

Ignorance  
The Fairview Church of God  
June 20, 2009

***Ignorantia juris non excusat*** or ***Ignorantia legis neminem excusat*** (Latin for "ignorance of the law does not excuse" or "ignorance of the law excuses no one") is a legal principle holding that a person who is unaware of a law may not escape liability for violating that law merely because he or she was unaware of its content.

### **Explanation**

The rationale behind the doctrine is that if ignorance were an excuse, a person charged with criminal offenses or a subject of a civil lawsuit would merely claim that he or she is unaware of the law in question to avoid liability, even though the person really does know what the law in question is. Thus, the law imputes knowledge of all laws to all persons within the jurisdiction no matter how transiently. Even though it would be impossible, even for someone with substantial legal training, to be aware of every law in operation in every aspect of a state's activities, this is the price paid to ensure that willful blindness cannot become the basis of vindication.

The doctrine assumes that the law in question has been properly published and distributed, for example, by being printed in a government gazette, made available over the internet, or printed in volumes available for sale to the public at affordable prices.

### **Translation**

**Presumed knowledge of the law** is the principle in jurisprudence that one is bound by a law even if one does not know of it. It has also been defined as the "prohibition of ignorance of the law".

The concept comes from Roman law ... The essential public character of a law requires that the law must apply to anyone in the jurisdiction where the law applies. Thus, no one can justify his conduct on the grounds that he was not aware of the law.

“You know everybody is ignorant, only on different subjects.”

[Will Rogers](#), *New York Times* Aug. 31 1924  
*US humorist & showman (1879 - 1935)*

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What is ignorance?

**Ignorance** is the state in which one lacks knowledge, is unaware of something or chooses to subjectively ignore information. **This should not be confused with being unintelligent, as one's level of intelligence and level of education or general awareness are not the same.**

I am willingly ignorant of several things – like bungee jumping.

How does the Bible treat ignorance?

**Leviticus 4:**

- 1 ¶ Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,
- 2 "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'If a person sins unintentionally (through ignorance) against any of the commandments of the LORD in anything which ought not to be done, and does any of them,
  - The Hebrew word is Strong's #7684 – shegagah, *sheg-aw-gaw* – a mistake or inadvertent transgression – error, ignorance, at unawares, unwittingly
- 3 'if the anointed priest sins, bringing guilt on the people, then let him offer to the LORD for his sin which he has sinned a young bull without blemish as a sin offering.
- - Verses 4-12 describe the sacrifice made by the priest to atone for the sin
  - The person is not put to death or otherwise punished, but a purification must be made
  - This purification foreshadows the crucifixion of Christ, which paid the debt we owe for our sins
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- 13 ¶ 'Now if the whole congregation of Israel sins unintentionally (through ignorance – *same word*), and the thing is hidden from the eyes of the

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assembly, and they have done something against any of the commandments of the LORD in anything which should not be done, and are guilty;

- 14 'when the sin which they have committed becomes known, then the assembly shall offer a young bull for the sin, and bring it before the tabernacle of meeting.
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  - Verses 15-21 describe the purification rites that were required before the death of Christ
  - Notice that the purification is for the entirety of Israel and the purification is done when the sin becomes known
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- 22 ¶ 'When a ruler has sinned, and done something unintentionally against any of the commandments of the LORD his God in anything which should not be done, and is guilty,
- 23 'or if his sin which he has committed comes to his knowledge, he shall bring as his offering a kid of the goats, a male without blemish.
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  - Verses 24-26 cover the purification rites that were required
  - Rulers are covered here as well
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- 27 ¶ 'If anyone of the common people sins unintentionally (**through ignorance – same word**), 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 a kid of the goats, a female without blemish, for his sin which he has committed.
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- 35 ... So the priest shall make atonement for his sin that he has committed, and it shall be forgiven him.
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- These words are at the end of each of the purification rite instructions above
- We are not perfect, but we are forgiven
- IF – we no longer sin – repent – don't do that anymore, now that we know it is wrong

**Leviticus 5:**

- 1 ¶ If a person sins in hearing the utterance of an oath, and is a witness, whether he has seen or known of the matter -if he does not tell it, he bears guilt.
- 2 'Or if a person touches any unclean thing, whether it is the carcass of an unclean beast, or the carcass of unclean livestock, or the carcass of unclean creeping things, and he is unaware of it, he also shall be unclean and guilty.
- 3 'Or if he touches human uncleanness-whatever uncleanness with which a man may be defiled, and he is unaware of it-when he realizes it, then he shall be guilty.
- 4 'Or if a person swears, speaking thoughtlessly with his lips to do evil or to do good, whatever it is that a man may pronounce by an oath, and he is unaware of it-when he realizes it, then he shall be guilty in any of these matters.
  - Sometimes we react without thinking
  - When we realize what we have done, we become guilty
- 5 'And it shall be, when he is guilty in any of these matters, that he shall confess that he has sinned in that thing;
- 6 'and he shall bring his trespass offering to the LORD for his sin which he has committed, a female from the flock, a lamb or a kid of the goats as a sin offering. So the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin.
  - Atonement, along with repentance, brings forgiveness

You can read the rest of Leviticus 5 for more of the same message

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Numbers 15 repeats much of what we have just covered if you want to read that, too.

The New Testament continues the same message.

Acts 3:

- 13 "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go.
- 14 "But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you,
- 15 "and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.
- 16 "And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.
- 17 "Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers.
  - The Greek word is from the root word Strong's #50 – agnoeo – *ag-no-eh-o* – not to know through lack of information
  - The people and their rulers did not realize what they were doing
- 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,
  - But once they became aware of their sin, they were called upon to repent and be converted
  - A purification must be performed by them
- 20 "and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before,
- 21 "whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

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**Acts 17:**

- 22 ¶ Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious;
- 23 "for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you:
- 24 "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.
- 25 "Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.
- 26 "And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings,
- 27 "so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;
- 28 "for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'
- 29 "Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.
- 30 "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,
  - Once we are made aware, we need to change our ways!

**Romans 10:**

- 1 ¶ Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.
  - And for the world today!
- 2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

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- There are many that want to obey God, they just don't really know how
- 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.
  - They lack the information – that is clearly in the Bible – if they would study it
- 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.
  - Jesus fulfilled the Law – gave it back its originally intended meaning

**1 Corinthians 14:**

- 38 But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant.
  - God will use His Holy Spirit to call them
  - It is not up to us to try to change their minds
  - It is up to us to be able to answer their questions when they come to us – and to do it in a kind manner

**2 Corinthians 2:**

- 10 Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ,
- 11 lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.
  - If we study the Bible, we know the deceptive practices of the Devil
  - We can be deceived!

**1 Thessalonians 4:**

- 13 ¶ But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.
  - The dead have hope
  - Even if they died in ignorance!

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- 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.
- 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.
  - Those alive at the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming will not precede the dead into the Kingdom
- 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.
  - Those who were not ignorant, but were obedient
- 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.
- 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.
  - It is indeed “good news” that is very comforting!

**2 Timothy 2:**

- 23 But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife.

1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter say more about ignorance that you may want to read for yourself.

**2 Timothy 2:**

- 15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.
  - Don't remain ignorant
  - Once you have the knowledge, you must act on it!
  - Repent, be baptized and receive the Holy Spirit!