

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

841 Old Hickory Blvd.

Jackson, TN 38305

oldhickorycofc.com

January 22, 2017

Volume 37, # 04

Will Honest & Sincere People Be Lost?

The preaching of the gospel gets varied reactions. One of those is amazement that anyone could believe that honest and sincere people could be lost. Several months ago a young man visited where I was preaching in a meeting. The lesson he heard was about the New Testament church. After the sermon he came to me and said that if what he heard me preach was right, then he must conclude that there would be some who are honest and sincere in their religion who would be lost — including him!

This reaction is quite pragmatical. That is, it screens a doctrine or position upon the basis of whether or not we like the consequences. If the consequences are undesirable, then someone concludes it must not be so.

Can Those Who Are Sincere Be Wrong?

Honesty and sincerity do not guarantee that our positions and actions are right. We recognize that principle in other areas of life. Why not grabble with it in religion? We all know that it is possible for one to take the wrong medication, while believing it to be correct, and then suffer the consequences. If a person drank a glass of poison, thinking it to be water, would it not have an adverse affect upon him?

All through the Bible there are examples of those who were sincere and still in sin. To illustrate, consider the case of Abimelech who took Sara from Abraham. He said, "In the integrity of my heart and innocence of my hands I have done this" (Gen. 20:5). Yet, it was still wrong for him to take her. God told Abimelech, "Indeed you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife" (v. 3). As a consequence, God "closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife" (v. 18).

Do you remember the old prophet who lied to the younger one about God telling him to come back with him (1 Kings 13)? The younger prophet had been specifically warned by God who said, "You shall not eat bread, nor drink water, nor return by the same way you came" (v. 9). The older prophet "lied" to him and convinced the younger prophet that the Lord told him to bring the younger prophet home with him. So, he did what he was told. The text says the Lord allowed a lion to slay him because of his disobedience. Sincere? Yes. Honest? Absolutely. Wrong? No doubt!

More specifically, there are cases of people who were sincere and yet they were still wrong and in need of salvation. Saul of Tarsus is a case in point. Before his conversion he persecuted the church making havoc of it (Acts 8:1-3). He assisted in putting Christians in prison and voiced his opinion about some being put to death. In fact, he was so bad that he described himself as the "chief" of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). Yet, during that time, he lived with a clear conscience (Acts 23:1). The whole time he was doing what he thought to be right. He was wrong, though sincere. He still needed to be baptized to wash away his sins (Acts 22:16).

Another case is that of Cornelius, the first Gentile convert (Acts 10). He was a good man (vv. 2, 22). He feared God, gave alms, and prayed regularly. Yet, he still had to hear the gospel by which he could be saved (Acts 10:6; 11:14). Was this notable leader sincere? No one would question that. Was he still lost and in need of salvation? He certainly was.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said that there would be some who would be surprised at the judgment day. He said,

Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness" (Matt. 7:21-23)!

Their reaction shows their honesty and sincerity. Yet, these would be cast off because they work lawlessness (doing that which is not lawful).

Some Consequences

While we do not determine what is right and wrong by whether we like the consequences, we can see something is wrong with a conclusion if its consequences contradict plain and simple passages. If we cannot conceive of sincere people being lost, then we must conclude that any who are honest and sincere cannot be lost. Who could affirm that? That would mean that sincerity is all that is essential. It wouldn't matter what you believe,

practice, or teach in religion as long as you are sincere. This would mean that any Jew or Muslim who denies that Jesus is the Son of God would not be lost (even though he doesn't believe in Christ) since he is sincere. Thus, any passage demanding faith would have to be wrong! Furthermore, even an atheist would not be lost if he is honest and sincere in their conclusions. Who can accept these consequences?

Obedience Is Necessary

Just a casual reading of the Scriptures will reveal that God expects obedience to his will. Consider a few simple texts.

Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven (Matt. 7:21).

But why do you call Me "Lord, Lord," and do not do the things which I say (Luke 6:46)?

Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him (Heb. 5:8-9).

Those who heard the gospel in the first century were told to "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19) even though the sin they committed was done "in ignorance" (v. 17).

We must conclude that there will be honest and sincere people who will be lost. If such is the case, it behooves us to carefully study God's word and live accordingly.

- Donnie V. Rader

How We React

We have all seen different temperaments in our children. One child must be spanked continually, while another one breaks out in tears with a word or look of disapproval. As parents, we are always trying to get at the heart of our children. We continue to train each child, according to their need, so that when they are teenagers they will heed our words without the use of a rod.

With some children, this is a challenging job.

But how hard is it for God to train us? Do we have the easily touched heart when we are confronted with sin? Are we truly grieved and repent quickly when we disappoint our Father? Like David, do we turn from our sinful ways in full repentance when we learn that we are the man? Or, are we like Pharaoh, so hard hearted that lesson after lesson, plague after plague does not soften our hearts to Gods love (Heb. 12:8)?

Determine now to soften your heart. Repent quickly and completely and return to your Father who only wants the best for you and loves you. "Rebuke is more effective for a wise man than a hundred blows on a fool" (Prov. 17:10).

- John McPherson

Take Action So God Will Not Forget!

It doesn't take a great deal of observation to realize that children, quite often, seem to be the ones who suffer the most from the bad actions or lack of concern of adults. To the adults of his day, Hosea the prophet said this: "... Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children." (Hosea 4:6b). How important it is for the adults of this world to open their Bibles and learn the things of God. How vital it is to know the law of God in order that our children will not be forgotten by Him. Those who do not seek the light can expect nothing other than to perish in the dark. And upon what passage will we book fare for our children as they embark into the world where Satan rules and destroys?

God's word is priceless. It alone teaches man the truth, the correct view of himself, why he is here, and where he is going. Only God's truth provides for man's every spiritual need because it, as man, has come from God Himself. Only the Bible shows man how to be freed from sin and how to serve God. Faith develops in man only as he hears God's word (Romans 10:17). It is man's responsibility to learn, believe and obey.

Hearing what God has given in the Bible will lead one to a knowledge of Christ. As Jesus said, "Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me." (John 6:45b). God's blessings are many and great, for adults and children, but every one of them is based upon God's word being known, believed and obeyed. Needless spiritual poverty abounds because so many are unwilling to pay the price of learning. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." (Hosea 4:6a).

John wrote in his gospel, "these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." (John

20:31). The believing that brings true life comes when one embraces what is written. What God has written is only found in the Bible.

Friend, will you see the precious value of learning and believing God's word, not only that God will not forget you, but also that God will not forget your children by your failure to teach them the contents of the Bible? We can help. We offer Bible classes for all ages twice every week. Please join us as we study God's word. God has not forgotten us, and He will not forget you!

- Gary Smalley

> "He who kneels before God, can stand before anyone!"

> "Nothing ruins the truth like stretching it!"

> "Prayer - Don't give God instructions - just report for duty!"

> "Watch your step carefully! Everyone else does!"

> "We set the sail; God makes the wind!"

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: We have guest speakers today: Sunday morning: Gregg Needham; Sunday evening: Gordon Percell.