just got to walk in it right here today. Will you receive it and will you help others break into freedom as well?

Let's pray. "Father, we love You. We find ourselves in an interesting predicament: Completely free yet continue to be assailed by the world. Lord, I pray simply this: That those of us who have been set free would reject any attempt of the enemy to try and empower those old temptations, those old sins, and stand firm in the freedom that's been given us and continue to proclaim that Gospel... and God that we would help others break out as well, by loving them without expecting anything else in return. Father, I pray also this, very simply, that for those who are here today that have yet to say 'Yes' to Jesus Christ that they stop fighting and right now, God, You draw them to Yourself through the power of your Holy Spirit, You would bring them forward today and they would say 'Yes' to You right now. God, deliver the lost. Bring them into freedom. We pray this and we ask it in the name of your Son Jesus Christ. Amen."