

Salvation and the Sinner's Prayer

S.R. James 2:24 - 26

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Introduction

A. Welcome: People are looking for Jesus

I. When Does Salvation Occur?

A. At what point does one come into Christ?

B. For some religious groups *Infant Baptism* is a part of a formula.

C. The historical derivation of this concept was influenced by the theology of Martin Luther and also the camp revivals of the early 1800's.

II. What Does the Bible Teach?

A. *The Acts of the Apostles* is the only inspired work of history that records actual cases of conversion.

B. Consider a few of the examples: Acts 2:38, 8:12, 36-39; 16:31-34; 18:8; 22:16

C. Summary: Hear the gospel, Believe Jesus, Repent, Confess Faith, Baptism

D. Terms "Altar call" or "sinner's prayer" are conspicuously absent from the New Testament.

1. Youtube exposure: many are re – examining creedal Christianity.

2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JPhEEzjU8xQ>

3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Is8QnxviOI>

III. Where did the "Sinner's Prayer" Teaching Come From?

A. There was a long process of change through history.

1. Christians in the earliest centuries after Christ consistently linked baptism to salvation.

B. Over the centuries, baptism came to be regarded by many as a *sacrament*.

1. Infants were *baptized* in light of the false idea that somehow they were born sinners and needed to be cleansed.

2. Sprinkling replaced immersion as the mode of baptism.

C. Protestants of the 1400 and 1500's strongly objected to the concept of salvation by "works" of human merit.

1. One of those protestors, Martin Luther, held on to the idea of "infant baptism" but his theology revolved around salvation by "faith alone."

2. This paved the way for baptism to be regarded as something not connected to salvation, but rather after the fact – i. e. nothing but “an outward sign of an inward grace.”
- D. Camp meetings and revivals of the early 1800’s were emotionally charged events that lasted for weeks and resulted in claims of supernatural Holy Spirit regeneration.
1. In this context the “altar call” became popular with the preaching of Charles Finney around 1830.
 - a. What he called the “anxious seat” came to be called the “mourner’s bench.”
- E. In the 20th century crusades the version of the “altar call” was the invitation to come down and say the “sinner’s prayer” and “receiving Christ into your heart.”
- F. Critics of the “Sinner’s Prayer”
1. Please note that the “sinner’s prayer” is an effort to forego and dismiss the teaching of the Holy Spirit in the revealed and confirmed words given by the Spirit. Those claiming the validity and authenticity of this prayer claim the Holy Spirit as the source. (Sinners Prayer carpentersdaughter2) YouTube
 2. Question: Will we believe what the Holy Spirit said that was confirmed by the signs, wonders and miracles performed by the apostles and prophets or will we look for our own feelings and signs as confirmation of a different teaching?

IV. What Does the Bible Teach about Faith and Works?

- A. In Romans 4, we learn that there are only two paths to a right relationship with God, which Paul calls, “faith” and “works”.
- B. No contradiction between James 2 and Romans 4.
1. Faith does not eliminate the need for obedience to all that God requires.
 2. James reminds us that “You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone.” (James 2:24)
 - a. It is interesting that the only verse in the Bible which puts the words “faith” and “alone” together says that salvation is *not* by “faith alone.”
 3. Even in Romans, where Paul denounces “works” as a system of self – justification before God, he is not against an active obedience.
 - a. Romans begins and ends with the obedience of faith (1:5 and 16:26)
- C. God said through Paul:
1. “But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became **obedient from the heart** to that form of teaching to which you were committed, (Rom. 6:17; 6:3 – 4)
 2. Are you in Christ?