

Twisted Freedom

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Date: 06 May 2018

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[0 : 0 0] bold and arrogant they are not afraid to heap abuse on celestial beings yet even angels although they are stronger and more powerful do not heap abuse on such beings when bringing judgment on them from the Lord but these people blaspheme in matters they do not understand they are like unreasoning animals creatures of instinct born only to be caught and destroyed and like animals they too will perish they will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight they are blots and blemishes reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you with eyes full of adultery they never stop sinning they seduce the unstable they are experts in greed and a cursed brood they have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of balaam son of bezer who loved the wages of wickedness but he was rebuked for his wrongdoing by a donkey an animal without speech who spoke with a human voice and restrained the prophet's madness these people are springs without water and mists driven by a storm blackest darkness is reserved for them for their mouth for their mouth empty boastful words and by appealing to the lustful desires of the flesh they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error they promise them freedom while they themselves are slaves of depravity for people are slaves to whatever has mastered them if they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our

Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and are overcome they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness the hunter than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them of them the prophets are proverbs are true a dog returns to its vomit and a sow that is washed returns to her wallowing in the mud first thank you for coming on one of glasgow's few sunny nights on a bank holiday weekend if i was up here i'm not sure i would be here so i thank you very much um and secondly there's probably no escaping the fact that this is a pretty tricky passage um i i've already told some people this morning this weekend i was up at 7 a.m on the queue to forbidden planet for world free comic book day uh in a queue for over two hours get free comic books and you might hear some of this stuff and think this is the reason that some people think the bible should probably be in forbidden planet as well with all the comic books in the world but i hope as we look at it uh we can draw some deeper meaning as to why some of this kind of big imagery but also truth that is under that as well is said so i'm going to pray and we will do that the father i thank you uh that you engage with us that you have not left us to just figure things out by ourselves and although even as peter himself goes on to say later in this letter scripture can be confusing uh that we can still approach it we can still think about it and engage with it and hope to meet with you through that and so ask that you would allow us to do that tonight that's that in your son's precious name amen so yeah if you've not been with us in the evenings we've been looking at these passages in second peter um and second peter is this letter it's kind of one of peter's last letters and before the end of his life and he was writing for two kind of reasons one thing encouraged this new community that sprung up a new community that was sprung up that was being persecuted by rome and was being persecuted by the jewish communities were from where they came from so on either side they either had religious officials against them or they had the government against them and so these vulnerable new communities pretty much made up of a lot of poor people were being attacked from all sides but as the kind of community grew this new danger grew of these people who were kind of coming inside these communities and saw it as an opportunity to advance their own agenda and you don't need to listen to this much before you think there's some pretty harsh words in here and that's kind of what i want to look at tonight we looked at last week simon took us through how you what where these people come from and what's the kind of consequences and this is an extension of that logic that peter follows through but i'd like to look

at tonight why like why is peter slash god so angry with these people is it they just done something wrong and they've got a bit of theology wrong and he's like well don't stand for that we smash people like that or is there something deeper going on here and the reason that i think he is so against this is because it's such a warping um so i put twisted freedom because that is essentially what they did they took the kind of very core of what christianity was supposed to be about that in this new relationship with christ you have a life of freedom and they essentially took that message and were like yeah and because of that freedom you can now do whatever you want and we'll tell you what you can do and they lived a life where they obscured facts they took messages of truth and goodness and said this is what you should do and in the process would therefore promote themselves and promote their own agendas and promote their own power these teachers essentially

twisted and reshaped the principle of freedom in a way that caused doubt and confusion and allowed them to promote themselves abuse and use others and would do this all under the banner of god there's a problem we don't have to struggle with today in the 21st century when people take ideologies and twist it and twist it and twist it and call it freedom now i don't know what your political landscape is but i think he's an expert at this causing confusion and in the process saying this is freedom and therefore i will use that to build myself up and subjugate others the tragic message of this letter is this is addressed to the church this is not addressed to an outside force this is addressed to people within this community who are using their position to do this to other people and unfortunately in history the church has an awful track record of when it has power of what it then seeks to do with that power and that is why i think those are not like easy words because they're not supposed to be a simple little subject that they need to adjust a bit it's at the core of what it meant for these people to even exist was turned on its head for self it's essentially taking christianity and shaping it into something new and presenting it to the world as do what we want and if you don't we're against you and unfortunately that's the picture that most people have of christianity it's definitely the picture of christianity i would have grown up with this just they're all hypocrites who abuse one another when they see fit and then they throw morals in your face when they're pretty much done with it and that's why these you have these moments in the bible where it speaks vehemently against it because it's part of god's heart he is vehemently against people who stand in the way of truth in its truest form that release that releases freedom so we're going to look briefly tonight at four different uh i've tried to do some alliteration so not very good at that but we're going to look at character chaos chasms and consequences uh the last two are a little bit they kind of fit but you'll figure um as to how they come about to this place it does suggest in the bible there's some people who see this group of this new community as like a prime place to find vulnerable people um my my uh i have to confess my mother hates it when i use her in the examples but i continually do there's so much to use um so my mother is in the aaa which is alcoholics anonymous and she's in a small town in scotland and she says one of the things that she loves about the aaa is there's a community about it which supports her but one of the dangers is there's certain type of and she would say men who see that that in community in that community there are weak-minded people and there's there's all this history within these movements of something good that was designed to help people experience true freedom but actually people see it as an opportunity to advance their own agenda um so we'll start with character so 10b to 13a bold and arrogant they are not afraid to heap abuse on celestial beings even angels although they are stronger and more powerful do not heap abuse on such beings when they bring judgment on the lord so yeah so we're going to talk about angels and talking donkeys and we have to get through some of this stuff now i don't know what you think about when you hear like words like angels um but one of the things the scriptures affirm is that there's more to life than what could be seen i definitely think it's one of the few areas that whenever anybody says i'm a christian therefore i'm closed-minded well i say why i thought i'm a reality that there's more of what we can see and feel and experience there's a bigger world out there than that particular moment and within that the scriptures attest to not just god but they attest to forces they attest to celestial beings some of good some are not and that they are there they exist

and not only do they exist but they have influence and they have purpose and often i think you know when i try and experience some of the more beautiful moments in life or some of the more darker moments in life the words i try to search for kind of transcend simply the here and now start to fuse words like beauty and meaning and purpose and drive and moments that take you out of yourself and it attests to a reality that is beyond that and i know for a lot of people that it's a struggle

my stepbrother recently got confirmed he's 16 and he got confirmed into the church which was like a massive shock to all my family who aren't christians um and we were having some conversations about it and they were like so why is he going to do that it's just a school thing is the school making them do it i was like no no no the school don't make them do this at all all right huh it's a catholic thing so some of my family's catholic some of them aren't the non-catholic side thought it was a catholic thing i was like no no no he's he's not come doesn't come out from the catholic faith and they're like did you force him to do it and i was like oh yeah because it's really cool to force a 16 year old to become a christian in today's culture yeah that was me i was of course not and they were all like why did he do it then i was like there is another option at work here he could have believed something that is beyond himself and some of my family are like huh really uh so well i do it like um but for most of them that's just that's that's just not a step that exists there's nothing beyond that but this passage is suggesting that these people although they would attest to a god and they would attest to a reality that is bigger than themselves they actually refuse to acknowledge their powers and consequences beyond themselves they mock these celestial beings these angels and there's two ways of looking at that one is these are angels and they're like well yeah we're essentially about it's an arrogance it's a statement of absolute arrogance that these people think they are in charge there is nothing beyond them there is nothing bigger than them and it says that's a big indicator throughout the whole thing they despise authority they do not want to be told what to do they only want to tell others what to do and it's very easy to have that mantra fulfilled in a life like i work as a therapist a day a week and the mantra is don't let anybody ever tell you what to do just do what makes you happy it doesn't matter what the consequences are just do it and people do that i've done that i still do that a lot of the time and while there's truth in elements of that a whole life you have a whole planet of people who lived like that is chaos and leads to deep dissatisfaction deep dissatisfaction i can have in myself sometimes but also experience through work but there is a kind of thing that even the angels don't judge these guys and there's a there's a there's truth there for us to take this isn't a letter that affirms some sort of theological witch hunt for anybody who doesn't believe the right things everywhere this is not they've got something wrong we need to attack them it is something quite corrupt that is hearty happening in the heart of a community however even the angelic beings of power they withhold judgment because that's actually god's job not in the sense that you can just stick only god could judge on your back or something and that means nobody can ever say anything against me but ultimately there's still an authority at work that while they deny it will happen and i don't know what you think about concepts like judgment but it's either there exists or it doesn't if it doesn't then that's got a whole set of questions about what we think is good and even goodness exists but that's another talk for another time you can ask me or matthew or emily or anybody actually have what they think about that so they reject the angels even in the sense that the angels have got power and there's a rejection of authority or there's the other sense the angels are these ideas of fallen angels which again is a whole other thing and it's essentially saying that there's no consequences to what i do with all my authority it doesn't matter because jesus has saved me i can do whatever i want and so you should do and one of the big things they use that to seem to do is make money

and sleep with people is uh you know do whatever you want however i have two suggestions for you can sleep with me and give you my money uh it's not a pretty it's pretty standard thing that the human race has done for generations it's not like a new idea we see here but it's the start of this arrogance of i'm the center nobody can tell me what to do and so they move them on this path and that brings us to the second thing of chaos their idea of pleasure is to crows and bod trade at the broad daylight their blots and blemishes reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you with eyes full of adultery they never stop sinning they seduce the unstable they're experts in greed and a cursed brood they have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Bezah who loved the wages of wickedness but he was rebuked by his wrongdoing by a donkey an animal without speech who spoke with a human voice and restrained the poor the prophet's madness so here you can see that their arrogance leads into absolutely chaotic living so when they put themselves at the center and say we are the masters of our identity and purpose and actually jesus legitimizes that do whatever you want doing whatever you want means you need to keep doing more of whatever they want to keep getting the same it's a bit like a drug same hit keep doing more of it it fulfills me no it doesn't i need to do more of it and they actually it starts to say they kind of like become wandering out of control this idea of the carousing with you means that eating feasts with you they're part of the community it's it's not this idea that somehow they're in a building

because they're in a building they are the good people and the people outside the building are the bad people it's this idea that within the community you can still be focusing on the wrong things and being the wrong way and likewise you're gonna people outside the building who are the opposite and it's not that that's deliberately stuck in there i think to say this whether they're having feasts with you is not really the point if anything it could be something different and that word i don't adultery is quite an interesting word is the idea that they're constantly looking for something to fulfill them in that that progression from arrogance to i want something to the dehumanizing of another person to people just become objects to fulfill their own desire for power and greed and that's why it says they start to prey on those who are the weaker ones who are the ones who are looking for something to be fulfilled in them and you there's these leaders would say i can fulfill that in you and you can fill it in me it's a pretty warped dehumanizing thing that's happening that extension from i'm the center to well how do i build up me increasingly as the center i look at people with adultery and it doesn't just mean i have sex with them outside marriage it is like a far deeper more i don't know aggressive idea of i look at people like objects they are there somehow to fulfill my agenda that's the primary reason they're engaging with people how do i get these people to do what i want to fulfill me and again when it comes to things like power and identity the church has not been the best group of people on the planet as how to deal with that when they have power and they feel it's attacked how do we get people to do what we want them to do how do we keep on hold of this thing you see how corrosive it can be whether it's inside the church or outside and he says and he uses this illusion of balaam son of beza so that's a story from the old testament in numbers 22 and it's a story of this prophet he's like a prophet for hire and this king um has israel on his doorstep and he's scared of what god's going to do even though he doesn't really know if there is that god of israel and so he hires one of the prophets to put a curse on his own people but balaam loves making money and he especially loves making money when it is coming from people who are in a position where they have no other choice he like thrives on it so balaam loved gaining from wrongdoing specifically [17:53] gain from someone who's willing to pay and then you have this story in the old testament where god stops him with a donkey he's his own donkey he's riding with turns around and speaks to him and it's so out of the ordinary obviously unless you've had animals speaking to you in a dr do little style recently it stops it says it stops his madness and again that's in for me that's an interesting word that this process of i'm the center i need people to twist this thing so that i can get what i need and want leads to a kind of form of madness it is never enough it gets out of control he uses a lot of imagery in this letter about they're like animals they're just all over the place doing whatever they need to do to build up their sense of self and their sense of status and they will do whatever it takes and use whoever they think they will use together and it's kind of and you know the story suggests in the old testament is a humiliating experience for this prophet well firstly that donkey this this servant animal would turn around and correct him and again that's at the heart of part of the the issue of the twisting of the freedom there's an arrogance at the center that says i am the center i am the ultimate authority and it's a donkey that god uses to bring him back and you can read the rest of that story in the old testament and it leaves me with the question of what do we do like unless god sends donkeys to speak to us whenever i find myself in that state because of course i can find myself in that trajectory any of us can where we feel those moments where actually i just want what i want and i should have it and actually god if you're real should definitely bless it and make it happen therefore god is good if he's good i should get what i want so i should do it and jesus should just bless that whole process that's quite a convincing argument in my head completely contrary to what true freedom is described as that actually you are a slave to anything we're humans we take on anything as our master and the gospel is let let let god reclaim you as a child as a beautiful human who's got value and dignity and in that let that dictate who you are because otherwise it leads to something that is not designed to be the true nature of what humanity is and if that is true for any human people who then manipulate that message and call it faith that is again why there's such a hard message spoken against them hebrews 10 24 to 25 says let's consider how to stir one and up stir one another up to love and good works not neglecting to meet together as in that is the habit of some but encouraging one another all the more as you see the day drawing near part of the call of what it means to supposed to if this this concept of false teachers how do we be true teachers to one another is it we just sit down and kind of hammer theological truth into our head over and over and over again that's part of it but this idea that we meet together we explore life together these things are born out of reality the questions of desire and hope and purpose that it's not like the free although some of the false teachers were pretty manipulative it

would have started somewhere it would have started in this small twisting of what they thought freedom was like a small twisting of it's okay it's okay it's okay and legitimizing more and more until they are eventually legitimizing their actions against a whole group of people there's a protective nature to this message to the church of how do you not be people like this is in contrast to chapter one which is this is who you were made to be you were called to be something different so how do we remind one another and to walk in that way to live that way to live as truth people of beauty and justice in the world if we're not actually discussing life with one another we're not actually discussing the places where we're completely tempted to do the opposite we just

hide it because we're supposed to be here and be nice and say everything is fine and go home and come back make sure we do it and as long as we're here on a sunday everything's fine and nothing will ever go wrong ever that's a very unstable way of living life because it's not the true reality of what it means to engage with each other's humans where god is present and god cares but god wants to not just protect us as naive people who hide away in the church and just do bible studies until we die but it's actually supposed to be present in the world as an expression of god's character we need help to do that help because we're weak i'm weak i know i have tons of weaknesses tons of faults where i feel like i'm a moment away from just being thrown off to what i want to do and so we need to meet meet in a way that is not just for fun although you can have fun with each other of course um but in a way that is building one another up seeking to bring truth into our lives that leads us on to the next bit chasm this is just brief thought on verse 17 so verse 17 says these people are springs without water and mists driven by a storm blackest darkness is reserved for them it's just this idea it's a very it's kind of like his conclusion before he goes into the consequences of this philosophy this idea of life this do whatever you want and jesus will bless it and that's actually fulfilling something of the gospel is empty it is like an oasis where you're thirsty and you go this will help this will help no it's like mist it that clings to you but you can't actually grab it it has like a futility to it that you know whilst you can think you can see it and whilst you think you can experience it it doesn't actually go anywhere if anything it leads to increased hunger increased desire and that's the way he describes what they're like in verse 18 when he talks about the consequences for they are for the mouth empty boastful words and by appealing to the lustful desires of the flesh they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error they promise them freedom while they themselves are slaves of depravity for they have their slaves whoever has mastered them if they have escaped corruption of the world by knowing our lord and savior jesus christ and they're again entangled in it and are overcome they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning he talks about this like they're insatiably enslaved to something themselves and they don't even know it and they're passing on that insatiable slavery to desire that just lets you just rule all over you again the bible never speaks against desire as a wrong thing we're not supposed to have no desires or no feelings or no hope but when they're channeled in the correct ways it's supposed to bring life and purpose and flourishing for us and the world as opposed to this continually inward nagging and eroding of who we are and therefore we start to encompass others in that kind of narcissistic black hole that can be my daily reality when i wake i don't know what you think when you wake up but sometimes that can be my experience of who i am it's just me me me and to use the gospel to affirm that and then to tell a room full of people that and then to actually say why don't you help me do this process this is why these words are spoken against these people these false teachers were right to promise people freedom the call to freedom is at the heart of the new testament this is not a call to give away yourself to free reign of passions that ends up in slavery as verse 19 calls it thanks we have this little um proverb at the end so the kind of the passage ends with this little proverb about dogs and pigs um which says um so beforehand it says it would have been better for them not to have known the way

of righteousness than to have known it and then to turn their backs and the sacred command that was passed on to them of them the problems are true a dog returns to his vomit and a so that washed a so that is washed returns to her wallowing in the mud and again in jewish culture these are these would not be the best animals to like we have a lovely fondness for dogs but in first century israel a dog would have been something that would have been in the dump and in the trash and you wouldn't have gone anywhere near it and pigs they weren't fond of pigs either they were like filthy creatures and what he's implying is there's something about these people who are using jesus's name and authority to do this that it almost reveals their true character but they've probably not actually engaged in the truest reality of what it means for jesus to transform them it's like they've

in the end their true colors expose themselves because they they they end up in literal destruction
jesus kind of implies this he says to um uh beth cedar and uh some other time i can't remember um
in the new testament so there's in the new testament there's the best student uh oh man that's
awful i can't remember but there's another time in the old and new testament which the one which is
in record sees the most miracles in the gospel in the gospel they're the ones who are exposed to
the most miracles and they keep getting all this stuff and like wow they keep saying whoa can i
have more jesus's words to them is woe to you for if the mighty works done in you had been done in
the entire inside in which were like old testament examples of the worst of the worst they would
have been repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes but i tell you it shall be more tolerable in the
day of judgment for those places than for you jesus is essentially saying what peter is saying here
that you can see all this stuff you can learn all this stuff but actually if you unless you engage with
the reality of who god is through his son that leads us to a place where we understand grace not as
just like go and do whatever you want license but a place that brings our desires and our heart back
into line with the focal point of where it should have been all along and therefore that message of
false teaching being a corruption of freedom therefore it doesn't just help us protect the people
inside but it actually should be a force that protects the weak this is the kind of people that are
talked about here people who are weak people who are easily manipulated that actually as
opposed to them being abused the movement of the christian messages they should be defended
by the church that jesus is for those people and actually freedom for them is being in a community
of people who are for them but not an opportunity to use them for your own agenda it's a wicked
thing to do for another human yeah i know that's the root of my heart every social situation i go into
is how can i build myself up here it starts small but it can end up in people who are using the name
of god to do pretty wicked things it's the same root thing that goes through the heart of every human
we all have it that that wrestle with whose agenda do i go for here myself or another why would i
ever go for another i am in control god challenges us to surrender that in the way where we return
not to nothing but to something new and big and beautiful and so second peter and especially this
chapter is written to help us do just that it aims to help us confirm the identity that god has given us
but to be aware of when you don't when you turn against it's not just oh well i'll just do what i want it
leads to this ideology that allows for pretty horrible things to happen to individuals in the name of
god and god's at the end of this chapter is god will do something about that it's not like they'll just
wander off one day and go well you know at least you served in a church you've got that in your
column despite the fact you look to people in a way
purely just to manipulate and to pursue your own agenda it's a dehumanizing way of living life for
the person doing it and the people it's done too and god is passionate about his children and his
children are described as all people made in his image who are the entire planet and so he's
against he is fundamentally against whenever that would happen to a human being and instead of
just leaving us in that place he calls us home the the the idea of there's these people being us an
empty spring in verse 17 the spring without water i mean immediately makes me think in contrast of
jesus who calls himself the spring of life the water of life and he says that to a woman at a well
who's hiding she's there at three o'clock in the afternoon it says which would have been like the
hottest time of the day where nobody would have gone near a well because she's in shame of how
often she has been how many partners she's had and there's this idea that she herself has been
abused by people within that community and she's constantly trying to find her identity in these
partners and they are done with her and they leave her so she goes back to another one and it's to
that woman jesus says you don't need to do this anymore this thing that you've got inside you it's
not like it's stupid but it's supposed to find its home in me it's supposed to find a home where it
flourishes into new life where it affirms the value of god's children and says you were more made to
be more important than this you've dignitated your value and how did a community of people form
around that message and take it everywhere we go to one another and to the world and so when
god sees somebody who comes in that and says i wonder if i could twist this to make this about me
i'll make some money out of it and i'll make me stand up that is why you have these harsh language
which ends with this idea these guys would have been better never to have known at all because
when we hear this message we hear this not i mean literally my message but the message of the
truth of the gospel it calls for a response it calls for us to do something with it as opposed to well
we'll see what happens we all have to wait and see what happens in some respect that calls for
some sort of engagement engagement what it means when we use words like good and bad and
afterlife and the present because god cares about all these things and it's weird for some people to

hear that that is good news but it's good news that jesus in his justice does not allow injustice to reign or go without consequence i don't know about you but i don't actually want to live in a world where there are no consequences that world is chaotic and messy and yeah for maybe for a few months if i have enough resources about me i might have a good time but i'm actually not that clever so i wouldn't get very far this idea that god sees and cares and will do something about it and calls those who are in the midst of all communities who are selling an agenda of some description to choose which one are you going to let rule you jesus's offer is this is the one that will bring life it'll bring life to the full i'm going to end there and then we will what sing we're gonna sing um so i was a bit creepy didn't mean to whisper and um father i thank you that we are called to be people of truth and that truth is both protective but i hope it is visionary for how we seek to live in a world wherever we see people be oppressed or abused that we know that you have a gospel that stands firmly against that but we know that well i know within myself that that chaos wrestles within my own heart of what agenda i want to have and so would you help me as i pray you'd help us all to to to walk that uh path of daily life well knowing that you don't abandon us in it that you don't leave us just our own devices and hope that we muddle through well but you promise to stand with us and that you give us a full assurance of a hope that in the end you are with us and for us i pray in the places that that is difficult for us that where there's a real wrestling of what it means to let go of some things you would give us a vision of what it means for you to stand alongside us and say to us the words that you say throughout many different interactions in the gospels for people who are struggling to find what it means to have life that you are life itself i hope you pray you'd help us to remember that as we sing and go into the rest of our week i ask that in jesus name amen