

The Place of Sincerity in Religion—No. 3

Dub McClish

God certainly requires us to be sincere in our practice of religion. Insincerity and hypocrisy are intolerable to God (Mat. 6:1-18); 23:4-5; 24:51, etc). However, the popular phrase concerning religion, "It makes no difference what you believe if you are sincere," is patently false, according to the Bible. Numerous cases demonstrate that sincere, earnest people, both in conviction and practice, (e.g., Saul of Tarsus, Cornelius, etc.) were not accepted of God merely based on their sincerity.

What is the real fault in the "sincerity alone" approach to religion? It exalts one noble trait (sincerity) to a position of dominance over all other noble traits (kindness, truth-seeking, etc.).

Jesus said that by abiding in His Word, the Truth, we shall be made free (John 8:31-32). He also warned us about false prophets and teachers (Mat. 7:15). But if sincerity is all that matters, then there is really no such thing as Truth and error; sincerity would make a false doctrine just as pure as a true doctrine. We are to discern between good and evil (Heb. 5:14). But there is no distinction between the two if sincerity makes all things right. Most are wiser than this in the fields of science and mathematics. Regardless of how sincerely one might believe that $2 + 2 = 5$, that would not make it so. It would still be 4. One might believe sincerely he would float if he stepped off a 200-foot tower, but his sincerity would not alter the law of gravity.

If sincerity is sufficient to please God, then a woman could do a strip-tease act on Sunday morning in your church building and it would be just as acceptable to God as the acts of worship prescribed in the New Testament, if the woman was sincere. If sincerity is not sufficient in those cases, then it fails in other cases. The Bible teaches that baptism is an act leading to forgiveness of sins, a condition of salvation. One may sincerely believe in salvation by "faith alone," but this does not change God's Word. Truth must be exalted alongside of sincerity in our lives.

[**Note:** I wrote this article for, and it was published in the "Bible Thoughts" Column for the *Hood County News*, Granbury, Texas, December 18, 1977.]

Attribution: From *thescripturecache.com*; Dub McClish, owner and administrator.