

"Boiling Point"

Peter is looking back over his life work. He has gone from a fisherman to an Apostle of Jesus Christ. He has experienced everything in his life that God had planned for him. Soon he would experience a death similar to Jesus. He would soon die for the faith, killed by those who hated him and hated Jesus. Church tradition is that he would soon be crucified but it would be done upside down.

As an apostle Peter has been entrusted to protect and guard the very foundation of the living church of God. He has been given the truth...everything that God wanted revealed to man...given to him to protect, record and pass on.

I imagine Peter at this point is not a happy man. It seems to me from reading and studying his words that he is seriously ticked off. He is 4+ angry.

His words in this chapter are full of righteous indignation, disgust, anger, fury....there are hundreds of adjectives we could choose....just pick one that has Peter about to explode and you will be close.

There are times in our walk with Christ when the most appropriate response to a situation is fully blown fury. In fact, one of the things that we have lost in the church today is anger at sin, indignation at rebellious hearts and the blood boiling response to circumstances that offend God and then us.

Paul tells us that we at times should be angry. In fact, if things that offend God don't offend us, that is a sin in and of itself. We are afraid as Christians today to get angry. We are afraid to offend people by what God has said is offensive to Him. We are more concerned about offending man than man offending God.

I love the response that the Jewish people had to things that offended God. They immediately separated themselves from the ugliness of sin. They tore their clothes...poured ashes on their head...stepped back with horror in their eyes and made sure that everyone knew that not only were they offended...but they were stepping back from the lightning bolt that they expected to strike. And it wasn't a joke. They were so offended by sin that they truly expected that person to be zapped by God.

If you were to take a first century Jewish person and put them on the strip in Las Vegas or the Red Light district in any city ...they would scream, run around like a wild man, tearing their clothes...moving from person to person...their eyes screaming "how can this be?" They would do everything in their power to escape...

Christians today walk by those things and ask, "Where do you want to go to dinner?"

In fact, Satan has so perverted our world that if we even hint that we are offended by sin...offended by the things that offend God...that we are out of control, intolerant and offensive ourselves.

A few weeks ago, I spoke of times I spent with my Grandfather sitting by a fire and listening to his stories.

One story that I remember is how he told me that his church has been in that city for over 50 years. They met every Sunday and Wednesday night. Well except for one Wednesday night when they decided not to meet at the church.

That one Wednesday Night the church decided that something was occurring in their community that they needed to shut down the church that night and go try to stop this offense from coming into their city.

He told me that there was a moral cancer moving across the country and if they allowed it to continue, it would destroy people and it had already deeply offended God.

In fact, this threat was so great that all the churches in town closed that Wednesday night and everyone...Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans, Episcopalians...even Catholics and those Holy Rolling AG churches...all came. Even in the south in the 40's this threat was so great that white and black men and women stood for God that night.

Their presence was so strong that night that there was almost no one who dared cross the line toward that sin.

What was the sin...that closed the churches...and brought together all followers of Jesus regardless of race or denomination? What was so offensive?

An attack my Grandfather said...at the core of our society...right downtown...in the middle of the business district...where children and young adults walk with their parents...out in plain sight for all to see....

Now surrounded by over 500 people who were on their knees praying...crying out to God to take away this offense from their community....was opening night at the movie theatre...of Gone with the Wind. **PHOTO 1**

They knew that God was offended that such filth would come to the movie screen. They knew that movies were becoming so popular that Satan would use them to destroy generations to come if the church stood silent.

Did you ever wonder why a line from that movie was so well known? It was so well known because all over the country churches in the 1940's were shocked and offended...the first curse word in the movies...

"Frankly my dear, I don't give a damn."

They understood back then that every time that word was used...there was an implied God as the subject of that term. The only place damnation came from was God. They were taking the name of Jesus...God's name in vain...right on the big screen...and pouring that filth into his community.

When people tell me that I am an old prude...with old fashioned ways...unbending and stubborn...I just think..You should have met my Grandfather. He actually knew how to be offended by things that offended God.

Jesus taught us that there are times when we should be fuming angry....when we see God's name..dishonored...we should respond in righteous indignation and anger.

John 2:13–14 (ESV) 13 The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there.

The Passover...one of the Highest Holy Days...a day when every Jewish man who was physically able must journey to the temple in Jerusalem to make the sacrifices for their family. To remember the blood shed the night the Israelites placed the blood of the lamb over the doorpost of their homes...so that God's wrath would pass over.

The city is overflowing...pilgrims from all over...all Jewish people at the temple. They came from all over...but they usually waited until they got to Jerusalem to buy their sacrificial animals...it made travel much easier and honestly it made the sacrifice a little easier.

But since they came from all over...they had to exchange their money...and they had to use that money to buy perfect animals for sacrifice.

Jesus taught that you can worship God or money but not both. These money changers were in the temple on the Holy Day...worshiping Money. They unfairly exchanged money and took advantage of people so they could profit. And it ticked Jesus off. He was furious.

In addition, those who sold animals tried to pass off blemished animals as worthy of the price of a perfect animal. They charged the price of a perfect animal but these animals they sold would be rejected by the priests and by the time it was discovered these folks were long gone.

Jesus walked in to the temple that day...saw not only what was going on...but saw what was truly in the hearts of these people...and He was furious. His anger was righteous...in defense of Himself...God.

Notice though, He is not out of control. We picture rage as a human...out of control...in need of restraint. God's rage is always measured...always the perfect degree of response to correct the situation...Human rage is out of control.

Jesus' response is calculated....

John 2:15 (ESV) 15 And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables.

Don't miss the symbolism here...Jesus made a whip of cords...in the temple....on Passover....and He used it...on people....who were bringing false lambs to the sacrifice.....

In a short time, Jesus would be on the other end of a whip of cords like that. The situation however would be reversed. Here we have Jesus...God driving sinful hearts and fake sacrifices out of His house...His temple...on Passover.

The first time a whip is used in the Temple of God it is by Jesus not on Jesus...It is righteous...not rebellious...it is measured not menacing and yet both are cleansing.

Soon these people would take the whip...and drive the pure and sinless lamb of God out of God's House...His temple...on Passover.

For our purposes here...God is showing us the contrast between a whip used in righteous anger to honor and defend God's name against sinful hearts....and a whip used in human anger to defend sinful hearts against God's name.

Paul said that we are to get angry...but not to sin in our anger.

Ephesians 4:25–27 (ESV) 26 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and give no opportunity to the devil.

But the story doesn't end here...there is another part of this story that is often overlooked.

Jesus shows us what it means to show restraint in the midst of anger...He shows us how God's wrath is always measured. How almost always those who are doing the right thing are protected.

John 2:15–16 (ESV) 15 And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. 16 And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade."

Do you see His restraint? Read it several times....

Jesus used a whip...with no warning.. and went after those who sold sheep and oxen and exchanged money....His wrath was poured out on these people whose hearts were focused on money.

But there was another group there that day. They sold pigeons. Pigeons were used for sacrifice only by those who were too poor to buy anything else. God had provided a way for those who were poor to still make a sacrifice. He states in Leviticus that two pigeons or two turtledoves could at times substitute for an unblemished lamb.

This grace given by God to those who were poor was well known to Jesus and His family. When Jesus as a baby was presented at the temple...notice what Joseph and Mary presented to God for the MESSIAH

Luke 2:22–25 (ESV) 22 And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") 24 and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."

This is another place where historical context opens up our understanding of God's truth.

There was no money in selling pigeons..they were everywhere....one thing that is rarely scarce in large cities are pigeons. Not easy to catch but they are everywhere. The people who sold pigeons knew that those who were going to buy them didn't have much money. Many were just too old to catch a pigeon on their own. So these people were providing a service...often taking only what someone could afford..which was usually nothing.

Interesting that when it comes to pigeons and turtledoves...I can find no where in Scripture where God says they must be without blemish. God wanted the poor to avoid being burdened by the sacrifice that was necessary for them.

In fact, if they could not afford pigeons, they often could offer a small amount of wheat. You see it isn't the amount of the sacrifice it is the heart behind the sacrifice.

You may remember the "mity" woman in Scripture as Jesus spoke of her heart in sacrifice.

Mark 12:42–44 (ESV) 42 And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. 43 And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. 44 For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

So Jesus' heart goes out to the poor. And it goes out to those who try to help them.

John 2:16 (ESV) 16 And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade."

Jesus is standing in the temple...furious in righteous anger...holding a whip...He is likely breathing heavy....beet red...sweating...the disciples are likely backing away freaking out that the Roman Guards will come...and in the midst of that event...He shows restraint...He told those who sold the pigeons...

Your heart is right...you are just in the wrong place.

He didn't turn over their tables...He didn't drive them out of the temple with a whip...the word told here is not in Greek implying screaming...attacking....Jesus simply spoke to them..Take these things away...let's not do this in my Father's house. It is not a place of trade.

Ok so I told you all of that to tell you this....When Peter is writing the Second Chapter of his Second letter...He is a lot like Jesus standing in the temple with a whip. His righteous anger is boiling and if this were in an email it would be bold....all caps...and in red.

These false teachers are coming into God's House....His sanctuaries and homes of the church of Jesus and trying to destroy the very foundation of the faith that Peter is about to die for.

2 Peter 2:1–3 (ESV) 1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. 3 And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

I think Peter is reminding himself and us as he writes that we need to let God handle vengeance. I believe that Peter wants to attack out of human rage and the Holy Spirit is restraining him. So he grabs his pen...and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit...remembers God's justice...vengeance and wrath.

Peter wants these people punished and punished now. Maybe you have been there....God what are you waiting on? Why do you let these people get away with this stuff? Zap them Lord!

I believe Peter, like David, is crying out to God...

Psalms 13:1–4 (ESV) 1 How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? 2 How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? 3 Consider and answer me, O Lord my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death, 4 lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him," lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.

But then David turns and essentially says...but I will remember...I will remember your steadfast Love Lord.

In the same way, Peter tells us an "if...then" story....His eyes are likely drifting back to His experiences with Jesus...He is telling us what He knows to be true about God.

If

2 Peter 2:4–10 (ESV) 4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment;

Apparently some fallen angels are in bondage while others are unbound and active in the earth as demons. The sin of angels can be thought of in two main ways: in the original rebellion of some angels against God, and in the sin of the "sons of God" described in Genesis 6.

Man is made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26) and angels are not. Satan and his angels resented this plan to create a being that would be more closely connected to God than they were.

Though mankind is beneath the angels in dignity (Hebrews 2:6–7a, 2 Peter 2:11), it is the job of angels to serve mankind. Satan and his angels resented a plan that would command them to serve lesser beings.

Redeemed mankind will be lifted in honor and status above all angelic beings (1 Corinthians 6:3; 1 John 3:2). Satan and his angels resented a plan that would glorify these lower beings to places above them.

At the same time, we cannot conclusively say we know why the angels sinned because the Scriptures do not give us more than hints

God did not refrain from punishing the angels when they sinned, but hurled them down into hell where they are kept chained in darkness, waiting for the Day when he will judge them.

2 Peter 2: 5 (ESV) 5 If he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;

Instead of the account of the murmurings of the Israelites in Egypt, which is found in Jude, Peter substitutes the story of the Flood, perhaps for the following reasons: 1. In various writings of that time, the Flood was closely connected with the fallen angels; in fact the flood was supposed to have been punishment that resulted from the activity of the fallen angels and their offspring. 2. It is likely that this choice was influenced by (1 Peter see 3:20). 3. The Flood story has overtones of the last judgment, since it reminds people of the end of the world. 4. Finally, the Flood account serves as a good example of God's act of punishing sinners and rewarding the righteous, and is therefore appropriate to 2 Peter.

The world before the flood is characterized as ancient. Peter seems to divide history into three stages: the ancient world, the present world, and the new world that will come about as a result of the day of the Lord. Ancient may be rendered as "a long time ago" or "many generations ago."

In the Genesis account Noah is described as a good man with no faults (Gen 6:9–10; 7:1). He is held up by Jewish tradition as an example of moral excellence. Noah then stands for those faithful Christians who will be saved from the judgment that is coming.

2 Peter 2: 6 (ESV) 6 if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly;

A third example is now given: after judgment by water, there is judgment by fire. The case of Sodom and Gomorrah is also found in Jude 1:7, but the differences are so significant that it is perhaps best to discuss the present passage separately.

God condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, causing them to burn until they were ashes. He made them a warning to people of what will happen to those who disobey him.

2 Peter 2: 6 (ESV) 7 and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked 8 (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard);

In this verse and the next, Lot is singled out to show that God does make a distinction between righteous and wicked people, and that he does rescue the righteous from danger.

Lot is here described as righteous, a word with many meanings but which in this context means "good" (TEV), "upright," or perhaps "doing God's will." Lot himself is not described as a good man in the Genesis account; in fact the actions recounted there show Lot not as righteous but as a person of questionable character.

Lot's attitude toward the conditions of his environment is now described: he was greatly distressed by the licentiousness of the wicked. This can be treated simply as a description of Lot or as a reason for Lot being regarded as righteous: he deserves to be called righteous because of his attitude toward evil; this latter possibility relates this verse to verse 8, which has further descriptions of Lot as a righteous man.

Alternative translation models for this verse are: (1) And if God rescued the good man Lot, whose heart (or, liver) was tormented by the indecent conduct of lawless men ... (2) God rescued the good man Lot, whose heart (or, liver) was every heavy when he saw the indecent actions of morally corrupt men. (3) God rescued Lot, who, because he was good, had a very heavy heart (or, liver) when he saw ...

While this good man lived among them, day after day (or, day and night) he was tormented in his heart because of their evil actions.

God judged the angels who sinned, so no one is too high to be judged. • God judged the ancient world before the flood, so God doesn't grade on a curve, only comparing man among other men. • God judged Sodom and Gomorrah, so even the prosperous can be judged.

Therefore the ungodly have no reason to think they can escape God's judgment. Their coming judgment is certain. As Jesus said in Luke 10:10–12, for those who reject the truth "it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom."

Then

2 Peter 2: 6 (ESV) 9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, 10 and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority. Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones,

Peter already told us how the Lord delivered Noah (2 Peter 2:5). Now, he shows us that the Lord delivered righteous Lot.

Lot was righteous in God's eyes, though perhaps it was hard for others to see his righteousness. Yet the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah tormented his righteous soul from day to day. Lot's soul was tormented, but he failed to follow through with godly actions and separate himself and his family from the ungodliness of Sodom and Gomorrah. The Lord delivered Lot because of his righteous soul; yet Lot lost everything else because of his too-close association with those wicked cities.

Even as the Lord delivered Lot, He knows how to deliver us from the temptations we face, and He knows how to reserve the unjust for the day of judgment. We can trust in God's deliverance of the godly because it is just as certain as His judgment of the ungodly.

The unjust have reservation made for them: they are reserved for the day of judgment. But believers have no such reservation. God will deliver us from the very day of judgment, from the very time of wrath that He pours out on the earth (Revelation 3:10).

Thirdly, the climax or main point of the section is in the last part, that is, in verses 9–10. After giving four examples from the past, the author then proceeds to draw a conclusion, namely, that God knows how to rescue the godly and how to punish the ungodly. It is therefore very important to make sure that the translation of verses 4–8 builds up to verses 9–10. In some languages it may be even more natural to put the main point at the beginning of the section. But this should only be done if it is really required by the structure of the language.

An alternative translation model for this verse is: Since the Lord has done all these things, this shows that he knows how to rescue good people from their sufferings, and to continually punish evil people until the Day of Judgment.

Immediately after this statement...That God rescues the godly from trials..and has punishment planned from long ago on those who defile in their passion and despise authority.....Peter goes into the 24 characteristics of these false teachers. He is venting at all they do...but reminding himself at the same time that God will handle their punishment.

We studied those last week. But let me remind all of us what Peter tells us about these false teachers. Now imagine Peter...with pen in hand instead of whip...almost tearing the paper with each stroke....furious in righteous anger...

Read 2 Peter 2-19

2 Peter 2:20 (ESV) 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.

This is one of the most hotly debated verses in Scripture. People far smarter than me have been arguing about it for 2000 years. This verse sounds like you can lose your salvation.

Rather than dive in to a long theological argument, let's just suffice it to say that I do not believe anyone who truly surrenders to Jesus and is reborn in the Spirit can become a spiritually reborn eternal fallen being. But with that said....

If this was the only verse that we had to go by...I would agree that we can lose our salvation. But none of that is Peter's point here.

2 Peter 2:21–22 (ESV) 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.

His focus is that in his anger...he can trust God...to punish those who need to be punished and save those who He chooses to save. Peter is saying what we all know to be true...

It is better to not know of Jesus at all than to know of Him and then reject Him.

2 Peter 2:21–22 (ESV) 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."

Pigs will be pigs

Jesus had a whip....Peter had his pen....both were furious...both were defending the name of God and neither sinned. They left vengeance up to God but they made sure people knew that when God's name is attacked they defend.

There was a time, not too long ago, when God's people remembered how to be offended in the name of Jesus. There are times when standing up for God is the right thing to do. When was the last time you got angry in Jesus' name? When was the last time people around you knew that you were offended? Do you have torn clothes in your spiritual closet?

We have been like those who play in the waves at the ocean. You start out just having a good time...you think you are stationary...but then you look up and the current has taken you way down the beach from where you started. That is what has happened to followers of Jesus.

We think we are holding our ground, but we are not standing against the cultural current.....slowly...almost imperceptibly....the culture moves us. We don't fight it...we aren't on guard...we think we are holding our ground....but we are literally being swept away. And by the time we wake up and realize it, we can't even see where we started from or how to get back there.

Let me remind you of a Jesus' prayer....."Hallowed be your name" To hallow something is to keep it holy or separate it or sanctify it. God your name...the name above all names...may it be held in the highest regards...God's name—His character and reputation—must be set apart as holy in this world, and that is what Jesus teaches us to pray for.

Jesus said that when we pray...one of the first and most important things that we must pray for...is that God's name is always holy....always protected...always set apart...never taken in vain...never shamed...never. The only people who keep God's name Hallowed on earth...are us. If we don't do it, no one will.

When was the last time you can remember taking a risk and standing up for God's name? The last time you had righteous anger?

We have to be alert to what is happening to God's name around us. It seems that you cannot watch TV for 15 minutes without being offended for God.

I am not suggesting that you make it your mission to get a whip, go on the offensive and attack everyone who doesn't honor God's name. Rather than go on the offensive...why not show you are offended?

Believers in Jesus need to learn again how to let people know how they feel about God's name being discounted, dismissed..or just dissed. When God's name is dissed....you should be....

Let me leave you with this final thought from Jesus....

Matthew 10:32–33 (ESV) 32 So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, 33 but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

Leave vengeance up to God....but when God's name is attacked...sometimes tables need to be turned. If you deny me on earth....I will deny you in heaven...Let's pray.