

SINCERITY vs. HYPOCRISY

BEING AS GENUINE ON THE INSIDE AS WE APPEAR TO BE ON THE OUTSIDE.

THE DEFINITION OF SINCERITY

The word sincere comes from the Latin “sincerus”. The prefix “sin” means “without” and “cere” means “wax.” An account is given of unscrupulous potters who made expensive looking clay pots by using inferior clay which did not have all of the small rocks sifted out. When a pot was finished, these pebbles would fall out creating indentations on the surface. Rather than reforming the pot, the potter would fill the defects with wax and paint over them. When the purchaser used the pots over a flame, the wax would melt and run down the pot. The merchants who made and sold the genuine products using superior clay, would therefore write on the base of their pots “sin cere”—without wax.

The Hebrew word for sincere is “timiym”. It means “without blemish, complete or whole, sound, wholesome, with integrity and completely in accord with truth and fact.” The Greek word translated sincere is “eilikrines”. Paul wrote, “This I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere [eilikrines] and without offense till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God” (Philippians 1:9–11).

The Greek word “elikrines” is made up of two Greek words, “heile” which means “the sun’s ray” and “krino,” meaning “to judge.” The literal meaning of sincere is to have our life and actions judged by sunlight. Jesus explained “Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved” (John 3:20).

The offering that Paul collected for the needy saints in Jerusalem was designed to test the sincerity [gnesios] of the love of the Gentile believers. In this way he was shining light on their deeds to see if they were righteous. (See II Corinthians 8:4–8.)

A close synonym of sincerity is the word integrity. It also means “completeness and fullness.” “Judge me, O Lord; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the Lord; therefore I shall not slide.” (Psalm 26:1).

SINCERITY BEGINS WITH OUR WALK WITH GOD

The first two times the Hebrew word for sincerity (timiym) is used in the Old Testament it is translated perfect. “These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect [timiym] in his generations, and Noah walked with God” (Genesis 6:9). “And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect [timiym]” (Genesis 17:1).

In Deuteronomy 18:13 God instructs all of His people to be perfect. “Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God.” In Psalm 15:2, the Hebrew word for sincerity is translated upright. “Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, [timiym] and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.”

THE FOUNDATION OF SINCERITY

The Hebrew word “shalem” describes the requirement of sincerity and means “perfect and whole.” It also means “to be complete, to make amends.” When Solomon dedicated the Temple he prayed, “Let your heart therefore be perfect with the Lord our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day” (I Kings 8:61). However, years later Solomon failed in sincerity and integrity. “For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father” (I Kings 11:4).

One who fails to make wise decisions can still have a perfect heart, as in the case of Asa. “The high places were not removed: nevertheless Asa’s heart was perfect with the Lord all his days” (I Kings 15:14). On the other hand, a person can make right decisions but not have a perfect heart. “Amaziah was twenty and five

years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem. . . . And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart” (II Chronicles 25:1–2).

The determining factor of a perfect heart is whether there are any other gods that are being worshiped, secretly or openly. “Now it came to pass, after that Amaziah was come from the slaughter of the Edomites, that he brought the gods of the children of Seir, and set them up to be his gods, and bowed down himself before them, and burned incense unto them” (II Chronicles 25:14). Whenever we expect from things or people what only God can give us we make them an idol and lose the sincerity of our heart.

THE REWARD OF SINCERITY

God looks for a sincere and perfect heart in order to demonstrate His wisdom and power through it. “For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him” (II Chronicles 16:9). This statement was spoken to king Asa who won a great victory when he relied upon the Lord, but suffered a great defeat when he relied upon a military ally.

The New Testament word for perfect is “teleioo”. Paul discovered that when he relied upon the Lord with all of his heart, even though he was weak, he experienced God’s strength. The Lord said to him, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (II Corinthians 12:9).

THE KEY TO DEVELOPING SINCERITY

Another New Testament word translated perfect is “katartizo”, meaning “to complete thoroughly, to repair, to restore, to purge, or to clean.” Its English equivalent is “catharsis”, a medical term to describe the cleansing of the bowels. Peter used this term when he wrote, “The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (I Peter 5:10).

God will take every believer through a fiery trial which will expose hidden defects and imperfections. By thanking God for these trials and rejoicing in the purpose for which they were given, God will grant a corresponding measure of the power of the Holy Spirit and a perfection of the fruit of the Spirit in that person’s life.

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy” (I Peter 4:12–13).

THE TRAGEDY OF HYPOCRISY

More people are probably turned away from the Lord by hypocrisy than by any other character deficiency. No doubt this is why Jesus was so harsh with them during His earthly ministry. “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in” (Matthew 23:13).

The Greek word for hypocrite is “hupokrites” and means “an actor, stage player, or pretender.” The hypocrites of Jesus’ day performed outward religious acts in order to get the praise of men, but inwardly they had moral corruption. “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness” (Matthew 23:27).

The root problem of a hypocrite is that his whole heart is not devoted to the Lord. “Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me” (Matthew 15:7–8).

A hypocrite will tend to focus on details of righteousness while violating major areas of morality. “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone” (Matthew 23:23).

CHECKLIST ON SINCERITY

- Does the life that people see on the outside match what I am on the inside?
- Are there secret sins in my heart that I am hiding from the light of Christ?
- Do I judge others for things that I know that I am guilty of?
- Am I trusting in people, things, or money rather than in God?
- Am I seeking the Lord with my whole heart?
- Do I resent trials and tribulations or do I welcome them as friends?