

It's Just Divine  
II Peter 2:9-10a

Pain is something we all try to avoid – at all costs. I don't like pain and if I were a betting man I'd say that you don't like it and try to avoid it as well. We don't like the trials that bring the pain.

It can be physical like when we get injured. Hitting a thumb with a hammer is not pleasant.

Stepping on a bee while barefoot, only to get stung, is not enjoyable.

Slipping on ice and injuring your shoulder or back or breaking a leg or hip is not on the list of fun things to do.

Catching a finger in a closing door hurts.

Twisting an ankle while stepping off a curb can take one's breath away.

Trials and pain can result from something social or relational.

A best friend does something spiteful that severs a longtime friendship.

A high school or college sweetheart decides it's time to start seeing other people. We painfully call it "getting dumped". Like so many others in the service, six months into his deployment in S. Korea my Dad got the "dear John" letter. But he says it was the best "Dear John" letter he ever received. A year later he met this cute waitress at a coffee shop in Black River, NY, whom he would marry. But still there was the initial emotional pain.

Going through a divorce has left many deep wounds.

Relational trials and pain even happen in churches.

Trials can also cause emotional pain.

The loss of a loved one

The loss of a job

The loss of some freedom or skill you once enjoyed, something you had to give up because of an injury or age or loss of income

People can also experience spiritual pain from trials.

Such pain can even affect faith. There may be guilt because of some sin. It's the kind of pain that David experienced when Nathan confronted him for his moral failure in committing adultery with Bathsheba and the subsequent murder of her husband in an effort to try and cover up the affair. It's the pain we are privileged to read about in Psalm 51 where he writes his confession and desire for reconciliation with God. We sense the overwhelming guilt of a broken and penitent heart as he yearns for God's mercy and forgiveness, a restoration of broken fellowship through offering songs of praise, and adoration and sacrifices that please God. He is even willing to tell his story so others won't make the same mistakes. He expresses deep spiritual pain for his sin with a desire to get right with God.

Psalm 51:1-4, 7-17

Spiritual pain can also come from the trials of persecution. In many countries standing up or standing out for Christ can bring verbal or physical abuse, being ostracized by your family or community or employer, imprisonment, hard labor and even death.

We may not experience the extent of that kind of spiritual pain in our country, yet persecution happens even in the land of the free and home of the brave.

Trials come and pain can't be avoided.

Pain isn't any fun, yet doctors tell us that it's important even necessary. We visit a doctor or psychologist or pastor and they all essentially tell us the same thing – pain is a good for us. The medical experts tell us that pain sends a signal to the brain. The brain processes the signal to tell us that something is wrong causing us to seek relief from the pain. God designed us that way. Otherwise, we would just go on our merry way and cause further damage to the affected physical, emotional, and spiritual area that is hurting when we ignore it.

While we try to avoid pain at all cost, when it

happens there is a reason. It causes us to sit up, take notice, and pursue relief. So if I can be so bold, let me suggest that pain is your friend. It's just divine.

So when we come to our passage Peter in a sense is addressing the pain his readers were experiencing. In his first letter there was pain from persecution. Persecution can be traced from the inception of Christianity to today. The first century church experienced it both from the Jews and the Romans. Peter's readers were not living in isolation. They knew it from firsthand experience and Peter encouraged and emboldened them to stand firm in their faith. They also knew the trials of false teaching.

But persecution isn't the only trial Christians have. James writes that we experience many kinds of trials. They abound. Peter's words in our text serve as a reminder of God's awareness of what we encounter and an encouragement that because He knows He also knows how to deliver us. He gave two clear examples in the lives of Noah and Lot. In both examples God is about to bring judgment because of sin, blatant and rebellious sin. In both cases there was utter rejection of God. In the middle of this outright and willful display of wickedness God saw and delivered, rescued those who were righteous. There was a clear distinction between those who were doomed to destruction and those who were deemed for deliverance. He knows who are His.

To receive God's retribution or rescue depends on personal choice: reject God in foolishness or receive God in faith.

Noah and Lot chose to live by faith. Everyone else foolishly rejected God and the means by which they could and would be rescued.

Our passage ends a conditional clause that began back in verse 4.

v. 4 – If God did not spare angels

v. 5 – If He did not spare the ancient world

v. 5 – If He...protected Noah

v. 6 – If He condemned...Sodom and Gomorrah

v. 7 – If He rescued Lot

And then we come to our passage. He's going to gather all the strings and neatly tie them off. Listen to what he says.

v. 9 – If this is so

v. 9 – Then the Lord knows

According to Webster's dictionary the word "if" is a conjunction that joins one thought with another. In this case Peter uses it to join verses 4-10. Webster's then defines "if" as a condition, something that expresses a wish or a speculation. That isn't how Peter uses the word. We understand him to mean "since" or "because" these things happened in the past, because they are fact not something wished for or speculated about, because this happened we can be assured that this will also happen.

Because God did these things in the past – destroyed the world with a flood and rescued Noah and destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah and rescued Lot, you can expect that God will rescue you and destroy the wicked.

In this passage the first we see is God's rescue of the saint.

#### I. GOD'S RESCUE OF THE SAINT – v. 9a

"If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials."

This is an incredibly comforting statement. It's comforting for four reasons.

##### A. There Is A Divine Perception

"The Lord knows"

What does it mean that the Lord knows?

It generally means to see or perceive, or to have knowledge of.

We might be in a discussion about something, anything with a friend. We might be debating some political point or who is the greatest baseball player or where the best place is to get Chinese. Our friend lays out facts that we listen to and when he or she is finished we respond by saying “I see”, meaning we understand, we know what they are talking about even though we may or may not agree with them. Or they may be describing a place they recently visited on vacation. You respond by saying you have knowledge of that place because you have been there, you know what they are talking about.

In the Greek there are several words that Peter could have chosen that can be interpreted to know. One is the word *ginosko*. It has to do with knowledge as a progression.

David knows general math and this year he will progressively come to know Algebra.

When Scripture talks about our knowing God, it's progressive. We don't know and neither can we know all there is to know about God. He's infinite and we're finite, but that shouldn't keep us from knowing all that we can about Him. Our knowing God is progressive, we learn as we grow. It isn't just academic knowledge about Him. We also come to know Him by experience. Abraham came to know Him as the Great Provider. Moses came to know Him as the Great Deliverer. David came to know Him as the Great Shepherd. Reading about it is one thing, experience is something entirely different. Through that experience we come to know and trust Him more. We know we can trust God today to meet a need because we not only read about it in Scripture we have seen it first hand in our lives and that leads us to want to know and trust Him more for greater things.

Instead of the Greek word *ginosko* Peter chooses the Greek word *oida*. It means to know fully. My brother has taught anatomy and physiology for almost 40 years. I can tell you that he really knows his stuff. But as much as he loves teaching the

wonder of God's design in the human body, even he would say that he doesn't know it all, know it fully.

Only of God can it be said that He fully knows and not just about some things, but all things. We call that His omniscience, that He is all knowing. He knows not only what is actual He knows what is possible. He knows all the infinite possibilities of the choices we could make in any situation and the one we will make. Where we learn new things all the time or forget other things God's knowing can neither increase nor can it decrease.

In *Systematic Theology* Lewis Sperry Chafer writes: “God knows to an infinite degree and eternally all that is knowable.”

Psalm 139:1-4 “O Lord, You have searched me and You know me. You know when I sit and when I rise: You perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; You are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue You know it completely, O Lord.”

Peter wanted his readers to be reminded again that God knows fully, not progressively fully about all their struggles, He knows fully about all their pain, He knows fully about all their hardship.

Isaiah 40:27 “Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel, ‘My way is hidden from the Lord; my cause is disregarded by my God?’”

Hezekiah was king and the Assyrians had sent a message to them to surrender because they were on the way to get them. No army had been able to stand up against their military prowess. They taunted Judah that none of the gods of the other nations had been able to deliver them. One by one they all fell and Judah would be no different. Their God couldn't rescue them. God knew what they were thinking. He made their question into a question. Why are you wondering where is God in your time of need? Why doesn't He hear and respond? Why has God disregarded our pleas?

If we were honest we have all probably wondered that. The nation asked that on 9/11. We ask it when a loved one gets cancer or a child dies or we lose our job. Why, God, are You letting this happen? Where are You? Don't You care? That's what the disciples asked Jesus when they woke Him up in the middle of a crisis. Their boat was about to sink. Lord, don't you care that we're in the middle of this storm? Don't you care that we're all about to die? How can you sleep at a time like this? Jesus gave two responses, a negative one and a positive one. "Oh you of little faith, why are you afraid" "Peace, be still"

We take the latter to refer to the storm which stopped immediately because it says He rebuked the wind and the waves, but maybe it was a subtle word to the disciples as well. Don't let your hearts be afraid. Instead let it be at peace, let it be still. *If He could calm the raging, threatening storm, He can calm your storms, your anxious heart and give you peace.*

John 14:27 "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you, I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

Peter told his readers that the Lord knew everything they were going through and insinuated in that statement that because He knows, He gives peace, He delivers. If He knew then about them, He knows now about you. The Lord knows what you are going through – whatever the heartache is, whatever the trial is. Sometimes we can feel like Judah and think that God doesn't see or know about our struggles, our pain. We wonder if He cares about the wounds, about our feeling helpless and broken. Underline this verse, stick it on your mirror and dashboard and refrigerator – just as He knew about the trials of Noah and Lot and the believers Peter was writing to "the Lord knows" fully what you are going through.

There's not an hour that He is not near us –  
No not one! No not one!  
No night so dark but His love can cheer us –

No not one! No not one!  
Jesus knows all about our struggles;  
He will guide till the day is done.  
There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus –  
No not one! No not one!  
There is a divine perception – "He knows".  
There is a divine provision.

## B. There Is A Divine Provision

"the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials."

Isaiah 40:28-31.

Hezekiah cried out on behalf of Judah to the Lord for deliverance. God's message came through Isaiah. Judah had forgotten about the past, about the previous times God delivered them. He was calling on them to remember the former days when He delivered His people, when He gave them strength. He wanted to remind them that what He did in the past He would do again for those who followed Him – He would give them strength.

There is no doubt that we get into some awful messes. Life continually throws all kinds of curve balls and we're down to our last strike. God as the manager of our lives makes a daring move and takes the bat from our hands. He steps in at the plate with a 2 strike count. The game is on the line and the pitcher looking in at the sign from the catcher winds up and lets the ball fly toward home plate. The crowd is on its feet as the Lord swings at the pitch and blasts a home run out of the ballpark to deliver the team to victory.

The Lord knows how to rescue you. He who never gets tired or grows weary; He who knows everything with an understanding that no one can comprehend will give strength to the weary, will increase the power of the weak. But this isn't for just anyone; it is only for those who hope in Him.

Psalm 20:7 “Some trust in chariots and some trust in horses, but I will trust in the name of the Lord.”

Where is your trust today? Where is your hope today? God will give His divine provision to deliver you, to rescue you.

The third point to consider about God’s deliverance of the saint is this: there is a divine protection.

### C. There Is A Divine Protection

Now I don’t mean to imply that God will automatically remove you from your trouble. There’s a divine reason He allowed it. But there is the promise that He will be with us in our storms. Let me repeat what I have said in the past: *“If He brings you to it, He’ll bring you through it.”*

How many of you know David was a man who knew all about trouble. As a teen he knew trouble while tending his father’s sheep. Trouble came from bears and lions. Trouble came from wayward sheep that had strayed. Trouble came because he was good at playing the harp. He could pick a lick on the strings which landed him a job playing for King Saul. You have maybe heard it said that music can sooth the savage beast and when Saul got into one of his fits, David would play his harp to calm him down. But the guy who pacified his soul when he was distraught was also the guy who brought him pain. Saul obsessed about killing David. He was chased all over Israel and ended up going to a Philistine town with his men to escape.

Harold Hill is a traveling con artist salesman in *The Music Man*, trying to convince a small town that they need to start a school band and they should buy his instruments. He sings about trouble in River City and it starts with T and rhymes with P and it stands for pool.

In David’s case, trouble started with T and rhymed

with P and it stood for Philistines. He fled to Lachish where he jumped from the frying pan and into the fire. When it was all said and done and after God delivered him he wrote Psalm 34 (1-4). “I will extol the LORD at all times; His praise will always be on my lips. I will glory in the LORD; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt His name together. I sought the LORD, and He answered me; He delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to Him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame. This poor man called, and the LORD heard him; He saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him, and he delivers them.”

We learned last week that the word rescue means to draw to oneself. It insinuates protection. Bruce Barton adds “Christianity does not guarantee a trial-free life; instead, it guarantees that God will be with us through trials and will, in His time, rescue us from them.”

David continues in his song (Psalm 34:15-19) “The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are attentive to their cry; but the face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to blot out their name from the earth. The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; He delivers them from all their troubles. The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. The righteous person may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all.”

Peter’s examples clearly remind us that God protects, God delivers, God rescues the righteous.

How does He do that? Let me suggest two ways how this is possible, especially when the trial doesn’t seem to be going away anytime soon.

1. It’s by God’s grace  
Romans 12:9 “But he said to me, ‘My grace is

sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.”

I Peter 5:10 “And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.”

God’s grace is able to sustain you, strengthen you, settle your otherwise anxious heart and help you stand firm in your faith while you are in the middle of the trial. God gives us what we need at the time we need it. That’s grace. That’s sustaining grace. That’s perfecting grace. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednigo knew that grace when they were tossed into their fiery trial. That same grace is ours now.

## 2. It’s for our growth

James 1:2-4 “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”

The trials we are going through give us patience and help us mature in our faith. Consider them as building blocks not wrecking balls. They are stepping stones to knowing God more not stumbling blocks that question His care. They help us grow in character to be like Christ.

There is a divine perception.

There is a divine provision.

There is a divine protection.

There is a divine promise.

## D. There Is A Divine Promise – II Peter 1:3-4

Our text promises that the godly will be rescued. In II Peter 1:3-4 we are given promises from God about escaping the corruption that is in the world

caused by evil desires. That was certainly the case for both Noah and Lot. And we read in Revelation 21 of that final escape from destruction when the godly will forever be in the presence of God where the effects and presence of sin will be absent.

God who does not nor will not nor cannot lie has given us His word, His promise that we will be rescued. Because of what God has done in the past we have the assurance that He can and will deliver the saint.

And just as God will deliver the saint, He will also bring destruction of the sinner. We do this briefly.

## II. GOD’S DESTRUCTION OF THE SINNER – vs. 9b-10a

Again, we see first a divine perception.

### A. There Is A Divine Perception

Because the Lord knows how to rescue the saint, He knows how to hold the sinner for the Day of Judgment. They will not escape. He not only has the knowledge on how to keep them, He has the power and the authority to keep them. He will never be overthrown. He knows how to hold them.

### B. There Is A Divine Punishment

Notice that it is both present and future. The Day of Judgment is that final judgment when those who rejected Christ in this life will be, according to Revelation 20, cast forever into the lake of fire. That is still in the future. But Peter also speaks of a present judgment. Now we may question this. Job did. In Job 23 he wonders out loud how the wicked seem to get away with a lot, while the righteous seem to be the ones who get punished. He reasons that it should be the other way around, especially because many in that day and even in the New Testament believed that if a person went through hard times it must be due to sin. That’s what Job’s

friends argued. To coin a phrase, sometimes it seems like they get away murder. Other times they do get punished. Rest assured God is keeping an accurate account and they will not go unpunished, He will not be lenient or overlook anything.

The word “hold” means to keep under guard. They won’t get away. God has prepared their punishment and they are held for judgment.

There will be divine punishment because that is His divine promise.

### C. There Is A Divine Promise

Psalm 37:1 “Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong; for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away.”

In Revelation 6:9-11 the martyrs under the throne ask God how much longer before their blood would be avenged. They were told to wait a little longer. God promises that all who deserve punishment will get what they deserve.

### D. There Is A Divine Prerogative

#### 1. What They Desire Is Corrupt

Bruce Barton refers to this as “sexual promiscuity, immorality, and even perverted sexual practices.” Not only did they live in immorality false teachers also taught that freedom in Christ meant there were no restraints on Christian conduct when it came to moral values. Christians could essentially do what they wanted for the sake of Christian freedom.

Barton continues “they lived as they pleased and laughed at the prospect of a second coming and judgment by God.” They did not fear God’s punishment.

It’s in the present active case referring to something they pursued continually. Why is their desire so corrupt? It’s because what they despise is Christ.

#### 2. What They Despise is Christ

We noted back in verse 1 that they denied the sovereign Lord.

We tend to think of authority as the government or officials who are over us, but the Greek reveals something different. It comes from the root word for Christ. So it’s not referring to governments and officials, although we could say that a person who resists the government that is over them is in fact resisting the Lord who set those rulers over them. More specifically it is referring to a rejection of Christ and His Lordship over them. They were rejecting His authority and rule over them as Lord. They despised the one who has reserved for them a punishment befitting their willful and open wickedness.

Peter’s point is this: God is able to simultaneously deliver the godly while at the same time hold the wicked for the Day of Judgment. What He did in the past He can do now.

For the believer the message is to hang on in your times of trouble, God knows and God will rescue. Celebrate that promise in a moment as we take communion.

For the unbeliever today the message is that God has reserved punishment that will be for eternity. But the good news is that He has provided a rescue for any and all who call on His name in faith believing that the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross is able to rescue you from that punishment. Communion is a picture of the deliverance that came through His broken body and shed blood. Repent of your sin and believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

(Communion slide)