

The Front Range

INFORMER

Promoting biblical truth and mutual support among churches of Christ in the Centennial State.

October, 2008

Editors: John Morris & Dale Loney

Volume 1 Issue 2

Sincerity & Salvation

by Rick Sparks
(revised)

INTRODUCTION

Sincerity is honest authenticity and genuine wholeheartedness. It is freedom from hypocrisy, and is often a pleasure to see. What is the relationship of this wonderful attribute to the salvation of the human soul?

THE NECESSITY OF SINCERITY

Sincerity is required by our Creator: "Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands (obedience in the outer life), and a pure heart (sincerity in the inner life)..." (Psalm 24:3-4). Amaziah the king "did what was right in the sight of the LORD, but not with a loyal heart" (2 Chronicles 25:1-2). God places great importance on sincerity.

God spoke to his children about the sacrifices they were offering, and told them he couldn't stand it: "Bring no more futile sacrifices" (Isaiah 1:13). They were obeying after a fashion, but it was just a series of perfunctory acts. It meant nothing to them, thus they stood condemned (Isaiah 1:16, 18). We see this in the Old Testament time and again.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). "Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith" (1 Timothy 1:5). Sincerity is necessary. God required

it from the beginning and still requires it today. Nobody can successfully approach God through a legalistic form to be justified by the deeds he performs, without regard to how his heart is toward God. An honest mind set on pleasing the Lord is essential.

THE INSUFFICIENCY OF SINCERITY

It seems that no matter what God requires, somebody adds that little four letter word: "ONLY." We often hear of one who has not obeyed the gospel, but who's sincere: "He's trying to do his best. Surely he'll be saved." That's salvation by sincerity only. The truth is that God has never set forth any one thing as a human response that we could say is the only thing necessary to salvation. We're saved by faith, but not by faith only. We're saved by works, but not by works only. We're saved by hope, but not by hope only. By love, but not by love only. By grace, but not grace only. By baptism, but not baptism only. By sincerity, but not sincerity only. Sincerity is essential, but in itself, insufficient.

We all understand the consequences of being sincerely wrong ("I didn't think the gun was loaded." "I didn't think there were any cars coming."), until we get to the area of salvation. Then some say, "It's all right as long as you're sincere." Where is the indication that Cain was not sincere in his offering? (Genesis 4:3-7) Yet God "did not respect Cain and his offering" (Genesis 4:5), because his sacrifice was not by faith (Hebrews 11:4). Where is the indication that Naaman was not sincere in his belief that the prophet had done the wrong thing? (2 Kings 5:10-13) If he'd gone home and washed in the better

rivers of Syria, sincerely believing, would he have been cleansed? He was still a leper until he obeyed God.

"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Proverbs 16:25). That's a blatant condemnation of sincerity only. It's a warning against it. If that verse does not teach you can go forth with assurance of mind, believing that you're doing right, and still stand condemned in the eyes of God, it teaches nothing.

EDUCATING THE CONSCIENCE

God has given us a standard, so that we don't have to rely on our own thoughts. His thoughts are higher than ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth (Isaiah 55:8-9). "[T]he world through wisdom did not know God" (1 Corinthians 1:21). "O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). God loves us so much, He gave us His word. We can in this all-sufficient standard find the narrow path of which our Lord spoke (Matthew 7:14). We need to leave the idea of sincerity only behind us, and bring our sincerity to a search of God's word.

The people in Athens were so sincere they built altars to every god they thought existed, and thinking they must have missed one, they erected an altar "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD" (Acts 17:23). But Paul, in declaring the Unknown God to them, preached to them as lost and dying sinners, just as he himself had been when he was killing Christians, sincerely believing that he did God service (1 Timothy 1:12-13; Acts 23:1).

Conscience is a function of education. If the education is faulty, the conscience will be skewed. We dare not let conscience alone be our guide. Still, we dare not go against conscience, for then we are not sincere. The only solution is to let our sincerity lead us to the word of God, and then let God's standard educate our conscience. ■

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This Quarter's Close-Up: *Pueblo*

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST
MEETING AT 1801 E. 4TH ST., PUEBLO, CO

by Bruce Elson
(October, 2008)

In the 1920s my parents, Ashley and Helen Elson, met with a small group which included Senior Paul McKenzie, brother Sankee, and their families. When these families moved to Long Beach, California, those remaining met in their homes. In 1946, space was rented in the Old Fellows Hall for the Lord's Day services.

It was decided in 1953 to build a building in which to meet. My father knew an architect and talked with him concerning plans. The congregation in Colorado Springs, which met at



Church building under construction (spring/summer, 1953)

Cedar and Cimarron, gave us the money to purchase the lot. Brother Norman Carlock's uncle who lived in Missouri loaned a small amount of money at a time, without interest, as needed. Construction began in 1953 with my dad, who was retired at the time, and other members who gave every hour possible, in addition to working their jobs, to enable us to move into the new building. The building had a coal-burning furnace that had to be hand fired. For several years, my dad would start the fire in the early morning hours on Sunday so as to have a warm building for worship. (We later purchased an electric stoker and then finally a gas furnace. Years later, we really got up-to-date with air conditioning.) As the years went by, my dad, along with brother Norman Carlock, brother

Howard Amerine, brother Bill Long, and myself finished the building. The building is still good and sound.



Church building seen from the south (fall, 2008)

The first evangelistic meeting, conducted by evangelist Paul Ketcherside of Nowata, Oklahoma, was held in the building on January 10, 1954, and lasted two weeks. Since that time, we have had the privilege of listening to very able evangelists who graced our doors. Talented men such as brothers Robert Brumback, Roy Loney, Richard Riggins, William Hensley, Roy Harris, C. R. Turner, and D. A. Sommer just to name a few. I have a postcard that my parents received in 1936 from brother Sommer thanking them for the one-dollar donation that they gave for his evangelistic work. We are also fortunate in this present time to have a new generation of evangelists who are appearing on the scene that are just as talented and dedicated as those that helped our church get started and helped it to continue to grow.



Church building auditorium (fall, 2008)

During the early years, we had several members who transferred to other localities for occupational reasons, which took its toll in regard

to our attendance. We also felt the effects of losing leadership when my father (an elder) died, elder Howard Amerine moved out of town, and deacon Bill Long moved to Springfield, Missouri, within a short period of time. I was the only remaining elder. Brother Tom Dennis held a meeting with the congregation and appointed brother Dave Caple an elder, and then appointed brother Lee Madison and brother Brian Elson as deacons. We are blessed with qualified men to conduct public worship in rotation.

The congregation is also blessed and thankful for four individuals who recently obeyed the gospel and were added by the Lord to His church. Kitty Minish was baptized by her uncle, Dave Caple. Sean, Laura and Morgan Elson were baptized by their father, Brian Elson.

It is sweet to visit our past, but even sweeter to look to the future. May God help us all to arrive safely, upholding His truth through Jesus Christ our Savior. ■

QUARTERLY QUIZ

1. How many times does the word “grace” appear in the Old Testament? How many times in the New Testament?
2. How did Elijah ascend into heaven? (**hint:** not in a chariot of fire)
3. Who was the “cousin of Barnabas”?

Last Issue's Questions and Answers

1. *What does Ps. 85:10 mean?*
Answer: The context is Israel's return from the captivity. The return revealed two things simultaneously--God's *mercy*, and the *truth* of His promise (Jer. 29:10). The returned nation walked in *righteousness*, which God rewarded with *peace*—man's and God's actions, thus, “kissed.” Ps. 85:10 may also have looked to the combined attributes and actions of Israel's future Deliverer, Jesus Christ.
2. *What two verses in Acts clearly connect baptism with the forgiveness of sins?*
Answer: Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16
3. *What did Job treasure more than his “necessary food”?*
Answer: “the words of His mouth” (Job 23:12)

All Things Through Him

~ submitted by Dale Loney

*All things through Him, My soul secure.
The hopes and heartaches which I see,
The pains and pleasures I endure;
This through Him who strengthens me.*

*When losses come, and loved ones leave,
The way seems faint, and hard to see,
Though pains and partings may bereave,
This, too, through Him who strengthens me.*

*To love, to hope; all things through Him.
The will to be what I must be,
The faith to trust when light seems dim;
All this through Him who strengthens me.*

(Mountains of Faith, March 2007)

What the Numbers Say

- “Throughout the United States, there are **19,839 people** for every congregation...” (*Priorities for Mission Work in the United States*, Flavil Yeakley, Jr., 1995)
- “**70-90%** of church members come to Christ through the influence of a friend or relative.” (*Church Growth Today*, Clayton Pepper, p. 11)
- “When members of the congregation visit first-time visitors from the community within 36 hours and stay about 15 minutes, **85%** of them will return the next Sunday.” (Ibid., p. 195)
- “When the visit is made within 72 hours **60%** will return.” (Ibid.)
- “Make it seven days later and **15%** will return.” (Ibid.)

Quips & Quotes

- “The world at its worst needs the church at its best.”
- “A church that is not reaching out is passing out.”
- “A Christian is one who makes it easier for other people to believe in God.”

This & That

from

Here & There

~birthdays, anniversaries, milestones, events, etc.~

• New Christians •

Pueblo: Kitty Minish (July 20) • Laura Elson and Morgan Elson (Aug. 17) • Sean Elson (Aug. 21)

• New Members •

Jay Street: James Bennett, Lorelee Bennett, and J.R. Bennett (Aug.) • Pat Cook (Sept. 10)

Pueblo: Kitty Minish (July 20) • Laura Elson and Morgan Elson (Aug. 17) • Sean Elson (Aug. 21)

• Happy Birthday •

Colorado Springs: Jeanette Dorland (Nov. 12) • Betty McDaniel (Dec. 20) • Carol DuCharme (Dec. 24)

Jay Street: Mary Ann Muck (Oct. 24) • Terry Arnold (Dec. 3) • Kay Vaughn (Jan. 14)

• Guest Speakers/Special Events •

Colorado Springs: Steve Wright (Aug. 31, Sept. 7, Nov. 2)

Jay Street: Steve Wright (Sept. 3) • Eldon Cox (Oct. 11-12) • Jim Boyd (Nov. 2, AM) • Eldon Cox (Nov. 2, PM) • Wade Stanley (Nov. 5) • Gospel Meeting w/ John Morris & Wade Stanley (Nov. 6-9)

Pueblo: Steve Wright (Sept. 4)

The Church Online

- Prince Road (Alton, IL) (Tom Woody's home):
www.princeroadchurchofchrist.org
- Lawrence, KS (Steve Wright's home):
www.lawrencecoc.org
- Excelsior Springs (Excelsior Springs, MO):
www.excelsiorchurchofchrist.org