Sincerity

By Pastor J. Paul Reno

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"*For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.*" (II Corinthians 2:17)

Language was created by God and given to mankind. The same day God made man, Adam had sufficient vocabulary to name every creature properly with a name which lasted. God used language to communicate with Adam and Eve. Later, mankind rebelled against the words of God at Babel. There God created more languages, which resulted in much confusion. Consequently, people were scattered over the face of the earth.

What God does, Satan seeks to destroy or corrupt. Since words are God's means of communication, Satan has historically worked to corrupt languages. Redefining words often weakens God's communication to us. Such is the case with the word "sincerity."

A careful examination of the verse at hand will help us understand God's use of sincerity. There are two groups of people mentioned- the "we" and the "many." The "we" would include the apostle Paul and those with him who hold to the purity of God's words. The "many" are those that "corrupt the word of God." There is a contrast in numbers- the minority ("we") and the majority ("many"). The concept of "corrupt" is that of a merchant who waters down his merchandise to increase his profits while maintaining a defense that all is still genuine. This may be done in the printed word of God. It may be done in the mind (redefining, etc.) the heart (emotional responses) or the life (how we live). Such has been common in the history of mankind. In Genesis 3 Satan questioned Eve over the words of God with, "Yea hath God said?" After talking with Eve they came to an adjusted form of God's words and sin was the result. In Jeremiah we are warned of the preachers who pervert God's word and/or steal God's words from their neighbors. In the gospels, false witnesses paraphrase the words of Jesus.

Here in II Corinthians 2:17 we find the majority of those using the word of God are corrupting it! The minority are still holding to the purity of God's words and will not budge. This non-compromising minority are classified by God as sincere. This is in contrast to the Bible corruptors. God's definition does not allow for Satan's cliché of "sincere but sincerely wrong." The English word sincere comes from the Latin words "sinne" and "cere." The first means "without" and the second means "wax." A potter would form his pottery and then fire them in the kiln. Some of the final product would be fine, some would have blemishes

or cracks. The honest merchant sold only the good. Most would take the seconds and fill the cracks with colored wax so that the purchaser would be deceived. Such pots when heated would leak their contents and reveal their flaws. Purchasers soon learned to hold their pots up to the light to see if there was wax. If none was discovered, they were declared as sincere, without wax.

The word sincere is found in three forms in our Bible: sincere, sincerely, and sincerity. Three times it appears in the Old Testament and nine times in the New Testament. God's words translated as sincerity (etc) are words with great depth of meaning. Consider these definitions: clearness, purity, judged by sunlight, tested as genuine, honest, undeceitful, unadulterated, incorruptability, unending existence, genuineness, immortality, true, legitimate birth (as in "God's own Son"), entire, complete, full, perfect, without blemish, without spot, sound, upright, whole, undefiled, and integrity.

Such things could never be said of Bible changers, those who would water down God's words in print or in life. It is insincere to claim faithfulness to "the old book" to get money while in practice they change it. Thus God would have us understand that the majority are insincere. They use wax to cover the flaws of thought and character.

Here are some terms which give the opposite meaning of sincere: fictional, double-minded, wavering, unstable, false, imaginary, imitation, imperfect, flawed, unreal, artificial, virtual, partially right, corrupted, seconds, deceptive, compromised, and apostate. The Bible gives many examples of those who failed the test of no wax: Judas, Thomas, Peter, Demus, Annanias and Sapphira, Sadducees asking about the resurrection, Herodians asking about paying taxes, Pharisees asking about authority, the unjust steward, those that draw back (Hebrews 10) and those that turn from the holy commandment (II Peter 2).

Bible societies, mission boards, Christian colleges and universities, churches or publishers who use corrupted scriptures do not meet the Biblical standard of sincerity.

The test of sincerity is the response we give when light exposes a flaw or crack. Do we seek help to repair the fault or do we cover it with wax? God not only defines this special word, He also tells of the necessity of this virtue in our lives. It is necessary for:

1. Service- Joshua 24:1-4
2. Doing- Judges 9:16
3. Dealings with others- Judges 9:19
4. Worship of Jesus- I Corinthians 5:8
5. True Christian living- II Corinthians 1:12
6. Right Bible believing- II Corinthians 2:17
7. Missions giving- II Corinthians 8:8
8. Only proper love of Jesus- Ephesians 6:24
9. Preparation for Christ's return- Philippians 1:10

10. Proper preaching of Christ- Philippians 1:16
11. Proper works and doctrine- Titus 2:7
12. Feeding on the word and growing spiritually- I Peter 2:2.

We are to be sincere (without wax) and feed on the sincere milk of the word. The pure word makes for pure saints. This relationship is unmistakable in the scriptures. Each of us should allow the pure light of God to test us for sincerity. May we dispose of any wax and come to Him for the healing touch of the Creator upon our needy souls.