

Title: The Lord Knows How to Rescue  
Date: 1/26/25  
Subject: The Lord knows how to and will rescue the righteous.  
Scripture: 2 Peter 2:1 – 10

The internet overflows with “How to” videos. Marie Kondo, the professional organizer, shows how to pack a suitcase. Food and entertaining magazine Bon Appetit has one on how to make 29 handmade pasta shapes. Martha Stewart and others show how to fold a fitted sheet. You can find a tutorial on how to parallel park. Not sure anyone needs that as the answer is: “Don’t. Drive around the block and keep driving until you find someplace else to park.” There are even “how to” videos about how to make “how to” videos.

I decided to do a search. I typed in “how to video on how to rescue godly people.” The search results were sermons and Sunday school lessons as well as motivational and inspirational talks. These focused on what people thought, but there wasn’t a “how to video” to instruct God about how to rescue godly people. He didn’t need one. He knew how to do it already. We’ll see that in our text for the morning.

READ 2 Peter 2:1-10A

#### 1. False prophets were a problem in the past

Even as God had prophets and teachers - Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, Micah - through whom he spoke, the Bible states the presence of false prophets. The prophets of false god Baal. Korah challenged Moses’ authority as the spokesman of God. 400 prophets of Israel advised king Ahab to attack the enemy (2 Kings 22). He liked what they said and hated the lone remaining prophet of the Lord because “he never prophesies any good about me, but always bad.” Prophets in Jeremiah’s day proclaimed peace (Jer 23:16, 17) and that captives would return from Babylon soon (Jer 28). Neither happened. The people of Israel were warned to not follow false prophets. The Lord God was testing them to find out whether they love him with all their heart and soul (Dt 10:12-13).

In Peter’s time there were the scribes and Pharisees who steadfastly taught that Jesus wasn’t the Christ. There were those who’d infiltrated churches to teach that people still had to submit to the OT ceremonial laws.

#### 2. false teachers will be a problem for the church

Jesus warned: “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves” (Mt 7:15. Also Mt 24:5, 11, 24; Mk 13:22). Warnings also came from Paul, John and Jude.

Some will be in the church. The apostle Paul warned: “I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard!” (Acts 20:29-31).

##### a. What false teachers do

--V. 1. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies. Heresy is “unorthodox religious opinion - opposed to commonly received doctrine” (Webster). Their teachings will deviate from the established Biblical truth about God, Jesus Christ and salvation.

They're stealthy in their approach. They won't be in your face. Think about a discussion with somebody on the best way to make a turkey. If the other person says you're dumb, dumb, dumb for what you think, how much likelihood is there that you're going to change your mind and agree with them? However, if they adopt a different approach such as talking about things where there's agreement like mutual enjoyment of turkey, ask questions and gently suggest this, that and the other thing, they have a much better chance of winning you over.

False teachers usually don't begin by attacking core beliefs: "Jesus Christ is the devil. Those who believe in him are doomed." As C. S. Lewis said, "Brass is mistaken for gold more easily than clay is." They begin by using Christian terms or things that sound Christian. They nibble around the edges even as the best way to break up a massive pile of ice under a downspout isn't to hit it right in the middle with a 9 pound sledge hammer because that would cause the hammer to bounce back.

They seek to induce doubt even as the devil asked Eve, "Did God really say? Have you considered...?" Then they gradually introduce ideas like Jesus was created by God and therefore not fully God but a god or that Jesus is just one among many gods. They use half-truths. They say God loves everyone, accepts everyone's lifestyle, so he'll take everyone to heaven and won't judge anyone except for the worst of the worst. They misrepresent who Jesus is. He's portrayed as a liberator and revolutionary so people should rebel against authority. Others hold Jesus was a good teacher and example just like the founders of other belief systems.

The ultimate heresy is denying the sovereign Lord who bought them. This doesn't mean they know Christ as Savior, have a personal relationship with him. Jesus' death paid the price for all people, but not all are saved because they don't place their trust in what Jesus has done. They deny God's work on their behalf.

There's a sense in which Jesus has become fashionable. Athletes give credit and honor to their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It's nice to hear and many of them are very sincere. However, there are athletes, celebrities, actors and musicians who invoke Jesus' name and wear Jesus' hats and t-shirts but communicate messages of immorality and vulgarity through their music, words, and lifestyle.

--False teachers exploit people because they're greedy. V. 3. They're self-serving. They focus on themselves. Greed refers to a desire for money. It can also mean they seek attention and popularity. Keeping the focus on money, they appeal to what people will pay for. It might be a new truth that's revealed, hidden codes in the Bible, stories about two gods - one good and one bad, or focus on angels, angels, angels. They proclaim what people want to hear as in "You can get to heaven by being good. Everybody is going to make it. You don't need to believe in sin or hell."

False teachers exploit through stories they've made up. The original word for "made up" is the word from which we get plastic. They craft fanciful fabrications that are deceptive. They look and sound appealing but don't provide substance or strength. It'd be like using plastic instead of steel for the girders of a skyscraper.

They aren't concerned for people's spiritual lives. Only after what they can get.

A New York City couple received in the mail two tickets to a Broadway hit. They were ecstatic because tickets were hard to get. They wondered who sent the gift as it arrived without a note. Whatever. They went to

the show and thoroughly enjoyed it. When they returned to their apartment, they discovered they'd been robbed. Valuable furs and jewelry were missing. On a pillow was this simple note: "Now you know."

b. many will follow their shameful ways v. 2

False teachers attract followers because they appeal to the baser instincts and desires of people. False teachers live immoral lifestyles and people will copy them. The non-Christian sees it as a way to experience life to the fullest.

The last phrase of v. 2 is difficult to interpret: "will bring the way of truth into disrepute." Disrepute is the easy part. It means Jesus Christ and his teachings will be spoken of in an evil manner, slandered, blasphemed, maligned and defamed. Who are the "many"? Is it false teachers and their followers who claim to be Christian so that people think they represent true Christianity that causes people to want to have nothing to do with Jesus because of their shameful behavior? Is it true Christians who copy the lifestyle of the false teachers and bring shame to the name of Christ?

Steven J. Cole, "These false teachers invariably cater to the flesh. They do not preach against sin. They do not mention divine judgment or hell. They avoid truths like denying yourself, taking up your cross, and following Christ no matter what the cost. Rather, they soothe people with uplifting thoughts about how much God loves you and wants you to have your best life now. If they ever mention the death of Christ, they say that He did it because He believed in your great worth. Now you need to believe in yourself and ask God to help you fulfill your dreams. People follow that kind of false teaching by the droves, because it feeds their pride" ([bible.org/seriespage/lesson-8-beware-false-teachers-2-peter-21-3](http://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-8-beware-false-teachers-2-peter-21-3)).

V. 10 informs us that false teachers, those who are evil, follow the corrupt desires of the sinful nature. They're ruled and dominated by their passions, desires and lusts. This includes but isn't limited to the physical. They're ruled by corrupt desires for power and position. The second part of the verse says they despise authority. The main authority in mind is God's authority. They essentially live their lives thumbing their nose at God and saying, "You have no control over me. I'm my own person. I'm the captain of my fate."

c. False teachers will be judged

Back to V. 1. They bring swift destruction on themselves. This doesn't mean it'll be immediate or even soon. Rather, when judgment happens either at their death or Christ's second coming, it will be sudden. They'll be thinking everything is going along wonderfully and then "BAM." They'll be judged much like Korah where the earth swallowed him up (Num 16). There wasn't time for him to change his mind and repent. Speaking in cosmic terms, anything that happens when people are alive is swift compared to the length of eternity.

V. 3 again uses the word destruction. It portrays the eventual doom in human terms. It hasn't been sleeping. It doesn't need to be aroused. The destruction is waiting for the right moment. The same verse also talks about condemnation. It's long been hanging over them. Judgment is coming. Play the theme from JAWS. When that shark started coming, you knew something bad was going to happen. It might not have been in that initial scene, but it was coming. The unrighteous won't escape judgment just because it's delayed.

The reason we can believe God's promise about future judgment is that there was past judgment. Three examples are provided.

v.4. Judgment of angels. These are the angels who participated in the devil's rebellion against God before Adam was created (Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28). Satan wanted to become equal with God. He and his army fought against the Lord and were defeated. These fallen angels were sent to hell where they are in gloomy dungeons awaiting the final judgment. The word for hell is Tartarus. This is the only time it's used in the Bible. The ancient Greeks conceived of a place where the most wicked spirits are punished.

John MacArthur gives a description of hell – “To live life without this hope (of going to heaven) would make life excruciating and unbearable. But what if everything in your life was as bad as it could be. Take everything bad that has ever happened in your life, roll it all into one experience, and make it permanent. All the pain, all the disappointment, all the failure, all the hatred, all the bitterness, all the fear, all the anxiety, and experience that to the full, and then add the fact that you have no hope. It will never get better. Such knowledge would compound and exacerbate your suffering exponentially. If you were in the severest torture and the most profound, relentless torment physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally, and you were suffering in all those things at the same time and knew there would never be one moment of relief, and that nothing would ever change...I just described hell. It is the place of the most profound suffering, compounded infinitely by the realization that it lasts forever, and nothing will ever change.” (sermon, A Testimony of One Surprised to be in Hell, Part 1)

v. 5. Judgment of the ancient world during the time of Noah. *Rabbi Yonatan Neril* writes that: “Jewish tradition says that a hundred and twenty years before the Flood, Noah specially planted the trees from which he would take the wood for the Ark...Some believe it took just 40 days for Noah to build it, some say 120 days, and others believe he had as many as 300 years” ([interfaithsustain.com/how-long-did-it-take-noah-to-build-the-ark-and-why-it-matters](http://interfaithsustain.com/how-long-did-it-take-noah-to-build-the-ark-and-why-it-matters)). Answers in Genesis believes it took Noah 50 to 75 years.

During that time people interacted with him and everybody came to the conclusion he and the God he spoke about didn't know what they were talking about. “Flood? That's nonsense.” The result: only eight people found safety on the ark. When the rains and flood came, some may have tried to cling to the ark or ride on top. It didn't work. They had to be inside the ark. Anybody who was on the outside of the ark was judged.

v. 6. Judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah. The people were completely wicked and evil. The sin most often thought of is homosexuality. The Lord also says the people were “arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me” (Ezek 16:49,50).

The Lord made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly. It was a warning shot for the people groups around them but also for people who've lived since then. Sodom and Gomorrah had burning sulfur rain down on them. Jesus used that imagery when warned about the fire of hell (Mt 5:22), an eternal fire (Mt 25:41), a blazing furnace (Mt 13:42), where the fire isn't quenched (Mk 9:47, 48). The punishment upon the people of Sodom and Gomorrah came suddenly and resulted in a permanent condition. The people of

Sodom and Gomorrah were permanently dead. The same will be true of the judgment of the unrighteous. They will be in a state of permanent conscious death and torment.

Even as we have illustrations of God's about punishment, we have illustrations of God's protection.

v. 5. Noah. He was a preacher of righteousness. He didn't merely undertake the task of building an ark to save all the animals God brought to him as well as his family. He spoke about God to friends, neighbors, onlookers, cousins and other family members. He declared what was right and how people could live rightly and be in a right relationship with God, how they could be saved from the impending judgment.

The main point about Noah isn't about Noah. It's that the Lord rescued him.

V. 7, 8. Lot. He's described as a "righteous man" with a "righteous soul." He was distressed and tormented by what he saw and heard. It's a little head scratching from what we know from the account in Genesis where it almost seems like he was content in that setting and didn't do much about it. Lot chose to live there, but he could have moved, but he decided to stay and subject his family to the horrible influence.

Yet Peter says he was righteous. He was delivered because Abraham prayed for the Lord to spare the righteous. We don't have all the facts the way God does. He's the one who's able to make a correct appraisal of each person. The point Peter makes about Lot is that God rescued him. The Lord sent angels to deliver him.

The reason the Lord tells us about the punishment of the unrighteous and the protection of the righteous is he wants us to have confidence in him. He knows how to do what he's doing.

v. 9. "The Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials." Some translations use the word temptations instead of trials. The two are somewhat interchangeable. The point is the godly will be delivered. It's to be understood as "out of" and not "away from" trials. We'll still have trials, difficulties and problems. Quite likely Noah heard people say, "He's crazy, delusional. He's not fit to be a parent. We should take his children away from him. He should be banned from the community."

God didn't intervene and prohibit anything bad from happening to them. God doesn't promise us that nothing bad will ever happen to us. Jesus gave a terse warning, "in this world you will have trouble" (John 16:33). Thankfully, that's not all he has for us. He promised, "But take heart! I have overcome the world."

God's rescue is like the destruction promised for the unrighteous in that it'll be swift. It doesn't mean it'll be immediate. It can be. And we're grateful for those times when God delivers us out of trials immediately. The deliverance that is ultimate and lasting will be swift and sudden. It will take place when Jesus Christ returns or if we die before his coming. God protects and preserves.

Meanwhile, "The Lord knows how to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment." They're in a bad place now and they'll be in an even worse place at the final judgment.

What situation are you in – ready for rescue or being held for judgment? There's still time to know you'll go to heaven, but don't wait. Today is the day of salvation. No one is guaranteed another day or hour. I invite you to place your trust in Christ to save you.

Second, what's our level of concern for the people who will face judgment and be condemned to hell?