

## **Ignorance And Apathy Destroy The Church**

by Douglas Hoff

A troubled church asked its members to identify the problems they faced. The survey had only one question: "In your opinion, what are the two biggest problems this congregation must solve?" One man wrote, "I don't know and I don't care" How right he was! Ignorance and apathy keep people enslaved to the devil and his ways.

The devil would like people to remain ignorant of the Bible because then they would have no power to overcome him. Thomas Gray (1716-1771) wrote poetic words that have been quoted out of context and misused for years. Many have heard the catchy phrase "ignorance is bliss." Gray said that in this life sorrow is an all too familiar reality and happiness swiftly flies away. Focusing on troubles only serves to destroy any chance for contentment. As such he wrote, "where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise." However, this should not be taken as a blanket endorsement of ignorance!

Another familiar cliché is "What you don't know can't hurt you." Oh, but it can! This is especially true in spiritual matters. In fact, when people do not "know" God in the sense of understanding His nature and obeying His commandments they will be destroyed. The Lord said, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee" (Hos. 4:6). When Jesus comes again he will be "revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." It has often been said that ignorance of the law is no excuse. The Lord created within each person a drive to know God (Acts 17:24-27). Mankind is without excuse (Rom. 1:20). Ignorance is a curse from which each individual must free himself to attain heaven.

Apathy is another one of Satan's tools for destroying souls and keeping them in his power. It is much like inertia to the soul. Overcoming the initial resistance takes work many are unwilling to put forth. Apathy has tragic consequences though. Edmund Burke once said, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." Do nothing and you will lose your soul (Matt. 25:24-30).

There is a story about a new minister who was trying to motivate the congregation to become more spiritually minded. He wanted them to be better Christians who were busy doing the work of the Lord. Thinking about how best to accomplish this task, he preached sermons on the love of God and the sacrifice Jesus made to save us from hell. People filed out of the building Sunday after Sunday saying "That was a good sermon." Still, there appeared to be no change in the lives of the members.

Months passed and the preacher became a bit discouraged. Finally, he decided to use a different approach to motivate and warn the church. The following Sunday when he got into the pulpit he cried out, "Fire!" The preacher's expression was so convincing that people jumped up and heads turned in fear but no flames were seen. After a while people sat back down and a buzz rippled through the auditorium. Questions abounded. One of the older members asked the minister why he had pulled such a stunt during a worship service. It seemed totally inappropriate he said.

The preacher sadly said, "For months I have been teaching all of you about the dangers of hell fire. I have been preaching on the love of God and how He sent his Son Jesus to die in your place. Yet, your lives have not changed. I was beginning to wonder if any of you realized the danger you are in because of apathy. Why is that when I yell, 'Fire!' you take action but when I preach on the reality of Judgment Day no one moves a muscle?"

Brethren, let us never be guilty of spiritual lethargy (Heb. 6:11-12). Knowing God's word ought to motivate us to love, serve and worship Him (1 Cor. 15:58).