Prayer Part 5: Does Prayer Save?

Prepared by Nathan L Morrison for Sunday September 22nd, 2019

Text: Gal. 3:26-27

### Intro

1. Part of understanding prayer is knowing what it can and cannot do.
2. Many in the religious world today teach & practice that one can receive salvation by saying the “Sinner’s Prayer.”
   1. For years, people have been told “just receive Christ into your heart” and “trust Jesus as your personal Savior.” The method for accomplishing this, we are told, is the “Sinner’s Prayer,” or even called the “Prayer of Faith” by some denominations.
3. Where did this teaching come from? Does it accomplish what it purports to? (To reconcile man to God through rebirth)
   1. Many Biblical scholars will tell you it originated by the apostles’ teachings in the 1st c.
   2. There are no Scriptures in Old or New Covenants that told sinners to pray for salvation!
   3. So, if not from God, who then?
   4. Simple answer is, it came from the mind of men, not from the mind of God!
4. The history of the Sinner’s Prayer is less than 500 years old, too young to be from the N.T.!
   1. In the 1700’s (after the Reformation period – 1500’s), Revelation 3:14, 19-20 became a popular passage for appeals.
      1. The passage is directed toward lukewarm Christians, not unbelievers.
      2. Yet, listen to how it was altered by John Webb who preached in the mid-1700's: “Here is a promise Union to Christ; in these words, I will come in to him, i.e. If any Sinner will but hear my Voice and open the Door, and receive me by Faith, I will come into his Soul, and unite him to me, and make him a living member of that my mystical body of which I am Head.” [*Christ's Suit to the Sinner, While He Stands and Knocks at the Door*: *A Sermon Preach'd in a Time of Great Awakening, at the Tuesday-evening Lecture in Brattle-Street, Boston, October 13, 1741,* p. 14] <https://books.google.com/books/about/Christ_s_Suit_to_the_Sinner_While_He_Sta.html?id=ZwsrkgAACAAJ>
      3. He misquoted it to say “Sinner,” which had a domino (snowball) effect for hundreds of years where preachers used it as synonymous with “unbelievers,” and the context of Jesus speaking to the church at Laodicea, a group of lukewarm believers, was lost.
   2. By the late 1960s it seemed that nearly every denomination was teaching the Sinner’s Prayer as a means to be born again and receive salvation.
      1. Even a Bible was printed with this theology inserted into God’s Word.
      2. Beginning in the early 1960s, as portions of the Living Bible were being released, this paraphrase was becoming the translation of choice for Billy Graham’s Crusades. The New Testament was released in 1967 and the entire New Living Bible in 1971. A favorite scripture often quoted in those crusades is found in John 1:11-13:
      3. “Even in his own land and among his own people, the Jews, he was not accepted. Only a few welcome and received him. But to all who received him, he gave the right to become children of God. ***All they needed to do was to trust him to save them. All those who believe this are reborn!*** --not a physical rebirth resulting from human passion or plan--but from the will of God” (John 1:11-13, Living Bible, emphasis mine).
      4. The emphasized words have no support at all in the original Greek. They are a blatant insertion placed by presuppositions of the translator, Kenneth Taylor.
5. Where did the Sinner’s Prayer come from? The mind of man, and not from God!

#### Child of Satan and Child of God

* 1. We must understand there are two classes of accountable people on this earth: A child of Satan or a child of God – Which one are you?
     1. Most would not want to be accused of being a child of Satan.
     2. Nearly all would want to be classified as a child of God.
        1. Mt. 6:24: Jesus said one cannot serve two masters.
        2. Jn. 1:9-13: A child of God: obedient to God
        3. Jn. 8:41-47: A child of Satan: disregards what God says
  2. Knowing this, we can ask, “Has God the Father, Christ the Son, the Holy Spirit, or any inspired writer ever told a child of Satan to pray for anything?”
     1. Jn. 9:31: The healed blind man even knew God did not hear sinners, and it angered the religious leaders (Prov. 15:8; 28:9; I Pet. 3:12).
     2. The common teaching today is all a sinner has to do to be saved is to pray a prayer asking Jesus into their hearts.
     3. Nowhere does God’s word command a non-Christian to pray.
  3. If a non-Christian (child of Satan) is to pray, then what are they to pray for?

#### What May A Sinner Pray For?

* 1. Should the sinner pray for God’s love?
     1. No one can be saved unless God loves him, but is it necessary for sinners to pray for God to love them?
        1. Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8: God loved the world, and Christ died for sinners.
     2. Why should the sinner pray & beg for God to do something He has already demonstrated that He does?
  2. Should the sinner pray for grace?
     1. Everyone saved will be saved by God’s grace (Eph. 2:8-9).
        1. Titus 2:11: Grace has appeared to all men.
     2. God’s salvation (bringing grace to all men) has appeared to all in the form of the gospel of Christ, so useless to pray for something that has already happened
        1. Rom. 1:16: The gospel is God’s power for salvation.
     3. The sinner needs not pray for grace that God has already freely given, but be obedient to the gospel!
  3. Should the sinner pray for faith?
     1. Often heard, “Pray the prayer of faith and God will save you.”
     2. Faith is necessary to salvation – Eph. 2:8-9; Heb. 11:6
     3. How does one acquire this faith? (Rom. 10:17: Hearing word of God)
        1. Acts 10:24-35: God heard Cornelius’s prayer (10:31) and directed him to send for Peter so he could hear the gospel!
        2. If prayer saves, why send for Peter?
     4. “Faith comes by hearing the word of God” – Rom. 10:17
        1. Peter was sent to teach Cornelius and his household the gospel! (Acts 10:33)
        2. Gal. 3:26-27: Our faith causes us to be obedient through baptism (Acts 10:47-48)
     5. Js. 1:6: Prayers must be “in faith” not in order to get faith!
        1. Since faith without works is dead *(Js. 2:26),* only those who have obeyed the gospel can pray “in faith.”
     6. The sinner can’t pray “in faith” so cannot obtain faith through prayer!
  4. Should the sinner pray for God to have mercy on him?
     1. All sinners need God’s mercy in order to be saved.
     2. The question is: when will the sinner obtain that mercy?
        1. Is. 55:7: The wicked must forsake his ways and return to the Lord.
        2. Eph. 2:4-7: God showed mercy by sending His Son to die for the sins of man – grace & mercy go hand-in-hand (Eph. 2:8-9: Saved by grace through faith!).
     3. God has already shown mercy to the world, up to individuals to receive it.
  5. Should the sinner pray to be born again?
     1. We must be born again to be saved (Jn. 3:3-5) – all those in religious world recognize this too.
     2. The question is: How are we born again?
        1. Jesus answered that question to Nicodemus (Jn. 3:1-5): He said one must be born again by water and the Spirit, by obedience to Christ’s word.
        2. Those in religious world teach the “Spirit” part and say it is obtained through prayer but neglect the “water” part.
        3. Romans 6:3-4: Baptism makes one new. The new birth is symbolic of Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection, in that the old self is put to death, buried, and a new self rises from the waters of baptism. Nowhere is prayer described in such a way!
     3. I Pet. 1:22-23; 3:21: To purify one’s soul and appeal to God for a good conscious, one must be obedient through baptism! Notice it does NOT say, “Prayer now saves you.”
     4. It is useless for a sinner to pray to be born again: since it is obtained through obedience to the gospel in baptism.
  6. Should the sinner pray for salvation?
     1. Many in religious world would answer this question with a resounding “YES!”
     2. What does God say? (Does God say prayer is obedience to the gospel?)
        1. Rom. 10:13: Salvation has been provided for and is available to all who want it. None excluded!
     3. But will prayer save someone separate and apart from obedience?
        1. Rom. 10:13 quotes from Joel 2:32.
        2. Peter also quotes from Joel 2:32 in Acts 2:21 and applies it to the Jews’ question on how to be saved (Acts 2:37) in Acts 2:38: “Repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sin.”
        3. Acts 9:9-12; 22:16: Saul was praying for three days! **He still needed to** “arise and be baptized” **to** “wash away” his sins!
           1. If prayer saved, why did Jesus send Ananias?
        4. Acts 10:1-2: Cornelius prayed to God continually: why wasn’t he saved?
           1. Acts 10:47-48: He needed Peter to come and tell him what to do: “to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.”
     4. If prayer is the obedience called for by the gospel, why did Saul need Ananias, and why did Cornelius need Peter?
     5. Why didn’t Peter tell the Jews on the day of Pentecost to pray? (Acts 2:37-38)
        1. “Just repeat after me…”
  7. We are all saved the same way: Obedience to the gospel – Mark 16:16: Believe and be baptized!

## Conclusion

1. Prayer is not a substitute for obedience!
2. Prayer will not save us: Obedience to God’s word will!
   1. Nowhere in the Scriptures, when one asked what they needed to do to be saved, was the answer given to pray for salvation!
      1. *Acts 2:37-38: Jews on Pentecost; 16:30-33: Philippian Jailer*
3. The difference separating the child of Satan from the child of God is obedience to the gospel!
   1. Mt. 25:34, 41, 46; II Thess. 1:7-9: The child of Satan will inherit an eternal fire (punishment); the child of God inherits eternal rest!
4. Are you a child of Satan or a child of God?
5. Let us pray to God for things in accordance with His will from a heart of thanksgiving!
6. If you are not a Christian, you need to be. Repent of your sins and be baptized!
7. If a Christian in error, remember your 1st love. Repent & pray for forgiveness!
8. Whatever your requests, let them be made known ***NOW*** while we stand & sing!