

- Good morning and welcome back to everyone. This morning, we pick back up with our study of 2 Peter 3.
 - Last week – we paused and set up shop on verse 9 as we dealt with an age-old debate between the concept of Calvinism verses Arminianism.
 - We did that because verse 9 is one of the proof texts that both the Calvinist and the Arminians use to back up their position.
 - That’s interesting because you wouldn’t think that two opposite views of salvation – could use the exact same text.
 - But they do because of one simple word – Presupposition – which simply means both sides approach the topic with a preset bias.
 - Which then allows them to read the verse from their own perspective.
- I want to continue our teaching on the topic this morning, but I want to do it from a different angle or maybe look at it in a different way.
 - Before we do that, I want to back up and re-read verse 9 – and then move forward in context from there.
 - And here is what Peter wrote, 2 Peter 3:9:

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

- Now – the context of that verse dealt with mockers. These people who were mocking believers.
 - Specifically saying – and I’ll paraphrase here for just a moment – they were saying “You guys keep about talking the return of Jesus but look around – as far as we can tell, Jesus has not returned – He is nowhere to be seen. Matter a fact, you guys have been saying He is returning forever, but He hasn’t – so obviously you must be wrong about your “Messiah”.
 - They said it this way in verse 4 of Chapter 3:

2 Peter 3:4 and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.”

- So, what’s the deal. Where is He?
 - As I told you last week, the fathers falling asleep was a reference to the Old Testament Patriarchs.
 - Men like Abraham, Issac & Jacob.
 - It had been roughly 2000 years since they passed so essentially, they are saying (Speaking of the mockers again), we are not really sure this whole Jesus coming back thing is real.

- Now, I want to echo something Paul said that I feel is very pertinent as it relates to these mockers and their statements about Jesus' return. And here is what Paul wrote.

1 Corinthians 1:18 For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

- The King James says it this way:

1 Corinthians 1:18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

- Translating it into modern words, Paul is saying, for those who have been enlightened and been given eyes to see and ears to hear.
 - Which includes – all those who have been given the gift of faith. Which is the Supernatural Ability to believe!
 - To them, the cross is the power of God.
 - To everyone else, it's simply foolishness.
- And I will tell you, there really is no truer statement than what Paul says here in 1 Corinthians. And why?
 - Because if you truly think about it the whole story of Jesus seems a little ridiculous.
 - Here is a man – who was supposedly born of a virgin.
 - Lived a relatively peaceful life.
 - Didn't really make any waves until He began His ministry.
 - Even then, He was meek, humble and spoke softly – and mysteriously, while never claiming to be the Messiah.
 - Yet He did allude to it repeatedly.
 - He was also patient, allowing God to work inside the hearts and the minds of the people, and it was those people who eventually figured out who Jesus truly was as one by one they had that "Ahh Ha" moment – which came to them by way of divine revelation.
 - A perfect example of what I am trying to say – and one that gives me cold chills – if I can be honest – shows up in Matt. 16:13-20 when Jesus was interacting with the disciples. And here is what was said.

Matt. 16:13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" (Once again – notice Jesus never says who He is)

Matt. 16:14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets."

Matt. 16:15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

Matt. 16:16 Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Matt. 16:17 And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

- Now the key to all of this lies in verse 17 where it says:

“Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father who is in heaven”.

- I bring this up for 2 reasons. The first being – remember, mockers will always be here and back then they showed up in one way. In our day, they show up as another.
 - Today – as we can see interest in the Church and Christianity is on the decline, and that decline is directly tied back to prophecy.
 - A prophecy that says in 2 Timothy 4:3-4:

2 Timothy 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,

- We also know from other places in scripture, that in the last days the church will become apostate. (It will fall away). We are seeing that play out before our very eyes, and there may be no greater proof for all of us than this church you all are sitting in here today.
 - It was built in the 60’s and closed shop this past year.
 - That’s not a one-off situation. It’s happening all over this country. Churches are closing their doors.
 - Also, according to a statement by the Southern Baptist Convention, right now there are more churches who need Pastors than there are Pastors to fill the positions.
 - And – the seminaries are seeing a decline in attendance as well.
 - So, as you can see – based on God's prophetic word, we are at the end of the last days!
 - There is simply no way around it
 - But there is another reason, I mentioned Matt. 16:13-20, and it ties directly back to our discussion and teaching from last week – the discussion of Calvinism versus Arminianism.
- Jesus Himself makes it clear that God is the one who opens the hearts of men, and He explains why He set it up that way in Ephesians 2:8-10 – where Paul (once again says the following).

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of

yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;

Ephesians 2:9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

- So, whether you are an Arminian / Freewill person or a Calvinist, there is simply no debate on who does the work in the heart of men.
 - And as I said last week that statement along with the others I made previously, are not where the rub comes in between these two camps.
 - The rub comes in when the Calvinist says God doesn't open the eyes of everyone – meaning everyone doesn't get a chance.
 - Or if you are an Arminian you say everyone gets their eyes opened – everyone gets a shot, but's it's their choice.
 - That is where the two roads diverge.
- Now – I want to give you my personal stance on this issue because I think it's important where I stand on the whole thing. First – I want you to know that I will not make it a thing. Meaning I will not set up shop on one or two topics of scripture and then allow this church to be identified by those topics.
 - There is simply way too much work to be done for us to get hung up on a thing!
 - Let me also say, Churches love getting hung up on things. They love saying – I know something you don't know.
 - Or we got it right and you don't.
 - What they should be hung up on is doing the work of ministry in their everyday life, because the world does not care about all this stuff.
 - They are simply watching to see if your walk matches your talk – and that's the truth of the matter.
- But back to my view on this whole thing, I began in ministry as a hard core Arminian. So hardcore I would argue with you to the death over the topic.
 - Matter a fact, I couldn't believe anyone would believe anything else other than God opens the eyes of everyone.
 - Then I started studying and teaching the Bible, and slowly my paradigm began to shift. I could not deny the fact that most of the Scripture spoke of how God was Sovereign.
 - How He was in control and how He was the one doing the work!
- Now I wouldn't say I became a card-carrying Calvinist by no means. I will say however – the evidence for Calvinism is everywhere in the Bible.
 - But then – the more I studied I began seeing man's responsibility sprinkled in with God's Sovereignty as well.
 - Which led me to the place where I am today, which is in the center of the issue – with a Sovereignty leaning.

- I didn't say Calvinist leaning – because I don't believe everything John Calvin taught.
- And to be honest with you – I'm perfectly fine with whatever way it is.
 - If the Calvinists are correct – then it's okay with me.
 - And if the Arminians are correct – that works as well.
- Having said that, I will tell you that if the thought of either side of this debate makes you angry, you are approaching the topic with the wrong paradigm. And let me explain what I mean.
 - To the Arminians I say – If God came down to earth and held a press conference this morning and said, hey guys – the Calvinists are correct, especially as it relates to Salvation.
 - And if Jesus' statement made you mad or upset then you need to check your motive in believing what you believe.
 - Because for me I can truly say, I don't worry about it – and whatever God says I am good with it.
 - On the other hand, if God said to the Calvinist, the Arminians are correct, and Jesus words made them mad – then once again I would tell them to check themselves.
 - Check their heart and motive.
 - And I will tell you why, because no matter where you stand on this topic, what I can tell you is this – in God's dichotomy:
 - He is the Creator.
 - He is the Master.
 - And He is the one who sent His Son to redeem men back to Himself.
 - And it's God's Sovereign choice to do whatever He pleases.
- And so – if you close your eyes and imagine Jesus Himself telling you what the truth is, about anything, and it was opposite what you had been taught or believed your whole life, and if His words – in any way make you mad, then at the heart of your feelings – would be the issue of pride.
 - Meaning, the moment you get upset about what Jesus told you to be true, it's no longer about God – it's all about you.
 - And that is fact
- Which leads me to the issue: Becoming too dogmatic about either side of this topic. Specifically how it effects our approach to ministry.
 - You see – there is only one true way to approach ministry, and that's with humility – which is the absence of Pride by the way.
 - And you can only arrive at this place in your life, when you see yourself the same way Paul saw himself, or the same way Peter saw himself:
 - As a “Bond Servant” of the Lord Most High
 - A Bond Servant – A slave who earned his freedom but decided to stay with his master!

- Which means (once again), it's not about you, (your wants and your desires). Rather it's all about God, all the time.
 - His wants and desires. More specifically – it's all about “His Will”.
 - And let me explain what I mean as it relates to your work in ministry.
- You see – if I am an Arminian and I share the Gospel with someone, because I believe without me they may not get saved – I am totally wrong in my doctrine.
 - God is the one who does the saving – not us.
 - And if He intends on someone being saved, I assure you – He will save them with or without me.
- On the other hand, if I am a Calvinist and I say, Oh well, I am not worried about talking to that individual. God's going to save who He will save. Once again – my doctrine is all messed up, and I have fallen way short of the mark.
 - Because you see – in both these scenarios there lies a problem deep beneath the surface, and that problem is: you have put yourself at the center of the universe rather than placing God there.
 - The correct paradigm for both views is this –
 - The reason I tell people about Jesus, and the reason I live my life for Christ is so that God will use me.
 - Which by the way brings my freewill into the equation.
 - In other words, I have a choice whether I get in the game or not.
 - If I apply myself, if I work on myself, if I study, attend church – fellowship etc.
 - Then I will grow spiritually, and the result of that will be God will use me.
 - On the other hand, if I choose to do none of the above – God won't use me, but He will use someone else.
- The biggest take away I want everyone to get out of today's lesson, which comes from my nearly 20 years of Bible study and teaching is this: God is our Master, and we are His slaves.
 - And slaves don't have opinions. They simply do what they are told, end of Story.
- Now the harsh reality for most church people is that they have never been told that we are not the center of the universe in God's World.
 - On the contrary, the mainstream church has evolved overtime. Slowly twisting God's Word into telling us that God is our buddy.
 - That Jesus is a Genie in a bottle; ready, willing and able to grant our every wish.
 - That is not how the Bible describes God's relationship to His children, and it is certainly not how the Apostles describe or viewed themselves.
- And just so you know – when you fully grasp the concept of God being Lord and not my buddy, it is a very liberating feeling. Because – if you are an Arminian, you no longer must feel trepidation, about sharing Christ with someone.
 - You simply share and if they receive it – well then, to God be the glory!

- And if they don't, you move on because you're not responsible for the outcome.
- That doesn't mean that person won't receive Christ in the future, it just means God wasn't dealing with them in the moment you spoke to them.
- On the other hand, if I am a Calvinist – then I should be even more compelled to be a witness. Which remember isn't necessarily what I say, but rather how I live my life.
 - I should feel more compelled to grow in my spiritual sanctification so that God will use me.
 - Not just sit back and say, Oh well – God is going to do what He's going to do. Therefore it doesn't matter what I do!
 - You see – as I said earlier, many times – at the heart of this debate is nothing more than pride!
 - And honestly, I believe that is why God has allowed these two topics to remain a mystery.
 - To keep us on our toes and guessing.
- But in reality – we don't have to guess. We just simply need to let God be our Lord and Master. And then study His Word (His instruction manual), and then do what it says.
 - We should do that without any worry – as it relates to who gets saved and who doesn't.
 - Because the fact is, we simply don't know. Only God does.
 - And it's not our job to know. It's our job to do what He said in the Great Commission.
 - And what was that? Well, let me read it to you once again:

**Matt. 28:19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,
 Matt. 28:20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”**

- Now, here's what interesting about the “Great Commission”. If I asked 30 Christians, men and women who have been Christians for 10 plus years, to tell me what the Great Commission says – they will say it says “go tell” – meaning go tell people about Jesus.
 - But that's not what the Great Commission says. It says “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations”
 - And then in verse 20 it says, “Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you”.
 - So, what this tells us is that if we want to make disciples, we must teach them!
 - But teach them what? God's Word – which contains everything we are commanded to do.
- Now some might say, well preacher – are you saying we are not supposed to tell people about Jesus? Are we not supposed to share the Gospel?
 - The answer is yes you are – If that's the opportunity you've been given.

- But that's not what the Great Commission says. It doesn't say "Go Tell" them about Jesus.
- Now – using the rule of inference from Hermeneutics, which is one of the rules we learned last week, you could say – well it doesn't say that – but how can you make disciples if they don't first hear the Gospel – and become saved.
 - I would say you can't, but that's not what the Great Commission says.
 - And I have a theory on this, and I would like to share it with you.
 - Here's my theory: God is saving people each and everyday all around the world. Just as the Psalmist says:

Psalm 3:8 That salvation belongs to the Lord

Psalm 62:1 My soul waits in silence for God only; From Him is my salvation

- And what we know about believers (God's Children), is that the Bible speaks specifically of how some have been gifted in sharing the Gospel. Where others have not (per se').
 - I'm not saying only a select few can share the Gospel. I am saying that when some believers share the Gospel there seems (many times) to be a response.
 - Kind of like those who have the gift of evangelism.
 - And whether I am 100 percent correct on that concept or not – it doesn't really matter for the purposes of my theory, except as it relates to my next statement. And that is, God is Sovereign over salvation – it's His work.
 - But the mechanism that brings about conviction which leads to salvation is His Word!
 - That is a truth of scripture.
 - His Word is the mechanism He uses to save people.
 - It's not our personal testimony by the way.
 - This is a fact – just go study Paul and his encounter with the Philippian Jailer.
 - Paul (of all people) never uses his personal testimony as a means of leading the jailer to salvation.
 - He instead carries him to the scriptures.
 - The result was not only was the jailor saved, but his entire household was saved.
 - And this is the case found elsewhere in scripture as well.
 - Such as with Phillip and the Ethiopian Eunuch.
- So, what that tells us is: if we want to see people saved, and we want to see people become disciples, we as believers must learn God's Word.

- And then teach it to others – not just rely on our experiences with God as our proof that God is who we say He is.
 - The Bible gives us clear examples of how men are saved.
 - From those examples – we can know that salvation is a byproduct of conviction, which comes by way of His Holy Manuscript.
- And so, what we also know is that even though we don't have control over someone's salvation, we do have control over how much we study and learn and are able to share God's Word with other people.
 - Which (as I said) is the means by which people are saved.
- And so my theory is this – if we focus on our studies and prayer time with God, salvation will be a natural byproduct for some of those we encounter.
 - Or – on the other hand we could use the same ole method the church has been using for the last 50 plus years. Which is what?
 - Don't worry about knowing God.
 - Don't worry about becoming well versed in the scriptures.
 - Just go tell people about Jesus.
- And let me say one more thing about this method before closing this morning. That is, once a person is saved, the next step in their walk is to begin a journey of sanctification.
 - Which is growing and becoming more like Christ.
 - And when we do that – our lives begin to change. And we slowly become a witness.
 - All by how we act and conduct ourselves. By how we handle ourselves.
 - Especially – when the outcome is not in our favor.
 - It's easy to be all about Jesus when everything is going our way, but the true test comes when things aren't going our way.
 - That's when the world is watching.
 - And that's when God will give you the opportunity to be a better you – that's when your faith will be tested.
 - And that's when your testimony speaks the loudest.
 - And so – once again – as we have seen time and time again, all of this is cyclical: you study, you grow, you mature – you become!
 - Or another way to say it is, what you ingest – you eventually become!
- So – with all this in mind, where are we on this Calvinist versus Arminian topic?
 - I say, don't worry about it. Just get busy studying and learning and ingesting God's Word.
 - Then watch how God begins using you!
 - Amen – Amen!
- Come back next week – as Peter makes a shift in his subject matter once again as he

begins speaking more in depth about the earth and its purpose and how it all ties into the end of times.

- I'll give you a little cliff hanger for next week. We are going to be talking about a hot topic:
 - The topic of Climate Change.
 - And I think you'll find my research to be somewhat fascinating.