

I Would Not Have You to Be Ignorant

Sunday, March 25th, 1990

1 Timothy 1.12-13

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

I have an unusual subject today, I'm going to speak to you on this subject: "I Would Not Have You to Be Ignorant." I want you to listen to the entire message. My text will be taken from First Timothy Chapter 1: verses 12 and 13. These are the words of the apostle Paul.

Paul said, *"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me in the ministry; who was before, a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious. I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief."*

Most people consider it a great insult to be called ignorant. Recently, I was preaching down in Mexico and the missionary, who has been laboring there for many years said to me, "Now, don't tell the people that you think they are ignorant." One of the greatest insults that you can put upon a Mexican is to lead him to believe that he is ignorant. They are highly offended when you call them ignorant.

I don't blame them. It is not very nice to tell a fellow that he is ignorant. If you do tell someone that he is ignorant, he is not going to take kindly to it. Here, in our text, here is the chief apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul, the writer of 14 epistles in the New Testament, one of the most gifted and wise man living in that day. We hear him saying, *"I was ignorant."* He said, *"What I did, I did in ignorance and unbelief."*

Listen to it again, Paul said; *"I was before a blasphemer, a persecutor, injurious and I was ignorant."* Paul was ignorant before he met Christ. This was before he met the Lord Jesus Christ that he said he was ignorant. "I was ignorant before I learned the gospel of God's grace, before God revealed His Son in me." That is what he says in Galatians 1:15. *"God was pleased to reveal His Son in me."* Paul was a wise and gifted apostle, called to be an apostle, God's messenger to the Gentiles." Before that time God called him and he met Christ, he said, *"I was before ignorant."*

We know this; we know a good deal about the apostle Paul before he was converted. There are several references to his life before he came to know Christ and before God revealed His grace to him.

We know this about Paul; he was called "*Saul of Tarsus.*" He came from a very reputable family. He was highly educated. In fact, one ruler said, "You've just studied too much. Too much learning hath made you crazy." He was highly educated in matters of the world; Gamaliel had taught him. In those days, there were two major Universities. There were two major scholars who taught. One of them was Gamaliel, the chief scholar. He was the one who taught Saul of Tarsus. He was wise in the things of the world but he was ignorant. He said, "I was ignorant of spiritual truth."

You see, my friends; a person can be very intelligent in material and carnal matters and yet be ignorant of spiritual truth. A man can know much about science, medicine or most any subject. He can still be ignorant of the grace of God and ignorant of spiritual truth. That is what it says in First Corinthians 2:7 and 8. Paul says, "*We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery which none of the leaders, the princes, and the rulers of this world knew.*"

They didn't know the wisdom of God. "*For had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*" Isn't that true? That is what Paul says; "*I preach the wisdom of God in a mystery,*" which even the leaders of the world did not know. For had they known it; they would not have consented to the death of the Son of God. They didn't know who He was. "*He was in the world and the world knew Him not.*" So, Saul of Tarsus, was highly educated and a man wise in material, carnal and fleshly matters. He said, "*I was before, ignorant.*"

Listen carefully, Saul of Tarsus was also very religious. You might say, "Well, he was smart in the things of the world, but he didn't go to church." I beg your pardon; he was very religious. He was very moral and a student of the Old Testament scriptures. This man was a Pharisee. He was about as high as you could go in religion. He was an officer and a ruler and a teacher of the Jews. He said, "*I was blameless. I was a Hebrew of Hebrews, a tribe of Benjamin. Concerning the law, I was blameless.*" This was a moral man, a religious man and a teacher of scriptures. He said, "*I was ignorant.*"

Saul was ignorant of God's way of life. This man was wrapped up in the form and tradition of religion. He had missed the grace and mercy of God. That is true today, of many people in the pulpit and in the pew. A person may be very religious, strict in form, law and outward morality. He may be totally ignorant of God's saving grace in Jesus Christ. Oh yes!

You see, spiritual ignorance and blindness to the truth of God, to the truth of God's grace in Christ, ignorance, as far as the wisdom of God is concerned, can be attributed to several things. There are several reasons for this ignorance. Paul said, "*I was a*

blasphemer and I was injurious. I was a persecutor before, but I did it ignorantly. I was ignorant and lived in unbelief.”

Ignorance is attributed to several things. The first thing is this: Our natural depravity and deadness in sin keeps us in ignorance. *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.”* So, a person can be born in the flesh and may know great matters pertaining to the flesh and material things.

He can still not know God because, *“In Adam we died.”* We are born in sin. *“In sin my mother conceived me. I was brought forth from the womb speaking lies. I was dead in trespasses and sin.”* We are born in darkness. We are born dead to God. We are born in spiritual blindness.

That is the reason that Christ said to Nicodemus, *“You must be born again. Except a man is born again, he can’t see the kingdom of God.”* He can’t understand it or enter into its mysteries unless he is born again. You see; that which is born of the flesh is in tune with the flesh and not spiritual matters. So, that is the reason that men are ignorant. Men are dead in sin, in darkness and depravity.

Secondly: Satan’s influence keeps men in ignorance. Paul said, *“If our gospel be hid; it is hid to them that are lost. In whom, the god of this world hath blinded their minds lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”* Satan blinds men. You see; *“The natural man receiveth not the things of God.”* The influence and power of Satan keeps men from seeing the light of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Another thing is the indifference. Indifference keeps men in ignorance. The flesh is just not interested in spiritual matters. How many people do you know who are interested in the things of God? How many people do you know who are interested in spiritual matters, and interested in what the Word of God has to say? They are not interested! God said, *“There is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way. They are all become unprofitable. You will not come to Me that you might have life.”*

Christ stood one day overlooking Jerusalem, and He said, *“How oft would I have gathered thee, but you would not.”* You are not interested. Why are men blind? Why are men in ignorance? The answer to that question is natural depravity. Satan influences them. They are just indifferent. They are just not interested. Today, the church uses every gimmick known to man to get people to come to church. They are not interested.

Fourthly: Another thing that keeps people in this ignorance is religious tradition. Paul was wrapped up in religious tradition. He was teaching commandments of God, the traditions of men and the commandments of men.

One time, our Lord healed a man. This man had been lying on a bed, afflicted and paralyzed for 38 years. He had never walked. Can you imagine the condition of this man, not being able to walk for 38 years? I can't imagine how frail he was, how bad of condition his legs must have been. He was lying on the bed and our Lord came by. Everybody knew him. He was always laying in the same place begging and asking alms. Our Lord came by and said, "*Take up your bed and walk.*" He was healed, just like that!

He took up his bed, put it on his shoulders and started walking down the road. He met these religious Pharisees. Do you know what they said? They didn't praise God that this man had been healed. They were not overjoyed and amazed that this man Jesus, had made him whole. They looked at him and said, "Don't you know that it is the Sabbath Day? You are not supposed to carry your bed on the Sabbath Day. Why are you carrying your bed on the Sabbath Day?"

They were so wrapped up in tradition that they couldn't see the glory of God. They were so wrapped up in the form and ceremony; they couldn't see the power of God. That is what happens today in all these denominations. You have the Catholics, the Jews, Protestants, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and the Nazarenes. You have the Church of God, the Church of Christ, the Pentecostals, and you have the non-denominations.

We have all these forms and ceremonies and rituals, denominations, creeds, catechisms and programs. We're not even open to the Word of God. We are so interested in what we believe that we won't listen to a man unless he is our brand, from our state, or from our community. He has to be from our denomination or from our creed. It is ignorance! We are wrapped up in tradition.

I will tell you another thing that keeps men in ignorance. Pride keeps men in ignorance. It is plain old pride. Our Lord came from the Father; He came from heaven. He was teaching and the Pharisees, these little religious teachers looked at him and said; "Dost Thou teach us? Do you dare teach us? You can't teach us anything. We know everything." They were too proud to be taught and too proud to learn.

I've had 18 and 19-year-old young people challenge me in the Word of God. I've been preaching, studying and teaching the Word of God for 40 years. The very youngest,

fearless youth will not hesitate to challenge the experience or knowledge. Everybody in religion thinks he knows everything. They are too proud to be taught.

Do you know what our Lord said in prayer? He said, *“I thank you Father that you have hid these things from the wise and from the prudent and you have been pleased to reveal it to babes.”* So, pride will keep a man in ignorance. The natural depravity will keep a man in ignorance. *“The natural man receiveth not the things of God, neither can he know them, they are spiritually discerned.”* There is Satan’s influence, religious traditions and indifference and pride. Oh, I pray that you and I may be able to escape these hindrances and truly be taught of God. Would you like to be taught of God?

Our Lord said one time, *“No man can come to Me except My Father which sent Me, draw him. It is written in the prophets and they, (those whom My Father draws to Me, those who come to Me) shall be all taught of God.”* I will tell you this, if a man is taught of God, God in His power has to get around the darkness and make the light to shine. He has to break down the pride, break down the indifference, and get around the religious tradition. He has to be taught of God. *“Every man that hath heard and learned of the Father will come to Me.”*

God teaches a man through His Word. A man doesn’t learn through shouting, yelling, screaming, clapping, running down the isle or singing silly choir songs about heaven. God teaches men through His Word and by His preacher and by His Holy Spirit. If we are going to learn anything we are going to have to get into His Word.

The apostle Paul, knowing his own ignorance, said; *“I was before, a blasphemer.”* He was a religious, educated, moral, law-abiding traditionalist. Yet, *“I was a blasphemer. I was injurious; I was a persecutor and I did it ignorantly.”*

In his writings, we have some things that are particularly characteristic of Paul. One of them is this: He says, *“God forbid.”* He is one of the only writers in scripture that uses that phrase. Here is another: He uses this phrase frequently, *“I would not have you to be ignorant.”*

I want to show you some of those places where he talks about being ignorant. Now, remember that he said, *“I was ignorant before I met Christ, before I learned the gospel.”* In First Corinthians 10: 1 through 4, Paul says this; *“Moreover brethren, I would not that you should be ignorant about God’s dealings with Moses and God’s dealings with Israel, passing through the sea, and under the cloud. They ate the manna; they drank from that spiritual rock which followed them. That rock was Christ!”* Now brethren, I would not

have you to be ignorant about these Old Testament types and patterns and pictures. That manna, and that rock was Christ!" Did you know that?

All of God's dealings with Israel in the Old Testament were to reveal and set forth Christ. Did you know that? That rock was Christ! That Passover Lamb was Christ. Our Lord said, *"Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; My Father gave you that bread from heaven and I am the true bread. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life."*

That tabernacle was Christ, the one *"Who tabernacled among us."* Christ is that priest, and that atonement. That mercy seat is Christ. We need to see from Abel's sacrifice, even back to the seed of woman, in Genesis 3:15, that rock, that brazen serpent. If we don't see our redeemer in these things in the Old Testament, then we are ignorant of the true wisdom of God. Paul said, *"I would not that you should be ignorant concerning Moses and Israel."* I wouldn't have you be ignorant of the patterns, the pictures and the types. You see; *"To Him, Christ gave all the prophets witness."* They talked about Christ.

Look at Romans 10, verses 1 through 4; this is important: Paul said, *"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved. I bear them record; they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. They are going about to establish their own righteousness, being ignorant of the righteousness of God."* They are going about to establish their own righteousness. They are trying to find their acceptance with God by what they do or by what they do not do. The righteousness of God is Christ. *"Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth."* Brethren, let's not be ignorant of true holiness and true righteousness.

There are three things here that are important. Number One: God demands perfection. If any man is going to be saved by the law, ask him this question, "Don't you hear the law?" What does the law require? The law requires perfection, absolute perfection. It does not require admiration and not even agreement. The law requires perfect obedience. That is what God demands, requires and will have, from anyone who chooses to be accepted on the basis of what he does. You don't have that perfect obedience and I don't either. No other human being does.

Secondly: Nothing we do in the flesh will please God. That is what the Word of God says, *"In the flesh dwelleth no good thing. In the flesh, no man can please God."* Actually, *"Our righteousnesses are filthy rags in God's sight."* Even the best we do is not acceptable. Christ Jesus became a man, born of a woman, made under the law and

He obeyed the law as a man, as our Representative. He kept every jot and tittle of God's law.

That is what Paul says here in verse 4: "*Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.*" Don't be ignorant of that. Don't go about to establish a righteousness of your own. It won't do. God won't have it. When you stand at the judgment you have to stand on either one or two foundations. You have to stand on your works or Christ's works. Yours won't do.

"*Christ is the end of the law.*" What does this mean when it says, "The end of the law?" Well, it means that it is the end of the law as a curse. All who are in Christ are no longer under the curse. "*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.*"

We are not under the law as a covenant. "*Christ is the end of the law.*" He is the goal of the law. When we talk about something being the end, we are talking about it being the goal. He is the goal of the law. The law was given to bring us to Christ. The law wasn't given to save us. God never gave the law to Israel to save them. He gave it to them to shut them up to mercy and to Christ.

"*Christ is the end of the law.*" This means that He is the fulfillment of it. He fulfilled the Sabbath Day. He fulfilled all of these things. He fulfilled all the types and shadows, pictures and requirements. You see; "*By the disobedience of one, we became sinners, by the obedience of Christ, we were made righteous.*" Do you see that?

All right, watch this: In Second Corinthians 2, it says; "*I would not have you to be ignorant.*" Paul said, "*Lest Satan could get an advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his devices.*" We are not ignorant of Satan's devices. Are you?

Today, people visualize and picture Satan as a grotesque, red figure with horns. They picture him as having a pitchfork and a tail. That is not Satan. Satan, according to Second Corinthians, Comes as a minister of righteousness. He puts himself off as an apostle of Christ. Satan is a very religious fellow. There are "*Principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places.*"

I don't claim to know a lot about Satan, demons, devils or the rulers of darkness. Most preachers that talk about them all the time don't know anything about them either. They don't know anything about Satan. They are always telling Satan to get off. They don't know Satan. I do know this; Satan is powerful, but not all-powerful. He's not almighty

and is not omnipresent. Satan's chief enemy is not you or me. His chief enemy is the Lord Jesus Christ.

The great aim of Satan is to, "*Corrupt your mind from the simplicity of Christ.*" That is his chief thing. He doesn't care how he does it. Paul said, "*I am not ignorant of his devices.*" Satan will use any means or any way to keep you from believing, resting, trusting and hoping in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is his business. You are not his enemy and I am not his enemy; Christ is.

Do you remember when Christ was going to the cross and Peter said, "Not so, Lord, not so?" Our Lord turned around and said, "*Get thee behind Me, Satan.*" Satan was just using Peter to get to Christ. He will use people. He will use materialism. He will use success or failure. He will use religion or morality. He will use popularity, comfort or discomfort. Paul says, "*I'm not ignorant of his devices.*" Satan will use anything to keep you from faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Don't be ignorant of his devices. Don't be conned by Satan and think he appears as some grotesque and wild looking demon. That is in modern movies ideas and that is not Satan. Satan is religious and his chief enemy is Jesus Christ, His preeminence and His glory. Satan will use any means and device to keep you from the simplicity of Jesus Christ.

Here is another thing: Peter writes this about being misled or being ignorant of God's divine providence. In First Peter 4:12, it says; "*Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.*" In other words, let's not be ignorant concerning trials, difficulties and troubles that come our way through God's providence. They are for our good.

I hear preachers say, "If you are really saved, you will be happy all the time and rich all the time. You are going to be well all the time. Someday you are going to go to sleep and wake up in glory." That's just not so! Life for the believer is full of trials. Our Lord said, "*In this world you will have tribulation, but I have overcome the world.*" These trials and troubles are for our good. They try our faith. They prove our faith. They strengthen our faith.

Joseph had the right attitude toward trials. Do you remember when his own brethren sold him into slavery? He was put into jail. He had a hard time. Finally, he wound up on the throne. Here they were before him. He referred back to their ill treatment. He said, "*You meant it for evil; God meant it for good.*" So, whatever comes your way, whatever the source of the cause, they may mean it for evil, but it will be for your good. "*For all*

things work together for good to them that love God who are called according to His purpose.”