

CONQUERING THROUGH CONFLICT

A Study of 2 Peter

STUDY FIVE

The God of Wrath and Rescue

2 Peter 2:4–11

The Bible delivers the bad news about all the evil in the world. But it also reveals the good news—what God plans to do about it.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

IF all we knew of the world was what we heard in the news, we'd probably conclude that humanity is in irreparable shape. Reports of wars, scandals, homicides, and corruption fill the headlines, and no one knows what to do about it. The situation can feel hopeless.

The good news, however, is that God is doing something about humanity's problems, and His plan is rooted in His nature. On the one hand is *God's compassion*. Jeremiah took heart when, after Jerusalem's downfall, he remembered:

*The faithful love of the LORD never ends!
His mercies never cease.
Great is his faithfulness;
his mercies begin afresh each morning.* (Lamentations 3:21–23)

Darkness may cover the landscape, but all is not lost. Lighting up the horizon is the hope of God's mercy—as well as the promise of *God's judgment*. God does not look the other way when people wrong one another and when evil corrupts His creation. His love demands justice, and we can be certain that He is in the process of setting things right.



The God of Wrath and Rescue

2 Peter 2:4–11

In Peter's day, false teachers had slipped into the churches like wolves, preying on the vulnerable sheep. That was the bad news. In *2 Peter 2:4–11*, Peter offered good news based upon both God's compassion and judgment—the same divine attributes that give us hope as well.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Come near to our compassionate Lord in prayer as you begin your study.

Father, You alone are worthy of dispensing justice in our world. I trust You to judge rightly, knowing that You are holy and good. Still, my heart breaks for those I love who don't know You yet. Reveal Your heart to me through Your Word and help me rest in the wisdom of Your ways. In Jesus' name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

So far in Peter's indictment of the false teachers in *2 Peter 2*, Peter has listed four charges against them:

1. Deceitfully teaching heresies (*2 Peter 2:1*)
2. Denying Christ and His work of redemption (*2:1*)
3. Luring the weak into immorality (*2:2*)
4. Conning church members out of their money (*2:3*)

Now, in our passage for this *Searching the Scriptures* study, the apostle cites precedents from the Old Testament regarding how the God of wrath and rescue plans to judge these false teachers while preserving the faithful.



The God of Wrath and Rescue

2 Peter 2:4–11



Observation: Judging the Wicked, Rescuing the Righteous

Observation helps us see what the biblical text is saying before we jump to conclusions about its meaning. Read *2 Peter 2:4–11* in the *New Living Translation* and the *New American Standard Bible*.

The NLT divides the passage into shorter sentences, making it easier to digest. But the NASB reflects the actual grammatical structure of the Greek text—2:4–10a is one sentence!

Peter hung his substantial sentence on an “if-then” literary framework. Write down the phrase immediately following the “ifs,” which lead to the concluding “then” in 2:9.

“For if God did not spare _____ **even the angels who sinned** _____” (2:4 NASB)

“and did not spare _____” (2:5 NASB)

“but protected _____” (2:5 NASB)

“and if He condemned the cities of _____” (2:6 NASB)

“and if He rescued _____” (2:7 NASB)

“then the Lord knows how to _____” (2:9 NASB)

With this structural overview in mind, let’s observe the specifics.



The God of Wrath and Rescue

2 Peter 2:4–11

Examples of Judging and Rescuing—2 Peter 2:4–8

Use the following chart to record what Peter said about those God judged and those He rescued. Also, read through the Old Testament passages that give the context for Peter’s comments.

Verses	Judged	Rescued	Context
2:4		N/A	<i>Genesis 6:1–2; Jude 6</i>
2:5			<i>Genesis 6:5–22</i>
2:6–8			<i>Genesis 19:1–16</i>

Summarize what you observed about the kinds of sins Peter referenced that led to God’s judgments.



The God of Wrath and Rescue

2 Peter 2:4–11

Why did God show mercy on those He rescued? What spiritual quality did they possess, according to *2 Peter 2:5, 7–8* NASB?

According to *Romans 4:1–5*, Abraham possessed the same quality. How did he receive his righteousness? How do we receive it?

The Lord knows how to rescue the godly. If He could preserve Noah and if He could rescue Lot, He knows how to rescue you as well. The secret is that you are rightly related to Jesus Christ. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



The God of Wrath and Rescue

2 Peter 2:4–11

Peter's Conclusion—2 Peter 2:9–11

In light of how God judged some and showed compassion on others in the past, what conclusion did Peter draw in [2 Peter 2:9](#)?

But the apostolic prosecutor wasn't finished. What further charges did Peter level on the false teachers, according to [2:10–11](#)?

Peter was on a truth-telling mission. He tore off the masks of the false teachers to expose the hideous nature of their sin. Let's look closer at the extent of evil that prompted the judgment of God.

God's judgment, which is as certain as His compassion, will result in the punishment of all unbelievers. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



The God of Wrath and Rescue

2 Peter 2:4–11



Interpretation: The Extent of Evil and the Nature of Judgment

The *interpretation* of this passage plunges us into the depths of evil where we witness the awful fate God has in store for those who reject Christ and His offer of salvation.

Review the extent of evil displayed by the sinning angels, the wicked people in Noah's day, and the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, particularly in [Genesis 6:4–5](#); [13:12–13](#); [19:1–11](#) and [Jude 6](#).

How would you explain *depravity* based on these examples? For help defining this doctrine, consult your Bible-study resources or the entry on "[Depravity](#)" in the online *Encyclopedia of the Bible* at [biblegateway.com](#).

What destiny awaits fallen angels? Peter wrote that God threw the sinning angels "into hell, in gloomy pits of darkness, where they are being held until the day of judgment" (2 Peter 2:4). The word for "hell" in Greek is *Tartarus*. According to Pastor Chuck Swindoll, Peter used this term to designate

a deep, dark holding place for wicked spirits that prevents them from having any contact with or influence on the world. Like a cross between solitary confinement and death row, Tartarus is the place where the most wicked spirits await judgment.¹

The evil spirits in Jesus' day pled with Jesus not to send them to this awful place. What did they call it in [Luke 8:26–33](#)? Where will Satan be cast at Christ's return, according to [Revelation 20:3](#)?



The God of Wrath and Rescue

2 Peter 2:4–11

What is the final destiny for evil spirits and Satan, according to *Revelation 20:10*?

So, what conclusions can you draw from these two aspects of hell—the abyss (Tartarus) and the lake of fire? How are they similar and different?

What about the destiny of unbelievers? Let's examine Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus for the answer.



Correlation: Judgment for Unbelievers

The rich man in Jesus' parable lived in luxury, but his heart was cold and hard, evidenced by his lack of compassion toward poor Lazarus. Upon death, each man's position reversed. To what place did God take Lazarus' spirit and to what place did God send the rich man's spirit, according to *Luke 16:22–24*? What did the men experience?



The God of Wrath and Rescue

2 Peter 2:4–11

Jesus' parable illustrates what believers and unbelievers can anticipate in the afterlife. Those who put their faith in God's Son who bore the judgment for their sins will immediately enter the presence of God (2 *Corinthians* 5:8); however, "whoever does not have God's Son does not have life" (1 *John* 5:13). Like the rich man, their spirits remain in torment in the place of the dead called "Hades" (Luke 16:23 NASB), awaiting resurrection and final judgment.

What will happen at the final judgment described in *Revelation* 20:11–15?

The purpose of Peter's sobering tour of the afterlife was to impress upon us the reason not to follow false teachers. Peter was saying, *Don't link up with those whom God condemns. You won't find life in those who are spiritually dead.* Peter's warning is equally relevant in our world in which false teachers still deceive many.



Application: Encouragement and Exhortation

Peter encourages us to remain faithful as we await God's *certain rescue*. In his mercy, "The Lord knows how to rescue godly people from their trials" (2 *Peter* 2:9). We are safe in Christ. "For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 *Thessalonians* 5:9). How does this truth encourage you today in your trials?



The God of Wrath and Rescue

2 Peter 2:4–11

Likewise, Peter exhorts us to warn unbelievers about God’s *certain judgment*. Just as Jesus foresaw Jerusalem’s fall and wept over the city, we also weep for those who reject Christ’s mercy. Use the following space to pray for those you know who need Christ.

Jesus satisfied God’s wrath by bearing “our sins’ in his body on the cross” (1 Peter 2:24 NIV). Judgment for believers is behind them; however, judgment for unbelievers is before them. Keep looking for opportunities to speak the truth as Peter did to those who need to hear it. Never stop praying with hope for their salvation.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, Your Word is the light that cuts through the fog of popular false teaching that permeates our world. Through Your Spirit, help me discern truth from error. Keep my heart tender toward those who do evil and speak lies, for their judgment is near. May I always see others through Your tears of compassion. In Jesus’ name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on James, 1 & 2 Peter*, Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: 2015), 326.

