

An Attempt To Listen To God

Meditations on  
His Prayers of Intercession  
Section 4

By

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**They Know Not What They Do**

- 1) In the reading of the scriptures there are different sorts of sins mentioned:
  - a) Sins of ignorance. (Lev 4:2)
  - b) Sins done in secret. (Psa. 90:8)
  - c) Sins of carelessness. (Psa. 39:1; Deut. 11:16)
  - d) Sins of presumptuousness. (1 Cor. 10:12)
  - e) Sins which can never be pardoned. (Matt. 12:31-32)
  - f) Sin unto death. (1 Jn. 5:16)
  
- 2) When we speak of a sin in ignorance, it must be understood that ignorance can arise from a number of ways. An individual can:
  - a) Be ignorant to that which is happening by way of emotions, Samson. (Jud. 16:9)
  - b) Be ignorant by not knowing the scriptures. (Matt. 22:29)
  - c) Be ignorant of the consequences of an activity, cp. Adam. (Rom. 5:12-19)
  - d) Being the channel through which the flesh can be manifested (Deut. 8:2), and the maid with Peter (Jn. 18:17, 25).
  - e) Be ignorant by not understanding the level at which one is being spoken to. (Jn. 4:10-15)
  - f) Pretending to be ignorant. (Gen. 37:32)
  - g) Intentionally ignorant. (2 Pet. 3:5)
  - h) Be ignorant of divine activity. (Job 1:8-11)
  - i) Keep others ignorant to that which is happening by a hidden agenda, Absalom. (2 Sam. 15:1-6)
  - j) Keep another in a state of ignorance. (Josh. 2:4)

With this in mind, we understand that an individual can sin through ignorance in at least one of three ways:

- a) Not knowing the law.
  - b) An individual knowing that which they were doing on the lowest level, but not appreciating that which they were doing on the higher spiritual level.
  - c) An individual knowing that they were doing wrong but ignorant of the consequences, that is, the individual was not only ignorant in not knowing that which they were doing was wrong, it also means that they did not understand the seriousness or consequences of that which they were doing.
- 4) When the Lord gave this petition, what did He mean when He said: "They did not know what they do"?
    - a) Surely they were not ignorant that they were crucifying a man without fault.
    - b) Surely they were not ignorant that they had called for His blood.
    - c) Surely they were not ignorant that they had chosen Barabbas over Jesus.
    - d) Surely they knew full well they had judged Him guilty of blasphemy.

How then could the Lord plead for them on the ground of ignorance?

- a) They were ignorant of:
  - i) The seriousness of their own sin and unrighteousness.
  - ii) The seriousness of the sin they were committing.
  - iii) The fulness of the love they were spurning.
  - iv) The grief they were causing the Lord.
  - v) The fact that he was suffering for them.
  - vi) The sin of passive involvement.
  - vii) The perfection of God's righteousness.
  - viii) The fact that they needed to be forgiven.

It was on this point that clearly the Lord prayed for them. A truth taught in the New Testament:

- a) "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers." (Acts 3:17)
- b) "I Paul, who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." (1 Tim. 1:13)
- c) "Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." (1 Cor. 2:8)

Being filled with hatred they were blind to their imagined:

- a) Moral superiority in being able to judge others.
- b) The fact that ignorance was no excuse for their behavior.

In Leviticus 4 there is instructions given for sins committed through ignorance. It will be observed that not all sins of ignorance were judged the same way, for the severity of the sin depended on the position of the offender. In that chapter, after the introduction there are four categories of people who sinned by either not knowing that which they were doing was a sin, or knowing that which they were doing was wrong but failing to know the consequences, or appreciate the seriousness of that which they were doing.

1) Illustration No. 1

- a) Priests who sinned in ignorance in this way, Nadab and Abihu are examples of this as well as the chief priests, Ananias and Caiaphas
- b) With Nadab and Abihu:
  - i) They knew they were disobeying God.
  - ii) They sinned in ignorance in that they did not know the:
    1. Seriousness of that which they were doing in breaking a type.
    2. Seriousness of that which they were doing in its consequences.

2) Illustration No. 2

The sin of ignorance by the whole congregation. In the Judgment Hall, all who were there cried "crucify".

- a) Did they not know what they were doing?
- b) Of course they knew that which they were doing on the lower level, but on the deeper level they did not know. They were ignorant of:
  - i) That which they were doing spiritually.
  - ii) That which they were doing prophetically.
  - iii) That they were doing this to the Messiah.

3) Illustration No. 3

Concerns the sin of ignorance by a ruler, an example of this is David with Bathsheba. When it comes to our Lord it was the "chief priests and rulers of the people" (Lk. 23:13, 23:35) who derided Him.

- a) Considering David and Bathsheba: (2 Sam. 11:2-12:13)
  - i) He knew that looking and lusting and taking Bathsheba was wrong.
  - ii) He was ignorant of the conniving he would have to commit to try to cover the sin.
  - iii) He was ignorant of the sins it would lead to, the killing of Uriah.
  - iv) He was ignorant of the sorrow it would bring into his family in four deaths.
  - v) He was ignorant of the reality of that which he had done until Nathan spoke to him.
- b) Also when David numbered the people (1 Chron. 21:1)
  - i) He knew he was taking a census, possibly to see how strong he was.
  - ii) He was ignorant of the fact that the instigator was Satan. (1 Chron. 21:1)
  - iii) He was ignorant of the consequences for the people. (1 Chron. 21:7-16)

4) Illustration No. 4

If one of the common people sinned through ignorance, an example of such was Achan. (Josh. 7:1-24)

- a) He knew that he was disobeying the command of the Lord.
- b) He was ignorant of the effects on it relative to:
  - i) The many families his sin would bring death into.
  - ii) The effect of shame on himself and his family.
  - iii) The ultimate results of it on his entire house.

Thus to all who are under the burden of guilt and care, having remorse for sins committed by ignorance or willfulness, they can stand at the foot of the cross and hear the heart healing words:

**“Father forgive them, they know not what they do”.**

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**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.  
John 16:13**

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