

Sincere, But Sincerely Lost

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- **The Ethiopian** was sincere, but sincerely lost until baptism (Acts 8:26-39). When Philip “preached unto him Jesus,” the eunuch wanted to be baptized immediately, because preaching Jesus equals preaching the necessity of water baptism for salvation (Acts 8:35-36; Mk. 16:15-16). The Ethiopian did not rejoice at the point of belief in Jesus, but after obeying Jesus’ command to be immersed for salvation (Acts 8:39; Mk. 16:15-16; cf. Acts 2:38; 22:16).
- **Saul of Tarsus** was sincere, but sincerely lost until baptism (Acts 9:6,18-19; 22:16). Although Saul had been praying, fasting, and believing in Jesus after Jesus spoke to him, none of these things washed away his sins (Acts 9:9-11). Jesus told Saul that he would be told what he “must do” (Acts 9:6). Saul was not told to keep praying. He was not told, “You are already saved by God’s grace, because belief alone is enough.” Here is what he was told: “And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Did you know that although Saul had gone three days without food or water, he did not even get a bite to eat before he was baptized? (Acts 9:9,18-19). He wanted his sins washed away as soon as possible! This same urgency regarding baptism is found in other passages also (Acts 2:41; 8:36; 16:33). Why were 3000 souls baptized on the same day they heard the Gospel? They all understood that it was “for the remission of sins”! (Acts 2:38,41).
- **Cornelius** was sincere, but sincerely lost until baptism (Acts 10:6,35,48; 11:14). Cornelius’ prayers did not save him. Like Saul, Cornelius was told that someone would tell him what he “ought” to do (same Greek word as “must” in Acts 9:6). Peter told Cornelius that to be accepted by God, he had to fear God and work righteousness (Acts 10:35). Cornelius did what he “ought” to do and “worked righteousness” when he obeyed Peter’s command to “be baptized in the name of the Lord” (Acts 10:48; cf. 2:38). Then Cornelius was truly accepted by God (Acts 10:35; Heb. 5:9).
- **Lydia** was sincere, but sincerely lost until baptism (Acts 16:13-15). After her baptism, she was “judged...to be faithful” (Acts 16:15; cf. Gal. 3:26-27).
- **The Ephesians** who had been “baptized” were sincere, but sincerely lost until they were taught correctly and baptized with a proper understanding (Acts 19:1-5; cf. Jn. 8:32; Rom. 6:16-18). Being sincere and immersed for religious reasons is not enough, according to the Bible. Today, one cannot be properly baptized without understanding that immersion in the name of Jesus Christ is for salvation, for forgiveness of sins, to wash away sins (Mk. 16:16; Jn. 3:5; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-5; Gal. 3:26-29; Eph. 5:25-26; Heb. 10:22; 1 Pet. 3:20-21).

- What about **you**? Are you sincere? Do you believe in God and His resurrected Son, Jesus Christ? (Jn. 8:24). Will you repent of all past sins, deciding to live for God? (Acts 2:38; 17:30). Will you confess that you believe in Jesus as the Son of God? (Mt. 10:32; Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:10). Will you be immersed for the purpose of washing away your sins? (Acts 22:16). Will you try your best to be faithful in every way, following the New Testament pattern for worship and every aspect of life? (Jn. 4:23-24; Col. 3:16-17; Heb. 10:23-31; 1 Jn. 1:6—2:6; Rev. 2:10).

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