**The Sinner’s Prayer**

**Introduction:**

What do I mean: “The Sinner’s Prayer”? It is a popular practice in many denominational churches. It is printed on many small cards that people pass out or at the end of many tracts that these churches produce. There are variations of it but most go something like this: “Dear Lord Jesus I know that I am a sinner and ask for forgiveness. I believe you died for my sins on the cross and rose from the dead. I invite you to come into my heart. I trust you as my Savior and receive you into my heart.” Where in the Bible can you find this prayer or one similar to it? Nowhere! Where in the New Testament can you find someone praying for his initial salvation? Again, nowhere! So what does the Bible teach?

**Body:**

1. **What Does “Calling on the Name of the Lord” Mean?**

* Many people believe that “calling on the name of the Lord” means saying the sinner’s prayer. Let’s examine those verses that mention “calling” and look at the context of each.
* Acts 2:21 “And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved.” NKJV What does the inspired apostle Peter tell these people they need to do to be saved? Acts 2:37-38 “Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’ Then Peter said to them ‘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.” NKJV

Calling was not saying a prayer but included both repenting and being baptized.

* Romans 10:12-17 “For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For ‘whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’ How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!’ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed our report?’ So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” NKJV People must hear and believe in Christ and then will call upon Him. In the same book, note the words of Romans 6:3-4. “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” NKJV The new life, the forgiven life, came after their baptism into Christ.
* Acts 22:16 “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” NKJV Saul was on the road to Damascus when he encountered the risen Savior. The Lord sent him into the city and told him this. Acts 9:6 “So he, trembling and astonished, said, ‘Lord, what do You want me to do?’ Then the Lord said to him, ‘Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.’ ” NKJV He went into the city, fasted and prayed. Acts 9:11 “So the Lord said to him, ‘Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying.” NKJV Even though he had prayed, Ananias told him he had not yet “called on the name of the Lord.” He needed to be baptized. His prayers did not save him!
* We have seen that the act of “calling out” the Lord’s name in an attempt to obtain forgiveness and salvation is a vain attempt. See Matthew 7:21-23. “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. 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!’” NKJV Luke 6:46 “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?” NKJV
* Putting this all together we see that “calling on the name of the Lord” means surrendering to the terms of God’s plan of redemption.

1. **What Does “Being Born Again” Mean?**

* Many people believe that saying the “Sinner’s Prayer” is when they are “born again,” when they experience the new birth. What is the new birth?
* John 3:3-8 “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?’ Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.’ ” NKJV The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God as His instrument on the heart. This Word produces faith. (Romans 10:17) “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” NKJV This then leads one to obey and be baptized in water for the forgiveness of sins. (I Corinthians 12:13) “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free – and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.” NKJV This new birth places one in a new relationship with Christ, in His family, the church. See I Corinthians 4:15. “For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.” NKJV

1. **Only Christians Are to Pray for Forgiveness**

* Christians, children of God, can pray for forgiveness. (Luke 11:2, 4) “So He said to them, ‘When you pray, say: ‘Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. 4 And forgive us our sins, For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one.’ ” NKJV
* The book of I John was written to Christians, disciples of Christ. Note what Christians are instructed to do. I John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” NKJV
* The book of James was also written to Christians. See James 5:16. “Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” NKJV
* Also not the example of Simon the sorcerer in Acts 8:13, 18-22. “Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done. 18-22 And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, ‘Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.’ But Peter said to him, ‘Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you.’ ” NKJV His initial salvation came after he was baptized. But when he sinned after his baptism, he was told to pray to God for forgiveness.

**Conclusion:**

Could a person sit down and read the Bible and come to the belief that they needed to say a prayer to be saved? No! You simple cannot be saved by saying the Sinner’s Prayer.

Bobby Stafford July 30, 2017