

2 Peter 2:17-22 (False Teachers Have No Life)

Today we want to talk about something that has very real application to our life. We are going to talk about the empty promises of the world and what happens to those who become slaves of those empty promises.

And this is a very important topic because whether we realize it or not, promises rule us. We operate almost entirely on the basis of promise. Every decision we make is because we believe a promise will be for our benefit and joy and we long for that promises to work itself out.

Why do you go to work? Because your work promises you money to buy the important things you need like food, shelter, cars and fertilizer for your lawn. Work even holds out the promise that if you work long enough you won't have to work any more. Now that's a promise! But for some, there is even more: recognition, identity, belonging, etc. If your home life is difficult, work even promises you escape from that turmoil. And often times your work delivers on those promises. You get a paycheck, you get promoted and rewarded, you get a sort of identity as an engineer or tradesman or businessman. And so because these promises are real, we continue to work away.

Why do you or did you go to school? Because school promises you increased opportunity, increased respect, increased salaries. And often times it delivers.

We operate on the basis of promise. But, there are some promises that are empty. There are some promises that at the end of the day are vapor. Have you ever made a decision based on one of these? I have a little document here that shows Lisa owns 100 shares of Cygnus eTransactions Group, INC. stock. This stock was given to her as a wedding present. If ever there was an official looking document that looks like a promise to me, this is it. This used to be worth 5 dollars a share. I looked it up yesterday after I found it in our files the other day having totally forgotten about it and discovered that it was worth .00001 cents a share. That's dumb. Not all promises are what they are cracked up to be.

So the experience of life tells you that some promises are worth investing in and other promises (aka lies) should be avoided at all costs. Well today we talk about the empty promises of false teachers which should be avoided at all costs but, truth be told, are believed by all of us on a daily basis on some level.

Last time we studied 2 Peter we read through verses 4-16. And the main point of that section was simply this: **God is sovereign over the wickedness of false teachers and their teaching.** God knows how to deal with the evil in the world, including false teaching. Just like he dealt with wickedness in the days of Noah and just like he dealt with the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorah, he can deal with the wickedness of false teaching. But even though God is sovereign over false teachers, he does not want us to conclude that they are of little concern and that we should have a cavalier attitude toward them. God is very serious about the danger of false teaching and so through Peter he invest a lot of energy to paint this very dark, grim picture of the poison of these false teachers. **And that grim dark picture continues into our text today and culminates at the end of chapter 2.** Speaking of these false teachers he says,

2 Peter 2:17-22 These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved. ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved. ²⁰ For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. ²¹ For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. ²² What the true proverb says has happened to them: "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire."

The title of the message this morning is this: False teachers have no life. There are two senses in which the False Teacher has no life. The first sense is this:

False Teacher Receive No Life

The text says that these teachers are **slaves of corruption** and that the **gloom of utter darkness** has been reserved for them. The text says that it would have been better for these people to have never known the Lord Jesus than to have known him and denied him and taught things contrary to him. Not taking God seriously has serious consequences.

Now this issue of eternal life could not be any more significant. At the end of the day how important is quality of life if you end up losing it all. **Jesus said, what does it profit a man if he gains the entire world and forfeits his soul.** Who cares how healthy, beautiful, powerful, rich, famous you were in this life when you die without Christ. It means less than nothing. In fact the goal of this life has very little to do with comfort.

In fact, when you look at the Bible, and the world for that matter it sometimes it appears that God is not all that interested in providing satisfaction and fulfillment for souls. Consider Job for a moment¹. Job according to the text is an innocent good man who has done nothing to offend God, but nonetheless, God withdraws his favor and allows the destroyer to swoop in gleefully and with unflinching blows drive him to financial ruin. God then give further permission for Job's ten children to be buried alive or squished by rubble. Now surprisingly, Job does not strike back with accusations against God. Instead with childlike faith he cries out, "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away, Blessed be the name of the Lord."

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1 The following section is a modified version of pp. 62ff of *The God Who Smokes* by Timothy Stoner.

Now, stop there for a minute. If anything is calculated to win back the divine favor and blessing of God this would be it! Look at Job's humility here. **God must come through for Job, now, right? At Job's very lowest point, surly God will not let Job down.** Job is suffering some very cruel and almost outrageous punishment. But he has refused to cave in and he's chosen to worship God who has not explained himself in any way.

Does God relent or release the abundant showers of blessing that we sing about? No, instead he permits Satan to crank up the flame further by afflicting Job with excruciating ulcers from his head to his feet. Job's wife helpfully suggestions the option of indirect suicide by saying, "Curse God and die."

All this on a man who we are told was blameless and upright and did not sin with his mouth. **So what exactly do we mean when we say that the world holds out satisfaction that is empty and God holds out satisfaction that is truly fulfilling.**

Compared to Job someone might argue that MTV looks pretty fulfilling. What kind of satisfaction is Christ promising.

There are two types of satisfaction that Christ is promising.

1. He is promising eternal life to those who trust Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. Often times the reason for the suffering and pain and the sorrow is so that we can see our need for a Savior. **What is God is doing in suffering is exposing the false, the temporary, the rivals who vie for our devotion and affection.** Being dropped hurts, but sometimes it takes dropping to break the fake so that the real appears. And when we surrender to Jesus and ask him to become our Lord and submit to him, he gives us eternal life. This is the opposite of false teachers. False teachers because of their refusal to accept Jesus as Lord and because they are slaves of their appetites, they receive no life. Like a seat at a restaurant, eternal darkness is RESERVED for them.

2. He is promising eternal life. But he also promises life. It is the stuff of **John 6:35** Jesus said to them, **"I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.**

John 10:10 I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

Even though your life may be littered with pain and suffering and trial and sickness and sprinkled with the death of many people you love dearly, you will not find a more meaningful relationship in all the universe. **Though all the trial in the world be thrust upon you and by some amazing act of GRACE, God enabled you to trust him through it, you could not be more thankful that you gave your allegiance and affections to Jesus because it is worth it.**

So the title of the message is, False teacher have no life. And we said that there was two senses that this was true. The first sense is that the false teachers receive no life. There is only utter darkness reserved for them. But there is a second sense in which the false teacher has no life:

False Teachers Offer No Life

Peter paints a couple of pretty graphic pictures here to represent the vanity and emptiness of what these false teachers are promising. Look at verse 17. **He says they are waterless springs and mists driven by storms.** Now both of these are pretty telling word pictures. Imagine you are travelling in the desert and it's been 3 days without water and your tongue feels like an ash covered leather sandal in your mouth. All you can think about is water. And then suddenly a ray of hope spreads across your face when you see dark rain clouds forming and then to add to the beauty of the situation, you read a sign that says, sweet artesian sparkling spring 1 mile. Now that sign is holding out a promise to you. Those dark rain clouds are holding out a promise to you. **They are promising water for your parched mouth.** **But how cruel is it to walk up to that spring and find flies buzzing around a dusty hole in the ground and to watch the dark clouds roll over and just leave a slight mist but never a drop of rain.** Peter says false teachers are just like this. **They are waterless springs and mists driven by storms.** They promise and promise and promise but never deliver. This is the formula for all forms of temptation we will ever encounter.

There is a promise of happiness and fulfillment, but in the end there is severe **disappointment** when you find out what it really is.

You may have heard this joke about the man who was looking for work and was scanning in the help wanted adds of his local newspaper. He ran across a position opening in the local zoo. And so he went to find out more about this position and discovered that the position was not for a zookeeper, but the position was for a zoo animal. They were running low on monkeys and so as a stop gap measure until they got more monkeys they were going to hire someone to dress up in a monkey costume and act like a monkey. And the owner said, all you got to do it eat peanuts when people throw them at you and swing in the branches like a monkey. Well the pay was pretty good so the guy took the job. After a belly full of peanuts he was swinging through the branches got dizzy and fell into the lion cage. And so the man started screaming, help, I fell into the lion cage. The lion responded, hey, we are all going to loose our jobs if you don't shut up.

And in a silly sort of way, this is just like false teaching. You came to see a lion but you get a man dressed up in a lion suit. That's disappointing. You got tricked. Waterless springs. Mists driven by storms. They promise happiness. They promise joy. **And that bait of happiness is presented in all its glory.** But the bait looses all its pleasure when the hook is forced through the cheek. There are lots of lights, lots of glitter, lots of thunder, lots of noise. But there is no substance. The substance of what they are offering is absent. And we all have a thousand examples of this running around in our experience.

This is the principle upon which every advertisement in the world is built. Consider the advertisement for a swimming suit. **Every women on the planet wants a new swimming suit about every 2-4 weeks.** It's part of the DNA of females. And so you get tired of shopping for swimming suits in the mall, because they never fit and instead you shop on the internet. The internet advertisement shows some beautiful woman, whose tan and fit, wearing the suit you want. The photo of course has been photoshopped to remove blemishes, make the eyes

bigger, hips narrower, etc. The advertiser does not want to show you reality. He shows you something make-believe. And in the back of your mind you think, that suit will make me look like her. And so you click and buy it and then it comes in a **brown box**. And you experience a severe case of **wrapper rage** as you try to unpackage the silly thing from the embalming plastic clamshell that suffocates your expensive fabric. And so you get it and rush to try it on and you wait for the promise to be delivered. And you wait. And you wait.... No photoshop. Still weigh the same amount. And even if you really love the suit, are you happy? Are you content? It's over. That's it. There's no more thrill. Empty rainclouds. Waterless springs. And of course advertisers know this letdown is inevitable so some of the most successful advertisers in the world try to mask this disappointment by making you believe this line: **the reason you are not happy is because your purchase is not complete.** The phone advertising business is a great example of this. Here is this device that magically hovers in midair slowly rotating against a hot white background in flawless perfection so you can view its elegance from every angle. The Android EVO, the Iphone, the Blackberry. Whatever. **You buy it and I guarantee every phone would be a yawn inducing experience if it weren't for the accessories.** You need this accessory to make your purchase complete. A little charging station, car charger, car holder, clock adapter, Bluetooth thingy, a little game application or a make my life amazing application for your phone, or this texting add-on package. So the emptiness is quickly replaced with more promises heaped upon more promises. Empty clouds, waterless springs.

But these false teachers are not promising happiness through swimming suits and phones. There is something specific that these false teachers are promising. Look at what the text says. They are promising: freedom. But freedom from what? It appears that the false teachers in Peter's day were offering freedom from the moral boundaries God has placed on believers. The text says that these false teachers **entice by sensual passions of the flesh**. This was an assault on the Christian view of sex. They say, "Hey listen, you have been cheated by abstaining

from sex. There is pleasure to be had and you are missing it. You are in sexual prison right now. Follow me and I will lead you to freedom.”

That is a powerful lie. Who wants to be in prison. Who likes the idea of being shackled by the man. **Who wants to be handcuffed so you can't do the things you want to do. We all want freedom in all areas of our life.** To suggest that you are currently experiencing the life of a prisoner is a powerfully compelling force.

BTW, it is common to hear this sort of tactic used to criticize Christianity. Religion is a crutch (who wants to be on crutches?). Theology is for the mindless (Who wants to be dumb?).

So when the false teacher suggests that you are missing out because you are imprisoned in stale ways of thought, it is compelling. Nobody wants to be a prisoner.

NOW, Do you want to know what God's answer to that is. **Choose your slavemaster.** Nobody is free, choose your slavemaster. **2 Peter 2:19 They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.** Nobody is free. This principle is played out in the gospels. Jesus says...

Matthew 6:24 "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

You are either overcome by God and serve him and be a slave to him or you are overcome by money and serve money and become a slave of money. But either way you slavishly serve.

Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin...So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

So if you sin, you are under the bondage of slavery. But you don't have to stay there. Jesus can set you free from the bondage of sin. But, here's the key

question, will the Son set you free to do whatever you want? **No the Son will set you free so that you can serve Him.** What does Paul call himself? He calls himself a “doulos” of Jesus Christ. That word is translated **slave**. This is one of the few places where I truly have a disappointment in the ESV translation. **When this word is used to describe Christians serving the Lord they always translated it servant instead of slave.** And I understand why they do that because our American ears have a lot of negative connotations attached to the word slave that are not meant to be part of the picture. But I still think slave is a better picture than servant. A servant gets to clock out. A servant can quit when he wants to. A slave cannot. **And in that very sense we are either slaves of God or slaves of Christ.** 6 Books of the New Testament start out by acknowledging this reality. Paul a slave of Jesus Christ, Grace and Peace to You.... James a slave of Jesus Christ.... Peter a slave of Jesus Christ... So the Bible’s answer choose your slavemaster. The issue is not, who is free and who is a slave. The issue is who has a better slavemaster. Almost invariably, this is what draws men and women to Christ. When the shackles of the world rub raw the wrists of its prisoners, then the words of Jesus come like aloe vera gel on a sunburn....

Matthew 11:28 - 12:1 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

In terms of ownership, we are just as much slaves of Jesus as the horrific slave trade that has scarred our countries history. The difference is we are under a kind, gentle, loving master who has given his life for us.

We must expose the lie of sin. There is no freedom in serving sin. Only slavery.

But despite this very true principle, the world’s lies are still very powerful. The sad truth about ourselves is that we want to be tricked. **Even though we may know that there is no true freedom in believing the lies of the world, we want to be fooled.** There are times when we want to think that there is freedom to be had

outside or Christ. **That God's plan for sexual pleasure is restrictive.** Our hearts are idol factories. We are starstruck and mesmerized by the empty promises of a thousand false lovers. The prophets call this type of insanity spiritual adultery and liken it to wild donkeys in heat (Jer. 2:24).

And Satan is just an absolute master at making sexual promises look really convincing. And guess what the main message that Satan is promoting all over America right now. It is the message of every pornographic image. It is the message of every TV ad that uses sex to sell their product. **It is the message of every TV show that portrays sex as a casual encounter that is as natural as brushing your teeth.** It is the same exact message of these false teachers: You are in sexual prison right now. If only you knew how fun it was. If only you knew what you were missing out on. If only you would loosen the restrictions you have so foolishly placed upon yourself you would experience a new level of satisfaction. Same message.

And the key is to uncover the lie. The key is to see that these messages are empty rainclouds and waterless springs. The reality is that in every sexual ad a woman is being horribly exploited. That happiness and joy are being taken from that woman. The reality is that what is being shown does not actually exist. Watch this video.

Dove Evolution Video.

Remember last week the text in verse 14 talked about hearts being trained in greed. Advertisements and social programming has trained our hearts in sex to want something that isn't even real. **Talk about the ultimate in wanting the impossible. That is such a clever tool of Satan.** Because you will never find out that the temptation which so powerfully controls you is in fact waterless springs and empty rainclouds because you can't ever try it, because it doesn't even exist.

Now let's get down to the actual day to day, decision to decision, temptation to temptation world that we actually live in. How are we going to combat Satan and his lies.

What is going to help you in your pursuit of purity, in your pursuit of happiness, in your pursuit of actually living for the glory of God in a sex saturated world? I'm talking mostly to men here.

It helps to unmask the lies of the world. And that is part of the ammunition. It helps to remember that real women are being exploited and that what our hearts are lusting after does not even exist. **But in my own battle for purity in my life, here is the number one thing that has consistently marked victory.** And it boils down to this simple question:

Who am I going to believe? Do I believe the promise of happiness that the world offers in sex? Or do I believe in God's promise of happiness in sex? **Am I going to believe Satan who is the author of perversion and his demons and their schemes?** Or am I going to believe the creator of sex itself?

And to add power to this line of thinking, we must also acknowledge that we can't have both. Either is one is true or the other is true, but they cannot both be true. In fact, to take it one step further, the reason God has placed restrictions on sex is because the rules are meant to protect the freedoms. **Just like you can't have clean rivers and have people dumping their waste oil in the streets. It's certainly more convenient to dump waste oil in the street instead of going down to Shucks and have them dispose of it properly, but that convenience comes at a cost. Is the convenience worth it?** Certainly not. And in a similar way, God has setup boundaries on sex to protect its purity and to actually provide you with greater happiness and joy and fulfillment.

And when we believe that following God's rules, in fact, make us the most happy, it is easy to say no. Because we are not missing out. We are getting the best. It's like walking down the road and being starving and being offered a 4 day old hotdog and knowing that at home your wife has prepared a beautiful 4 course meal. The four day old hotdog would satisfy to some level, but there would be a price you pay. And you know that. So it's easy to say no to the hotdog when you know that something far better awaits.

And that is truly what God has in store for you if you believe him. You are wrecking your joy if you throw away the users manual and try to do it yourself. It never works that way.

Walk it out.

1. If you are a woman, you need to believe this, and believe it with all your heart. True beauty is in the heart. This is a true statement: beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. And if your husband or future spouse loves the Lord, I guarantee he will think you are physically beautiful if your life is a life of worship to him. I guarantee it.

1 Peter 3:3-4 Do not let your adorning be external- the braiding of hair, the wearing of gold, or the putting on of clothing- ⁴ but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.

2. If you are a man, spend some time acknowledging that all your failures have been a result of believing the lies of the world. You thought that Satan's plan was better than your plan. Then spend some time analyzing how stupid it is to believe that.