

**Answering The Religious Errors Of Our Family, Friends, and Neighbors 1**  
**“If I’m Sincere and Follow My Conscience, God Will Save Me!”**  
**Lesson 29**

**INTRO:**

- A. For many people, organized religion is a ‘turn off’.
  - 1. They only see the division and confusion that exist.
- B. Yet they are unable to completely dismiss God from their thinking.
- C. So, to remain separate from any particular church, they have come to accept the idea that if they are sincere and maintain a good conscience in what they do God will be pleased and save them.
- D. The result of this thinking is that you can believe and do whatever you want to do as long as you are sincere and have a good conscience.
- E. This is also similar to the statement people are heard to make: “All you have to do to be saved is just be a good moral person”.
  - 1. However, they don’t realize that if you can be saved by just being a good moral person that is the same as saying we can be saved without the blood of Christ.
  - 2. Why was it necessary for Christ to leave Heaven, suffer as He did, and die the cruel death on the cross if all it takes to go to Heaven is just be a good moral person?
- F. The consequence of both of these statements is that a person can save themselves!
  - 1. That makes both God and Christ unnecessary!
- G. Again this is one of those statements that is applied to religion but folks wouldn’t dare apply it in real life.
  - 1. In a New York hospital several years ago, carbon dioxide instead of oxygen was mistakenly given to a patient.
    - a. According to the police report, the patient died almost instantly.
    - b. The unfortunate patient died in spite of his own sincerity and the sincerity of the hospital authorities, the anesthesiologist, and the surgeon.
  - 2. Suppose I go to my medicine cabinet and take out a bottle of liquid that I believe will help my cough.
    - a. But what if I pick up another bottle by mistake that is dangerous if swallowed?
    - b. I might sincerely believe it’ll help my cough — but if I swallow it, will my sincerity save me from harm?

**I. DO THE SCRIPTURES TEACH “IF WE ARE SINCERE AND FOLLOW OUR CONSCIENCE, GOD WILL SAVE US”?**

- A. All through the Bible there are examples of those who were sincere and still in sin.
  - 1. Abimelech who took Sara from Abraham. He said, “*In the integrity of my heart and innocence of my hands I have done this*” (**Genesis 20:5**).

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- a. Yet, it was still wrong for him to take her.
  - b. 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).
  - c. As a consequence, God “*closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham’s wife*” (v. 18).
2. Remember the old prophet who lied to the younger one about God telling him to come back with him (1 Kings 13).
- a. 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).
  - b. The older prophet “*lied*” to him and convinced the younger prophet that the Lord told him to bring the younger prophet home with him.
  - c. So, he did what he was told.
  - d. The text says the Lord allowed a lion to slay the young prophet because of his disobedience.
  - e. Sincere? Yes, absolutely! Wrong? No doubt!
- B. More specifically, there are cases of people who were sincere and had a good conscience yet they were still wrong and in need of salvation.
1. Saul of Tarsus.
    - a. Before his conversion he persecuted the church making havoc of it (Acts 8:1-3).
    - b. He assisted in putting Christians in prison and gave his voice against them and it resulted in some of them being put to death.
      - 1) In fact, he was so bad that he described himself as the “*chief*” of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15).
    - c. Yet, during that time, he lived with a clear conscience (Acts 23:1).
    - d. The whole time he was doing what he thought to be right!
    - e. He was wrong, though sincere!
    - f. He still needed to be baptized to wash away his sins (Acts 22:16).
  2. Another case is that of Cornelius, the first Gentile convert (Acts 10).
    - a. He was a good man (vs. 2, 22).
      - 1) He feared God, gave alms, and prayed regularly.
    - b. Yet, he still had to hear the gospel by which he could be saved (Acts 10:6; 11:14).
    - c. Was this good notable leader sincere?
      - 1) No one would question that!

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- d. Was he still lost and in need of salvation?
  - 1) He certainly was!
3. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said that there would be some who would be surprised at the judgment day.
  - a. **Matthew 7:21-23**
  - b. Their reaction shows their sincerity along with their good consciences.
  - c. Yet, these would be cast off because they work lawlessness (doing that which is not lawful/according to God’s will).
- B. The Scriptures have much to say about the conscience.
  1. Our conscience is the product of what we are taught:
    - a. **1 Corinthians 8:7, 10**
  2. It’s possible to have a defiled, evil conscience:
    - a. **Titus 1:15; Hebrews 10:22**
  3. It’s possible to have a seared conscience:
    - a. **1 Timothy 4:2**
  4. It’s possible to have a good conscience while doing contrary to God’s will:
    - a. **Acts 23:1; 24:16**
  4. We are commanded to have a good conscience:
    - a. **1 Timothy 1:5, 19; 3:9**

#### CONCLUSION:

- A. 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 of Scripture.
- B. If we cannot conceive of sincere conscientious people being lost, then we must conclude that any who are honest and sincere cannot be lost.
  1. Who could affirm that?
- C. That would mean that sincerity is all that is essential.
  1. It wouldn’t matter what you believe, practice, or teach in religion as long as you are sincere.
  2. 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 they are sincere and their consciences don’t bother them.
  3. By the same token, any passage demanding faith would have to be wrong!
  4. Furthermore, even an atheist would not be lost if he is sincere in his conclusions and didn’t violate his conscience.
- D. Who can accept these consequences?
  1. Do you?