



A Spiritual Encouragement Message
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The Sinner's Prayer

by Andrew Lemus

Growing up my mother and stepfather used to take me to a church called Harvest. I grew accustomed to what the preacher, Greg Laurie, would say at the end of every service. If you are like me and have spent some time in an interdenominational church like Harvest you have probably heard something very similar to Greg Laurie's words in this video (Example of The Sinners Prayer: [Video](#))

In services I would see many people hold up their hands while saying this prayer to show the minister that they were one of those who were "accepting Christ." I have seen thousands of people go forward after saying this prayer to be recognized as being part of the body of Christ, forgiven of their sins, and on their way to heaven. It wasn't until I was a little older that I started to question what was being taught at Harvest and other churches that I attended. It was when I was older that I started to compare the practices of many assemblies to that of the teachings found in the Bible.

The New Testament does not teach that someone who is outside of the body of Christ and in their sins can be saved through the avenue of prayer. A perfect example of this plain truth can be seen in the conversion of Saul (later known as Paul the Apostle). Saul was a persecutor of the church and strived to put an end to the church of Christ (Acts 22:4-5). While he was on his way to persecute Christians in Damascus Christ appeared to him (Acts 22:6).

When Saul was met by Jesus he was faced with the reality that the church he had been persecuting and the gospel he was seeking to put an end to was from God. He realized that the zeal he had to stop the church of Christ was indeed an effort against the authority of God (Acts 22:7-10). Humbled, Saul made his way into Damascus where he spent three days praying and fasting (Acts 9:9, 11).

Saul saw Jesus, recognized Him as Lord, and realized that He was the Messiah. It was with these truths in mind that Saul prayed for three days (Acts 9:9, 11). But it wasn't those prayers offered up to God that

brought Saul into a right relationship with God and freed him from his sin. Saul was saved and had his sins forgiven when he responded to the words spoken by Ananias...

“Then he said, ‘The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. ‘For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. ‘And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.’ Acts 22:14-16

Ananias commanded Saul to be baptized and wash his sins away. It was through immersion in water that Ananias told Saul that his sins would be washed away, not through saying a prayer. Through observation of Saul’s conversion we can see that salvation wasn’t obtained through prayer but rather through baptism (Acts 22:16; Mark 16:15-16). If forgiveness and salvation is obtained through immersion than surely this should be a constant thread we would see throughout the New Testament.

When we open up our Bible’s to Acts chapter 2 we see this same doctrine of salvation through immersion. When the Jew’s recognized and believed that they had played a part in crucifying the Lord they asked Peter and the rest of the Apostles, *“Men and brethren, what shall we do?”* (Acts 2:37). Peter and the Apostles did not respond by having them recite a certain prayer but rather Peter commanded them to *“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”* (Acts 2:38).

The Sinner’s Prayer that is so frequently taught by many churches today is a doctrine that is foreign to the Bible. The New Testament does not teach that someone who is outside of the body of Christ and in their sins can be saved through the avenue of prayer (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27). What the Sinner Prayer has done is provide a man-made door to be saved, to become a Christian, and to enter into the body of Christ (2Timothy 4:3). This man made door has given many a false sense of security and has led many to believe that they are putting their faith in God when really all they are doing is putting their faith in the doctrines of men (Romans 10:17).

As a young man growing up I said the Sinner’s Prayer. Like my mother, stepfather, and hundreds around me, I thought I was free from sin, a Christian, and in the body of Christ. It was shocking and unnerving to find out that what I and many others had put their faith in was merely a tradition and doctrine of men. With the New Testament and its inspired word in hand we can put our faith in God and His word and know that we are saved. Let us obtain salvation the only way and the same way that they did in the first century, that is by dying to your sinful lifestyle, burring that body in that watery grave of baptism, having your sins forgiven, and being raised up to live a new life devoted to God (Romans 6:3-7; Colossians 2:11-13).