**Freedom in Christ***July 4th, 2012*

**Theme:** The truth of Jesus’ redemption is the freedom from slavery of our hearts and in our lives. Jesus sets the hearts of men free from sin; yet, are we consciously working on ourselves (outwardly) to live a life of freedom?

**Setting:** Independence Day Celebration. Students are encouraged to bring a friend as we enjoy fellowship, food, fun and fireworks. Before the festivities, we join together for a time of worship and reflection on the Word of God. This time is meant for evangelism.

**Scripture:** (2 Corinthians 1:10) “*We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and He will deliver us. On him, we have set our hope that He will continue to deliver us”*

**Outline:**

1. INTRODUCTION (ANNOUNCEMENTS, ETC.)
   1. **What is freedom?** **On a day like today when we celebrate our countries triumph over freedom, what does it mean to be free?**
   2. I’m going to guess the majority of us in this room, tonight, have never been in a position where you have felt overwhelmingly oppressed, chained, bound, or in slavery.
   3. Therefore, I am going to assume that we don’t truly understand to the full extent what freedom is…
      1. **Example:** The Disciples
         1. After the death of Jesus, they went into hiding
         2. Feared they would be hunted for following Jesus
         3. They were going to die
      2. **Example:** The Hunger Games
         1. The capital demanded 2 children from each district
         2. These children were forced to fight for survive
         3. Their sole purpose was to survive, and be “set free”
   4. Yet, today, in Lubbock, TX, we are not face with oppressive governments or controlling authorities that demand things from us, or the will put us to death.
   5. So compared to the disciples, or Hunger Games, we live in freedom
      1. But, only in a physical sense…
      2. So tonight, I want to ask the question, **“What is freedom in Christ really mean?”**
2. THE CAPTIVITY OF SIN
   1. **VISUAL:** *Have a student join you up front and begin to read* ***Romans 3:9-18****. As they are reading, tie/chain them to a chair unable to move, stand up, or get away.*
   2. Think of man in a spiritual sense. We are controlled by our spirit, our heart, the very thing that God put inside of us drives what happens on the outside.
      1. What \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(Student’s Name) just read in Romans says that man is a prisoner to sin. A prisoner to death. We are, in our inner most self, corrupted with sin.
         1. If our hearts are filled with sin, then we are controlled and motivated by sin.
   3. So, our soul looks like this (***POINT TO STUDENT IN CHAIR***). It is bound by the very thing that corrupts us.
   4. In fact, some might say, “Well, I’m a good person,” or “I give to charities,” or “I go to church,” or “I went to church camp,” or “I went on that mission trip.”
      1. The problem is all of these things that we might associate as “good” cannot change who we are inside.
      2. ***OUR OUTSIDE CANNOT CHANGE OUR INSIDE.***
         1. Isaiah 64:6 says, “We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deed are like ‘filthy rags.’”
         2. We think, “If I just do enough ‘good’ things, then I’m no longer chained.”
      3. So, if our outside cannot change our inside – if our deed cannot change our hearts – ***OUR INSIDE HAS TO BE CHANGED SO OUR OUTSIDE CAN BE CHANGED.***
   5. **(UNCHAIN VOLUNTEER AND EXPLAIN)** For us to truly be set free from sin and death, it has to be done inside of us first! It must start with our heart
3. TEN MINUTES OF AIR, FOR 3 HOURS UNDERWATER
   1. **Example:** Think of it like this, you’re going SCUBA diving. You have an air tank that has only 10 mins of oxygen in it. However, you are going to be underwater for 3 hours. Is there a problem here?
      1. Our hearts, because of sin, are unable to sustain the life it is meant to. It is so corrupted by sin, we literally drown in it.
      2. Somehow, somewhere, we have to get more “air.”
   2. **READ 2 CORINTHIANS 1:10-12**
      1. When we talk about freedom, it is not some physical (outside) oppression or authority that we are trying to overcome.
      2. It is not our ability to “do good” things.
         1. You can do good things all you want, however, you heart still “feels the sentence of death” (vs. 10).
         2. ***You can still go SCUBA diving with all the right knowledge of what to do, and with all the right procedures; but, if you don’t have enough air, something is going to horribly wrong.***
   3. Jesus even talks directly to this disconnect between the works of people and their heart.
      1. **READ Matthew 5:21**
         1. “You shall not murder” was not a new concept. When God says, “You shall not murder,” nobody said, “Oh… Well, now I get it.”
         2. However, even though we don’t “murder” somebody, our hearts still dwell on vengeance, anger, deceit, inflicting pain on someone else, etc.
      2. Jesus changes the dynamic and says, “Your heart must be radically changed.”
4. MAN’S HEART FREE
   1. Jesus was trying to show us that it is not our “physical selves” that are chained. It is our heart.
   2. But there is good news; the cross was a symbol of Jesus setting our hearts free.
      1. He took the punishment of sin, that we deserved, so that we can live in freedom.
      2. **THAT IS THE BEAUTY OF THE CROSS.**
   3. **If there is anything I want you to hear tonight, it is this:**
      1. **YOU HAVE BEEN SET FREE!**
         1. You are no longer controlled by sin, you are no longer dead to your sin.
         2. If you believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior, you have been set free.
   4. Now, does this mean that we no longer will struggle and everything will be peaches and cream when we “accept Christ?”
5. STAND FIRM
   1. There is a second part to this equation. If Jesus set us free, then begin to pursue a life (the Will of God) that is also free from sin.
   2. **READ GALATIANS 5:1**
      1. If you have been set free in your heart, then in your life, you begin to walk like you are free.
         1. This takes time, practice and discipline
         2. You will fail, stuggle, fall, etc.
         3. But, you are free!
      2. **Example:** If you have been set free (we will talk about how in a second), and your heart is free from sin because of the cross, yet, on the outside you are still:
         1. Cussing
         2. Crude jokes
         3. Going places inappropriate
         4. Looking at things inappropriate
         5. Etc.
      3. Then, flee from the opportunity to do any of these things.
         1. For example, if you have been set free by the cross of Christ, yet your friends you hang out with continue to pressure you into things you don’t need to be doing (smoking, parties, vandalism, etc.), **then DROP THEM LIKE ITS HOT.**
         2. **Example:** *(Tell of High School friends I lost when I accepted Christ)*
   3. Galatians 5:1 says, “…do not ***let yourselves***…”
   4. Romans 12:2 says, “***Do not be conformed…***”
      1. Both of these requires action on our part to “**not do**” something.
      2. If you have been set free, **THEN DON’T LIVE LIKE YOU ARE STILL DEAD INSIDE.**
6. RESPONSE
   1. There are two people that God has spoken to tonight:
      1. First person
         1. You feel the weight of sin on your heart
         2. Never have been set free from those chains you carry
         3. You didn’t know the cross of Christ breaks those chains
         4. If this is you, Romans 10 says that if we “believe in our hearts and confess with our mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord, then **you shall be saved.**”
            1. If you feel the weight of sin on your heart, do you believe that he can free you from it?
            2. Are you willing to believe that, and live that out – confess it in your life?
      2. Second person
         1. You have been set free, yet your life simply shows otherwise
         2. You may know Jesus, but the people who know you best would say, “Who? Him/Her? No, they’re not a Christian.”
         3. If this is you, Jesus tells us, “Come to me all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you… For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)
            1. I guarantee you that living a life that does not show your freedom is a lot more burdensome than a life of freedom.
            2. And he tells us to simply, “Come to” Him.
   2. ***(SPEND TIME PRAYING)***