

"Tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD!"-1King 22:16

Sins of Ignorance! Part 1

Perhaps one of the most controversial issues among brethren today is that which arises concerning the child of God and his sins of ignorance. Some brethren teach that if a child of God sins through ignorance, that sin of ignorance will not separate him from God; rather, this sin of ignorance will be cleansed with the blood of Christ unconditionally. In this lesson, we shall see that this is simply not taught in the Bible. Throughout the history of God's dealings with man, provisions for a sin committed in ignorance have been made, but these provisions were conditional.

Sins of Ignorance Under the Law of Moses

As one studies the law of Moses, he will learn in Leviticus 4 that it was possible for a man to sin through ignorance under the law of Moses. If you will take the time to read Leviticus 4 in its entirety, you will learn that it was possible for the priest to sin through ignorance (v. 2); that it was possible for the whole congregation to sin through ignorance (v. 13); that it was possible for the rulers to sin through ignorance (v. 22); and that it was possible for the common man to sin through ignorance (v. 27). But, as you read this chapter you will also learn there were provisions made in the law for the sins these people committed in ignorance. God had provided for an atonement to be made for their sins of ignorance, but only after they had learned of the sin and only as the conditions were met (notice vs. 3, 14, 23, 28). The provisions for the sins of ignorance committed under the law of Moses were conditional.

In **Leviticus 5:17, 18**, we learn that not only was it possible for a person to sin through ignorance, but also that these sins of ignorance brought with them guilt (v. 17). Thus, the sins of ignorance committed under the law of Moses separated sinners from God. This is consistent with other passages found in the Old Testament dealing with sin such as in **Isaiah 59:1, 2** or **Ezekiel 18:4, 20**. God said, *"The soul that sinneth, it shall die."* Leviticus 5:17 teaches that this is just as true of a sin committed

through ignorance as it is of any other sin; *"though he wist it not, yet is he guilty, and shall bear his iniquity."* Verse 18 goes on to teach that sins committed through ignorance could be forgiven, but only as the conditions were met. It does not teach that sins of ignorance were unconditionally forgiven. Provisions were made, but they did not provide for an unconditional forgiveness.

As you study further in the law of Moses, there were provisions made for the sins of ignorance, but you will also see that there were no provisions made for the man that had sinned presumptuously (**Num. 15:22-31**). Even in this passage, however, the provisions that God made for the sins committed in ignorance were conditional. As long as a man had not met the conditions for forgiveness of a sin committed in ignorance, he was guilty of that sin.

In **Ezekiel 18**, we learn that *"the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die"* (**Ezek. 18:20, 21**). Again we see that a man is guilty of his sins (whether committed in ignorance or not) and that he shall bear the iniquity of those sins, unless he meets the conditions that God has given. He is a sinner and must seek forgiveness on God's terms.

It is quite common for those who teach an unconditional cleansing of the sins which a child of God commits in ignorance to refer to **Psalms 19:12** where David said, *"Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults."* Therefore, let us look at this passage and see if it teaches an unconditional forgiveness of sins of ignorance. In the first place, let us consider, *"Who can understand his errors?"* Is David here teaching that we cannot understand what our sins are? Of course not! Sin is defined by John as *"transgression of the law."* (**1 John 3:4**). Thus, if a man could not understand what his sins were, he could not understand what the law of God is. Paul said that we could understand God's law when we read it (**Eph. 3:3-5**). Thus, David could not be saying

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that it is impossible for a man to understand what his sins were, for we can understand that, if we will read the word of God and study it. The word of God gives warning to the servant of God and he receives the reward for keeping the word of God (Ps. 19:11). I suggest to you that David is here saying the same thing that Solomon said in Proverbs 16:2, i.e., "every man's way is clean in his own eyes." We have the tendency to say, "I am satisfied with my life," but those who say that are confused about the whole matter. The question is not, "Am I satisfied," but "Is God satisfied?" Man has a tendency to think in terms of his own reasoning and understanding and thus, by my own understanding, it is not possible for me to understand my errors. But I can understand my errors by looking into the perfect law of liberty (Jas. 1:25; Jer. 10:23). This is what David is saying in Psalm 19. No man, in and of himself can understand his errors. We must rely upon the word of God (vs. 7-11), rather than on human wisdom.

In the second place, when David said, "cleanse me from secret faults," of what was he speaking? Was he speaking of sins committed through ignorance? Well, that certainly is one opinion! But, that is not the only opinion. It could be argued as well that the secret faults of Psalm 19:12 are those faults of which other people were not aware. The whole argument made from Psalm 19 is based upon an opinion of what is said, rather than the fact of what is said. It begins with an assumption, and thus, if the assumption is false, then the conclusion that follows from that assumption would also be false.

However, let us assume that David is speaking of sins that he has committed of which he is unaware. Would this mean that David was asking for an unconditional forgiveness of his sins of ignorance? Not at all! The whole point that David makes in Psalm 19 is that the word of the Lord reveals the will of the Lord, and that as we study and learn the will of the Lord, we can keep His will and be rewarded when this life is over. Nature reveals the existence of God (Ps. 19:1-6). The word of God reveals the will of God (Ps. 19:7-11). Keeping the will of God secures the reward of God (v. 11). Thus, David is not here asking for an unconditional

forgiveness (i.e., forgiveness without the appropriate sacrifices) of sins of ignorance; rather, he is asking for the ability to learn of his sins, so that he can turn from them, keep God's will, and receive the reward. As Paul said in 2 Timothy 2:5, "And if a man strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned except he strive lawfully." David had to learn the rules and abide by them to receive the prize, the reward.- Russell H. Dunaway

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Sermon Notes

Speaker: _____

Sermon Title: _____
