

Freedom or Slavery

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Date: 17 January 2021

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[0 : 0 0] My name is Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's Word to you today. A special welcome if you're new or visiting with us.

We're glad that you're here, and we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community. And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced there's no one so good, they don't need God's grace, and no one so bad that they can't have it.

And that's why we come back week after week, because we believe that God has something to say to everyone in His Word. And so we open it to hear from Him every Sunday.

We're continuing our series in the book of 2 Peter. We're going to be in 2 Peter 2, verses 17 through 19. And you'll remember that the book of 2 Peter is a letter written by a man named Peter, and he writes this letter to a church somewhere in the Roman Empire in the 60s AD.

And he writes this letter with one desire. He wants these people to grow. We know that because at the very beginning of the letter, he wants their grace to be multiplied to them through knowledge.

[1 : 1 1] And he tells them at the very end of the letter, in the last verse, to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And so he wants them to grow in two ways, to grow in grace and to grow in knowledge.

We're in chapter 2, which talks about the problem of false teachers. And so in this entire chapter, we've been tackling that. Last week, we had a very difficult passage as we looked at what it means to blaspheme angels.

And we got to tussle with that and figure out how it applies to us today. We're continuing our discussion of the false teachers and the way that they attack both knowledge and grace.

And unlike last week, our passage this week is incredibly straightforward. We find out in verse 18 what these false teachers are up to. They entice by sensual passions of the flesh.

And it also tells us in this passage that there's a choice between slavery and freedom. Verse 19, these false teachers promise freedom, but they themselves are slaves.

[2 : 1 6] And so we have clarity up front about what this passage is talking about. When it talks about this idea of sensual passions of the flesh, it's talking about sexual sin. It's talking about the ways that false teachers will attempt to entice people to do things that God says are forbidden.

And so it's with that that we're going to jump into this passage. This passage is telling us that there are many things that the world will offer us as freedoms that are actually slavery.

There are many things that the world will offer us as freedoms that are actually slavery. And as I've done the last several weeks, I'm going to tell you our strategy headed in. Because even as the passage is clear, its topic is difficult.

And so my strategy is going to be this. We are going to briefly look at what this passage means at the very beginning. And then I'm going to apply it in several ways. Ways that today we're given offers of freedom that actually result in slavery.

And so it's with that that we're going to jump right in. I invite you to turn with me to 2 Peter 2, verse 17. You can turn near the end of your worship guide. You can turn in your Bible. Of course, you can turn in your phone.

[3 : 25] No matter where you turn, remember that this is God's word. And Isaiah chapter 40 tells us that the grass withers and the flowers fade. But God and his word stand forever.

And so that's why we read now, starting at verse 17. These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them, the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved.

For speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error.

They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.

I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word. Our Father in heaven, we thank you that you are not a God of slavery, but a God of freedom.

[4 : 26] And we also thank you that you provide that freedom through the knowledge that you give us in your word. And most of all, the knowledge of Jesus Christ. And so we ask this morning that you would use that knowledge to grow us in grace.

That Peter's desire, his command, would be true of us. That we would grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. We ask that you would do that by showing us our need, our great need for your grace.

And also showing us how you meet us at that very same point of need. We thank you that we don't have to earn or deserve these things, but instead we ask them in the name of Jesus.

Amen. Amen. In looking at this passage, one Bible teacher explains it this way. He tells the story captured in the film called Sahara.

And in the film Sahara, it came out in 1942 or 43. We find out the story of a tank commander who was involved in the Battle of Tubrook in World War II, which was about a garrison in Libya.

[5 : 30] And in this battle, it was the Germans who won. And so the Americans, actually not the Americans, but the British, well, the American tank commander, excuse me, is fleeing after this defeat.

He's fleeing in this tank. There's a variety of people who join him. He's played by Humphrey Bogart, who will be familiar to you if you're perhaps a lover of old movies. And he has this task as this tank commander.

They are racing against time, really against gasoline. They're in the Sahara Desert. They have very limited water available to them. And they need to make it to a spring, to a well, before they run out of gas.

And so the question is, are they going to make it in time, or are they going to run out before they make it to the spring? Are they going to get the water that they need to live? They make it to the well.

The only problem is that all that's in the well is sand. And that's the problem, the picture that Peter uses for us in this passage of what it's like to follow after false teachers.

[6 : 41] We see this in verse 17. We're told they are waterless springs. There's the promise of life. There's this hope for deliverance, for preservation.

What they find out in the movie is it's full of sand. What those who follow the false teachers in this passage find out is that it's waterless. There's actually no life there. What's promised is false.

This image continues when we're told in verse 17 that the false teachers are also like mists driven by a storm. Now, this is a difficult image in the way it's translated, but basically what it's telling us is this.

There seems to be to someone this promise of rain. There seems to be this mist. And yet before the rain can come, the rain is driven away. And so there's two different images here of hope for water, hope for life, promise of life replaced with nothing, replaced with death.

And Peter is telling us that this is what it is like to look at the false teachers. In other words, the false teachers promise what they cannot deliver. The false teachers promise what they cannot deliver.

[7 : 53] And we find out more about what it is that they promise in verse 18. Speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh. The false teachers are promising sexual experiences, sexual freedom to the people who are following after them.

They are telling them, if you do whatever you want sexually, that is what freedom is going to look like. That is what is going to give you life. And yet Peter reveals for us what's actually going on.

What appears to be a well is actually empty. And he gives us another category here. And that's not just this category of water taken away, but the category of slavery and freedom.

Verse 19, they promise them freedom. But they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.

The well promises water and delivers sand. The false teachers promise freedom and deliver slavery. And that's the point of this passage.

[8 : 59] Very simple, very clear, very straightforward. And so this morning, I'm just going to take a look at a variety of lies that we're told. Of how we're promised freedom in ways that actually deliver only slavery.

And as I say, every time we come up against a hot topic, I'm going to say something, but not everything. Something, but not everything. There are plenty of lies that our culture tells us about sex.

I'm not going to cover every single one. And even the ones that we do cover, we're going to cover some of it. We're not going to say everything that could be said. I'll also mention that this is a perfect time to apply the category we talked about two weeks ago.

Remember, Lot and Noah were examples to us because they grieved over sin. They were not angry Christians or cool Christians. They did not rail against the world around them.

They also didn't downplay it. They were grieved in their hearts. They had great sorrow over it. And it's tempting for Christians when we talk about these sorts of things to become people who are sarcastic and mean.

[10 : 02] But instead, we have the example of Noah and Lot who instead are sad and grieved at the presence of sin in the world. And so first, as we talk about the sexual lies of our world that promise freedom, I want to talk for a minute about the lies of transgenderism.

This is a movement that promises freedom. It tells you if you feel that you're a gender that's different than your body, there is a path to freedom, and there's only one path to freedom.

You are facing various forms of depression and other sorts of mental health challenges, and there's a solution. The solution to that is to change your body. The solution to that is to change the way you think of yourself as a man or a woman.

And this is going to be a path of freedom. In fact, this is the way that it's marketed. This is the way that it's sold. In fact, some people are told this is their only path to freedom. If you don't choose this path of change, you have only a life of despair to look forward to.

And so you need to go through this process. It's the only option you have of freedom. This is what's going to solve your problems. Rejecting your body.

[11 : 15] That's the path of freedom. However, we know what the Bible tells us. This is a promise of freedom, but it only delivers slavery.

And it delivers slavery in a variety of ways. If you are like me and you listen to The World and Everything in It, the news podcast from World Magazine on Thursday, they had the story of a woman who had pursued this path of supposed freedom.

She was about 16 at the time. Her name was Kirabel, is Kirabel, and she was told that changing genders would save her mental health. She would have freedom.

There's only one problem. It didn't. The article says this. She says, no one challenged her ideas or offered a different way of thinking.

And this is a quote from her. I should have been told to wait and not affirmed in my gender identity I was claiming to have. No one challenged her ideas.

[12 : 14] Everyone told her this was the only path of freedom. Now she understands that it didn't. It did not solve her problems. It did not resolve her mental health challenges. In fact, quite the opposite.

What this movement presents is not freedom, but slavery. And I want you to think about it in this way. If your body does not determine whether you're a man or a woman, what does determine whether you're a man or a woman?

Well, it must be your behavior in some way, right? And so you're suddenly bound to these very rigid gender stereotypes in a way that you would not be if you allowed your gender, your sex, to be determined by your body.

And I'm going to read a couple times from this book called Love Thy Body by a woman named Nancy Piercy. And she explains it. She explains it in this way.

The transgender script tells young people that embracing their cross-gender feelings will liberate them to be their authentic selves. And then it asks this question.

[13 : 19] Eventually, he's talking about this young man. He realized the promise of liberation was a lie. And he realized it was a lie because he discovered if he wasn't letting it be defined by his body, he had to let it be defined by his actions.

Ironically, queer theory actually reinforces rigid gender stereotypes. In other words, he felt like he had to act in this very stereotyped way to prove that he was a man or a woman.

By contrast, if you take your identity from your body, you can engage in a range of diverse behaviors without threatening the security of your identity as a man or a woman.

When we are defined by our bodies, the whole width of human experience remains open. There is freedom in the body. And then she ends with this. Contrary to what postmodern gender theory says, there is greater diversity and inclusivity when we anchor our psychosexual identity in the objective, scientifically knowable reality of our biology as male or female.

And so we say this not to mock anyone, but instead to name the reality of an offer of freedom that results in slavery.

[14 : 34] We say this as people with compassion. For folks who have been told the lie, the same sort of lies that these false teachers are spreading. There are wells that look like they're going to provide water and have only sand.

Of course, that's not the only lie that the world tells us about freedom when it comes to our sexuality. This is one, of course, that's easy for us to agree on.

In the church, there's ones that are perhaps less easy. One of the challenges when it comes to our sexuality is we've lost an understanding of why it is that God has given us the rules that he has.

And so another lie that Christians are told is the general lie of sexual freedom. And I'm going to use a word that's fallen out of fashion in these days, but it's fornication. Fornication is when you have a sexual relationship with someone you're not married to.

It is different than adultery. Adultery is a subset because to commit adultery, you have to be married. So, for example, by definition, it is actually impossible for me to commit adultery. However, fornication is an option.

[15 : 44] The biblical ethic, however, what God tells us is that sex is reserved for a man and a woman who are married to each other. Now, this used to be more accepted in our society.

It's now becoming something that's the exclusive realm of traditional religions. And the promise that the culture gives us is, again, a promise of freedom. You can have these wonderful experiences.

Sex is fun and good. Why wouldn't you do it? You don't need to be repressed and have your freedoms taken away like people had in the past. You can live freely.

You can enjoy all sorts of things. And many Christians today, unfortunately, would not be able to raise any arguments against this. There are many Christians who would say, I know it's wrong because the Bible tells me that it's wrong.

And that is reason enough, right? So don't hear what I'm not saying. But they would not be able to articulate why God's world is set up in such a way that this is the best option. God's rules, in other words, are not arbitrary.

[16 : 48] There is a reason that he's restricted sex to a relationship between a man and a woman who are married. There's a famous quote from a movie that came out in 1991, or 2001, excuse me, called Vanilla Sky.

And there's a woman named Julie, played by Cameron Diaz, who says famously, she's in the car talking to this man, Don't you know that when you sleep with someone, your body makes a promise whether you do or not?

Don't you know that when you sleep with someone, your body makes a promise whether you do or not? And if that doesn't make sense right away, I'll read you another quick excerpt, again, explaining this reality.

As one sex therapist puts it, when we have sexual relationship with someone, we create an involuntary chemical commitment. The upshot is that even if you think you are having a no-strings-attached hookup, you are in reality creating a chemical bond, whether you mean to or not.

An advice columnist for Glamour magazine warns that because of hormones, we often get prematurely attached. Even when you intend to just have casual sex, biology might trump your intentions.

[18 : 10] That might be why Paul said, whoever sins sexually sins against their own body. Sex involves our bodies down to the level of our biochemistry.

In other words, and one theologian has put it this way, a sexual relationship is a life-uniting act. It's a life-uniting act.

It is meant to take two lives and make them one. And so it cannot be separated from a life-uniting commitment. It is a life-uniting act that cannot be separated, should not be separated from a life-uniting commitment.

You do not share your body with someone in that way unless you're prepared to share your bank account and your house and your future and your commitments and your children. And so sex is only safe when it comes with a life-uniting commitment, when it comes within the context of marriage.

And it is true because that's the way God has made the world. In other words, another way of putting it is this. When people who are not married sleep with one another, there is a lie that is being told.

[19 : 23] When people who are not married sleep with one another, there is a lie that's being told even if there's consent. I'll read from you a quick excerpt from another book called Why Does God Care Who I Sleep With?

And the author says this. There is a degree of union that remains after a couple has had sex. They might not be physically joined anymore, but at a deeper level, they are still united.

This is hugely important. Sexual union is both an expression of and a vehicle for a wider and deeper form of union. And this greater union is not designed to be undone.

Sex is a means by which two people are being united, not just physically, but also emotionally and psychologically. Our culture often claims that we can give someone our physical body without giving them our whole self.

But Christians would say this is not so. What we do sexually affects the whole body in a way that is not generally true of other things. Whether we know it or not, mean it or not, Paul is saying that sex engages far more of who we are.

[20 : 41] It involves the whole person. And so, if you are not married to someone, you don't sleep with them.

Period. Full stop. It's a lie of freedom that the world tells us what you're actually doing is something destructive. By the way, I'm just going to say this.

Being engaged doesn't give you a pass. It's become commonplace now in the church, even the Reformed Church. Of course, the church is often only one step behind the world for Christian couples to think, well, we're not going to be like the world, so we're going to wait until we're engaged, until we have a sexual relationship.

And yet, that still falls short of what God commands. If there is not a life-uniting commitment, if there are not wedding vows that have been taken, there should be no life-uniting act.

One characteristic of slaves, remember we're talking about the difference between slavery and freedom, a characteristic of slaves is that they are treated as less than human. When you have sex with someone you are not married to, there is something deceptive and destructive going on, even if you both have agreed to it.

[21 : 58] Because God has designed it in such a way that it cannot help but be a life-uniting act. Your body makes a promise, whether you do or not.

And so there's a promise that is given, a promise of freedom that delivers slavery. You are treating someone as less than human. Again, even if you both agree to it.

And so that brings us to this question, right? So in the church, when we talk about sex and things of that nature, there's often this complaint that the church has only negative things to say.

And yet it's not that we think so low of sex, it's actually that we think so much of it. It's not that we value the body too much, it's that we value it too little.

Christianity points us to a way to value it more. If we're avoiding the empty wells, what's the water that we actually want to have? Well, remember, I've told you before, God loves sex.

[23 : 06] And he made it to be incredibly powerful. And so since it's incredibly powerful, it needs to be channeled correctly. I've used the illustration before of guns and fire, right?

Both are wonderful. Both are also very dangerous. Both are wonderful. Both need to have rules and constraints. Someone who observes strict rules with their guns is not someone who hates guns.

It's someone who loves them. And also understands how powerful they are. And so we ask, what's the proper use? We want the freedom to enjoy something the way it was intended, without damaging ourself, without damaging others.

The freedom to be fully human. And so when we embrace God's sexual ethic, we are embracing true freedom and avoiding real slavery.

And yet the world and the culture around us promises the opposite. I'm going to give you one more example, one more lie that our culture tells us.

[24 : 17] Again, we're not going to cover all the lies today. These sorts of lies are rampant and becoming more and more rampant. But the final one is related to the previous one.

It's related to fornication. And that's the lie of cohabitation. Our culture has this lie now telling you that you need to live with someone before you're married to them.

That's the way that you have freedom. Because if you live with someone before you're married, then you can sort of test the relationship out. Because what would be worse, right? What would be worse than becoming married to someone and then finding out that you don't actually get along that well?

And so you just need to kind of take it for a test drive. You need to keep your freedoms, try out your options, and this is going to protect you in the long term. You're going to have freedom.

That's the lie our culture tells us. It's good to live with someone you're not married to, to sort of try on marriage for size. You get all of the benefits, right?

[25 : 17] And none of the risks. That's the lie that our culture tells us. Now, many of you are familiar with this publication. It's a great bastion of Christian conservatism.

It's called the New York Times. And over the last 10 years or so, they've actually run a variety of articles talking about the risks of cohabitation, the dangers of cohabitation.

And there are statistics that show that there's a lower rate of satisfaction in marriages that result after cohabitation, and there's not a lower divorce rate. There's a higher divorce rate.

Cohabitation actually does the opposite of what it's supposed to do, of what it's intended to do. And to explain this, they use a phrase called sliding rather than deciding. Sliding rather than deciding.

In other words, the bar, the threshold for living with someone is much lower than the threshold for marrying them. And so what ends up happening is you end up in this situation where you're living with someone, and then you realize how challenging it is to get out of that situation.

[26 : 18] You bought furniture together. You have a lease together. Maybe you share some pets together. The cost of leaving rise and rise and rise, and you find that you've made this marriage-like commitment without taking a marriage-like look at the relationship to see if it's worth it.

And so instead of having all of the freedoms and none of the responsibility, you actually have all of the costs and none of the protection. You get to have all the costs are similar to a divorce.

Not the same, but they're similar. You're leaving. You've got to figure out how to extricate yourself financially. You've got to figure out how to extricate yourself in terms of property. Or you end up marrying someone you wouldn't have married otherwise because the threshold, the standard, was so much lower.

And so there's a marriage-level commitment without marriage-level protections. So it promises freedom. It delivers the opposite.

It delivers slavery. But it's, again, one of the lies that our culture tells us about sin. What's the goodness? What's the protection here? What's the good thing that God is looking to preserve?

[27 : 28] Well, it's that people would be honored, right? If this is a life-uniting act, we want it to be guarded and protected by a life-uniting commitment. In fact, preventing cohabitation.

Cohabitation, by the way, especially if it benefits anyone, and I've just argued it doesn't benefit anyone, but if you're going to argue that it benefits anyone, it benefits men, not women. For reasons that are hopefully obvious, we can talk about later if you want.

And so this protects women from being in situations where they don't have the protection of commitment. And so all of these, the world around us offers us this vision of freedom that's actually incredibly dehumanizing.

Dehumanizing in the way we treat our bodies. Dehumanizing in the way we treat other people. Dehumanizing in the way we enter into commitments. And so not much has changed in the world since the 60s AD.

There are still people who promise freedom and deliver slavery. However, as I've named before, there's only one problem at this point, and it's this. If you're a Muslim or a Mormon, you probably agree with every single thing I've said up to this point.

[28 : 41] What is it about Christianity that's different? What is uniquely Christian about this message? Well, one thing that's uniquely Christian, we can say, remember Matthew chapter 5, verses 44 and 45, Jesus tells us that God makes it rain on the just and the unjust.

And so yes, non-Christians are going to experience the blessings, the temporal blessings, in this world of obeying God's law. Yes, Muslims who adhere to a biblical sexual ethic are going to experience a certain level of blessing.

And so part of what we say is everyone in this world enjoys God's blessings, whether they recognize him or not. Another thing we can say is Jesus is the only one who offers healing and restoration from our sexual brokenness.

Jesus is the only one who offers healing and restoration. And so I've described a variety of situations, some of which some of us have been in. Jesus still offers hope.

This woman who's disappointed that I told you a story about earlier, Kirabel, she still has a future and a hope in this life, despite what she's done to her body. Because Jesus offers a future and a hope to anyone and everyone who repents of their sin.

[30 : 01] And so Jesus is the one who offers hope to this world in the midst of its sexual brokenness. That's something that other religions cannot offer to us. Jesus is also the only one who can change our hearts and affections.

If we are talking about slavery and freedom, who is going to free us from the slavery of sin? The reason these things are alluring is because they offer us things our hearts want.

And so our solution is not to be and behave better, but to have new and changed hearts. And the apostle Paul talks about Jesus' ministry in this way.

He talks about it as the defeat of slavery. We're told in Romans chapter six, we know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

Jesus' death breaks the slavery of sin over us. It means that we're actually able to do what's right. We're also told in Romans chapter six, verse 22, but now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and to its end, eternal life.

[31 : 17] In other words, there's a switch here. It's not that we actually give up slavery ultimately. It's that we all are slaves. We just choose our master. We can be slaves to sin or slaves to God.

Being slaves to God leads to eternal life. And so it is only Jesus who's able to free us from the power of sin and only Jesus who's able to give us the life eternally that this ethic looks forward to.

And so yes, there are people who don't believe in God and people who believe in other gods who will experience some of these benefits for a time if they follow these rules.

And only people who believe in Jesus and his sacrifice have a hope of salvation from failures in the past and a hope of the life that God offers in the future.

And so we as Christians can hold out the hope of life no matter what someone's past is, no matter what our past is, because Jesus has freed us from the reality of slavery to sin. He's done it by his death, doing what we could not do.

[32 : 28] And so the offer is to anyone and everyone who repents of their sins, turns to the life that God offers, knowing that it's Jesus who changes their heart and makes them able to obey.

And so that's how Jesus is the one who gives us true freedom rather than real slavery. Now I told you last week, I reminded you of a passage from 1 Peter, 1 Peter chapter five, verse eight, which tells us that the devil is like a ravenous lion looking for someone to devour.

In other words, there's real spiritual warfare going on. I'm gonna interpret, not interpret, I'm gonna give you a different image than the devil is a lion looking for someone to devour.

Some of you Coloradans will appreciate this. Our enemy, the devil, is a fly fisherman looking for fish to catch. Now fly fishing, very popular out here in Colorado, and the logic is this.

You find a fish, you promise the fish freedom, and you deliver slavery. You've got your fly, right? It's meant to appear to be something good and wonderful and sweet.

[33 : 40] The fish takes it, what does it get? Not the freedom, not the fly, but the hook in its mouth. And so the devil is a fly fisherman. He is looking for Christians that will take the bait.

They will believe the offers of freedom that are actually false, that actually lead to slavery and death. Now, some people say Colorado's a great place to fly fish.

Some ways that's true. We've got a lot of great rivers and we've got great locations. There's also some ways in which Colorado's not a great place to fly fish. And here's why. The fish have gotten smart.

If you go down, let's say you go down to the South Platte, you throw your fly in, those fish are not going to be snapping at every fly you throw.

You've got to be really good if you're in some of those spots because they've been fished over and over, right? It's a catch and release place. This is not the fish's first rodeo. And so they have been trained by experience to be able to discern between freedom and slavery.

[34 : 47] We, as God's people, brothers and sisters, we want to know the difference between freedom and slavery. Not because of experience.

Not because we've been hooked over and over again. We want to know the difference between freedom and slavery because God has taught it to us in His Word.

And it's a freedom that He gives us and only gives us through our Lord and our Savior, Jesus Christ. Please pray with me. Our Father in Heaven, we thank You for Your Word that speaks clearly and directly to us.

It doesn't mealy mouth. Father, it doesn't talk around things, but it tells us the truth that we need to hear. We ask that You would use this truth this morning to protect Your people from the temptations and snares of the devil.

We ask that for those who are not Your people, that You would draw them to Yourself even now, that You would bring them to desire and want true freedom, and that through it they would come to faith in Jesus Christ and repentance from sins.

[35 : 58] Father, we thank You that we can ask these things boldly because we ask them in Jesus' name. Amen.