

# The Sinner's Prayer

John Buttrey II

We have all heard the so-called "Sinner's Prayer" referenced by a friend, or some radio or television Bible teacher. At the close of a sermon, those who have responded to the invitation, are told they must say the sinner's prayer, if they want to be saved. The preacher will then lead them in this prayer. Generally, it is something along these lines:

"Dear Jesus, I believe You died for me on the cross, and rose from the dead. Please forgive my sins. I promise to give my life to you. Amen."

Having said this prayer, or something like it, the people are told, they are now saved, and are Christians. What these people are not told, is that the Bible does not mention any "sinner's prayer." On the contrary! What we find in the Bible are passages like these:

*The Lord is far from the wicked, but **He hears the prayers of the righteous*** (Proverbs 15:29 Emphasis mine).

*He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, even his prayer is an abomination* (Proverbs 28:9).

*Behold, the Lord's hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, **and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear*** (Isaiah 59:1-2 Emphasis mine).

**"We know that God does not hear sinners;** but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him" (John 9:31 Emphasis mine).

Each of these texts indicate that God does not hear the prayers of sinners. When Israel, God's own covenant people, were involved in sin, and had turned away from Him, He refused to hear their prayers (Isa. 59:1-2).

Prayer is a covenant blessing for those who have obeyed the Gospel, and are living faithful lives. David put it like this:

*The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and His ears are open to their cry (Psalm 34:15).*

It is in Christ, and only in Christ, that we have access to our Great High Priest. As our High Priest, Jesus is able to sympathize with our weaknesses (Heb. 2:17-18; 4:15). Those who are outside of Christ do not enjoy this special covenant-only relationship.

All this considered, God, being All-knowing, will certainly know if one outside of Christ is truly seeking the Truth (cf. Matt. 7:7-8). I believe God will help that individual find it (1 Tim. 2:3-4). Upon hearing the Truth, the person must do what the Scriptures tell them to do, in order to be saved (Hear: Romans 10:17; Believe: John 3:16; 6:29; Repent: Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Confess: Romans 10:10; Be Baptized: Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Gal. 3:27; 1 Peter 3:21).

Those who insist on teaching people that salvation comes by simply saying the sinner's prayer, need to offer either a command, example, or even an inference from the inspired Scriptures, that this is all that is required in order to be truly saved. Searching the Scriptures for any such proof texts will show that none exist.

The sinner's prayer is no doubt the work of the devil, designed to deceive people into a false sense of security (cf. 2 Cor. 11:14; 1 Tim. 4:1). Let's tell the lost the whole message of salvation (cf. Acts 5:20; 20:27). Obedience to the Gospel is the only "prayer" sinners have to escape eternal loss.