

Is Honesty And Sincerity Enough?

Introduction. There is a pervasive idea in too many people's minds that honesty and sincerity will save someone. In Isaiah's day, God appealed to His people to give up their way of thinking and acting so they could follow Him (Isaiah 55:6-9). Following God means submitting to His truth and avoiding self-deception. Only by those means can someone be saved.

I. Submitting To Truth

- A. Three necessary attributes.
 - 1. In Luke 8:15, Jesus spoke of the "honest and good heart." "Honest" is "good in its substance and nature; morally virtuous," and "good" indicates "a soul inclined to goodness, and accordingly eager to learn saving truth and ready to bear the fruits."
 - 2. In 1 Timothy 1:5 and 2 Timothy 1:5, Paul used the term "unfeigned" which means "genuine and sincere, and hence lacking in pretense or show."
 - 3. In Philippians 2:5, we are told to have the mind of Christ. This means to engage one's faculty for thoughtful planning, with an emphasis on the underlying disposition or attitude.
- B. When people in the world do something wrong, but are honest and sincere, and possess a good attitude, does it make what they do right?
 - 1. What if a doctor gives the wrong diagnosis? What if a nurse gives the wrong shot? What if a pharmacist gives the wrong pill?
 - 2. These wrong decisions did not harmonize with medical truth. This could result in the death of the patient even though they were honest and sincere.
- C. What is "truth" (John 18:36)? "Truth" objectively describes conformity to fact (1 Timothy 2:4). It is not subject to a man's feelings or experiences because they are undependable (Judges 21:25; Proverbs 16:25; Jeremiah 10:23). One who has an honest heart and sincere faith will submit his subjective feelings, thoughts, and opinions to objective truth.

II. We Can Be Deceived

- A. We can be deceived by false evidence.
 - 1. Joseph's brothers deceived their father (Genesis 37:31-33).
 - 2. Jacob mourned for his son even though he was really still alive (vv. 34-36).
- B. We can be deceived by prejudices.
 - 1. Naaman thought Elisha would pray the "sinner's prayer" (2 Kings 5:11).

2. Saul happily persecuted Christians (Acts 26:9-11; Galatians 1:13; cp. Acts 23:1).
- C. We can be deceived by false teachers.
1. Satan uses false teachers who appear honest and sincere to deceive people (2 Corinthians 11:14-15).
 - a) The Jewish multitude was deceived by the religious leaders (Matthew 27:20). The fact that they were honestly and sincerely ignorant that He was the Messiah did not absolve them of guilt (Acts 2:23, 36; 3:17).
 - b) The Samaritans honestly and sincerely believed Simon the sorcerer had God's power but they were wrong (Acts 8:9-11).
 2. Some believe false teachers will suffer eternal consequences but not their hearers. If this is the case, why did Jesus say what He did in Matthew 15:13-14? Though they may be honest and sincere, they will fall into the same pit as the false teacher.
- D. Every Christian has to learn the word so they will not be deceived (James 1:22-25). Self-deception is perhaps the most dangerous deception (Jeremiah 49:16; Galatians 6:3).

III. What Did They Have To Do?

- A. They all had to submit their subjective feelings, thoughts, and opinions to the objective standard of truth.
1. Jacob's sons came back with food from Egypt and told their father Joseph was alive (Genesis 45:26). Why did he not believe them? Because the false evidence of the coat made him think that Joseph died over 20 years ago. Jacob changed his mind when he heard the evidence that he was still alive (vv. 27-28).
 2. The servants convinced Naaman to disregard his preconceived ideas (2 Kings 5:13). When he obeyed and washed in the Jordan, he was cleansed of his leprosy (v. 14).
 3. After Saul realized he was persecuting Jesus, he was told to go into the city and wait for more instructions (Acts 9:6; 22:10). Saul was honestly and sincerely fasting and praying (Acts 9:9, 11), but he was not yet saved. In Acts 22:16, Ananias told him to be baptized. His sins were then washed away.
 4. Not long after the Jews had been deceived by the religious leaders, Peter preached a sermon that convinced them Jesus Christ was the Son of God. When they asked what they could do, he told them and they responded (Acts 2:38, 41).
 5. Simon and the Samaritans changed their convictions to comply with what Jesus said to be saved when they heard the preaching of Philip (Acts 8:12-13).

- B. To inherit eternal life, people have to ignore their feelings and objectively examine the evidence of God's word.
1. Those who will not are like the hearers of 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 who did not love the truth enough to obey it.
 - a) In fact, they preferred the previously described system of error and delusion to the simple and pure gospel.
 - b) The "strong delusion" was not an arbitrary punishment on the part of God. It was a withdrawal of restraint and an allowance for men to show they do not love truth (cp. 1 Kings 22:15-23). God does not want anyone to believe a lie (2 Peter 3:9), but He will not prevent it when people do not love the truth.
 2. We certainly do not look forward to it, but many honest and sincere people will be condemned by Jesus in the judgment (Matthew 7:21-23).

Conclusion. Your feelings and prejudices, as well as false teachers, can deceive you. This deception will result in your condemnation, regardless of your level of honesty and sincerity. Love truth so it can set you free (John 8:32), cleanse you (John 15:2), and sanctify you (John 17:17). Let us help you come to God today!

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