

What Does the Bible Teach About Sins of Ignorance, Weakness, and Inadvertence?

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- Hosea 4:6 - “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.”
- “Those who don't know history are doomed to repeat it.” (Edmund Burke)

What Does the Bible Teach About Sins of Ignorance, Weakness, and Inadvertence?

- “Nothing in the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity. The greatest enemy of knowledge is not ignorance, it is the illusion of knowledge. You are not entitled to your opinion. You are entitled to your informed opinion. No one is entitled to be ignorant.” (Harlan Ellison)
- In religion, ignorance is catastrophic.

What Does the Bible Teach About Sins of Ignorance, Weakness, and Inadvertence?

- “Christianity in modern America is, in large part, innocuous, ineffectual, inoffensive, and bland. It tends to be easy, upbeat, convenient, and compatible. It does not require self-sacrifice, discipline, humility, an otherworldly outlook, a zeal for souls, a fear as well as love of God. There is little guilt and no punishment, and the payoff in heaven is virtually certain.”
(Thomas Reeves, historian, University of Wisconsin)

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- Ignorance of the law is not an excuse.
 - This is true in civil government.
 - This is also true with regard to God's law.
- However, the reason for committing the sin may have an impact on the mercy that God may or may not choose to extend, or on the ease with which the sinner may be penitent

What Does the Bible Teach About Sins of Ignorance, Weakness, and Inadvertence?

- God's word and compassion can reach those who sin in ignorance, weakness or inadvertence.
- He finds that His word and compassion do not have much effect on the deliberate, willful sinner. Such persons require more drastic measures to reach
 - Jude 22-23 - "And on some have compassion, making a distinction; 23 but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh"

The Bible Speak Of Sins That Are Not Deliberate Or Defiant

- Sins committed unintentionally or inadvertently
 - Num. 15:22-36 - “27... if a person sins unintentionally... 30... But the person who does anything presumptuously... he shall be cut off from among his people. 31 Because he has despised the word of the LORD”

The Bible Speak Of Sins That Are Not Deliberate Or Defiant

- Lev. 4:2, 27-28 - “Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘If a person sins unintentionally against any of the commandments of the LORD in anything which ought not to be done, and does any of them... 27 If anyone of the common people sins unintentionally by doing something against any of the commandments of the LORD in anything which ought not to be done, and is guilty, 28 or if his sin which he has committed comes to his knowledge, then he shall bring as his offering...”
- The sins were not ignored; there were less burdensome offerings to be made for unintentional, as opposed to purposeful, sins.

The Bible Speak Of Sins That Are Not Deliberate Or Defiant

- Sins committed accidentally
 - Num. 35:22-25 - “However, if he pushes him suddenly without enmity, or throws anything at him without lying in wait, 23 or uses a stone, by which a man could die, throwing it at him without seeing him, so that he dies, while he was not his enemy or seeking his harm, 24 then the congregation shall judge between the manslayer and the avenger of blood according to these judgments”

The Bible Speak Of Sins That Are Not Deliberate Or Defiant

- Joshua 20:1-9 - “2 Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'Appoint for yourselves cities of refuge, of which I spoke to you through Moses, 3 that the slayer who kills a person accidentally or unintentionally may flee there; and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood.”
- There were consequences for sins committed by accident. While the punishment differed from intentional sin, nevertheless there was a sentence for the sin.

The Bible Speak Of Sins That Are Not Deliberate Or Defiant

- Sins committed in weakness
 - Matt. 26:41 - “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak”
 - Rom. 7:15 - “For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do”
- Sins committed in weakness are not overlooked; however, God offers mercy in a few forms

The Bible Speak Of Sins That Are Not Deliberate Or Defiant

- He may give more time to allow the weak to become strong
 - 2Peter 3:9 - “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance”
- He sends strong brethren to help build up the weak ones
 - 1Thes. 5:14 - “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all”

The Bible Speak Of Sins That Are Not Deliberate Or Defiant

- He occasionally sends chastening to awaken the weak
 - Heb. 12:9-12 - “Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. 11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. 12 Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees”

The Bible Speak Of Sins That Are Not Deliberate Or Defiant

- While God looks at the rebellious or deliberate sinner with wrath; He looks upon the weak and ignorant with compassion
 - Heb. 5:2 - “He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness”

The Bible Speak Of Sins That Are Not Deliberate Or Defiant

- Sins committed in ignorance
 - Lev. 5:14-19 - “17 If a person sins, and commits any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the LORD, though he does not know it, yet he is guilty and shall bear his iniquity”
 - Jonah 4:11 - “And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left?”

The Bible Speak Of Sins That Are Not Deliberate Or Defiant

- Matt. 11:21-24 - “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. 23 And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. 24 But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you”

The Bible Speak Of Sins That Are Not Deliberate Or Defiant

- Luke 12:47-48 - “And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. 48 But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.”
- Acts 3:17 - “Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers”

The Bible Speak Of Sins That Are Not Deliberate Or Defiant

- Sins committed unknowingly, undiscerningly, in ignorance. They are secret or unknown to the sinner.
 - “Known” - Strong’s H3045 - “yada” - “to be made known, perceived, instructed.”
 - “Secret” - Strong’s H5641 - “sawthar” - “to be hidden, concealed.”

God Does Not Accept These Motives As Excuses For Sin

- However well-meaning one may be.
- Many intentionally avoid learning
 - “If I don’t know how, I can’t be required to do it.”
 - “Ignorance is bliss.”
 - “What you don’t know can’t hurt you.”
- Willful ignorance is intentional sin
 - Heb. 10:26 - “For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins”

God Does Not Accept These Motives As Excuses For Sin

- Some excuse sin, because “They didn’t know any better.”
- If ignorance of God’s will is an excuse for sin, we do others a disservice when we teach them the Gospel
- The apostle Paul thought he was serving God by killing Christians
 - Acts 26:9 - “Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth”

God Does Not Accept These Motives As Excuses For Sin

- Whether one is aware of his sins or not, every unforgiven sin will be punished
 - Nahum 1:3 - “The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, And will not at all acquit the wicked”
 - Ez. 18:4 - “Behold, all souls are Mine; The soul of the father As well as the soul of the son is Mine; The soul who sins shall die.”
 - Ez. 33:6 - “But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand”
 - Col. 3:25 - “But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality”

God Does Not Accept These Motives As Excuses For Sin

- Everyone sins
 - Ecc. 7:20 - “For there is not a just man on earth who does good And does not sin”
 - Rom. 3:23 - “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”
 - Rom. 6:23 - “For the wages of sin is death...”

God Does Not Accept These Motives As Excuses For Sin

- Sin is always terminal, and Jesus has the only cure for it
 - John 14:5-6 - “Thomas said to Him, ‘Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?’ 6 Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’”
 - John 8:24 - “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins”
 - Mark 16:15-16 - “And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.’”

These Sins Are Dangerous For Both Christians And Sinners

- Everyone is ignorant about something
- No one fully understands everything written in the scriptures
- One must never be satisfied with his level of understanding.

These Sins Are Dangerous For Both Christians And Sinners

- “But how can I discover and avoid sins of ignorance?!”
 - Be aware of our potential for this kind of sin.
 - Like David, pray to God about them, asking His help in discerning them
 - Be a dedicated student of God’s Word - 2Tim. 2:15
 - The word of God is the instrument by which we discern sin
 - Rom. 7:7, 3:20
 - Be diligent in self-examination - 2Cor. 13:5
 - Be persistent in avoiding any known sin, for sin habitually committed ceases to be recognized and acknowledged as sin.

These Sins Are Dangerous For Both Christians And Sinners

- “How does this principle relate to infants, children, and the mentally incompetent? Infants and children sin in ignorance.”
 - They cannot yet discern between good and evil
 - Deut.1:39 - “Moreover your little ones and your children, who you say will be victims, who today have no knowledge of good and evil, they shall go in there; to them I will give it, and they shall possess it”
 - They cannot yet refuse evil and choose good
 - Isa. 7:15-16 - “Curds and honey He shall eat, that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good. 16 For before the Child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that you dread will be forsaken by both her kings”

Sinners in Ignorance: Understanding Conscience, Guilt, and the Truth

- People sometimes do what is sin, without realizing it is sin.
- People do what is not sin, under the impression that it is sin.
- The question, of course, is how they stand before God: are they guilty or not guilty in His eyes?

Sinning in Ignorance: Understanding Conscience, Guilt, and the Truth

- God certainly made a distinction between one who sinned in ignorance, and another who sinned in defiance (Num. 15:27-31). ***But that distinction was not between innocence and guilt, but between different kinds of guilt.***
- God's way of dealing with sins of ignorance was very simple and sensible. He caused the sin to be brought to the offender's attention, so that the guilt might be realized, and the path to forgiveness taken.

Sinners in Ignorance: Understanding Conscience, Guilt, and the Truth

- By the love, the power, and the grace of Christ Jesus, Saul the ignorant sinner was enlightened, and became Paul the apostle
 - 1Tim. 1:13-15 - "...I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. 14 And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. 15 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

Sinners in Ignorance: Understanding Conscience, Guilt, and the Truth

- Ignorance is not a desirable state. Nor is it a state of being excused. God deals patiently and kindly with the ignorant, but he wants people to learn of their guilt and repent
 - Acts 3:17-19 - “Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers. 18 But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. 19 Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord”

Sinners in Ignorance: Understanding Conscience, Guilt, and the Truth

- Acts 17:30-31 - “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, 31 because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead”
- Matt. 7:21-23 - “Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”

Sinning in Ignorance: Understanding Conscience, Guilt, and the Truth

- Likewise, evangelists and elders deal gently with the unlearned. But they do not leave them in ignorance; they enlighten them
 - 2Tim. 2:24-26 - “And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, 25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, 26 and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.”

Sinners in Ignorance: Understanding Conscience, Guilt, and the Truth

- God looks on ignorance as blameworthy
 - Eph. 4:17-19 - “This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; 19 who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.”
 - 1John 4:1 - “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

Sinning in Ignorance: Understanding Conscience, Guilt, and the Truth

- While ignorance may not always be as bad as that, and in some cases it may appear to be not very far from innocence, we should never think of ignorance as good. Ignorance is the lack of knowledge. Wherever we find that want, we are responsible to enlighten or be enlightened by the Gospel.

Sinning in Ignorance: Understanding Conscience, Guilt, and the Truth

- 2Cor. 4:1-6 - “Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. 2 But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. 3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. 5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. 6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”