

Prison Break

Freedom

Galatians 5:1 (NIV)

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

- Many people are saved but not free. Right with God but things on the inside are not right. "Fine" but not Free. (Habits, the past, disappointments, fear, pride, and unforgiveness have created a prison)

Ex. Alcatraz, Shawshank Redemption, Locked Up Abroad, visiting museums, and old forts you can see and learn about prisons. Everyone I've seen and visited had a sense of hopelessness. While most people haven't experienced prison life physically, everyone experiences emotional and spiritual prisons.

Prison Observations:

- Prisons keep you from your freedom and your future.
- You can't go where you want to go and be who you want to be.
- They make your history impact your destiny
- God doesn't want you imprisoned by anything! He wants to break every chain so you can run into the future that he sees for you!

3 Different Prisons:

- 1. A sin we can't leave**
- 2. A hurt we receive**
- 3. A lie we believe**

2 Different Responses:

- When you find yourself in a prison, whether you made it or someone else made it for you, we respond one of two ways.

We Rehearse It (or Reverse It):

- we go back to that mistake we made or what someone did to us.
- "I wish I'd said this"
- "I can't believe they did that"
- Tell people off in your head?
- Comfortable "It's not that bad in here."
- False sense of control (powerful but powerless)
- Difficult to get over stuff
- Rehearse it looking for freedom, joy, peace, hope, answers, and closure only to find ourselves still locked up.

REHEARSE = PRISON, REVERSE = FREEDOM

A Prison Break in the Bible

Context: It was a hopeless, death row experience, with no possible way of escape. King Herod had arrested some of the followers of Jesus and was severely persecuting the church. The day before He killed James. Now Peter is in prison.

Acts 12:4-11(NIV)

After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover. ⁵ So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him. ⁶ The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. ⁷ Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists. ⁸ Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." And Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," the angel told him. ⁹ Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰ They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him. ¹¹ Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were hoping would happen."

Couple of things I want us to see at the beginning:

- Peter was in a hopeless situation
- His hands and feet are chained
- He was surrounded by (16) guards (16:1 odds)
- Facing certain execution. It didn't look like anything could free him. BUT GOD...
- God had a different plan and a different ending to this story!
- You may feel the odds are stacked against you or that your situation is hopeless BUT GOD is not intimidated by the odds.
- It doesn't matter what chains have wrapped around you; He can handle it. He's writing a different ending to the story. He can break every chain and open every prison door.

Object Lesson: *(Using a chain) Many have chains around them. Chains of discouragement, chains of past decisions, things that happened to us, and we just can get free. They control us and are keeping us from the life that God created us for.*

- Wrap a person up and ask them if they would choose to be chained up. Most of us are smart enough to turn the devil down if He asks us if we want to be wrapped in chains. He doesn't come with a chain; he comes with a choice.
- He's smart. He comes with a choice (using a single link of the chain to illustrate a choice)

- Doing it God's way or your own way? Do what feels right or what God says is right? It's just one choice. When you're confronted at work...tell the truth or save yourself? Invited to the party...go, knowing nothing good will come from it? It's just one choice, but the choice becomes a chain.
- If he can trick us with the choices, he can chain us. He's in control and drags us around. No matter how hard you try, you can't seem to get free.
- God doesn't want you living like this. He doesn't want the enemy controlling your life and your future!

Today's Choices Can Become Tomorrow's Chains

- But if you know there are areas where you are chained up...choice after choice has led to a prison, there is ONE who Breaks Every Chain! His name is Jesus!

5 Tips for Breaking Out of Prison

- **He Uses Free People to Free People**
 - Are you "fine", but not free? If you've got chains or got some problems, you are in the right place. Some have lived so long with chains that they need strong men and women of faith to help walk out freedom in 2 ways.
 - POWER OF PRAYER
 - The church was praying for Peter when the chains fell off and the prison opened
 - Who is praying for you? Who is in your corner? "Well, I can pray for myself." Yeah, but there are times where you don't feel like praying or know what to pray.
 - Prayer can bring God's light into the darkest of situations. It doesn't matter how dark it seems, when you pray, God shows up.
 - **Prayer Teams Today**
 - POWER of CONFESSION
 - In this house, it's okay to not be okay. But it's not okay to not tell anybody. What's hidden can't be healed.
 - We confess to God to be forgiven; we confess to others to be healed. (wholeness)
 - Biblical Confession is more than admitting your business. It's inviting a safe person to help you walk your freedom journey.

James 5:16 (NIV) ¹⁶ Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.

1 John 1:9 (NIV) ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

- **Breaking Free doesn't mean Pain-Free**

He struck Peter on the side and woke him up.

- Notice the angel didn't tap Peter. "Hello, Pete. Wake up." No, he struck him!
- Often, we want a pat on the back from God when we need more than that. "It's okay Michael." NO, I need, "What are you doing?" "Get up!"
- Don't resist the strike on the side, He's trying to do something. We didn't respond to the love tap so now He's using a love strike.
- Comfortable in the prison? Lulled to sleep by the lies of the enemy? It's a new day. Jesus said the Spirit of the Lord is upon me to set the captives free...Let's get Free!
- The first moments of freedom don't necessarily feel good. They're painful. Sometimes bad choices wreck relationships, homes, and jobs.
- As pastors, we get the honor of walking with people in tuff seasons, and we see God work in the pain and lead people to His promises. *He will work in ALL things to bring about good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.* It might not always feel good, but He's always good!

- **Freedom Takes Work**

Verse 7b-8a (NIV)

"Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists. ⁸ Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." And Peter did so.

- Quick, get up. Don't wait. This is the time for freedom. Not later, now!
- When you're down, everything looks bigger. Your problems, the walls, the chains, the guards but when you get up and look up, your perspective changes.
- Put your shoes on, we are leaving this place. The place you've been stuck isn't your home. If Peter hadn't gotten up, He wouldn't have gotten free. When he got up, the chains fell off.
- We are waiting on God and He's waiting on us. (Get out of that relationship, develop new habits, get some new friends. Show up at Grow Nights, start serving, get connected)
- If we are serious about the free life, we've got to do the freedom work.

You can't be who you are going to be and who you used to be at the same time.

- **Freedom is Determined by Who You follow.**

Verse 8b

"Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," the angel told him.

- If you follow the crowd, you'll end up where the crowd is. If you follow what the world says, you will be confused because it changes from day to day.

- But if you follow Jesus, He's going to get you out of where you've been and get you where you need to be.

Psalm 119:45 (CEV)

I have gained perfect freedom by following your teachings,

- The commands of God are not burdensome, they are freeing. The world's rules are complicated and heavy. Ask anyone in recovery if what the world offers is freedom.
- "Do what you want, it doesn't matter." It does matter. **My choices are building prisons or places of freedom.**
- God wants you free! When we follow God, He'll walk us right out of the enemy's territory into the land of the living.
- Don't let shame keep you there. The enemy says, "Shame on you." Jesus says, "Shame off of you."
- Don't let what you don't have stop you. Notice Peter thought most of this was a dream. He wasn't full of faith. It just takes a little faith for God to take you from where you are to where He wants you to be.

• **Freedom is Knocking**

Acts 12:12-16 (NIV)

¹² When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. ¹³ Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer the door. ¹⁴ When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!" ¹⁵ "You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel." ¹⁶ But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished.

- She hears something that the rest of them didn't hear. Then she saw something that the rest of them didn't believe. She interrupted the prayer meeting to tell them that what they were praying for was already standing at the door. God already sent the angel, broke the chains, and opened the prison.
- Could it be that you've been praying about a certain area and God has already done what needs to be done? Could it be that God has already answered your prayer? Freedom has come, it's about to knock on the door.
- Maybe you haven't seen it yet, but God's already done it. Just because you don't feel it doesn't mean He has already broken the chains and opened the prison. (He doesn't have to send you push notifications)
- You've been praying for that family member and God has already got them surrounded by other Christians at work or school. You're believing for a financial breakthrough. He's already in the prison working it out. You don't have to stress out. Expect the knock on the door any minute.

- Rhoda isn't wrong! Freedom is at the door! Everyone needs a Rhoda. Someone who is tuned into what God is doing. Hearing what you are not hearing, Echoing the voice of God. Kids, Students, and Adults all need Rhoda's. (MEN, get a Ronald or a Ricky)
- You find Rhoda right here on Sun and Wed, Sunday night MVMNT. But if you don't come, you won't have a Rhoda.