

**New Series: Last Days – 2 Peter
“False Freedom” – 2 Peter 2:17 – 22**

Big Idea – True spiritual freedom may be misunderstood or even counterfeited.

Sadly, many so-called evangelical Christians now are actively involved in false religious cults and say they finally “feel free!”

Many today reject all spiritual beliefs, saying they once believed in God, etc. but no longer do and now they feel liberated.

Freedom is often defined as the ability to do whatever we feel like doing with folks saying I now enjoy a new freedom or liberty. But there is a big difference between liberty and license.

The false teachers/apostates Peter is writing about in this chapter offer liberty to these unstable new converts. However it’s not freedom at all, but the worst kind of slavery or bondage. Notice the “bait” they use to try to entice them to forsake the true faith and follow the false teachers. But it’s not freedom, it’s a fake, and Peter gives three reasons why it’s fake or false.

It is based on empty promises – (2 Peter 2:17-18)

Faith is only as good as its object. If the object of your faith or belief is unstable or shaky, your faith will be easily shaken. Many put their faith in a bad scam of an investment scheme, like a lot of crypto-currency companies, and lose everything.

Faith in Jesus Christ is solid because it’s based on the solid Word of the God who always keeps His promises:

"There hath not failed one word of all His good promise" (1 Kings 8:56).

“In hope of eternal life which God Who cannot lie, promised before the world began.”
(Titus 1:2)

Peter uses three different metaphors:

1. “well without water” - actually it’s the Greek word for a flowing spring.

A spring without water is not a spring at all! A well is still called a well even if the water is gone, but a spring ceases to exist if the water is not flowing.

Mankind has an inborn thirst for reality, for God.

St. Augustine said, "Thou hast made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee."

People attempt to satisfy this thirst in many ways, and they end up living on substitutes. Only Jesus Christ can give inner peace and satisfaction.

Remember what Jesus said to the woman at the well in John 4, "Whosoever drinks [present tense, "keeps on drinking"] of this water [in the well] shall thirst again," said Jesus, "but whosoever drinks [takes one drink once and for all] of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst" (John 4:13-14).

What a contrast! You can drink repeatedly from the broken cisterns of the world and never find satisfaction, or you can take one drink of the Living Water through faith in Jesus Christ, and you will be satisfied forever. The false teachers could not make this kind of an offer, because they had nothing to offer. They could promise, but they could not deliver.

2. "Clouds that are carried with a tempest" (v. 17b). picture of clouds of fog or mist being driven by a squall over a lake or sea. Clouds ought to announce the possibility of rain, but these clouds only announce a windstorm is coming.

Jude's description is, "Clouds they are without water, carried about of winds" (Jude 12). Again, there is noise, motion, and something to watch, but nothing profitable happens.

The farmer sees the clouds and prays they will empty rain on his parched fields. The false teachers have nothing to give; they are empty.

3. "The mist of darkness" (v. 17c-18). word translated "mist" means "blackness, gloom," so "the blackness of the darkness" is an accurate translation (see 2 Peter 2:4).

These apostates promise to lead people into the light, but they themselves end up in the darkest part of the darkness! (see Jude 6 and 13) The atmosphere of hell is not uniform: some places will be darker than others. How tragic that innocent people will be led astray by these apostates and possibly end up in hell with them.

With nothing to give, how are they able to attract followers? Vs. 18

1. these teachers are eloquent promoters of their doctrines. They know how to impress people with their vocabulary, "inflated words that say nothing" (literal translation).

The average person does not know how to listen to and analyze the kind of misinformation that pours out of the mouths and online posts of the apostates. Many people cannot tell the difference between a religious huckster and a sincere servant of Jesus Christ.

Don't be impressed by oratory. Apollos was an eloquent orator but need the husband/wife team of Aquila and Priscilla to teach him to accurately preach the truth about Jesus (Acts 18:24-28). Paul said that he did not want his converts' faith to be based on his words or his wisdom. Paul was a brilliant man, but he preached to express God's truth, not to impress his audience.

2. Next reason for their success is they appeal to the base appetites of the flesh, the old nature. Much more than sexual sins, read the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21 and you'll see many different types of "bait" the false teachers use. Like ego or pride. True preachers lovingly tell their hearers "all have sinned". False teachers say "you're not so bad, I'm ok, you're ok, or we're all God's children!"

3. Another reason for their success is they go after brand new converts, not down and out sinners. Why it is very important that soulwinners and churches make every effort to disciple new believers, new converts so they are grounded in their new faith.

It is offered by fake Christians – (2 Peter 2:19-20)

You can't set someone free if you are in bondage yourself, and these false teachers were in bondage. Peter made it clear that these men had temporarily disentangled themselves from the pollutions of the world, but then they went right back into bondage again! They professed to be saved but had never really been redeemed (set free) at all!

Notice the present tenses of the verbs, "While they promise them [the new believers] liberty, they themselves [the apostates] are the servants of corruption"

They were slaves to love of money, lust, pride.

Hebrews 3:13 says to watch out so you are not "hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" Sin always promises freedom but brings bondage. Bondage to drugs, bondage to booze, bondage to pornography, bondage to _____ (fill in the blank) It promises life but instead brings death.

Romans 6:23 "the payment for sin is death..."

The apostates used lies to bring people into slavery. Jesus Christ brings us into freedom by means of truth. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

He is speaking about the truth of the Word of God. "Sanctify them through Thy truth," He prayed; "Thy Word is truth" (John 17:17).

Through the Word of God, we discover the truth about ourselves, our world, and our God.

Temporary reformation without true repentance and rebirth only leads to greater sin and judgment. Reformation cleans up the outside, but regeneration changes the inside.

Sinful tendencies do not disappear when a person reforms; they merely hibernate *and get stronger*. Holiness is not just refusing to do evil things, for even unsaved people can practice self-control. True holiness is more than conquering temptation: it is conquering even *the desire* to disobey God.

It comes from a false experience – (2 Peter 2:21-22)

Peter called these apostates "natural brute beasts" (2 Peter 2:12), and then ended the warning by describing them as pigs and dogs! But he was not simply showing his personal disdain for them; rather, he was teaching a basic spiritual lesson.

important we understand that the pronoun "they" in this entire paragraph (2 Peter 2:17-22) refers to the false teachers and **not** to their converts. It is also important that we remember that these teachers are not truly born-again people. Jude described these same people in his letter and stated clearly that they were "sensual, having not the Spirit" (Jude 19).

It is not profession of spirituality that marks a true believer but possession of the Spirit of God within (Rom. 8:9).

But these apostates did have a "religious experience"! And they would boldly claim that their experience brought them into fellowship with the Lord. They would be able to explain "the way of righteousness," and would use the Word of God to support their teachings. If they had not experienced some kind of "religious conversion," they would never have been able to get into the fellowship of the local assemblies.

But their experience, like their promises, was false.

At one time they had even received the Word of God (2 Peter 2:21), but then they turned away from it. They never trusted Christ and became His sheep.

Instead of being sheep, they were pigs and dogs—and keep in mind that the dogs in that day were not pampered pets! The Jews called the Gentiles "dogs" because a dog was nothing but a filthy scavenger who lived on garbage! It was hardly a title of respect and endearment!

These men could point to "an experience," but it was a fake experience.

Satan is the counterfeiter. We know Satan has a false gospel (Gal. 1:6-9), preached by false ministers (2 Cor. 11:13-15), producing false Christians (2 Cor. 11:26—"in perils among false brethren").

In His Parable of the Tares, our Lord taught that Satan plants his counterfeits ("the children of the wicked one") wherever God plants true believers (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43).

What kind of "experience" did these false teachers have? To use Peter's vivid images, the pig was washed on the outside, but remained a pig; the dog was "cleaned up" on the inside, but remained a dog. The pig looked better and the dog felt better, but neither one had been changed. They each had the same old nature, not a new one.

This explains why both animals returned to the old life: it was part of their nature. A pig can stay clean only a short time and then must head for the nearest mudhole. We do not condemn a pig for acting like a pig because it has a pig's nature. If we saw a sheep heading for the mire, we would be concerned!

So we can better understand why this "freedom" offered by these teachers is a false freedom, a "freedom" that only leads to bondage. It is based on false promises, empty words that sound exciting but that have no divine authority behind them. It is offered by false Christians who were involved in a false experience. From start to finish, this "freedom" is the product of our adversary, the devil!

Now we can appreciate Peter's admonition in 2 Peter 1:10—"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure." In other words, "Has your spiritual experience been genuine?"

It is a startling fact that there are many people in our churches who have never truly been born again, but who are convinced that they are saved and going to heaven!

They have had "an experience," and perhaps look better (like the sow) and feel better (like the dog), but they have not been made better as "partakers of the divine nature."

Perhaps Peter recalled Judas, one of the Twelve, who was a tool of the devil and was never born again. Up to the very end, the other disciples did not know the truth about Judas and thought he was a spiritual man!

The apostates appear to have successful ministries, but in the end, they are bound to fail.

The important thing is that you and I have the assurance of a true experience with the Lord, and that we have nothing to do with these counterfeit ministries, no matter how popular they may be.

Christ is "the truth" (John 14:6) and following Him leads to freedom. The apostates are liars and following them leads to bondage. There can be no middle ground!