

The Lord Knows How

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[0 : 00] 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.

! And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. 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.

Thank you, Evan. Father, we are grateful for the privilege of gathering together. We're humbled that you have called us together, that you've given us a place to gather, that you have grown our love for one another in such a way that we would desire to be together and stick together and get to know one another and care for each other and walk with each other through good and bad days and all the ordinary days in between.

Thank you for your kindness to us. Thank you for the privilege of lifting our voices and worshiping you. Thank you for these songs that Sarah selected today to help us center our attention on you and to focus, focus on you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Indeed, indeed, we can say, as we have already celebrated together, to God be the glory, great things he has done. Behold our God.

[1 : 23] That would be our desire this morning, Father, that we behold you. So would you help us in this text, as we consider this early portion of the second chapter of 2 Peter.

We want to hear those things that you would say to us today, that you want for us today. Would you please help us to hear and to believe and to obey what your word tells us.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. In the early 1950s, Ron Popeil created the first infomercial.

It was a one-minute black and white ad for a chop-o-matic. It's a vegetable or a gadget that you could use to dice garlic and vegetables.

You probably have a knockoff of this in your home. I know that we do, or at least we did. That \$500 commercial brought in millions of revenue, in revenue, and it launched Popeil into a household name status.

[2 : 31] And then over the next, get this, five decades, five decades, Ron Popeil launched a parade of as-seen-on-TV products.

Products like Mr. Microphone, and the Smokeless Ashtray, and the Inside the Shell Egg Scrambler, and my personal favorite, GLH-9.

Great-looking hair, formula number nine. You spray it on your bald spot, and it makes your bald spot disappear. According to his website, Popeil was, quote, On more channels, for more hours, in more markets, for more years, than virtually any other TV celebrity.

His charming and his over-the-top style helped make phrases like, Set it and forget it, set it and forget it, but wait, there's more, and I'm going to give you the secret.

The industry doesn't want you to know part of our American culture. Some of Ron's inventions were genuinely practical, like the rotisserie oven and the food dehydrator, but others, like the pocket fishermen, were a bit more gimmicky.

[3 : 52] I mean, I don't know about you. Isaac, I checked with Isaac before worship today. He said, this fishing pole is no good. This is, you are not going to be able to cast, he told me.

And so he said, this is not a thing that would be a really great product. But the thing is, it folds up, you know? It folds up. And I could see this being very handy, you know?

If you are ever, like, the Philip, and you're just on some lonesome road, and the Ethiopian eunuch happens to come by, and you're like, We should go fishing.

You have this pocket fisherman in your glove box. It's amazing. Glove box. There it is, right into the glove box.

It's a little more gimmicky. Popeil did not seem to mind being the punchline of a joke. He embraced the spotlight, even if some people saw him as more of a con artist than a marketing genius.

[4 : 59] But he made a living, a good living, according to his website, selling head-shaking solutions to everyday problems. His infomercials were flashy.

They were over the top. But they were entertaining. And at the end of the day, nobody's soul was at stake if you bought the pocket fisherman, and it didn't work out the way you hoped. Incidentally, you can still buy the pocket fisherman.

It's 31 bucks. I did not purchase one yet, but I may, just so that I have one if I'm ever in need to go fishing. You guys know that's my thing.

Now, false teachers, on the other hand, sell something that is far more dangerous. And many people, according to our text, buy it.

Instead of just selling some gadgets that perhaps make dinner easier to prepare, they offer false assurance. And they are peddling lies that make godliness optional and future judgment irrelevant.

[6 : 02] And unlike Ron, these dangerous deceivers are not just on late night TV. They are in the church. It is likely that false teachers are the source of the accusations against the apostles in chapter 1, verse 16.

Let me remind you of what we read there. Chapter 1, verse 16. Peter says this, We did not follow cleverly devised myths. The accusation from the false teachers is that the apostles are pitching stories.

They're myth-making. Everything they're saying about the future return of Jesus is all made up. They're cleverly devised myths. Peter denies that. And then after reminding the believers that Scripture is totally trustworthy because it is based on eyewitness testimony and because it is divinely inspired, Peter draws this sharp contrast beginning in chapter 2 and verse 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, and many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed, 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. Consider the profile of a false teacher.

[7 : 56] First of all, they are within the church. Do you see that there in your Bible? False teachers will be among you. We don't know for sure why Peter shifts from false prophets to false teachers.

It may be that these people who have arisen from within the church are not claiming to have any special authority. And it seems that they are also not hiding what they teach, but rather the degree to which it disagrees with the apostles' teaching.

If Jesus is not returning, then there is no foundation for Christian ethics. There is no motivation for godliness.

If Jesus is not returning to save his people and to judge his adversaries, then you might as well just go ahead and get everything you want out of this life, because this is the only life you're going to get.

So do whatever satisfies your cravings, whatever feels good in the moment, whatever makes you happy, without regard for what it does to those around you, if Jesus is not returning.

[9 : 12] But be warned. If you follow this type of destructive heresy, there will be serious consequences. Notice in your Bible, they are looking forward to swift destruction, eternal judgment.

If you're taking notes, that word destructive or destruction, three times in those verses that we read together. Now, if that type of judgment seems extreme, then please call your attention to the magnitude of their error.

These false teachers are denying the master who bought them. What does that mean? It sounds like you can be bought, receive salvation, and then you can deny the one who bought you.

Some argue that the word bought here, when Peter uses it, is only figurative language. Perhaps he's just sort of waxing poetic.

However, waxing poetic, not poetic, what in the world? Waxing poetic. However, however, being bought or being redeemed in the New Testament is always associated with salvation.

[10 : 41] So I don't think that's true, that Peter is just waxing poetic. Some believe that Jesus bought everyone. In this way, his death could save everyone, but doesn't actually save anyone.

This is sometimes called unlimited atonement. But Peter is describing very specific people, church members, who now reject the gospel.

And so I think that interpretation is also not helpful for us. The plainest reading here is that you can be bought and then deny Jesus and lose your salvation.

But we know better than that, don't we? That interpretation that you could be bought, receive salvation, and then somehow lose your salvation rubs up against a long line of other scriptures, including the words of Jesus in John chapter 6.

Scripture is clear. Those who are called by God, those who are given new life by the Holy Spirit, those who come to Jesus by grace, through faith, cannot lose their salvation.

[11 : 59] Rather than any of these interpretations, I think we should understand Peter's language as describing what can be observed about these false teachers rather than what is actually happening inside of them.

This is sometimes called phenomenological language. I didn't know that, but I learned that word this week and it is fun to say. Phenomenological language.

Now, if you look at these false teachers, what could you see? If you observed them, what would you notice? They profess faith.

Perhaps they were baptized. They're active in the church. They seem to love God. They are respected. They are even teaching others. From everything you can see, they look like a follower of Jesus, like one who has been bought.

But over time, it becomes clear. They have not been bought. They are wolves in sheep's clothing, not followers of Jesus.

[13 : 17] When they give up any effort towards godliness, they deny the one who they claim has bought them. Their teaching is attractive and it's subtle.

And so many follow their ungodly example. And as a result, Peter says, the way of truth is blasphemed. Outsiders, people who are not yet Christians, people who do not believe in Jesus, they're looking at what is happening and they're saying, if that's the kind of behavior that comes out of that church, then that can't possibly be from God.

The way of truth is blasphemed. They're just a bunch of hypocrites. They're no better than the rest of us.

This is the result of a set it and forget it kind of faith. The kind of faith that is pious passivity, a let go and let God mindset where you want a resurrected Savior but not the returning king.

These individuals are not merely misguided. They are not selling something gimmicky like hairspray for bald men. They are intentionally exploiting God's people with made up stories.

[14 : 49] Look in verse 3. Fabricated words. Peter says, we're not the ones telling you stories. The false teachers are telling you stories.

Why would they do this? What would ever motivate these false teachers to do this? Peter says, it's because they're greedy. And because of their greed and their godliness, these false teachers will be judged when the event that they deny actually happens.

That's Peter's warning. How can you be so sure that these false teachers will be judged?

Well, because God does not change. And he always eventually judges the ungodly. Peter offers three examples. First example, God did not spare angels when they sinned.

chapter 2, verse 4. 4. 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 judgment.

[16 : 11] This likely refers to that text from Genesis chapter 6 where the angels crossed boundaries, took women for themselves, and then spread corruption throughout the earth.

God has those angels confined and restrained. Their sphere of influence and operation has been restricted and limited.

They are awaiting the final day of judgment. Second example, God did not spare the ungodly in Noah's day.

Verse 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.

Third example, God did not spare Sodom and Gomorrah. Verse 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.

[17 : 27] During the time of Abraham, Sodom and Gomorrah were well known for their sexual corruption, for their pride, for their gluttony, for their selfish neglect of the poor.

And so God rained down sulfur and fire, reducing those cities to ashes. And he sets an example for the nature of the judgment that hangs over the heads of these ungodly false teachers.

Notice how Peter's logic works. If God did not spare sinful angels, if God did not spare those who are outside of the ark, if God did not spare the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, then, verse number nine, then the Lord knows how to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment.

judgment. And especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.

Those who exploit others with made-up stories, denying the truth of scripture, those who appear to be Christians by what you can see and hear and observe, but they deny the life-changing power of the gospel.

[19 : 06] Those who are among you, Peter says, but verse 10, they go all in after the flesh in a passionate longing for defilement.

They may seem to prosper, but God has his eyes on them. And like Sodom and Gomorrah, and like the ungodly who drowned outside the ark, and like the angels who sinned, God knows how to keep the unrighteous, false teaching, faux believers under punishment until the day of judgment.

judgment. Now, if this is all that we say about this text, I think we have correctly identified the clear warning for false teachers and those who would follow them into ungodliness.

But wait, there's more. let's remember who Peter is writing to. Verse 1, there will be false teachers among you.

He's writing to the church. This church has a growing knowledge of Jesus, chapter 1 and verse 3. Not only that, they know the truth and are established in it.

[20 : 46] Chapter 1, verse 12 and 13. Peter just wants to stir them up by way of reminder. There will be false teachers among you and God knows how to deal with them.

But remember verse 5, although the ancient world was destroyed, God preserved Noah.

Peter tells us he's a preacher of righteousness. He's urging others to repent, believe God's word of coming judgment, and get themselves in the ark.

When you read the Old Testament text, Lot doesn't seem like the most admirable guy, does he? He is definitely not the type of person that you are leaving your children or your daughters with.

But here, in the New Testament, three times Peter tells us, uses the word righteous in association with Lot.

[21 : 55] Look at chapter 2, verse 7. And if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked, 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.

false teachers are doomed like Sodom. But God rescued Lot.

I'm going to give you the secret that the devil does not want you to know. Notice how Peter's logic works the second time.

if God preserved Noah, if God rescued Lot, then, verse number nine, the Lord knows how to rescue you.

You, you, church, you who are growing in your knowledge of Jesus, you who know the truth and are established in it. If God preserved Noah, if God rescued Lot, then, the Lord knows how to rescue you, church, because by God's grace, you are the godly, in verse nine.

[23 : 39] God's grace, you are the Lord, and the Lord knows how to rescue you from the trials that arise from false teachers and false teaching.

Scripture is totally trustworthy, thee. But not all prophets, not all preachers, not all teachers, not all pastors, not all elders handle it rightly.

Some may try to exploit you. They may offer you lies disguised as truth, like fuzzy hairspray to cover up your bald spot.

Some teachers will tell you that the truth costs nothing, demands nothing, and charges nothing. That's not the gospel that Peter is telling.

When those who bring shame on the testimony of Jesus get away with it, when they get promoted, when they are respected, when they get greater and greater opportunities, greater and greater authority, greater and greater leadership, that's hard, isn't it?

[25 : 01] that's hard. Don't confuse God's patience with tolerance. I urge you not to be among those who follow false teachers into ungodliness.

I want us to know the truth that sets us free so that we can spot the error that will lead us astray. But I don't think that this means we need to constantly be looking over our shoulders for the next boogeyman false teacher who is coming after us.

That's not the main point of this text. Peter wishes to stir you up by way of reminder.

He wants to see you moving in faith by remembering this truth. The Lord knows how to rescue me from the trial of false teaching and the influence of false teachers.

Do you believe that? do you believe that the Lord knows how to rescue you? Perhaps like Noah you are in the minority.

[26 : 22] One of just a few that you know who are firmly committed to following Jesus. Maybe like Noah you have shared the gospel faithfully for years and yet despite your efforts wickedness only seems to increase.

and you wonder is it worth it? Is it worth it to follow Jesus? And then you hear or you read a persuasive person who says you just need to stop trying to be more godly.

Just let go and let God. God. As the Lord preserved Noah God will preserve you through that trial of false teaching.

Perhaps like Lot your path of following Jesus has not looked like a really great prophet chart. Perhaps your path of following Jesus looks a lot more like the Candy Land board game.

lots of twists and turns and ups and downs and moments of faith and moments of doubt. You're not alone. You've seen temptations.

[27 : 35] Maybe you've heard grace twisted into permission to sin and maybe you've even given in to those temptations. Perhaps your soul is distressed.

as the Lord rescued righteous Lot God will rescue you from that trial of false teaching.

Because God ruins the rebellious and rescues the righteous. So persevere in faith as God preserves you by grace.

Perhaps like false teachers you have been among God's people. Maybe you can quote the gospel. Children I know this is true of you.

Maybe you can quote the gospel. Maybe you serve in some capacity in the church. Maybe you've changed how you talk or how you act in order to fit in with followers of Jesus.

[28 : 46] But you know I have not been born again. I am not a Christian. Here is God's promise to you. The Lord knows how to rescue the godly.

But the only way to be counted among the godly is to have the righteousness of Jesus. You can't earn that righteousness by cleaning up your act, doing more, trying harder.

You must receive this righteousness by faith as a free gift of grace. Today, today, before the judgment comes, turn from your sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

God's truth. What do we do in a world full of rebellion, full of deception? What do we do?

Brothers and sisters, immerse yourself in God's truth. Test everything you hear against the scripture. Don't be swayed by charisma or convenience or crowds.

[30 : 04] When you feel exhausted, and frustrated and shocked at the latest scandal coming out of the big C church, remember, the Lord knows how to rescue the godly.

Since God did not spare the ancient world, but infinitely more importantly, since God did not spare his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

God ruins the rebellious and rescues the righteous, so persevere in faith as God preserves you in grace.

let's pray. Let's pray. Father, we are grateful to receive your word. I'm grateful for this text that at the start of this week felt very confusing and overwhelming, and in your kindness you have helped me to understand and to try to sort through it and you've shown me things that I wasn't thinking about and your spirit has opened up an understanding so that I can make sense of it and other faithful brothers and sisters who write about these things have done the work that they've done.

You've been so kind to open your word to me and I'm so grateful for the privilege of opening your word to your people. Father, would you please take whatever is true, whatever is helpful, whatever is wise, whatever is going to grow our faith and our knowledge of Jesus, would you please take that and settle it deep in our hearts?

[32 : 09] And whatever was not helpful, whatever was confusing and distracting, whatever was taking away, what you wanted us to hear today, would you please just take that away from our minds and cause us to reflect and to think about the most important truth, that the Lord knows, the Lord knows how to rescue the godly.

Thank you for making us godly, not in ourselves, but in the righteousness of our Savior Jesus. Lord Jesus, thank you for taking our sin, our shame, our place, thank you for bearing up under the wrath of God, so that we could know only forgiveness and mercy and grace and reconciliation and adoption.

Thank you for calling us to faith, and thank you Holy Spirit for urging us to supplement our faith with virtue and knowledge and self-control, brotherly kindness and love.

Please help us as we continue in our time of worship, as we gather around the bread and the cup, and we remember again the great cost of our salvation.

Thank you for your grace that is still sufficient for us. We ask all of this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

[33 : 43] Thank you.