

Rescuer and Judge 2 Peter 2:1-10a

Prior to the start of the NFL, I read of an interesting story about the Seattle Seahawks.

- Because of Covid, teams were following strict safety measures, and the team hotel was locked down, keeping visitors out.
- But one Seahawks player didn't abide by the rules.
- He tried to sneak in his girlfriend ...
- Here's the amusing part: she tried to enter the hotel disguised as a football player!
- But it didn't work, as she was caught on video.
- And the player was cut from the team.

Dressing up like a team member doesn't make you a team member.

In 2 Peter 2, we read of false teachers who were trying to weasel their way into the church, "secretly bringing in destructive heresies."

They may have looked like spiritual leaders, but they were preaching another gospel.

- They're were on another team.
- Peter's warning is similar to Jude's warning, though not identical.

Jude 4: "For certain people have crept in unnoticed [False teacher's don't stand up and say, "Hey, I'm a false teacher, measure what I say by the truth of Scripture..."] who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into **sensuality** and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ."

Watch out for theological creepers!

- They "creep in."
- Reminds me of the old hip hop song, "I so I creep, and I'll keep it on the down low" TLC

This language is very strong.

- My title is "Rescuer and Judge" and there's a lot of **judgment** here.
- How many of woke up and wanted to hear about God judging the earth with a flood, or the fires of Sodom and Gomorrah; or how about Angels who committed sin with women and got caste into prison?
- It is shocking to our contemporary sensibilities.
- But like it or not, judgment is real and necessary because it is rooted in God's perfect justice and in his holy character.
- Behind Peter's words is the belief that God is sovereign and righteous.
- "The judge of the earth always does what is right."

And deep within us we want someone to set this world right.

- Dozens of movies express the desire for good to triumph over evil, like Star Wars, for example.

- God has planted a sense of justice in us.
- And his justice is actually a word of hope, like **Psalm 73** teaches us.

And knowing that perfect justice will prevail, we don't have to take vengeance ourselves, but we can leave it to the wrath of God; we preach the gospel and love our enemies, knowing that God will have the last word.

It's also tough teaching for many because in this relativistic, pluralistic culture, people do not like the idea of something being labeled as "heresy."

- But there is such a thing as heresy; as such a thing as truth.
 - Just believe "your truth" we hear.
 - We need the word of truth to build our lives on.
 - The word of truth is like a lamp shining in a dark place!
- Christians can disagree over matters that are not of first importance and still be in the category of orthodox. (Ordering of events of end times, gifts, predestination, etc)
- But **heresy is another gospel**.
 - It's gives no life; no salvation; no hope; only destruction and judgment.

But there's not just judgment in this chapter; there's also the message of **salvation**.
God is both rescuer and judge.

- He is the Savior who rescued the faithful in the past, and he will do so in the future.
- The gospel leads to rescue, heresy leads to judgment.

Let's look at the first ten verses today, and we will consider the second half of the chapter next week.

(1) False Teachers and Their Followers

(2) God's Judgement and Rescue

#1: False Teachers and Their Followers (2:1-3)

1: Peter starts with a **historical** note: "false prophets arose among God's people."

- These false prophets are put in **contrast to real prophets** mentioned at the end of chapter 1. **See 1:20-21**.
- God didn't call these false prophets and they didn't communicate God's word. (cf., Deut 13:1-5; Jer 23).

1a: He adds: "just as there will be false teachers among you"

- This speaks of the **inevitability of false teachers**.
- There's **realism about this**.
- There will always be **wolves in sheep's clothing, and sheep among goats**.
 - Matt 24:11, 1 Tim 4:1-5; 1 John 2:18-27; Revelation – 7 churches

He describes their actions in **three ways (1b-d)**:

1. **How They Work**: They "**secretly bring in destruction**."

- They **cover up how much their teaching differed from the apostle's instruction**.
 - i. False teachers often cite verses and use the language of the faith.

ii. They may even use the name **Jesus or Jehovah in the name of their cult.**

- They were promoting “**destructive heresies**” – teaching another gospel.
- History is filled with examples of such destruction on their followers (eg., **David Koresh**)

2. **Who They Deny:** They “deny the Master who bought them”

- They gave an **appearance** of belonging to Christ, but **denied him by their beliefs and actions.**
- Hey may be quoting Deut 32:6, as Moses uses similar language to simply refer to the saving God.
- The passage ends with “they despise authority” they despise the Lord Jesus.
- At the heart of our faith is the **Master, Jesus Christ.**
- **We don’t deny him, we adore him.**

3. **Where They’re Headed:** They were “bringing upon themselves swift destruction”

- He will elaborate on this more through the chapter.
- The point is clear, **false teachers were inviting God’s swift and severe judgment**, the same judgment that he will render to all who fail to embrace Christ as Savior and Lord.

2: He turns his attention next to those who follow their message.

- “**Many will follow their sensuality**”
 - This is anti-discipleship.
 - Everyone is following something or someone.
 - Despite their erroneous teaching, they are persuasive, and many will follow them.
- “**sensuality**” – a lack of moral restraint, usually a reference to sexual sin, and that’s probably the idea here.
 - Sexual license was a Main Street affair, normalized in this society, and the false teachers came up with some way to teach that it was okay.
- Often false teaching is motivated by not only greed and power, but also sexual perversion. Numerous cults come to mind in this regard.
- False teaching is self-focused — because it has no true Master, only self; and a self-centered theology leads to self-indulgent living.
- Whereas Christ-centered theology leads to Christ-like living.

2b: “because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed”

- The phrase highlights the contrast between the true gospel and the false gospel.
- We follow the way of truth, the gospel, which leads to salvation.
 - Calling it “the way” also emphasized that it’s a lifestyle.
 - We believe the gospel and walk in a manner worthy of it.
- Thus it is the gospel that is **blasphemed.**
 - What is sacred is trampled on.

2:3: He notes another motivation of these teachers: “**greed**”

- They have commercialized their religion, using fabricated stories to take people's money.
- They use people to satisfy their selfish desires.

2:3b: But these prosperity teachers will not escape punishment.

- Judgment is personified as “not idle” and “not sleeping”
- Don't interpret the delay of Christ's return and judgement the wrong way.
- God never slumbers nor sleeps.
- He is being patient, giving people time to repent.
- Don't sleep on his return. Don't sleep on judgment.

Know your enemy — game film.

Basketball, ankles taped, watching the film...

So it's a serious situation. Peter has taught us in chapter 1 the need to pursue godliness, and the truth of Christ return, rooted in the apostles eyewitness testimony and the Holy Scriptures.

- Now we see why he lead what that.
- These teachers denied both, and did not teach that which is consistent with biblical truth.

#2: God's Judgment and Rescue (2:4-10a)

- Verses 4-10a are one long sentence in Greek, structured as an “if/then” statement, with several “ifs” followed by a two part “then” in verse 10.
- The “ifs” Minor premises include three OT examples, the then concludes with the simple point that God knows how to judge and how to rescue.
- **Chronology:** Gen 6:1-4 (angels); Gen 6:5-9:17 (flood), and Gen 18-19 (Sodom and Gomorrah)
- **Locality:** Cosmic (Angels) to Widespread (flood) to Local (cities of the plain)
- **Theology:** His judgment and rescue in the past assures us of it today and in the future.
 - The false teachers were denying Christ's return and a judgment, **but Peter swats away this claim like Lebron James would swat down a shot by Danny Devito.**

Example 1: Fallen Angels (2:4)

Point: If God has condemned fallen angels, he will certainly condemn false teachers and their followers.

Genesis 6:1-4 – The nature of the angels' sin was marrying human women they found attractive and having offspring with them.

- It's a wild story, and is explained in several Jewish sources, as Peter may be drawing on 1 Enoch 6-21.
- According to this tradition, these angels taught these human wives all kinds of secretes and mysteries related to magic, medicine, plants and so on – and engaged in a lot of sexual immorality.

- They were supposed to teach for the benefit of humanity, but instead ended up bringing condemnation upon themselves.
 - Tartus --- a place of judgment (prison) for fallen angels.
 - A temporary place of judgment before the final judgment.
- So it was with these false teachers: instead of blessing people with teaching and leadership ability, they taught heresy and promoted sexual immorality.
- So if God didn't spare great and powerful angels, how much more will he judge these teachers?

Example 2: Noah and the Flood (2:5)

Point: If God didn't spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah with seven others, then he will certainly judge the false teachers and rescue the godly.

Judgment: "God didn't spare the ancient world..."

- After Genesis 6:1-4 (previous example) we read of rampant wickedness on the earth, and God chose to do what some people call "de-creation" by flooding the earth.
- This flood is used often as an illustration of God's judgment on sin.

Salvation: In his grace, God "preserved Noah, the herald of righteousness and eight others"

- Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and was righteous man.

He is called here a "herald" – one who proclaims the way of salvation.

- 2:21 – the gospel is called "the way of righteousness"
- 1:1: We have right standing through faith in our God and Savior Jesus Christ
- 3:13 – the new creation will be a place where righteousness dwells.

Just as Noah preached the gospel to those in his day, so now believers are called to announce the way of righteousness to the world.

- We tell the world to flee from sin and find refuge in Jesus Christ.
- As Noah said, "Get in the ark" we say "Get in Christ."
- You are only safe in Christ.
- There is no safety, no salvation anywhere else.

We can tell them there's a way to escape judgment and be saved, just like Noah and the seven others.

- This included Noah's wife, his three sons and their wives.
- They were a tiny minority of believers, just as Peter's readers were.
 - The godly are usually the minority.
- But God protected the eight, and he will protect his people today.

Example #3: Sodom and Gomorrah (2:6-8)

If God judged Sodom and Gomorrah, he will do the same thing to those who reject the gospel; and if he rescued Lot, he will rescue the righteous.

Judgment (6)

Peter sees the judgment against these cities (Gen 18:1-19:29) as a type (a divine foreshadowing) of judgment by fire on the last day (2 Pet 3:10-12).

- The false teachers were denying this truth.
- Sodom and Gomorrah was so wicked that God destroyed them.
- He turned them to ashes.
- Peter uses the word “**extinction**” referring to total destruction.
 - **You won't find their flag at the Olympics.** They don't exist any longer.
- This served as a warning of future judgment on the last day.
- Michal Green:
“There are curious parallels between our contemporary scene and Sodom, for that city was as famed for its affluence and softness as for its immorality—and, of course, like any men come of age, they thought they had outgrown the idea of God. They found out their mistake too late.”

This is a warning to us, and God's warning is a mercy.

While you have time, find refuge in Christ, and pursue godliness.

Salvation (7-9a)

Lot was Abraham's nephew (Gen 11:27) who settled near Sodom because the quality of the land (Gen 13).

- Some have questioned if Lot was truly righteous, given the sins mentioned in Genesis 19.
- The godly are not the perfect, but those who live by faith.
- They don't bring righteousness, they receive it by faith.

He was “**distressed**” by what he saw further points to his righteousness.

- The distress was caused by sensual conduct of the wicked
- Like the false teachers, those in Lot's day were characterized by sensuality.

8: “He was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless needs that he saw and heard”

- That is, the wickedness of the city tormented Lot as he lived among them.
- A characteristic of the righteous is that they're deeply bothered by wickedness.
- Further, Scripture distinguishes Lot from the cities of Sodom in that he received angelic visitors and attempted to protect them from harm – a very crucial and courageous action that stood in contrast to his wicked environment. These angelic visitors led Lot to safely out of the city, although his wife was turned into a pillar of salt (19:12-22).
- Despite his flaws, Abraham considered him righteous (Gen 18:22-23), and he did obey the angels, fleeing the city.
- Finally, Peter may also be relying on extrabiblical sources that gives more information about Lot's life.

Consider what **a beautiful picture of the gospel is here.**

- The text doesn't say that Lot was rescued because he was righteous.
 - These were not sinless men who earned salvation.

- Neither Noah nor Lot brought anything to the table
- Their rescue was due to the grace of God.
- Jesus doesn't save us because we're all cleaned up and deserve his grace.
- Noah and Lot—like Abraham—are OT illustrations of justification by faith.
- We are made righteous through faith in Jesus
- Paul: “found in him, not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through faith in Christ—the righteousness from God based on faith” (Phil 3:9).

So we learn from the past (Lucas):

From the fallen angels

1. No one is exempt from judgment.
2. Judgment, though delayed, is a reality.

From the flooded world...

1. God's inevitable judgment can be escaped.
2. We are to proclaim this salvation, even if people mock us.

From the filthy cities

1. The pattern of that judgment has been put on display.
2. Living a godly life in an ungodly world will be difficult, but it's worth it.

Peter's Summary of These Examples (2:9-10):

1. The Lord knows how to rescue the godly (v. 9a).

- “rescue” makes a link to Lot in 2:7.
- God **is** the rescuer!
- The godly are those whose lives are characterized by reverence and resemblance.
 - i. They revere God and seek to resemble his character.
- This is made possible because Christ has made a way for our sins to be forgiven; he's made it possible to be in a right relationship with God.
- Jesus is the Great Rescuer of the redeemed.

But there's more than rescue from judgment, and the enjoyment of eternal life; there's also rescue provided from “**trials**”

- Here the context is false teaching; they will be able to resist their influence.
- They can move forward knowing that God will see them through this trial.
- God's people can take comfort in the fact that God knows about their situation.

2. The Lord knows how to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgement. (v. 9b1-10a)

- He will punish in a partial and preliminary way before the final day of judgment.
- Those who reject God, who reject the gospel, are being kept for a day of judgment.

10a: He adds “especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority”

- This is another reference to false teachers.
- We have already spoken of their desire to indulge the flesh.

But he also says that they “**despise authority**”

- Which I take to mean They reject Jesus Christ.
- They don’t merely reject the Lord’s authority, they *despise* it.
- This regard him as having no value.

Reflections

So then, God is true to his character. He cannot deny himself.

- His track record is perfect.
- He has exercised just judgment in the past, and will continue to do so in the future.
- And He has always had a people for himself, who were rescued by grace.

For Christians, we learn several positive truths from Peter’s denunciation of these teachers:

1. Instead of denying the Master, let us devote our lives to following him!

- He bought us. We’re his!
- We don’t live like the cult followers who deny his Lordship, rather we embrace it.
- We don’t like secularists who try to explain the origin of the universe and the meaning of life apart from the supernatural.
- Our lives are to be robustly Christ-centered and Christ-exalting.

2. Instead of following destructive heresies, let us pay attention to the way of truth, as a lamp shining in a dark place.

- We’re like pilgrims traveling in the dark, headed home and the Scriptures show us the way.

3. Instead of denying the future return of Christ, let us live in view of it.

- Let us pursue godliness and reject sensuality.
- Let us set our hope on this coming.
- Let us remember that judgment is coming, and tell everyone, including our enemies, to find refuge in Christ.

4. Instead of operating in secret, let us gladly and publicly praise God, for rescuing us!

- He knows how to rescue — freely, fully, and finally.
- Praise be to who rescued us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved, Son.