

THE “SINNER’S PRAYER?”

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The “sinner’s prayer” is a common practice used by various Christian denominations found in the world today as a way to gain salvation. It can take different forms but they are all similar in nature. This one was found during the study and research of this topic:

Heavenly Father, have mercy on me, a sinner. I believe in you and that your word is true. I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God and that he died on the cross so that I may now have forgiveness for my sins and eternal life. I know that without you in my heart my life is meaningless. I believe in my heart that you, Lord God, raised Him from the dead. Please Jesus forgive me, for every sin I have ever committed or done in my heart, please Lord Jesus forgive me and come into my heart as my personal Lord and Savior today. I need you to be my Father and my friend. I give you my life and ask you to take full control from this moment on; I pray this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The question that must be answered is whether or not the “sinner’s prayer” is scriptural; and if it is, where can it be found in the New Testament of Jesus Christ?

The use of the “sinner’s prayer” is not found anywhere in the scripture, whether New or Old. A careful study of the cases of conversion in the New Testament will not reveal one single instance of an alien sinner (one who has never obeyed the gospel) being instructed or encouraged to “pray through” for his or her salvation. Instead, those that had been taught were instructed to believe on the Lord (Acts 16:31), repent of past sins (Acts 2:38), confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Acts 8:37), and be immersed in water for the forgiveness of past sins (Acts 22:16). This was done so the recipient could be added to the Lord’s body, which is the church (Acts 2:47, Col. 1:18) and where all spiritual blessings exist (Eph. 1:3).

One may ask, “What about the parable of the publican and the Pharisee found in Luke 18:9-14?” This passage is often used in support of the “sinner’s prayer.” The first thing that should be pointed out is that neither the publican nor the Pharisee was an alien sinner before God. Both of these men were children of God! They were both Jews, born into the family of God, and both were going to the house of God in order to worship. The case of the publican is simply an example of a child of God asking for forgiveness because he had not been faithful to Him.

Scripture makes it very clear that the mere act of “calling” out the Lord’s name, in an attempt to gain His divine mercies, in the absence of obedience to the gospel, is an act that will not be rewarded. Christ Himself said, **“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven”**. He also said, **“And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say”** (Lk. 6:46)?

Prayer is and has always been for the child of God. When Christ was asked by His disciples to teach them how to pray, He began the model prayer with these words: “Our Father which art in heaven” (Mt. 6:9). The great prophet Isaiah taught this very premise, “Behold, the LORD’S hand is not

shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear” (Isa. 59:1-2). Isaiah told them it wasn’t that God couldn’t hear, it was that He does not hear those that are in sin! It was John that said, “Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and **doeth his will**, him he heareth” (Jn. 9:31).

Saul, the great persecutor of the church, could not gain salvation through prayer. He fasted and prayed for three days, and yet his sins were not “washed away” until he was baptized in water in accordance to the divine will of God (Acts 9:11; 22:16). If there was ever a case of the “sinner’s prayer” being exercised, this was it, however, it was not successful.

The only answer to sin is obedience to God’s plan of salvation, not man’s inventions. That is just what the “sinner’s prayer” is, man’s invention.