

- Good morning, everyone and welcome back. Today we pick back up with our journey through 2 Peter.
 - Last week we finished our teaching by focusing in on Chapter 2 verses 4-10, and today – believe it or not – we are going to do more of the same.
 - In those verses, Peter made a couple of statements that I feel are critical for every believer.
 - For context - I want us to back up and re-read those verses as we segway into our next set of verses at the end of today's lesson and here is what Peter wrote:

2 Peter 2:4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment;

2 Peter 2:5 and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;

2 Peter 2:6 and *if* He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing *them* to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly *lives* thereafter;

2 Peter 2:7 and *if* He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men

2 Peter 2:8 (for by what he saw and heard *that* righteous man, while living among them, felt *his* righteous soul tormented day after day by *their* lawless deeds),

2 Peter 2:9 *then* the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,

2 Peter 2:10 and especially those who indulge the flesh in *its* corrupt desires and despise authority.

- Now – if you read these verses separately - by themselves – apart from the context of the previous verses, Peter's words might seem kind of odd.
 - Fortunately for us – we know the context from which these verses were written.
 - Peter wrote these words on the heels of a warning.
 - And what was the warning?
- It was, that any believer who might read this section of scripture should be vigilant and weary of a certain set of individuals who had and will be infiltrating the church.
 - And who were those individuals?
 - Peter labeled them as False Teachers – and just to give the readers a clue as to who it is they are watching out for; he refers them back to false prophets of old.
 - Those men and women who had previously tried (and succeeded in some cases) in leading God's people off track.
 - But as we learned over the past few weeks false prophets and false teachers were different (at least as they are described here in 2 Peter).

- Where the false prophets tried to lead God's people off track to other religions and beliefs.
 - Religions and beliefs totally contrary to God's Word.
 - Totally contrary to the one true God all together.
- These False teachers would use different methods from those of the Old Testament False Prophets.
 - The biggest difference being in who they say they serve.
 - These false teachers will call themselves believers – matter a fact, many of them will be believers...
 - Believers who through their own logic and intellect – (which by the way is guided by none other than the enemy himself).
 - They will slowly begin to twist and or slightly change God's Word.
 - Their behavior will produce the same type of results as the false prophets were able to produce.
- But as we know – God knew that would be the case.
- So He moved Peter to write about it here in 2 Peter.
 - Which leads him to expound on this issue a little bit further.
 - He does so using a method I like to call the “Stick and Carrot” method.
 - Have you ever heard of that concept? Or this method?
 - It's simple to understand.
 - The theory goes like this, when trying to motivate someone – you can either use a stick or a carrot.
- Now, the stick side of the equation is exactly what it sounds like, its motivation is through negative reinforcement.
 - Throughout the years this method has been a popular method used in business, and it captures the essence of the old saying “The beatings will persist until the morale improves”.
 - And believe it or not, this method was, and still is the preferred method of motivation inside some business organizations.
 - And it seeks as its intent to change people's behavior by beating them down until they eventually do what they are supposed to do.
 - This method worked at one point but today, it's not very effective – primarily because employees have options. And the same goes for church.
 - People can attend church anywhere – therefore they don't want to go to a church that makes them feel bad about themselves.
 - Which is one sign of the end of times by the way.
 - Where (in 2 Tim. 4:3) Timothy says:

2 Tim. 4:3 For *the* time will come when they will not tolerate sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires,

- Next – we have the carrot method. Which (as you can imagine) is polar opposite of the stick method.
 - The carrot method seeks to motivate people with positive reinforcement – instead of negative reinforcement
 - Companies (for example) who adopt this method in its extreme form, take it over the top – by giving people bonuses and incentives for doing the job they were paid to do in the first place.
 - In these organizations the employee is number 1.
 - Proponents of this method say the customer isn't number 1 – rather it's the employee who is the focus.
 - The theory is, if you take care of the employee – the employee will take care of the customer.
- Now – the question is – are either one of these true?
 - Maybe a better way to say it – is one of these more effective than the other?
 - The answer is yes and no – which I know makes me sound like my lawyer.
- In Peter's writings here in 2 Peter 2 he begins the verses by using the stick – in the form of a warning.
 - And he does so by following it up with examples from the Old Testament. Specifically by using Noah & the flood, along with Sodom and Gomorrah as examples.
- But inside those stories is also another story of hope for every believer – where God gives us the “Carrot Side” of the story as well.
 - Our hope lies in the “Why” of the story.
 - As in why did God destroy everyone on the earth besides Noah along with 7 other members of his family?
 - And FYI – it was same the reason He destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.
 - And let me say, in both those stories God was consistent.
 - He destroyed the earth and the cities because the unrighteous and the ungodly had taken over – leaving just a few righteous.
- Now – most of us know these stories.
 - What's most important for believers in these stories is how God pulled out the righteous (the saved people) before He destroyed the ungodly.
- This is a fact –
 - God destroyed the entire earth and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah – but not

before he removed the saved people from the planet.

- And we know this to be the case – because that’s exactly what Genesis tells us.
- And it’s also reinforced by what Peter said in these verses as well.

2 Peter 2:5 and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;

2 Peter 2:6 and *if* He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing *them* to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly *lives* thereafter;

2 Peter 2:7 and *if* He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men

2 Peter 2:8 (for by what he saw and heard *that* righteous man, while living among them, felt *his* righteous soul tormented day after day by *their* lawless deeds),

2 Peter 2:9 *then* the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,

- And so in Peter's example we have the “Stick and Carrot” method being used – where God makes it clear He will take care of the unrighteous people.
 - And the example He uses is a pretty scary one.
 - Which (as I said) gives us the stick side or the negative reinforcement side of the equation – and it should motivate us to pay attention and work hard to stay on track.
 - But then in those same verses He also lets us know that He will also preserve the righteous.
 - Which paints a picture of the security that we as believers have in Christ (as it relates to matters of Salvation).
 - Matter a fact, Peter says – in verse 9 – that the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation (which is Great News: there you have the Carrot – the positive reinforcement side of things).
 - While at the same time keeping the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgement (which is bad news for those who are not saved – which show us the negative side of things).
- Now having said all of this, there is something quite interesting about the story of Noah and Sodom and Gomorrah.
 - At least as it ties back to the concept of “The Eternal Security of the Believer”.
 - It shows up after Lot and his family were removed from those cities.
- What do you think it is?
 - It has to do with – Lot's wife?
 - The question we should all be asking ourselves is, was she saved?

- The answer to that question is important as it relates to the guarantee you have in your salvation.
- The Bible says, God removed the righteous before destroying Sodom and Gomorrah and the same held true for Noah and the flood.
 - But God also turned Lot's wife into a pillar of salt!
 - And why did he do that?
 - Because He told the family not to look back after leaving the city. And – she looked back anyway!
 - So, God punished her – by turning her into a pillar of salt.
 - Another way to say it is, He eliminated her from the face of the earth!
- So, how about that loving God? The one we all want to romanticize about.
 - God took her out – but good news, guess where she is today?
 - Heaven!
 - And how do I know that?
 - I know it because of what 2 Peter told us and I know it because of the testimony of the Salvation process in the scriptures.
- And so, all of this tells us something folks.
 - It tells us that we might be saved – but we are not outside the reach of God's wrath and punishment.
 - At least as it relates to our spiritual discipline here on earth!
 - And so there it is – God clearly showing us both sides of His character in these stories, where He gives us the positive and negative results – or as I said – where He uses the Carrot and the Stick.
- Now one question I have when studying both sides of God's Character is...
 - Do these methods work?
 - And or, which ones works the best?
 - The answer is both methods work to a degree.
 - But focusing on one without the other won't work.
- Which leads me to the words of the day – “Balance and Moderation”
 - Meaning – God uses both methods in His handling of us and we are to do the same in our everyday lives – balance is “key”.
 - Just like with all things in our lives, even too much of a good thing is bad.
- I'll give you an example of what I mean – by using a super spiritual analogy or object – one that we all know and love... Cheesecake.
 - I love Cheesecake and just so you know – it loves me as well!
 - I guess you could say – we have a relationship.
 - Obviously having a little cheesecake from time to time – or even having two pieces

from time to time is not bad at all.

- Eating it every day, well – not so good!
- So, as I said – the words of the day are...“Balance and Moderation”.
- And God is the one who invented this concept.
- All throughout the scriptures we see places where God gives us liberty to do certain things – but then follows that verse with another verse that brings balance and or moderation to the equation.
 - An example of that would be drinking.
- Now – before I delve too deep into this topic this morning, I would ask that you don’t leave here today and say – Brother Greg was promoting drinking in today’s sermon. (Not that you would – but I mention it – just in case!)
 - Because I am not doing that.
 - Drinking is very dangerous – but it’s not prohibited.
 - Drunkenness on the other hand is prohibited.
 - Having said that, even though we are not prohibited from drinking it is one the most dangerous liberties we have.
 - Primarily because too much of it excites the flesh – which then causes it to become a lifestyle.
 - A lifestyle that some individuals can’t live without – and if it ever grabs ahold of a person, it will absolutely destroy them.
- And so, although the scripture doesn’t prohibit the believer from consuming alcohol – it does issue a warning relating to this liberty. When I read those warnings, I think of it like this:
 - If you had a headache for a week – and I told you I had a pill that would eliminate your headache, you would probably, (if you trusted me), grab it out of my hand and take it.
 - But what if (right before you took it) – I said, before you take this – please know – if you don’t let this pill sit under your tongue for at least 15 minutes it will kill you instantly.
 - You would probably hesitate – and not be so anxious to take it.
 - I bet you would pause and think about it – and probably say to yourself hold on, wait a minute – I may need to research this a little bit more.
 - You might even say, thanks for the offer but I believe I will just ride it out – I am sure the headache will eventually subside.
 - This same analogy could be applied to alcohol or cheesecake.
 - If someone has a drink or two every so often – no big deal.
 - But alcohol has a way of sucking you in and becoming master over your psyche!
 - Which makes it very dangerous.
- Now – let me speak a disclaimer.

- “What you do or do not do – is between you and God”
- I will teach you God's Word – and the rest is between you and him.
- I will never step in and try to counterfeit the work of the Holy Spirit (and try to convict someone).
 - That is not my responsibility, and I am not telling you what to do.
 - I am just giving you an example of balance and moderation
 - And I am doing so using a substance that the Bible clearly doesn't prohibit – but a substance that has (at its core) – the potential to ruin your life and the lives of others around you.
- Alcohol isn't the only one.
- There are many others – such as gluttony/overeating etc....
 - Having said that, alcohol is a substance that carries with it much higher consequences if it gets out of control.
 - And some people can handle it – where others cannot.
- But before I wander too far of track, I want to get back to this balance/moderation thing for just a minute. More specifically how the Bible promotes balance and moderation in its language.
 - And I want to do so by calling this “Balance and Moderation” concept the same thing the Bible calls it: It's called Freedom or Liberty – Christian men and women we have Freedom and Liberty in Christ.
 - That liberty was given to us when Jesus died for our sins on the Cross of Calvary.
 - Paul himself references this (Freedom/Liberty) slash (Balance & Moderation) in Galatians 5 – and I want to read it to you quick.
 - Galatians 5:1 and then I want to skip forward to Gal. 5:13
 - Listen to what Paul wrote Galatians 5:1: Walk by the Spirit

Galatians 5:1 It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

- The freedom Paul is referencing here relates to how the Jews were slaves – held under bondage by the Law of Moses along with all its rules.
 - But now after their acceptance of Christ they've been set free from all those rules and regulations.
 - These Jews are known as Messianic Jews – because they have accepted the Messiah!
 - Paul is telling them – if you think following the rules will save you, you would be wrong.
 - And so we have freedom, and or liberty in Christ.
- But then in verse 13 we get the counterbalance to Paul's words.

- And this is where the words balance, and moderation enter into the equation – at least as it relates to our liberty.
- Listen to what he says:

Gal. 5:13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do not turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

- And so there you have it, Paul says you have Freedom/Liberty – but do not turn your freedom or liberty into opportunity for your flesh.
 - Pretty powerful statement when you stop to think about it.
 - Just remember, your flesh is looking for any and every opportunity to take over your life.
 - Hence the words Balance and Moderation.
 - So, we must always be on guard and be vigilant in protecting ourselves and our families!
- Back to the focus of today's teaching. In verses 4-10, Peter sends the church and every believer a clear message.
 - I would call his statement a heads up for the church. A negative reinforcement of sorts, in trying to keep God's Children from sin.
 - That heads up or warning was stated as an overarching theme in the entirety of these verses.
 - Listen to it one more time – 2 Peter 2:4-10:

2 Peter 2:4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment;

2 Peter 2:5 and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;

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2 Peter 2:10 and especially those who indulge the flesh in *its* corrupt desires and despise authority.

- The way you should understand these verses is simple but unfortunately, its theme or message isn't a theme or message our society likes hearing anymore.
 - Matter a fact, our society detests the message of these verses
 - So much so, that they work extremely hard not to allow this type of talk to even enter our adult minds.
 - And we work even harder not to allow it to enter the minds of our children.
 - And so, what is the message of 2 Peter 2?
 - Well – before I tell you – you might want to lean in on what I am about to say here for just a moment because it's very profound.
 - I am not sure there are too many people on the planet who could have picked up on what I am about to tell you.
 - And so - what is it?
- Well here it is – Sin has consequences. But that's not the most disturbing part of the message hidden in these verses. The most disturbing part and or the most bothersome part of Peter's words come from its underlying meaning – which is God is Just, and He is Holy and Righteous.
 - And nothing unholy or unrighteous will escape His wrath and judgement.
 - Which means Peter is making it crystal clear to all of us sitting here today.
 - God will punish the ungodly and He will preserve the righteous until the end!
 - Which tells us that what we must never, take God's Grace and Mercy and Love for granted.
 - Because if you do you will pay the price – and if it's not in this life, certainly it will be in the one to come
- Now I said no one wants to hear this and let me clarify what I mean.
 - No one wants anyone to paint God in the light of His wrath, we instead want to talk about His Love.
 - Which is fine, but our God is a God of balance
 - He is a God of both Love and Wrath. If you remove the wrath side of His character from the equation, you end up with a God who is much like Santa Clause, the Tooth Ferry or the Easter Bunny –
 - A God Who is all loving and would never punish anyone, much less allow someone to enter the gates of hell.
 - But let me expound on this concept or view of God for just a moment, because it has become a real issue in our church society today.
 - Reason being, that description of God's Character is simply not an accurate description of the God of the Bible.
 - Let me say one more thing related to this topic, a healthy fear of God or authority in general is extremely important.
 - And I am not the one who made that up. This is a God concept.

- Listen to Proverbs

Proverbs 3:7 Do not be wise in your own eyes;
Fear the LORD and turn away from evil.

Proverbs 9:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Proverbs 14:27 The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life,
That one may avoid the snares of death.

Proverbs 28:14 How blessed is the man who fears always,
But he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity.

- Now if you have never heard this description of fear as it relates to God, and how we should view Him, then you can say you heard it here first.
 - Fear is a good thing, and if you don't have it – and if your children don't have it, you are living in a very dangerous and unhealthy place.
 - But why is that? Why is Fear a Good thing?
 - Because it causes us to pause, to think and count the cost.
 - Without it we run a very high risk of doing whatever we want to do. Which then of course leads to mistakes and regret.
 - Listen to those descriptors one more time.
- The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom
- The Fear of the Lord is the Fountain of Life
 - That's what Proverbs tells us.
 - Fear is not only a good thing. It is essential if we want to be a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ.
 - By the way – you know the number one byproduct of fear is Humility!
- Now before we move on from this topic this morning, I would like to bring your attention to the fact that there are two types of fear.
 - One is a derivative of being afraid of something. As in – “I'm scared I will get in trouble”
 - The other is a fear out of respect – which leads a person to act or react out of reverence.
 - You would think that fear is fear, and who really cares if it accomplishes the result.
 - That is true somewhat – but not really.

- Yes – having a fear of something just so you don't get in trouble is better than no fear at all.
- It is totally different than fear out of respect.
 - One is healthy and the other is not.
- Unfortunately in our society today, we have worked hard to eliminate any type of fear from the minds of adults and our children.
 - This has now led us into a society where young people walk into movie theaters and schools and shoot people.
 - And they do so with zero visible signs of regret.
 - And how crazy is that, how could an individual who has never been in trouble simply walk into a crowd of people and begin shooting?
 - It's all due to a lack of fear.
 - Obviously Prison isn't a bad place anymore because we've made our prisons comfortable.
 - Even if you commit mass murder it's highly unlikely you will ever get the death penalty.
 - If you do get the death penalty, more than likely you will die before you're ever executed.
- Just remember this as it relates to fear – The lack of fear removes the suppression of the flesh.
 - Sure enough that is exactly what Peter tells us in the next set of verses.
 - And that's where we will close – 2 Peter 2:11-16

2 Peter 2:10 and especially those who indulge the flesh in *its* corrupt desires and despise authority.

Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties,

2 Peter 2:11 whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord.

2 Peter 2:12 But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed,

2 Peter 2:13 suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong. They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you,

2 Peter 2:14 having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children;

2 Peter 2:15 forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the *son* of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

2 Peter 2:16 but he received a rebuke for his own transgression, *for* a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet.

- As I said, we will close here because as you can see there is a whole lot being said.
 - I read these verses because they tied in perfectly with what I said about fear, and I want to encourage each one of you to study these verses this week, because Peter's words run extremely deep and there is a whole lot being said here as it relates to a warning for the church!
 - Amen – Amen!