

Sincere ... But Sincerely Wrong

“Having a form of godliness ...
But denying the power thereof; from such turn away.”
II Timothy 3:5

by Wilma L. Sullivan
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“Sincere” and “zealous” are the words which describe the religious aspects of my life for twenty-nine and a half years as a Roman Catholic. I so desired to do what was right. I went to Mass, received the sacraments, loved my neighbors, and basically tried to do good to all people. I always thought that by going to Mass, doing good, and being nice to people was the way to get to Heaven. The desire to do good to all people led me to become a member of a religious order, the Sisters of Mercy, for four years from 1967 to 1971.

In October of 1973, while waiting to undergo surgery, another patient came into my hospital room and asked me a question. This question would lead me to a totally new life in Christ as a child of God. ¹ “If you were to die in surgery today, Wilma, do you know for sure that you would go to Heaven?” she asked. “Yes, I do,” I replied. Our conversation was interrupted at that point by a nurse ordering her back into her room across the hall.

During the next two weeks, however, we did talk more about where I would spend eternity. She showed me verses from the Bible that salvation – going to Heaven – is a free gift. ² She explained that there was nothing I could do to earn that gift except receive it by faith, because the Bible says in Ephesians 2:8-9 “*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; Not of works, lest any man should boast.*” Again, in Titus 3:5-6 it states that it is “*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.*”

I needed to realize that I was a sinner and that I needed to be a saved, born-again child of God. ³ Unless I trusted Christ alone to save me, I could never hope to live in Heaven with a holy God Who would not allow even one lie to exist in His holy dwelling. ⁴

On November 11, 1973, I realized that I was lost: I was on my way to Hell to receive the just payment for being a sinner because “*the wages of sin is death...*” ⁵ I realized that only Jesus Christ could take away my sins “*once for all.*” ⁶ The only way that I could ever be saved was to trust totally in Jesus Christ’s death on the cross for my sins, and realized that His resurrection from the tomb showed His power over sin and death. I was saved that night because I claimed God’s promise in Romans 10:13 that if I would call upon the name of the Lord I would be saved. Assurance of eternal life with Christ in Heaven was freely given to me that night simply by claiming further promises of the God Who cannot lie. ⁷

Since then, I have come to realize that before I trusted Christ as my personal Saviour, I had a “*form of godliness, but (I) denied the power thereof.*” ⁸ I have searched the Bible diligently to find the will of God for my life and to do it. Worshipping God is man’s purpose for living. Jesus said, “*God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.*” ⁹ Man is

separated from God by sin. He must be born again before communication with God is possible. True worship is possible only after the sinner has been born again. When a man is alive spiritually through the new birth, he will worship God in truth by obeying God's Word – not man's traditions.

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As I compared the sacraments of Catholicism – communion, baptism, penance, etc. – with the Bible, I discovered that they differed one from the other. For example, regarding “communion” the Bible states that Jesus needed to die only once for man's sin,¹¹ while Catholicism claims that He must die daily for forgiveness of sins.¹² The Bible declares that “baptism” is only an outward expression of the inward repentance of a sinner,¹³ while Catholicism claims that the rite of baptism takes away original sin and makes a person a child of God.¹⁴ “Penance” in Catholicism is when a priest forgives a person of his sins.¹⁵ This is unscriptural because the Bible states that there is only “*one mediator between God and men – the man Christ Jesus*”¹⁶ – and no one else! This same verse also helped me to realize that no “saint” can or will hear and answer prayer for me – only Christ.

These obvious contradictions with Scripture confronted me with the most important and difficult decision I ever had to make. I had to decide to believe the God Who cannot lie¹⁷ and follow His way in the Bible, or believe man who can make mistakes.¹⁸ I decided on December 16, 1973, to leave Catholicism and simply leave the results with God. I can honestly testify that I have never regretted my decision and have, by His love which constrains me, “*grown in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*”¹⁹ I now can say “I am sincere, but sincerely right!”

I extend a personal invitation to anyone who reads this testimony to “*Come...take the water of life freely,*”²⁰ that you may “*Worship Him in spirit and in truth*”²¹ for His glory, for your eternal salvation, and for the good of others.

Footnotes

1. II Corinthians 5:17
2. Romans 6:23 (b)
3. John 3:3-7
4. Revelation 21:27; 22:15
5. Romans 6:23 (a)
6. Hebrews 10:10
7. I John 5:13; Romans 8:38-39; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18
8. II Timothy 3:5
9. John 4:24
10. Psalms 119:89; Colossians 2:8
11. Hebrews 10:10-14
12. What Catholics Believe, by Rev. Lawrence G. Lovasik, S.V.D., Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., Rockford, IL., 1977, page 65
13. Acts 2:41; 8:26-39; 16:25-34
14. What Catholics Believe, pages 51-52

15. What Catholics Believe, page 79
16. I Timothy 2:5
17. Romans 3:4
18. Proverbs 14:12
19. II Peter 3:18
20. Revelation 22:17
21. John 4:24

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