

## **18. Is Sincerity Enough?**

AMAN NAMED Ferguson, who lived in one of the large cities in the East, asked his wife to make him some pancakes. She liked to please her husband, and made the pancakes for him. They did not look just right to her, so she ate some to see what the trouble might be. She died a few hours later, for she had used insect powder instead of flour to make them.

This woman was as sincere as any woman could be, but mistaken, nevertheless.

I was talking to a young woman who planned to marry a young man whose religious beliefs were

## Highways To Happiness

very different from hers. I told her that she was taking a chance, for so often these marriages do not bring happiness to the contracting parties.

“But,” she argued, “he is sincere; and, if anyone is sincere, he will get to heaven. We will get along all right.” The passing years have proved that his sincerity did not bring them happiness.

An east-and-west road runs in front of my house. There is a man travelling on foot along this road, and I inquire where he is going.

“I’m on the road to New Orleans,” he replies.

“But this road will not take you to New Orleans, my friend. This is an east-and-west road. If you follow this way, you will land in New York or San Francisco,” I suggest to him.

“Thanks for your interest,” he answers, “but I am sure this road goes to New Orleans.”

He had every appearance of being sincere. I think he felt sure that he was headed for New Orleans. But was he? No, he was not. That road would not take him there. That he sincerely believed it would did not alter the fact. He might trudge it for months, believing all the while that he was nearing his goal, that he was making progress; but that would not make it so. Although he sincerely believed he was headed south, he was going east.

Three women patients in a large hospital were given an anaesthetic injection before an operation for the removal of their tonsils. The nurse who gave the anaesthetic misread the doctor’s prescription, and took “grs.” for grains to be grams. The patients, therefore, were given a dose about fifteen times as strong as that intended by the physician.

The first patient acted strangely, but she had asthma, and the attendants were not alarmed. The second patient slumped after the anaesthetic, but this was not unusual, so no concern was felt by the nurses. But when the third patient showed abnormal symptoms the doctors made an investigation and began to apply restorative measures. It was too late, for within a few minutes all three of the patients were dead.

The nurse who gave the anaesthetic was faithful and conscientious. No one who knows her questions her sincerity. But the deadly mistake was made, and three women paid with their lives. The nurse believed that she was doing just the right thing for her patients, and she was prostrated with grief. But her sincerity could not bring back life or comfort the sorrowing loved ones.

Many people declare that it makes no difference what we believe if we are only sincere. You may travel any road, join any church, or belong to any one of more than six hundred denominations, as long as you are sincere. In other words, believe anything you like as long as you are sincere in that belief.

But as much as we admire people who are sincere, we cannot agree that sincerity is any assurance of safety or right. To be sincerely wrong will not get us very far along the path of truth. A young man went to a lake to swim. He dived into what he sincerely believed to be deep water. Only a few inches beneath the surface were submerged piles. He struck these with his head, and was taken from the water paralyzed. The doctors doubt that he will ever walk again.

Suppose your child is taken very ill, and you want to get the doctor. Every moment is precious. You do not stop to put on your coat or hat, but start off on a run. You know the doctor’s street address, but do not know just where it is or how to find it. However, you do not worry about that; you try to make up for your ignorance in speed.

Knowing of your errand, a neighbor shouts at you, “Stop, friend; wait a minute. You are going the wrong way.”

As you run you shout back, “I can’t stop; I am in too big a hurry. My child will die.”

“But your hurry is not getting you anywhere. You are headed in the wrong direction. The doctor lives the other way.”

“Never mind, friend,” you reply, “can’t you see that I am sincere? Look how hard I’m running.”

You do not locate the doctor in time, and your child dies. Sincerity on the wrong road in life means travelling faster to eternal destruction.

How many people today are depending on their sincerity to save them! Sincerely to believe error will result in disaster for any of us. The heathen is sincere as he worships his idols, but he is wrong, and his idolatry degrades him.

Millions of people today sincerely believe that this world of ours will continue as it is for ages to come. The Bible says it will not—that Christ will return soon. Because the majority of people believe the world is to go on and on, does not make it true.

The people of Noah’s day may have sincerely believed that Noah was wrong, that the earth was not to be destroyed by a flood. It had never rained. And here was a queer old man preaching that the water

## Highways To Happiness

would come down from the skies and destroy them all if they did not mend their ways! Though they were sincere, their sincerity did not save them.

Many men and women have conscientiously invested their life savings in securities and stocks, and have believed that they would profit from the investment. But stocks have crashed and securities become almost worthless in spite of the investor's confidence in their stability.

Many have conscientiously, sincerely, regarded as sacred the first day of the week, believing it to be the Lord's Sabbath; but that does not make it so. They will not be freed from the results of transgression if they knowingly reject light. God says the seventh day of the week is the Sabbath. No matter how sincerely one believes otherwise, his belief will not change the truth.

Sincere as you and I may be, we must try to find out whether we are right. "How can I know the right way?" you ask. With so many different denominations all professing to have the truth and to be travelling to heaven, how can I know which is the right church? This question is worthy of further discussion. It is possible to know we are right, if we will take the Bible as our guide and lay aside the traditions of men.