

The Sinner's Prayer?

By *Ron Boatwright*

Today many people espouse the false doctrine, that in order to be saved, one must "accept Jesus as your personal Saviour" and say "the sinners prayer". But where in the Bible is this found? This teaching contradicts the Bible's clear instruction as to what an alien sinner must do to obtain forgiveness and salvation. Nowhere in the New Testament is the alien sinner ever authorized to ask Jesus to come into his heart and to pray for forgiveness in order to be saved. I have yet to find anyone who can provide even one biblical reference to substantiate this false claim. Many good honest people have been deluded by this false doctrine. Today just as it was in the apostle Paul's day, "there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:7).

If it cannot be found anywhere in God's word, then from where did it come? Man has devised his own scheme of redemption with the help of Satan. Satan knows if he can fool people into believing his lie, they will still be lost and will be keeping him company in the burning fires of Hell. "And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15). We must be obedient to God's plan of salvation, not one that man has "dreamed up". "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Proverbs 14:12). Jesus says, "And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Mark 7:7). It is vain to follow the commandments of men, which will cause one to be lost.

Usually "the sinner's prayer" goes something like this: "Lord Jesus, I need You. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my personal Saviour. Thank You for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of my life. Amen". This may sound impressive, but it is foolish for an alien sinner to ask Jesus to come into his heart and to say "the sinner's prayer" in order to be saved. God will not respond to such a request.

God's salvation is accomplished by obedience. Jesus says, "Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who **does the will of my Father** in heaven." (Matthew 7:21). Just calling Jesus our Lord will not get us into heaven, but we must do the will of the Father to go there. Saying "the sinner's prayer" to be saved will not save us because it is not according to God's will. Jesus goes on to say, "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out

demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you, depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness" (Matthew 7:22-23). These people were believers in Christ. They called Him their Lord. They apparently had "accepted Jesus as their personal Saviour". But they were eternally lost because they hadn't **done the will of the Father**, but their own will. Such a tragedy!

People may be sincere in their beliefs, but if what they believe is not in harmony with God's will, they will be lost. "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Colossians 3:17), that is by His authority. But saying the sinner's prayer to be saved is not by the Lord's authority. The Bible says forgiveness and salvation is only in Christ. "**In Him** we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Ephesians 1:7). Paul says, "Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is **in Christ Jesus**" (2 Timothy 2:10). How does one get into Christ where he can be forgiven and be saved? Galatians 3:27 says, "For as many of you as were **baptized into Christ Jesus** have put on Christ." The Bible's instructions are quite clear.

We read concerning Jesus, "And being perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" (Hebrews 5:9). Jesus is only going to save those who obey Him. What does Jesus say we must do to be saved? Jesus says, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). A person needs help to misunderstand this. He does not say, he that believes and says "the sinner's prayer" shall be saved.

Because people do not believe and accept the truth of God's word, many people will believe a lie that is going to cause them to be eternally condemned. "And for this reason God will send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:12-13).

God says those who will not listen to Him concerning their salvation, "Then they will call on Me, but I will not answer; they will seek Me diligently, but they will not find Me. Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord, they would have none of My counsel" (Proverbs 1:28-29). If people will not listen to God's counsel, particularly concerning their salvation, He will not have anything to do with them and they will end up being eternally lost.

"The sinner's prayer" is man's substitute for God's requirement of being baptized for the forgiveness of our sins. God's word says, "Repent and be

baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38), and "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). But man says to "accept Jesus as your personal Saviour" and say "the sinner's prayer" for the forgiveness of your sins and you will be saved. I cannot think of a more flagrant crime against both God and man than to teach lost sinners, who want to be saved, something different than what God says in the Bible.

On the Day of Judgment people will find out too late that their substitute did not work when they are condemned to the eternal fires of Hell, "those who did not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9). If a person is lost in Hell, he will only have himself to blame.