

# He Knows How to Do What He's Doing!



**Bro. Ricky Cunningham**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 2:3b-10a**

Have any of you ever caught yourself telling somebody how to do something that they already know how to do? Why do we do that? Sometimes I can just tell by the look on Kory's face when I tell him, again, how to do what he's been doing for the last 15 years. Now when it really dawns on me how wrong that is, is when I catch somebody else telling somebody how to do what I know the person already knows how to do. Have you ever defended somebody who is being told how to do what they already know how to do? Have you ever had to try to stop someone from telling somebody else how to do what they already know how to do? This morning, I want to assure you that God knows how to do what He's doing...*even* in your life. How many of you believe that? How many of us struggle to practice that from time to time? We're going to continue the sermon we started last week, Beware of Spiritual Cons, (AKA False Teachers). I thought we were going to just call this message part two, but the more I immersed myself with this passage, I believe the real title should be He Knows How to Do What He's Doing.

## Scripture

***"Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. For 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 the judgment; 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; 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; 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); then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority."***

I hope you remember those five things we taught you about false teachers last week, because 3b is going to teach us that false teachers who are among us, whose opinions are destructive, who will have many followers, who do harm, who out of greed exploit us with works, Peter says, are also being and will be judged. I don't know about you, but when I read that statement, "their condemnation is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep" well, we just don't talk like that in Dexter. Why does Peter word it this way? I'm just wondering if at this point Peter's writing about these false teachers and he's making this point because he believes there are many people in the church who possibly believe that false teachers are getting away with doing what they're doing, and it looks like God is asleep or He's on break. He's too busy with something else and therefore these people who need to be condemned are not being condemned, and these people who need to be punished are not being punished. For see, Jewish people would've had this thought—their God, Jehovah, never slumbers and He never sleeps; He's always awake. He's always on guard, guarding them. Do you remember when Elijah took on the 450 false prophets of Baal?

They were doing their thing and nothing was happening, Elijah taunted the false prophets, saying maybe Baal was asleep, maybe he's busy doing something else and he doesn't hear; he even says maybe he's in the bathroom relieving himself... *Give him a few minutes, he'll be back, he'll wake up!* It's a contrast to Israel's God who is always awake; He's never idle. He's always sovereign Lord over Israel and the affairs of His people. So now, Peter uses that language to say don't think because they're not being judged, God's asleep and they're not going to be judged—they are being judged and judgment is on its way. Then to prove this point, we're going to have a whole paragraph (v. 3a-10b), one thought, showing God's judgment.

Now in English, we have basic words and we put those words together and make sentences, then we put sentences together and we make paragraphs. But I teach all of the young guys I get to disciple that when you start reading a passage of Scripture, don't stop in the middle of a paragraph, don't stop in the middle of a sentence, continue that whole thought. There are one hundred and sixty-five words in this paragraph. Now, that's not a lot of words in a paragraph. As a matter of fact, the first paragraph we studied last week had seventy-five words so this paragraph is longer. The paragraph last week had four sentences. Do you know how many sentences there are in this one hundred and sixty-five word paragraph? One. Wow! I got tickled because when I was studying this because my grammar teacher, Mrs. Coleman, came across my mind. She's the one that taught me if you're going to communicate effectively, you use short, simple sentences. Peter turns one sentence into a paragraph!!

Now, does this mean Peter didn't have a good grammar teacher? Possibly, but I think something else is going on here, and I think Mrs. Coleman will agree with me. What Peter's doing here is he's taking some clauses, conditional clauses, that start with the word "if" and he puts those clauses together as evidence. He tells us if all these statements that he's putting in a clause are true, then something else is true. When you read this whole sentence all together, you'll see there are four clauses after the word "for" (the word "for" ties this to the previous paragraph where he's talking about false teachers), and he is going to make four statements about judgment

and God's judgment. He is going to say if these four things are true, then it means these other two things are true, so I want you to watch this flow. Here's what he's saying, and it's going to be the whole sermon—if *this* is true, and *this* is true, and *this* is true, and *this* is true—then *this* is true, and *this* is true. For us to understand why the two things in verse 9 are true, it's based on the first four things being true. In other words, if the first four things aren't true then the second two things aren't true.

Now, what is Peter telling us is true? God knows how to save the godly from trials. I heard some amens...you believe that to be true. Now, there's something else he wants us to believe is true—He keeps punishment for the unrighteous until the Day of Judgment. So while God is saving the godly from trials, He is holding the ungodly, the unrighteous, the ones who are not believers in His Son, under punishment right now until they face the final judgment of God at the return of Christ. You believe that, right? Now, Peter says the reason we believe this should be true is because of what God's done in the past. Here are four things God has done in the past:

1. He judged the angels who sinned.
2. He judged the ungodly world with a flood.
3. He judged the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for their sinning.
4. He rescued Lot from his trial.

Now, how many of you believe God judged the angels who sinned? How many of you believe He judged the world with a flood? How many of you believe He judged Sodom and Gomorrah? How many of you believe that while He was judging Sodom and Gomorrah He rescued Lot from that judgment? If you believe these four things, you should also believe He knows how to save the godly from trials, and He also knows how to punish those who are ungodly. Even before they face their final judgment, He knows how to punish them now. Do you believe this? Tell me you believe this. Now let me ask you this, how many of us are practicing this? How many of us are living this out? Because see, here has to be the thought...why would God allow false teachers to influence so many people?

Is He asleep? Is He too busy with something else? No. If He took the time to judge angels, and He took the time to judge the world, and He took time to judge Sodom and Gomorrah, He will judge the false teachers. And when He does judge them, He knows *how* to judge them. What Peter wants us to grab hold of is while God is judging and waiting to judge—did you catch that twofold judgment—do you know what He's doing in the life of the godly? He's rescuing us from trials. Why are you complaining? Why are you bellyaching? Why are you so critical about life as if God's not doing His job? See, I think many of us will say we believe this, but in practice, we don't believe this. Therefore, many of us are trying to be god in other people's lives instead of letting God be God. Let's look at the four examples.

God judged the angels who sinned. He committed them to Hell. The Greek word here is Tartarus, a word that talked about the Greek's thought of there being a place of punishment, and there being a deeper level of punishment for the people who are really, really, really, really, really wicked. I've heard people talk from church history perspective about people who've done some really, really bad things, and when they talk about them going to Hell, they talk about how they're going to be in the hottest part of Hell. Have you ever heard somebody say something like that? That's what this word means. In this place of Tartarus (Hell), they are chained. Some manuscripts don't have the word, chains; they have the words, dungeons of gloomy darkness, already being punished, and waiting for their final punishment. Now, I wish Peter had told us what these angels did so that we would know as soon as they did it that they were cast to Hell, because we know that not all fallen angels were cast immediately to Hell. Some angels followed Satan to the earth, and we battle with their evil spirits, their evil force in the world in which we live. But there was a group that did something so bad that when they did it God protected the world from them so that they couldn't ever do it again, and they're already in Hell.

Now, most of the commentaries I read this week believe what Peter is referring to is what happened in Genesis chapter 6. In verses 1 through 4, Moses writes about the sons of God seeing how beautiful the daughters of

man were and they married them and then gave birth to offspring. Now the Jewish people, by and large, believe that sons of God are referring to angels, so some commentaries believe Peter's thinking of that group of angels. That they were ministering to mankind (because the Bible says angels are servants of man; they carry out God's will) and they started looking at these pretty ladies and decided they didn't want to be angels anymore. They wanted to have a relationship with them, and they did, so life got messy and God immediately judged them and cast them down to Hell. I mean, can just say this—none of us regular human men would have a chance to get a pretty girl if we're having to compete against angels, so praise God, those creatures got cast to Hell and it gives you and me a chance! Now, that was just my opinion. 😊 😊

Now here's my problem. If you've ever sat under my teaching on the book of Genesis, you know I do not believe that's what Genesis 6:1–4 speaks about. So I'm in a mess, I'm in trouble, I'm out on a limb when I tell you I would never read Genesis 6 and believe it's talking about angels who fell marrying women. I thought Genesis was presenting two seed lines, the seed of Seth to whom the Messiah's going to be born...the Promised Seed, and then there's the line of Cain. The line of Seth is supposed to remain godly and the line of Cain is sinful. Guess what those sons of Seth did...they started seeing those daughters of Cain, and wow, they were really pretty, and they started marrying. I've always thought wouldn't that be just like Satan, to try to prevent the birth of the Messiah by intermarrying the bloodline so that we could never know who "He who is to come" is? Most everybody says this is talking about Genesis chapter 6, and all I'm saying is I don't know; Peter doesn't tell us. Here's what we do know...there was a group of angels in the past who had done something so bad that when they did whatever they did, God immediately judged the angelic beings who were in His presence. He judged them immediately and cast them to Hell, and they're going to stay there, locked away, until they face their final judgment.

Now, here's what I expect Peter to say...I expect Peter to say if God judged angels who fell, you know what he'll do to false teachers. But he doesn't say that. He now gives another example and it's the ancient world. He tells

us that when God was getting ready to judge the ancient world with a flood that would destroy the ungodly, He preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, along with seven others. Wow! I mean, if God would judge the whole world for sin, do you think He's going to spare false teachers in the church? Absolutely not. Now, when you're reading the Genesis story, Moses doesn't tell us that Noah was a preacher of righteousness, he just told us that Noah built this boat. The writer of Hebrew says he built this boat by faith. Why did he need to build this boat by faith? Because there was a flood coming. And because he found favor, he found grace, in the eyes of God, God's going to rescue him, his wife, his three sons, and his three daughter-in-law. Eight people are going to be saved through this flood, because in the midst of judging the world, God is going to preserve this preacher of righteousness. Now I want to be careful here, but I think God had revealed to Noah that a flood was coming and judgment's coming. He's a God who judges sin. Can you imagine building a boat in the desert year after year after year? The ridicule, the questions, the jokes that was told about him, yet this man was confident in the judging power of God.

Now here's what we know, in Genesis chapter 5 we see this pattern of life cycles. There would be a man who fathers a son. It tells us how old he was when he fathered his son and how long he lived after he fathered his son. Then at the end of his life, it tells us he fathered many sons and daughters. Finally, it tells us how long he lived, and then it says he died. We get to this man named Enoch, and when he's 65 years old, he fathers a son named Methuselah. But I want you to watch this—Enoch breaks this life cycle, because it says Enoch walked with God, and it tells us how many years he walked with God, 300 years...and then he died. Wow. Now guess what the name Methuselah means, "After him, it will come." I personally believe at the birth of his son, God revealed to him that He was going to judge the world with a flood, and Enoch started walking with God. He walked in light of a God who's going to judge sin. There was a book that was written that bears Enoch's name, and in that book, it tells how he was instructed by God to prophesy about coming judgment. Jude, referring to false teachers, quotes that book, quotes Enoch as being a man who prophesied about coming judgment. Now get this picture...Methuselah has a son and then lives longer than anybody ever lived. He's going to live 969

years. When Methuselah was 369 years old, his son has a son, Noah. Methuselah lives 600 years after Noah was born. Guess how old Noah was when the flood came? 600 years old...wow. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and in the midst building that boat, he told the good news that you could be spared from the coming judgment, you could be brought into right relationship with God, but very few believed. When the flood came, only he, his wife, his three sons, and his three daughters-in-law entered the boat with all the animals. If you're a false teacher, please know that if God wouldn't spare the ancient world of their sin, he'll not spare judging you.

Then, we have the third example, Sodom and Gomorrah. Sodom and Gomorrah were so wicked that God rained down fire on them and destroyed the whole cities, turned them into ash, brought about their extinction to the point that Sodom and Gomorrah are an example to the ungodly. Whoa! Now Peter's switching from not just talking about false teachers to false about talking about the ungodly. If you're an ungodly person, Sodom and Gomorrah is an example to you—God's going to judge you and it's not going to be good; it's going to be really bad.

Now watch this...the fourth "if" clause is not another judging, it's a rescue. We're told about Noah being preserved during the second "if" but Lot's not thrown into the third "if" clause, he's made an "if" clause all by himself. So here's the picture. God who judges and is going to judge also rescues and He rescued "righteous Lot." That throws me a little bit. Can I be totally honest with you? I'm a preacher, I'm a preacher of righteousness, but I was never really raised to read the Old Testament story about Lot and just really be firm into calling him righteous. He did several things to me that was kind of iffy. I'm not throwing him under the bus here; I'm just being honest. But listen to what Peter says, God "rescued righteous Lot."

Now, remember he's kin to Abraham. Abraham's this faithful, righteous guy. And then we meet Lot...Lot chooses where to live because Abraham gives him choice. He chooses this land and he gets as close as he can get to this place called Sodom. Genesis tells us that there are great sinners who lived there, so he's kind of drawn toward this sinful town. The next thing we know he gets captured, but Abraham rescues him so he gets



another start on life, but the next thing we know he's in the middle of Sodom and Gomorrah. Then two heavenly visitors appear and show up to talk to Abraham. After they talk to him they get ready to leave, but they say... *Whoa, Abraham's the friend of God, don't you think we need to tell him what we're going to do next?* They agree that they need to tell Abraham they're going to judge Sodom and Gomorrah and then Abraham asks this question... *Hey, would it be right for God to judge if there were 50 righteous people in those towns?* The angels say no, God wouldn't judge them if there was 50 righteous people. You remember the story; Abraham says what if there were just 45? How about 40? How about 30? How about 20? He finally gets it down to 10 and the angels say if there's 10 righteous people, God will not judge it.

The next thing you know, those two visitors go to Sodom and Gomorrah and they show up at Lot's house and he invites them in. They have a great time, they talk, and then they say... *Hey Lot, it's time to go to bed; we're going to go out and sleep on the court square.* Lot says no, because by this time, Scripture tells us, every man in the city, old and young, are all standing outside the door of Lot's House saying they want to get to know those two guys. Now, I have to be totally honest with you, Being raised the way I was raised, I didn't get this. I mean, if someone said to me, "Hey, I want to get to know you." I would have said, "Great, let's go have breakfast. Come and ride the combine with me; let's talk!" That's not how "know" is being used here. You know that, right? You know what they're wanting. Lot says you're not going out there, but the people on the outside want them so bad they keep knocking on the door. They're about to break the door down and so Lot says, and this just tears me up—Lot says... *I'm not going to send the two guys out, but I've got two virgin daughters I'm going to send out to you.* Are you kidding me? I'm sorry guys, but tell me a dad who's righteous that would say something like that; who would protect two strangers but would give his daughters to a group of men, knowing what they were wanting! I struggle with that! But then, I look at some of us who God calls righteous...He brought us into right relationship with Him, not based on our behavior, not based on good or bad works, but based on faith in His Son. Righteous people sometimes do some really dumb things, some hurtful, sinful, wrong things. I've taught you this principle that we

interpret our Old Testament in light of our New Testament. Amen? So I can't read my Old Testament and then let that shed light on how I think about Lot today. I have to look at Lot and what the New Testament says about him and read that back into that Old Testament story, and he's a righteous man.

Now, you know what Peter goes on to tell us about what happened there. And because Lot was a righteous man with a righteous soul, he was distressed. His soul was distressed; his righteous soul was distressed! Then, there's a whole other verse about Lot in the midst of this judgment, and it says he was grieved. Do you know why he was grieved? Because he lived among them day after day, tormenting his righteous soul with what he saw, and what he heard. Sodom and Gomorrah was such a sinful society that when this righteous man interacted with culture every day, it grieved him; it tormented him. Now, let me tell you what's getting ready to happen. God's getting ready to judge Sodom and Gomorrah but He's not going to as long as Lot's there so He tells the two visitors to tell Lot get out of town. Lot goes to his sons-in-law and he says...*Hey guys, God's going to judge Sodom and Gomorrah come with me.* They laugh at him. The men that are engaged to his daughters laugh at him!

So, Lot gets his wife and his daughters, and Genesis says he lingers. Now, I've always believed that when he lingered, he lingered because he loved Sodom and Gomorrah, he loved being on the edge flirting with sin. But if I read that now in light of this passage, do you know why he may have lingered? Because he knew when he was gone, judgment was coming. No hope! Do you know what grieved him and what tormented him? Some of you're not going to like this. What tormented him and grieved him was not what living in a sinful society was doing to him, but what living a sinful society was doing to them. Did you catch that? If we're not careful, sometimes we Christians want society to be better but we want society to be better for one reason, and that's not for the people of society but for us. Because there are some certain things if they happen, it's a detriment to our way of life, and we like our way of life. We're grieved and we're hurting because we're trying to preserve our way of life; we're not concerned at all about those who are in sin, not concerned at all about

what sin is doing to sinful people! If we believe what we say we believe, that the wages of sin is death, that death kills, death separates, death harms, sin destroys—people who are in sin are literally killing themselves and they're grasping for hope! Their hope is in a new boat, it's in a new car, it's in a new job, it's in more children, it's in this or this, and that never satisfies.

Now, we might look at all these sinful people and see how they're living, and some of us are a little envious of them, "How are they getting to do all they're getting to do, doing what they're doing?" And some of us are thinking...*Look at me, righteous, living paycheck to paycheck!* Sin destroys, and many of us are not grieved by it, we're not tormented by it. We actually think they deserve what they're getting and wonder why they're not getting more. Are you kidding me? That's why Peter goes from this fourth "if" statement, *if* God rescued Lot to *then* He knows how to rescue the godly from trials. We say, amen, we believe that, now let's practice that. Here's what trial means in this context. We who are few, who are righteous (made right with God) live among ungodly people, and like Noah we're to be concerned that they hear the truth that judgment is coming and that there's hope in Jesus Christ. And like Lot, it torments us, it grieves our soul to know what sin is doing to those we live among! So our eyes being righteous are not on us; our eyes are on Him and our eyes are on them, and here's what we believe—God will rescue us from the trial of being a godly person, living in an ungodly society whom God is going to judge. And we believe this—that God's going to punish because He is already punishing those who are ungodly. Remember Romans chapter 1. The wrath of God is already (present tense) being revealed in the world in which we live. Romans 1 teaches that the wrath of God is, right now in this society, God lets sinful people be as sinful as they want to be. Do you know what that is? It's an act of judgment. It's God punishing people. God basically lets people kill themselves, God's basically lets people destroy themselves, but as long as they're still breathing, there's still hope.

When we get to 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter, chapter 3, do you know the reason God hadn't sent Jesus back yet? It's because God is longsuffering. He's patient and He's not willing that any should perish but that all should come to eternal

life. Please hear my heart. While many of us are praying for Jesus to come back so we'll have a better life and get out of this life, God's not sending Jesus yet because He doesn't want those to die and spend eternity in Hell! Some of us aren't telling anybody about Jesus because we've made this life all about ourselves. The more society gets sinful, the more we want to huddle, and the more we want to isolate. No! God knows what He's doing and He knows how to do it. Can we live this week and the rest of our life in light of that truth? He knows what He's doing in rescuing and judging.