

PathLights

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path"
Psalm 119:104*

September 24, 2017

Ignorance

by Frank Himmel

To say a man is ignorant is no compliment, but it may not necessarily be an insult, either. Ignorance is simply lacking in knowledge; being uninformed or unaware. Everyone is ignorant, we are just ignorant about different things.

Most of what the Bible says about ignorance relates to being uninformed about God and His will. Lest we be ignorant about this particular kind of ignorance, consider these truths.



Ignorance usually results in wrong conduct. “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in ignorance” (1 Peter 1:14). We do not know God’s will intuitively. We must be taught. “There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Proverbs 14:12). The purpose of the Bible is to remove ignorance.

Ignorance is sometimes a chosen state. Some prefer their own ways to God’s revealed truth. “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness” (Romans 1:18). Ephesians 4:18 couples ignorance with hardness of heart. Some do

not learn the truth because they do not want to learn the truth!

Ignorance does not excuse. Preaching to those who had called for Jesus’ crucifixion, Peter said, “And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also. Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away...” (Acts 3:17, 19). Paul told the Athenian idolaters, “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent” (Acts 17:11).

There is hope for the ignorant. Saul persecuted Christians because he was ignorant about Jesus. Looking back at that time in his life, he considered himself “the foremost of sinners.” “Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly and in unbelief” (1 Timothy 1:13). Saul was not so hardened that he would not listen. Though confident in his error, He was nevertheless willing to consider that he might be wrong. When Ananias taught him the truth, he immediately obeyed it and was forgiven.

Some teachers are ignorant. Timothy’s work included counteracting those who were “wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions” (1 Timothy 1:7).

Following ignorant teachers is disastrous. Jesus said, “And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit” (Matthew 15:14b). ■

“As the Lord Lives...”

by Frank Himmel

The account of Elisha cleansing Naaman of his leprosy is a familiar one, a favorite text of many preachers. It so well illustrates several essential principles: our need to come to God with an open mind, not full of preconceived notions; the essentiality of doing exactly what God requires, not trying to substitute our own preferences; willingness to listen to criticism.

When Naaman was cleansed, he returned to Elisha’s house (which was considerably out of his way) to offer the prophet a present. Elisha refused, but his servant Gehazi overheard the offer and was definitely interested. He said to himself, “Behold, my master has spared this Naaman the Syrian by not receiving from his hand what he brought. As the Lord lives, I will run after him and take something from him” (2 Kings 5:20).

Gehazi’s plan involved lying and stealing. Is it not fascinating that he prefaced his plan by swearing by God he would do it?! “As the Lord lives, I will... take something from him.” George Rawlinson observed in *The Pulpit Commentary*:

‘As the Lord liveth’ seems a strange phrase in the mouth of one who is bent on lying and stealing. But experience teaches us that

religious formulae do drop from the lips of persons engaged in equally indefensible proceedings. This is partly because formulae by frequent use become mere forms, to which the utterer attaches no meaning; partly because men blind themselves to the wrongfulness of their actions, and find some excuse or other for any course of conduct by which they hope to profit.

Rawlinson’s comments are right on the mark. Expressions we hear can become part of our speech, yet be nothing more than mechanical words voiced with little thought as to their meaning or implications. (Interestingly, Elisha had used this same expression in his refusal: “As the Lord lives before whom I stand, I will take nothing” [v. 16]). This might even be true of words and phrases we use in songs or prayers, thus reducing our worship to “tradition learned by rote” (Isaiah 29:13).

Even more frightening is our capacity to pursue a course of conduct directly opposed to what God said, yet do so fully satisfied that we are acting with divine approval, perhaps even divine support. God could not have been plainer about divorce, greed, strife among brethren, etc., yet how many professing Christians are active in these and other sins! If we see ourselves in this story (and the problem is that often we do not), we’d better repent before we receive a fate worse than the leprosy that was transferred to Gehazi. ■

A strange phrase in the mouth of one who is bent on lying and stealing

Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday Morning	Sunday Evening	Wednesday Evening
GREETER	Greg Winget	Chris Brooks	Bruce Williams
SONG LEADER	Gary Hagler	Carlos Garcia	Greg Winget
OPENING PRAYER	Albert Lee Harrison	TBD	
LORD’S SUPPER			
BREAD	Mike Zachry	Mike Zachry	
CUP	J B Williams	J B Williams	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Daven Daniel		
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Singing	Gary Hagler
CLOSING PRAYER	John Baucom	TBD	Josh Baucom