

Dangers of Biblical Ignorance

Let us turn to our Bibles to Hosea chapter 4 verse 6. Hosea chapter 4 verse 6. This powerful admonition upon God's people of old and I believe upon us today. Hosea chapter 4 verse 6. Let us listen attentively to the word of God. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge, because you have rejected knowledge.

I also reject you from being priests for me. Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I will also forget your children. Let us pray.

In these ominous verses God, the warning you give your people of old, which is still a warning for us today, is not as though we are expected to have less knowledge of God, but we have even more knowledge of the New Testament and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in a manner unthinkable of the Old Testament era. It has crossed the face of the world, wherever men and women are called by you, Gentiles and Jews alike. Gracious God, help us, we ask and pray, to contemplate our own lives, to see how far perhaps we have come into the dangers of being biblically ignorant.

And Lord, especially those around us, give us the strength, perseverance and humility to help them avoid the dangers, to call them out to a better understanding of the word of God, we pray, Lord. Help us in all this endeavor to grow closer to you as the body of Christ. Amen.

I just found out this week, providentially, that there is a Mr. Rogers Day in the PCUSA. The very same Mr. Rogers many of us knew about, I guess, from the 60s or 70s. My daughter doesn't know, I'll explain in just a second.

It's called Mr. Rogers Neighborhood. It was a TV show. PBS, I think it usually was, right? It's a kid's show.

With a soft-spoken, clean-cut man in a red sweater, doling out moral aphorisms and lessons in kindness with dolls and puppets. That's fine as far as it goes. What I did not know was his presbytery decided that having a TV show was enough to let him carry his credentials as a pastor without a church.

There's no Jesus in that whole series, children, if you're not aware of it today. It's just basically a secular show. I mean, it's fine as far as I remember it.

That's the mainline Presbyterian church back then. I don't think it's gotten better. I know it hasn't gotten better.

The history of the Presbyterian mainline church is a history of willful ignorance, as demonstrated in the eyewitness accounts of the OPC Minister Churchill in his recommended book, *Lest We Forget*, that all OPC people should read. He grew up in the mainline churches before the OPC was created in 1936 and discovered much of the body that he ran across as he graduated from seminary were unfamiliar with the Bible and the catechisms and the confessions as far back as the early 1900s and the turn of the century. There was growing ignorance and lack of education of the truths within Presbyterian circles.

It was widespread and left what? A theological vacuum that was filled with liberal and progressive thinking. There are other reasons for the fall of the Presbyterian church to be sure, but this was an important problem then as it is now. Consider one poll that compared pop culture and entertainment knowledge with Bible knowledge of the general populace.

Bobby and Peter, I don't know who these people are, I never watched the show, the least recalled names from the Brady Bunch sitcom of the 60s were more recognized in the polls in contrast to the commandments remember the Sabbath and do not make false idols. So Bobby and Peter from a sitcom from the 60s, I think I only had a few seasons, I don't think I had a bunch of seasons. The least known members, there were five or six kids, people remember the smallest kids, that was like 43% of those polled.

Only 34% could remember the Sabbath and only 29% could remember do not make any false idols. Even those who attend a place of worship at least once a week had a bit of trouble naming all ten commandments. Thou shalt not kill 70% and thou shalt not steal 69%, yet more knew in the same poll the parts of the Big Mac.

79% of those polled knew it was two all beef patties and 76% knew it involved lettuce. They know more of the Big Mac than they do of these other commandments. That's where we are and that's just a few of the stats.

So let's look more carefully at the text here to learn the problem entails and how can we avoid this problem and help one another not to fall into the judgment of this text.

Dangers of Ignorance to the Church

The first point is the dangers of ignorance to the church, the dangers dangers of ignorance. This morning a friend of ours mentioned ignorance is bliss and I thought that would be a good title for a sermon perhaps with a question mark.

Ignorance is bliss, question mark? It's not, it's dangerous, downright dangerous. They think they're blissful because they're well they're ignorant. They're actually destroying themselves like little kids.

The Jewish church is the context here of course, the Old Testament Church. The problem is they're destroyed for lack of knowledge and you can tell here I hope that it's parallel to rejecting knowledge. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge because you have rejected knowledge, right? He's explaining what he means by this lack of knowledge.

What he's saying is it's culpable ignorance. You can't claim I didn't know, I'm not guilty. What does it mean? Why are you picking on me? No, you've rejected and God interprets their ignorance as actually a rejection of the truth.

They don't want to know what it takes to honor and praise God or right. As we saw in the prior verses there, the list is more than just the first table, it includes the second table. By swearing and lying, killing and stealing, and committing adultery, they break all restraint with bloodshed upon bloodshed.

Verse two, they excuse it as you recall in the prior chapters, we are blessed by God so what we're doing must be okay because God is materially, financially, economically, socially blessing us. We have these good things, so why do we need to change? That's what's going through their head. They are happy staying uninformed and that's culpable.

Like an adult who refuses to learn the rules of the land or the traffic law or anything else, he is ignorant we say. His lack of knowledge and understanding of these things, because of his own stubborn decision not to learn these things, because he wants to do his own thing. It's his own way to get around the problem of the culpability, the clear culpability of knowing something is right or wrong.

They're like, well I didn't know either way. No, you didn't want to know, so you did, therefore you didn't investigate further, you didn't pay attention, you didn't take the means, causes, occasions, provocations, so that you come into the path of this knowledge that you can better honor and glorify God. They're doing it willfully.

You've done this sometimes, you try to avoid things you don't like in life. Kids do that at times. Well, I didn't quite, what's that, a corner of my eye and you're always just kind of missing the point because you don't want to feel the guilt, you don't want to be, feel like you want to be responsible perhaps or whatever the case is.

That's what this is, willful ignorance, culpable, willful ignorance. Now the punishment here then is I will reject you from being priests for me because you have forgotten the law of your God and I also forget your children. The rejection of priesthood, if it's all of them, then certainly the priests themselves would be rejected as well.

This is a question, is he speaking of the priest more narrowly or is he speaking to all of them as a whole? As you recall in Exodus 19.6, and you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, God tells them. All of you, every single Jew here, a holy nation. These are the words where thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel and continues on to explain this and gives us the Ten Commandments in Chapter 20 of Exodus.

So the foundation, in other words, of the Jewish Old Testament Church is that you're all priests. We must not forget that. We forget that sometimes because you often just hear about Aaron and the Aaronic priesthood and all that, and that's true.

God used them, as it were, instead of all of them being priests in that active sense as a lesson, of course, and to point them to Jesus. He set aside some of them, Aaron and the priesthood and Levites, to do this work. And of course, if all of them are rejected as priests, then clearly that subset known as the special priesthood of Aaron is also rejected.

Maybe that's the simple solution to this text. God's people, by rejecting knowledge, throw away their privileges and blessings of God's covenant. That's what we're reading here.

The Lord of the covenant will not be mocked, and so he will forget them from being a priest and take away and bring punishment upon them for it. I will forget your children. Would you ever forget your children? Of course not.

Like how could I ever forget that which came from me, that I love and took care for? But clearly it's a metaphor of punishment, because God doesn't forget anything. He knows all things. He doesn't have a gap in his memory.

It's a way of describing and playing off the idea here, right, right, of the word of ignorance. You forget, you don't know, and all of a sudden, I guess I'm not gonna know. Who are these kids? They're not my kids.

Of course, he's not really saying that. It's a play on words that way, the concept to highlight the importance of removing his hand of protection upon the children, even to the third and fourth generations, as the curse is in the second commandment, right? You're not gonna take me seriously, God says. There's consequences for that.

And part of taking God seriously and his gospel seriously and his word is understanding and knowing it, not staying in ignorance, not just being a babe your entire life as a Christian. The American church is a clear application, unfortunately, to this. I just say it in general.

There's always exceptions, to be clear. But when I go through the polls, I hope you understand where I'm coming from. What do Christians believe about morality? What do the polls say about this? About 10 years ago, Barna published a massive research and made their own book out of it.

They had so much data. I've got the book at home. The name of the book is called Un-Christians.

It's about the state of the American churches, as best as they can pull it. On the question of cohabitation, one-third of older Christians, about age 40 or over, believe it wasn't a sin. About 59% of those younger believe it wasn't a sin.

Why get married? Fantasies about other people, not a sin. One-third of the older, 57% of the younger population of those who claim to be Christians. I mean, the best you can do in a poll is take a person's word for it.

Are you a Christian and do you believe in being born again? Do you believe in Jesus? Yes, I do. Yes, I do. Yes.

Okay, now we're going to ask these other questions. And this is what they're giving us. It's okay to have a relationship outside of marriage.

23% of the older generation, 44% of the younger. Now, that was 10 years ago. I would submit to you it's even worse now, but I could be wrong.

Drunkenness, one-third of the old generation was against drunkenness. Only 13% of the newer generation. Wow.

Anti-abortion. What do we have here, brothers and sisters, in verse two? By swearing and lying, killing. And they break all restraint with bloodshed upon bloodshed.

There are people who claim to be Christians who kill their babies. Anti-abortion, one-third of the older population of professing evangelicals slash Christians of some sort. 13% were against murdering babies of the younger generation.

That's appalling. And of course, anti-homosexuality or pro-godliness, pro-heterosexuality, 28% of the older generation, and 13% of the younger generation. They've been swallowed whole by the lies of the queer community.

That's just the questions on morality. And then you ask the questions about the Bible and theology. Supposedly, three million Americans described themselves as Christians from age 18 to 41 in another poll.

And they supposedly have a Christian worldview. So, this is actually three million of a larger number who say they're Christian or evangelical. And then you ask them, okay, so what are your views about God and heaven and the resurrection? Do you have a Christian worldview, was the question.

And of that larger number, only three million came out on top with something called a Christian worldview. So, that's about three million that came out this way. But what does it mean to have a Christian worldview according to Barna? I will tell you already, it's not going to be a confession of faith, which is 32 chapters, larger or shorter catechism.

What you have is simply this. Jesus Christ lived a sinless life. God is the all-powerful all-knowing creator of the universe.

That's two points so far. And still rules today. That's three points.

Salvation is a free gift of God, four. Satan is real, five. Christians should witness, six.

The Bible is accurate, seven. And the source of moral absolute truth, eight. That's it.

That's how they define a Christian worldview. I don't recognize it. There's nothing about the Holy Spirit in this definition.

The Apostles Creed has more depth in many ways. So, that's a very low bar, brothers, this is what I'm telling you. And only three million were able to hurl it.

Amongst the homeschoolers, because I remember this very clearly when I was researching the homeschooling question a number of years ago, half believed that you were saved by good works. The claim of the homeschooling circles, as you know in Colorado, was how conservative and wonderful they were. And half of them believe they were saved by good works.

57% in another poll, I think this was the Pew poll, I have it in my notes, 57% of evangelicals deny that Christ alone is the way to heaven. These are people who say, I'm evangelical, I'm describing myself as a person who's not just a general Protestant or a mainline, but I'm evangelical, and they deny that Christ is the only way to heaven. 57%.

A high percentage of believers contend that they have indeed obeyed vast portions of God's law. You know, sufficiently, I'm good, I'm good enough. And so, it's easy to obey God's law when you're ignorant about God's law and doctrines and truth, because part of the problem here, in Hosea, of course, is ignorance about God's law, willful ignorance, they're making excuses and whatever else is going on here.

But, of course, also about God and his worship and who he is. We have that today, unfortunately. If we don't know it, it's easy to say, I guess I'm doing it well.

I'm good enough to go to heaven. Half of homeschoolers are like, I can go to heaven by obeying God enough. Now, there are different types of ignorance.

There's willful ignorance, which is the point of this text, shoving their heads in the sand, ignoring the warning signs of how bad things are in their life and the church around them. Happily uninformed is another way of describing this. Plugging their ears when someone speaks the truth.

I don't want to hear it. What I have is enough. Then there's uninformed ignorance, or lack of information, more or less.

So, here I'm not using the word ignorant in a negative sense. You're just ignorant. But, simply, they just don't know.

And there are Christians like that. Not being informed enough, even though they want to be informed. They would like to hear such things if it came their way.

Often through bad preaching and teaching, bad theology. Remember, bad theology pushes out good theology. That's why we want to stomp it out.

It's a variation of what's called, I think it's Gresham's Law in economics. Bad money pushes out good money. The worst form, of course, is when both the people, people in the pew and the teachers, are all happy being ignorant in theology and the Bible and things like that.

They just don't want to learn anymore. I don't want to hear anymore. I remember witnessing to some visitors we had a number of years ago, and they were younger people.

I was like, okay, this is good. Let's talk to them, and here's our confession. And they were just blown out of the water.

That's a lot of stuff. 32 chapters? Really? Like, well, we can talk about it. No, that's just too much.

They like to have, I guess, a very minimalistic approach to the Bible. I mean, look at this Bible. It's huge.

32 chapters is nothing compared to what everything else you could talk about in the Bible. Thus, Hosea 4.6, where you have both the priests, apparently, as we see in another verse

after this, and certainly the people, all of them, happy in their ignorance. They don't want to know more.

They want to keep sinning and claim ignorance and innocence. It's a way to avoid responsibility. And I fear it's too common in America.

Pastors in the New Testament, or prophets and priests in the Old Testament, they are the officers who are called to instruct the people to keep them from the dangers of being destroyed for lack of knowledge. This warning here in Hosea 4.6. When God revokes their special privilege as priests before him, that will include the ministers of the Old Testament, the priests and the like, and they will be judged, the people will be judged, and part of that judgment is more ignorance. It just keeps abounding and growing, unfortunately.

They're especially judged by God, a church officer, and that makes sense. To whom much is given, much is required. And the priests are supposed to know more.

The prophets are supposed to know more. We run across this in Ezekiel 13. Several verses there, especially in verse 9, where God warns through the mouth of Ezekiel the false prophets who preach ease and peace amongst the people of God, instead of waking them up from their slumber.

My hand will be against the prophets who envision futility and who divine lies. They shall not be in the assembly of my people, nor be written in the record of the house of Israel, nor shall they enter into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.

He is writing them out, no longer written in the house of Israel. That's pretty serious, the records therein. God will punish the false teachers and the false prophets, even today.

The judgment. God forgetting the children. Of course, it is not always an absolute rejection of them.

We shouldn't take this as we hear other verses in Hosea as well, and read it as a black and white, but a relative rejection. But it could be absolute, depending on who's listening. Because, well, in the church, there are literally unregenerate reprobates who really don't care much.

They're just here because their parents make them to be here, or they just like to hang out with people, or whatever else the reason is. I don't know. If they will not repent, their rejection is final.

But those who do repent, because this is a warning, their rejection is not final, it's but temporary, because the punishment. God punishes those whom he loves, doesn't he? We read that in Hosea Hebrews, at the end of the chapters there, in chapter 12, in the opening verses of chapter 12, God will discipline you. If you're not being disciplined, maybe you're not a legitimate child of God.

And as we read elsewhere, in fact, in Hosea, in the earlier verses, where it seems like there's an absolute rejection, you're no longer my people. He tells them, you will be my people. In

fact, I'm going to expand my grace and my long-suffering to include the whole entire world, and even the Gentiles shall come and celebrate.

And they will have what? The knowledge of the Lord upon them. That's a blessing, the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. He will judge even the church for bad practices and false teachings, even willful ignorance, in the New Testament.

This is not just an Old Testament thing, because judgment and sin and morality and ignorance are a universal problem, not a unique problem to the Jewish Church. And God cares about it wherever we are in the world, before, after, the coming of Christ. We have it more clearly, however, in 1 Peter 4, 17-19.

You're going to recognize this passage, 1 Peter 4, 17 and following. When the time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God. For if it first begins at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Everyone will be judged.

Christians are being judged right now, but the judgment, of course, is the judgment of a father upon a child to bring them and to change them and to mold them in the image of Jesus Christ. For those who do not have Jesus as their Savior, who do not live a life of repentance, that judgment is final. And it's a judgment of a judge.

The fatherly judgment versus a judicial judgment is what I'm highlighting. And Peter clearly here is warning them that God will indeed purify His church. He will bring here upon them, even today, if they have rejected knowledge of the Word of God and they are in willful ignorance, God will reject them, even if it is temporary, to wake them up and bring them back to Him.

That's the point. And even the forgetting of the children is to jolt them out. Don't you love your kids? And if things are going south for the kids, don't you want to change things so things don't go south for your kids? Of course.

That's what He wants them to do. Whether they did or not, we know historically God brought greater judgment and He went into captivity. So they didn't do it immediately, unfortunately.

Protecting the Knowledge of the Church

Protecting the knowledge of the church, or your knowledge, which is the opposite, in other words. Here is the negative. There is the warning.

You're destroyed for a lack of knowledge and therefore what? You are preserved, protected, and maintained with knowledge and truth of the Word of God, what we have. And how is this done? In separate ways, in other ways, a number of ways. I could have sliced the pie, as it were, and described how this can be done on the positive end to preserve the truth of God's Word in our lives, in our churches.

And the first thing I want to point out is the truth read. The truth read. It's a personal responsibility.

It's what I want to highlight here. You can't have your parents, your pastors, read for you all the time. You have to do some of the thinking and studying and meditation upon the Word of God yourself to avoid the dangers of the future.

Because things will happen, especially for the kids, that they get older. They'll be distracted. And if you don't have good habits when you're younger, you're going to lose them when more pressure comes upon you in adulthood, as a rule.

As you know, as you get older, it becomes harder to change your patterns in your life. And reading the Word of God is one way to avoid being destroyed for lack of knowledge. And the punishment that comes upon it, the misery of the life that we know, when people run around, destroy marriages, are drunk and everything else.

Christians think, unfortunately today, according to the polls, many of them, too many of them, that this is okay. And it's not. They're already having judgment upon them.

This is how you can avoid it. Learn his Bible. Read and meditate upon it.

Bible reading and meditation, not just reading, as such, family or personal time. We have phones, tablets, laptops. You have a Bible on it.

It can always be with you, especially with the phone. Read a little bit here and there. You have it with you.

Multiple Bibles in the home. Grab a reading plan. Pick up a book of the Bible and go through it.

If you're confused about something, I would recommend, although I can't say I agree with everything of his, because I haven't read everything of his, but I read a lot of his. Matthew Henry is a classic passage, a classic author, a commentary that you could use to help you with the more difficult parts of the Bible. The Bible is summarized as well.

Read the Bible. Meditate upon the Bible. Understand the Bible.

Get some assistance with the Bible, like a commentary. But we have other ways in which you can learn the Bible, and that's summarized in the Confessions and the Catechisms. If you never thought about it, those are ways of taking the Bible data and putting it in a systematic, presentable form for you to digest and learn.

And preferably, if you can, get those Confessions and the Catechisms with the proof text at the bottom of the text. Not going to the back trying to find it. They're there on the same page as the claim, the theological claim.

You can read at the bottom and go, oh, that's interesting. I never saw that verse before. That's the best way to do it, I think.

But if you don't have that, that's fine. Or reverse, perhaps you can call it, reverse Bible study. You look at the Bible text, you have Hosea 4.6, Hosea 4.6, and some of the Confessions there have the verses in the back referenced to parts of the Confession and the Catechism.

You can find out what the commentary is, what you're having in the case of a Confession and a commentary. And a Catechism is basically a commentary. They're commentaries on the Bible, saying this is what we think this is about.

And they give you proof text. You go to the proof text and see what they think about it. And Hosea 4.6, in fact, is used in the Confession.

I think it's the larger Catechism, in fact. And the truth taught, not just read what you do, what you can interact with the Bible and other helps and the like, but the truth taught specifically through preachers. Preaching, not just the Catechisms and the like, but preachers.

Romans 10.13, for whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him to whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him in whom they have not heard? How shall they hear without a preacher? There's something about the Lord blessing his church and giving them men who speak, who are like us, who stand up for Jesus, explain the Word of God, and apply the Bible to us that's different than simply reading it. You want to do both, but it is different.

It's a different mode in which it captures, I hope, our thinking and our hearing. This guy is zealous for the Word. I, too, should be zealous for the Word.

Something along those lines. He takes it seriously. I ought to take it seriously.

That's the office of the preacher. Preachers are a blessing because they specialize in reading and learning and applying the Bible of God as much as they can, as much study as possible. Preaching, of course, includes morning and evening, if possible, Sunday school, Bible studies.

Given the lack of instruction in the schools, let alone anywhere else in society, about the Bible, about the truths therein, the prevalence, on the other hand, of the wicked advertising movies, books, and all the lies that we're inundated with throughout the week, we ought to take, as we are able, especially in the Lord's day, to learn, learn, and grow, and apply, and grow some more. Of course, Sunday school is specifically designed for this, as an addition to morning and evening worship, to go over specifics that you wouldn't always cover in preaching. At least, that's my approach, and you can take questions in a way you don't do in worship, of course.

In Geneva, in Scotland, and the like, they had weekly sermons besides Monday. They were so zealous to get the people of God to have a better understanding than all the ignorance they had throughout the Dark Ages under the Roman Catholic tutelage, or the lack thereof.

Matthew Henry taught the youth on Sundays, excuse me, Saturdays, and Geneva taught the Psalms on Saturdays as well, so the kids would grow up learning the Psalms of God.

So, there's all kinds of different methods and tools to be used to increase knowledge of God through our church, and our own lives, and perhaps our friends, and the like, that we can invite, and say, hey, you don't have to always directly confront them. Usually, the pastor does something like that, sure. You don't have to do that, and say, you know, why don't you come, and maybe you can hear something a little different.

You don't know what Presbyterian is about. You never heard this before. Let's try it out.

I mean, you know they need to have more instruction, perhaps, but you can read it, you can hear it, you can meditate upon it, but it means nothing if you do not believe in Jesus Christ and the truth of the Bible itself. The truth must, therefore, be believed. These men and women of the Old Testament here didn't believe enough, at least.

The weak Christians, if they're like Lot, and of course, those who weren't believers at all, didn't really care. The whole generation in the desert with Moses heard and saw the gospel through the miracles and the words of Moses himself, and God speaking from heaven. But it availed them nothing.

Many of them, it availed them nothing. Hebrews 4.2 we read, for indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them. That whole generation in the desert outside of Egypt.

But the word which they heard did not profit them. It did nothing for them. Not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.

My preaching, your reading, is not a magical bullet to change you. You have to simply believe. I can't do that for you.

But if you believe, God will continue to bless and work through the means of reading his Bible, meditating upon it, and hearing it preached to you. And I don't think it needs to be expressed too much to our audience here, but you need to recall this, that we are surrounded by much ignorance in the American Christian churches. But your faith can't grow in ignorance, just by definition.

It simply cannot grow when they're ignorant. They think it grows because they often confuse faith with feelings and emotions. That's been my experience.

While they talk this kind of confused talk about the law of God and worldviews, and they don't know what they're talking about. It's sad. They need help.

We all need help, and we can pray. I pray for ourselves, for them, that they can get the help for revival for all of us, in fact, of the truth in the U.S. churches, and meditate upon what we can do to help our brothers and sisters in their time of need. Let us pray.

Indeed, God above, we mourn. We don't gloat in this problem, God. We certainly have ignorance in our own churches, because ignorance in one sense is relative to whom much is given, much is required, and the Reformed faith has much, indeed, given to us, Lord.

And sometimes relative to that amount of knowledge as summarized in the confessions, although there's much more to that, because they, Lord, are not the Word of God, but the Word of God is here before us. And people don't want to learn anymore. They're like, this is enough.

I don't have to go any further. I'm satisfied. No, we need to go perhaps even a little further, especially, God, when it comes to applying the law of God into our lives by the power of Spirit and conviction of where you want us to walk in our lives.

And so, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we pray, indeed, for revival, to raise up godly men to speak the truth in these churches, Lord, in which the people are starving, and the sheep are slowly fading away through starvation, God, from not having the truth of your Word, that they would get that Word, that they would be fed, and they would be changed and grow. Our God and Savior may, indeed, all of us change and grow and become more like Jesus. We pray and ask and implore these things by the power of the Holy Spirit.