

Searching His Word

Where does the Bible say that? Part 1

By Russell Earl

In congregations throughout the world we sometimes find ideas that are taught as doctrine but cannot be found anywhere in the Bible (Matt 15:9). We should always strive to do as the Bible says. One important area which has been clouded by false teaching is salvation (Acts 2:37-38).

The first idea I want to investigate with you is referred to as “The Sinner’s Prayer.” The sinner’s prayer originated sometime during the Protestant Reformation movement. Billy Graham used his counselors to tell those who responded to his “altar call” to pray. His method of conversion began with a prayer from what is called his “Four steps to Peace with God” which began with a tract 50 years earlier.

There are a few passages some use in an attempt to teach the “sinners prayer.” However, upon dissecting the verses used, the truth becomes clear. There is no such support for a “sinner’s prayer” in the Bible. Let’s look first at John 1:12 which says, “*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name*” (NKJV). The believer has the right to proceed with his obedience which includes repentance, confession and baptism in water for or unto remission of sins (Acts 2:38, Rom 10:10, 1 Peter 3:21). Only believers have the right; obviously, a person does not have the right of becoming what they already are therefore this is proof that the act of believing alone does not produce salvation. Faith apart from works (of righteousness) is dead (James 2:26). The scriptures do not teach a “sinners prayer” in the idea that it is all that is required for salvation. No where does the Bible give a single example of a person being saved by faith until the faith involved reveals itself in action through obedience to God’s commands (1 Jn 2:4, 5:3).

A second common passage which is used is Romans 10:9-10,13 which says “that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For *‘whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.’*” (NKJV). Just because Paul does not mention every step of obedience does not mean it is not implied or understood. In many biblical examples of conversion not every point is brought out, that does not mean that particular step is not necessary or was not completed. No one would deny that those who desire to be called a biblical Christian will do what is required of them. “Calling on the name of the Lord” is the equivalent of gospel obedience. No one would deny that; those in Acts 2, Saul, the Eunuch in Acts 8, and Cornelius in Acts 10 all called on the name of the Lord. However, that is not all they did. These individuals called on the name of the Lord in that they believed, repented, and were baptized. Thus, to call on the name of the Lord is the same as a believer who repents and is baptized.

What about the occasions when a person was speaking to a messenger of God or to Christ Himself? They still did not receive salvation until believing, repenting, and being baptized. Saul met Christ on the road and spoke to Christ himself. However, Saul was not granted salvation. He was told to wait to be told what he “must do.” Cornelius talked to an angel of God but did he receive eternal life? No, he was told to send for Peter to hear what he “must do.” Why did these men not receive salvation at the point of

talking to Christ or an angel of God? They were to OBEY God's will and do what was required of them. *"There is also an antitype which now saves us--baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God)..."*, 1 Peter 3:21 (NKJV). What now saves us? Baptism, "the answer of a good conscience toward God." We can know in all good conscience that Christ has washed away our sins in baptism and we now have a clear conscience when we appear in judgment. We are to be buried with Christ in baptism and to rise in newness of life (Rom 6:4). How can we be saved "through the washing of regeneration" that is become new cleansed servants of Christ, if we are not baptized for the right reason? I challenge you to search the scriptures! Is there an example of anyone ever becoming a Christian by a simple prayer? After all, we cannot put on Christ if we are never baptized for the correct purpose (Gal 3:26-27). We see faith is not alone it accompanies works of righteousness and works of obedience that brings salvation (James 2). Search for yourself to see if there scriptural support for something man has invented? Is the sinner's prayer anywhere in the Bible? The answer is 'no.'