

THE ALTAR CALL RITUAL

INTRODUCTION

We shall be investigating a topic by which the enemy of man has kept many in Christendom for a long time rooted in the belief of a lie from the very start of their Christian race. Belief in “a doctrine of faith confession” by which they are said to have been saved and born again into the Body of Christ (BOC) as certified by the Ministers of the People (MOPs) of the Church as a business organization (CAO), after repeating a “Sinner’s prayer” as directed by them. As we have always said, it is the doctrine that a man comes to believe in and lives by that makes him who he is. If a man believes wrongly he shall speak and do foolishly and vice versa. **Mk 4:23-24; Jn 7:14-19; Jn 8:38; Mtt 7:24,26**

Ps 11: 3 If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?

This has to do with a foundational practice by which a sinner is said to be introduced into a covenant relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father, after the preaching of all manner of sermon. The sinner is made to believe that the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in him instantaneously after undergoing such a ritual, thereby converting him into a saint of God by fulfilling a ritual of answering “the Altar Call”. This is a foundational practice of the CAO by which they make new converts and members for their organization, while declaring that they are “winning souls” for the Lord Jesus Christ. By it sinners are said to “give their lives” to Christ as it were.

Many believers as adherents of the CAO who are said to have become born again through this ritual have never bothered to find out how biblical this practice is and whether it is Christ that taught this way as the way of becoming born again truly or not. They assume it to be true because their CAO MOPs told them so and practice it, thereby having from the start the foundation of their faith based on presumption as it were. Is this practice from heaven or of man? **Mtt 21:25**

We shall in this literature trace the root cum origin of the Altar call as formulated by men, a doctrine that is from beneath, so that ye may no longer be simple in your understanding of it, but be delivered from its falsehood/assumption. This Altar call practice study can only be gotten from internet resources and literature reviews, being not Bible based, unlike in all of our previous literatures that were strictly got from biblical sources cum references. Many believers are even willingly ignorant of the fact that there is nowhere in the Gospel that the Apostles of

Christ instituted or carried out such practice as an example for us to follow and yet they do not seem to care to do a diligent study by themselves to really understand what the doctrine they believe and practice blindly is all about, quite unfortunate. **Jam 3:15; 2 Tim 2:15-16**

As opined we shall be presenting internet extracts basically concerning this topic because that is where it is found and not in the Bible verbatim, answers that men have given. It is quite interesting.

ORIGIN OF ALTAR CALL

Question: What is the origin of the altar call? It started with the Great Awakening of 1740 in the 1st quarter of the 19th century.

Originally, at that time (1740) revival which was often preceded by a time when God would “set His people praying” meant a spontaneous, sovereign move of God, which converted many souls and refreshed the Church. All of this took place basically within the framework of the normal church services.

The 2nd Great Awakening (specifically 1750-1858) saw a change in the meaning of the term revival. It came to mean a special series of evangelistic meeting held outside from the normal church services. Camp meetings originated during this period. For the 1st time, man actually set dates and advertised “revival” meetings. Results were guaranteed through “new measures” which incorporated the “altar call”.

Preachers had discovered then, that at the end of the sermon, they could ask people who desired to pray further to come forward to the “anxious seat” or “mourner’s bench” to repent of their sins. Out of this practice came the altar call.

The altar call originally was used to identify people who wanted prayer or to talk with the minister so that they could more easily be helped especially in a large congregation. Responding to the altar call eventually became synonymous with conversion of souls.

The “new measures” caught on. Apparent success breeds success. Ministers compared members through the roll call that they recorded from answering altar call. The altar call took a life of its own and became a new tradition in most church denominations. **2 Cor 10:12-13**

When and why did the custom of conducting altar calls begin?

Steven Gertz answers

This question is tied to the history of revival and revivalism. George Whitefield, who historians identify as the key preacher of the Great Awakening, refused to speculate on how many of his listeners had been converted. "There are so many stony-ground hearers which receive the word with joy," Whitefield said, "that I have determined to suspend my judgment till I know the tree by its fruits." Revivals were the sole work of the Holy Spirit, and the test of time either confirmed or disproved these conversions. **Mtt 13:18-23**

But as the nineteenth century dawned, popular American Methodist preachers wanted a method to help them determine who of their listeners had been converted. Anglican churches featured an altar in front of the communion table, and ministers often encouraged parishioners to come to the altar if they needed prayer or encouragement. Methodist preachers inherited this tradition but changed its purpose, calling rather those "under conviction" to come forward to the altar. In 1801, for example, itinerant Methodist preacher Peter Cartwright told women at a camp meeting that if they promised "to pray to God for religion," they might take a seat at the altar. Cartwright further accused parents who discouraged their children from "going to the altar" of hindering their salvation.

The altar call gained popularity in the 1830s with the preaching of Charles G. Finney. Finney rejected Calvinistic teaching that human nature was irreparably depraved; he believed only men's wills, not their natures, needed to be converted. His "new measures," then, set out to make regeneration as easy as possible. "A revival is not a miracle," Finney wrote. "It is a purely philosophical result of the right use of the constituted means."

Thomas S. Kidd answers

By the mid-20th century, altar calls had become a staple of evangelical and Baptist life in America, especially in the South. Many evangelical and Reformed-leaning churches in recent years have stopped doing altar calls, for a variety of reasons. Critics of altar calls have pointed out that they have no strong biblical basis, and that they were part of the "New Measures" introduced by Charles Finney in the later stages of the Second Great Awakening.

In his anti-revivalist tract *The Anxious Bench* (1843), theologian John Williamson Nevin admitted that Finney's "anxious bench" tactic was sometimes associated with real revivals. (Finney invited the unconverted to come to this bench at front of the room to pray, and to be prayed for, often resulting in an emotional breakthrough for the person.) But, Nevin wrote,

Spurious revivals are common, and as the fruit of them, false conversions lamentably abound. An anxious bench may be crowded, where no divine influence whatever is felt. . . . Hundreds may be carried through the process of anxious bench conversion, and yet their last state may be worse than the first.

Evangelists such as Dwight Moody and Billy Sunday also employed invitations to come to the front of the preaching hall. For Billy Sunday, the journey to the front in response to a gospel invitation became known as “hitting the sawdust trail,” as recently explained by Justin Taylor. Billy Graham issued the most famous invitations of all, telling people “your friends will wait for you” as the choir sang “Just as I Am.”

Although some have made a sharp distinction between the era of Finney’s “New Measures” and the theologically pristine revivalism of the First Great Awakening, there were signs of calls for an immediate response to the gospel from First Great Awakening evangelists, including George Whitefield. Whitefield at the 1742 Cambuslang revival in Scotland gave one of his standard sermons on *Isaiah 54:5*. “Thy Maker Is Thy Husband.” As I wrote in my biography of Whitefield, he ended the sermon with a scene that might be discomfiting to many evangelicals today:

Whitefield asked whether anyone wished “to take Christ for their husband.” If they did, he extended an invitation: “Come and I’ll marry you to him just now.” . . . A twenty-one-year old male convert said that when Whitefield “laid out the terms” of the union with Christ, he found his “heart made sweetly to agree to those terms.” Another convert ran to embrace a friend, exclaiming that the minister had “married my soul to Christ.” . . . Whitefield wrote that many “were married to the Lord Jesus that night.”

Whether or not people actually came to the front, Whitefield’s intent was similar: trying to have people make a decision for Christ right then and there.

There was a growing trend toward practices in the 18th and 19th centuries that sound a lot like invitations or altar calls. **Strangely, however, the term “altar call” was almost never used in the 19th century**, at least not in print. It starts to show up first in Holiness and Nazarene publications in the early 20th century. For example, the term “altar call” appears as part of the program of 1908 commencement exercises at Pacific Bible College (a forerunner to Point Loma Nazarene University).

In Pastor C. B. Harrison’s *Pioneer Days of the Holiness Movement in the Southwest* (1919), he speaks of the altar call as if it had become routine. But the altar call for the Holiness meetings

was as much about seeking sanctification as it was about salvation. Harrison describes a “song and praise service,” which “ended in an altar call as usual.”

The altar call delayed the beginning of preaching, Harrison wrote, because there “were twenty-five praying at the altar at the top of their voices to be sanctified.” Some Baptist observers were disgusted with this display, and at a competing revival meeting they reportedly prayed for God “to stop this heresy or smite the leaders of the holiness meeting.”

The *practice* of the altar call for salvation came through the longer trajectory of British and American revivalism. But the *name* “altar call” seems likely to have originated among Holiness and Pentecostal churches.

There’s nothing inherently wrong with doing an altar call, to be sure. In your church, it may make sense as a way to focus nonbelievers on their need to receive God’s offer of forgiveness through Christ. And publicly professing your faith in Christ, which I see as fulfilled ultimately in baptism, has clear scriptural support in passages such as Matthew 10:32-33. Others such as Jonathan Leeman have written compellingly about how you can modify the practice of altar calls in order to avoid their traditional pitfalls.

All evangelical preachers must invite nonbelievers to come to Christ for salvation. But however that invitation is issued, nonbelievers and immature Christians must *never* get the impression:

- That walking an aisle and praying with the pastor, by definition, made them a Christian. Walking an aisle should be the beginning or continuation of a longer conversation about grace, faith, and discipleship.
- That God will reward those who walk the aisle with salvation. Prospective Christians must understand that there’s *nothing* they can do to earn God’s favor.
- That walking the aisle is the lone standard for how the prospective convert knows that he or she is a Christian. If “hitting the sawdust trail” is not followed by obedience (first by receiving baptism, at least in churches that practice believer’s baptism) and faithfulness to the Lord and the church, then the body of Christ may well doubt whether the one-time response to the gospel was evidence of real regeneration.

Pastors and churches should have a great deal of latitude to structure their services and methods the way that works best for them, assuming that a given practice does not contradict the Bible’s parameters. But practices like the altar call should be scrutinized to make sure they are not introducing bad assumptions or bad theology into the church.

Question: "What does the Bible say about altar calls? Are altar calls biblical?"

Answer: The practice of altar calls—calling people forward after an evangelistic sermon to make a public confession of faith in Christ—has gained prominence in the 20th century primarily through “crusades” such as those of Billy Graham. Also known as the “invitation system,” altar calls are regularly practiced as part of some church services, especially in many Baptist denominations and other evangelical churches where altar calls are an integral part of the services.

While altar calls as practiced today are not found in the Bible, their advocates cite several biblical examples as support for using them. First, Christ called each of His disciples publicly, telling them, “Follow Me” (Matthew 4:19; 9:9) and expecting them to respond immediately, which they did. Jesus was demanding an outward identification with Himself on the part of those who would be His disciples. Of course, the problem of Judas, who also responded publicly by leaving his life behind and following Jesus, is that Judas’s response was not synonymous with salvation.

Proponents of the altar call also cite Matthew 10:32 as proof that a new believer must acknowledge Christ “before men” in order for Him to reciprocate. Calling people to the front of an arena or church is certainly acknowledging before men that a decision has been made. The question is whether that decision is genuinely motivated by a sincere repentance and faith or whether it is an emotional response to external stimuli such as swelling music, heartfelt pleas from the pulpit, or a desire to “go along with the crowd.” Romans 10:9 makes it clear that genuine salvation comes only from heartfelt belief, which will then result in a verbal confession of that faith

Just like the sinner’s prayer, altar calls can be an outward expression of genuine repentance and faith in Christ. The danger is in looking to the prayer or the response as evidence of salvation (Matthew 7:22). True salvation results in a life of continual sanctification as the Holy Spirit within the true believer produces more and more of His fruit (Galatians 5:22-23) as evidence of the reality of saving faith.

THE SINNER’S PRAYER

The Altar call ritual is not complete without the unbeliever being led through a form of confessional prayer called “the sinner’s prayer”, at the end of which the preacher declares him saved, born again and welcomes him into the family of God. Therefore, we shall be taking internet extracts on some men’s take on this also.

Is the Sinner's Prayer biblical or not?

Answers by **Tony Miano and Matt Slick**

Is the "Sinner's prayer" biblical? Yes and no. It is biblical for a sinner to pray to Jesus to forgive him of his sins. It is not biblical to say someone is saved "because of reciting the Sinner's Prayer." It is biblical to confess one's sins and ask for forgiveness and put trust, hope, and faith in Christ and his sacrifice on the cross. But, again, it is not biblical to give someone assurance of salvation based on reciting a prayer - on simply saying the words. Salvation is the work of God, and the manifestation of that work is sometimes seen in people publicly confessing, even publicly praying to receive Christ as Savior.

So, we want to be clear that elements of the sinner's prayer are biblical. However, we also want to be very clear that a person is not saved "because he prayed a prayer." Faith, assurance, and hope should never be placed in the prayer. Instead, faith, assurance, and hope should be placed in Christ via the proper presentation of the saving message which consists of presenting the Law (that we are sinners before God and deserve judgment) and the gospel (that only through faith and trust in what Christ has done on the cross where he bore our sins and died with them can we be saved from God's righteous judgment). People must repent of their sins and believe the gospel. That is what the Bible says.

- **Mark 1:15** "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."
- **1 Corinthians 15:1-4 (Vr.1** "Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, **Vr.2** by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. **Vr.3** For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, **Vr.4** and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."
- **Acts 16:30 (Vr.30** "and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" **Vr.31** And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household." **Vr.32** And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. **Vr.33** And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

What we are not saying about the Sinner's Prayer

Many Christians have a prayer of repentance and faith as part of their conversion testimony. We know there are genuine, Christ-loving, born-again followers of Jesus Christ who will forever testify that someone shared the gospel with them and asked them to repeat a prayer, which they did, and they were saved. This article should in no way be interpreted or construed as an effort to bring into question one's salvation because he "prayed a prayer."

That being said, no one is saved because they “prayed a prayer.” It is not reciting a phrase or the words of a prayer that saves anyone. We are against formula salvation. Those whom God sovereignly chooses to save (**1 Peter 1:3; 2 Thess. 2:13**) and draw to Himself (**John 6:44**) may pray a prayer - on their own or at someone else’s urging - as part of the first fruits of their salvation.

There are many Christians who will testify, to the glory of God, that they prayed a “Sinner’s Prayer” the day God saved them. But there are also people in the world who, as a result of being *led* in a false “Sinner’s Prayer,” are now apostate. They were false converts (**Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-31**). They have turned their back on Christ and have left the faith they thought they had because they had never really come to genuine repentance and faith in Christ. They are and were false converts because they put their hope of salvation in "saying words", in "reciting a prayer", in "doing the Christian prayer thing", instead of truly trusting Christ to forgive them of their sins against God.

The purpose of this article is not to discourage genuine Christians or cause them to question the authenticity of their faith because their conversion story includes a “Sinner’s Prayer.” Many people have truly been saved along with saying the Sinner’s Prayer. Rather, the purpose of this article is to warn Christians, to plead with Christians to preach the gospel biblically and if/when a person wants to trust in Christ and receive him as Savior, that it is done properly.

There are biblical elements to the sinners prayer but it is not the sinners prayer itself that saves and again, it must be made clear that it is not reciting the prayer that saves anyone. It happens thousands of times every day around the world. It happens in one-to-one conversations between friends, relatives, and even strangers. It happens in pastors' offices. It happens via email. It happens in online chat rooms. A well-intentioned Christian shares the gospel with someone (hopefully a gospel that is consistent with the Word of God). The listener seems to understand and even seems emotionally moved by the conversation. The Christian, with eagerness and sincerity, asks the person if he wants to know Jesus as his personal Savior. If the other person responds favorably, then the Christian leads him in a "Sinner's Prayer."

The Sinner's Prayer, False Conversion, and Tradition

This is important. Many Christians make the cataclysmic and unbiblical mistake of giving the other person a false sense of assurance of salvation, by asserting the person is saved because he prayed a prayer. So, many people walk away from such a conversation still dead in their sins, but believing what they've been told. "I believed what my friend told me, and I prayed a prayer. So, now I'm a Christian!"

It is unbiblical confidence in the "Sinner's Prayer" (instead of repentance and trust in Christ) that often leaves me thinking American Evangelicalism is much closer to Rome than she realizes. The reason is that like the apostate Roman Catholic Church, which holds up church tradition as equal or superior to the Word of God, American Evangelicalism sometimes does the same with her own traditions. The "Sinner's Prayer" is a case in point.

My presupposition regarding it is an easy one to articulate. Simply put...

There is not a single verse or passage in Scripture, whether in a narrative account or in prescriptive or descriptive texts, regarding the use of a "Sinner's Prayer" in evangelism. *Not one.*

However, proponents of the use of the "Sinner's Prayer" will cite several verses/passages of Scripture in a failed attempt to support the unbiblical practice. Here are several:

- **Matthew 7:7**, "Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you."
- **Luke 18:10-14** (**Vr.10** "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax-gatherer. **Vr.11** "The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, 'God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. **Vr.12** 'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' **Vr.13** "But the tax-gatherer, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' **Vr.14** "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted."
- **Romans 10:9-10** (**Vr.9** "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; **Vr.10** for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."
- **1 John 1:9** "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
- **Revelation 3:20** "'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me."

A brief exposition of each of the above texts will show they should not be used to support the practice of the "Sinner's Prayer."

Does Matthew 7:7 support the Sinner's Prayer?

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you," (**Matthew 7:7**).

When trying to interpret Scripture, especially if one is seeking to establish or support a belief or practice as biblical, never simply read a verse. Read *many* verses. Read passages. Read

chapters. Read books. Allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. Let's look at the verse in its near context.

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him," (**Matthew 7:7-11**).

The first step in biblical interpretation (hermeneutics) is observation. In this step, the student asks three basic questions of any given verse or passage: What does the verse say? What doesn't the verse say? What questions come to mind as I read this verse?

Matthew 7:7 says nothing about evangelism. It says nothing about the conversion of the lost. It says nothing about what, if anything, the unsaved person should or could do to be saved.

In order to rightly understand the verse we must not only look at the surrounding verses, but we must go all the way back to the beginning of the "Sermon on the Mount"-- back to **Matthew 5:1**.

"Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him," (**Matthew 5:1**)

Jesus' primary audience during the Sermon on the Mount (**Matthew 5-7**) was His disciples. His extended audience was the crowd that followed Him (**Matthew 4:25**). Jesus began His sermon with the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes served as Jesus' description of the Christian life. The Beatitudes were not instructions for becoming a Christian. Jesus' primary audience remained the same in **Matthew 7:7**, His disciples, *believers*. This truth is further evidenced by what Jesus said in **Matthew 7:11**.

"If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" (**Matthew 7:11**).

"Your Father who is in heaven..." Unsaved people have no Father in Heaven. They have a Judge in Heaven. Jesus' words about "asking" in **Matthew 7:7** are words of instruction and encouragement to believers, not the lost. Therefore, to suggest **Matthew 7:7** supports unbelievers asking Jesus into their heart or to save them is utterly contrary to what the verse actually says and means.

Does Luke 18:10-14 Teach the Sinner's Prayer?

This is another passage, with specific emphasis placed on **Luke 18:13**, that many Christians use to justify the implementation of the "Sinner's Prayer" in an evangelism strategy. After all, the tax-collector cried out to God in prayer.

Again, context is critical to understanding this beautiful and important parable.

Who was Jesus' audience when he shared the above parable? Yes, it was His disciples. But there were others present, so we must go back to **Luke 17:20-21** to discover who else was there.

"Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you." (**Luke 17:20-21**).

If one looks closely at the parable, the prayer is not the primary focus. Jesus' point is to emphasize the self-righteousness and sinful arrogance of the Pharisees. The parable was an indictment against the Pharisees, not a treatise on how one should pray to enter the Kingdom of God.

Look closely at the parable. Why was the tax collector justified? Was it because he prayed? No! It was his humility that exemplified the justification He had received from God (cf. **Romans 8:30**). "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted," (**Luke 18:14**).

God opposes the proud (the Pharisees), but He gives grace to the humble (the tax-collector). (See **James 4:6** and **1 Peter 5:5**.) It is far better and far more accurate to use this tremendous parable as an encouragement to call unbelievers to humble themselves before God than to errantly convince unbelievers they can be reconciled to God if they pray a prayer. Again, it is not simply the prayer that saves anyone.

Does Romans 10:9-10 Teach the Sinner's Prayer?

"that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; **Vr.10** for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation," (**Roman 10:9-10**).

Who is Paul's audience? Believers or unbelievers? He is writing to believers, the Church, in Rome. The recipients of his letter would have never taken from this text that Paul was instructing unbelievers to pray a prayer in order to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Nor would his readers have received Paul's teaching here as a suggestion, much less a mandate, to lead the unsaved in a "sinner's prayer."

I could not find one legitimate Bible scholar who suggests that Paul's words in Romans 10:9-10 is an example of either a "sinner's prayer" or a suggestion that believers are to lead unbelievers in such a prayer, or to "ask Jesus into their heart." In fact, there is no place in the Bible where it says we "ask Jesus into our hearts" [or "give your life to Christ"].

It is also interesting to note how Paul switches the ideas of confession and believing, from verse 9 to verse 10. Paul makes it clear that justification by faith (Romans 1:17) comes *before* confession. Justification does not come as a result of confession.

Both verbs in Romans 10:10, "believes" and "confesses," are in the present-passive-indicative in the Greek text. This means that those who are truly born again will continue to believe by faith and they will continue to confess Jesus as Lord. The wording in Romans 10:10 in no way whatsoever supports the notion of praying a one-time prayer as a means of receiving salvation and the gift of eternal life.

Romans 10:10 ends with these words: "...and with the mouth he confesses and is saved."

I appreciate what John Gill wrote about this phrase.

"This is to be understood not of confession of sin, though that is proper and requisite to be made, both with respect to the participation, and enjoyment of salvation, particularly pardoning grace and mercy, and to an admission to Gospel ordinances; but of confession of Christ, as appears from the preceding verse, which lies in a frank and open acknowledgment of what Christ is in himself, as that he is truly and properly the Son of God, the true Messiah, the Mediator between God and man, and the only Saviour of lost sinners, and of our faith in him, with respect to ourselves, to our pardon, justification, acceptance and salvation in him and through him; in ascribing the whole of our salvation to him, and giving him the glory of it; in declaring to the churches of Christ what he has done for our souls, and in subjecting ourselves to his ordinances. This confession must be made both by words and facts, must be open, visible, and before men; and also real, hearty, and sincere, the words of the mouth agreeing with the experience of the heart; and such a good profession made before God, angels, and men, highly becomes all that believe with the heart. This was the practice of the primitive saints; yea, all nations own, acknowledge, and profess the God they worship; and should not we confess our God, Saviour and Redeemer?"

Confessing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is the pattern of the born-again follower of Christ. Those who are saved, those who will forever be saved, are those who confess Jesus as Lord -- not as a means of salvation, but as evidence that the salvation to which they cling has been wrought by God and secured in heaven by Him for all eternity (**1 Peter 1:3-9**). Those who claim to be Christians but do not confess Jesus as Lord as a regular course and pattern of their lives should examine themselves to see if they are even in the faith (**2 Corinthians 13:5**).

Does 1 John 1:9 Teach the Sinner's Prayer?

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," (**1 John 1:9**).

Who are the "we" in this verse? The "we" is John's audience. John is writing to Christians in the Church of Ephesus as well as believers in the region. Unbelievers are not included in the "we," as indicated by Paul's warning to the brethren about false teachers (**1 John 2:18-27**).

God is faithful and righteous to forgive the sins of His adopted children (**Romans 8:12-17**). Until God causes the unregenerate person to be born-again (**1 Peter 1:3**), their prayers are an abomination to Him (**Isaiah 1:15**). Christians should call unbelievers to repent and believe the gospel (**Mark 1:15**; **Luke 13:1-5**), not to pray a prayer of confession and trust in it as the means by which they are then saved. Instead, people need to trust Jesus and what he did on the cross.

Does Revelation 3:20 Teach the Sinner's Prayer?

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me," (**Revelation 3:20**).

We prayerfully long for the day when pastors, evangelists, and Christians, in general, will stop proclaiming a man-centered gospel by misusing Revelation 3:20 and drawing an emotional and often-times false response from the hearer.

Jesus is not standing at the locked door of any sin-corroded human heart, longing to be let in. Jesus doesn't need the acceptance of anyone. Everyone needs *His*. Jesus isn't the blonde haired, blue eyed, surfer standing at the door of your heart waiting for *you* to let him in. He's God's Son. He is sovereign. Not you.

The context of the before-mentioned verse finds Jesus *not* speaking to the unsaved, but to a disobedient church. It is not an evangelistic verse, nor should it be used as such. It is a call to repentance to the church.

Jesus never asked people to let Him come into their hearts. Jesus is not lonely without the unrepentant sinner. Jesus is not chasing after people, hoping he will one day catch them and save them. Jesus needs *nothing* from his creation. He demands *everything* from his creation.

Jesus commanded people to repent and believe the gospel. He is not looking for acceptance. He is demanding obedience. And those who obey the commands of Christ, those who repent and believe the gospel--by the grace of God alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone--will be saved.

Conclusion

Walking an aisle in response to the emotional and caring invitation of a pastor does not save anyone. Asking Jesus into one's heart does not save anyone. Writing the date in the back of one's Bible to commemorate the day a decision was made to follow Jesus does not save anyone. And praying a prayer does not save anyone.

But can God use even the sinner's prayer in his sovereign work of salvation? Of course. But we need to be very careful and not urge someone to recite a prayer and have them put their hope in that, so as to be saved. In that sense, the "Sinner's Prayer" has done a great disservice to Christ and the untold millions of people who, as a result of praying a prayer but never being converted, will one day hear Jesus say, "I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness," (Matthew 7:21-23).

I am often asked what I do at the end of an apparent good conversation with an unbeliever -- especially when the person gives an outward expression of a desire to repent and believe the gospel. I am often asked, "How do you close the deal?"

The question itself is a tragic and unbiblical byproduct of one of American Evangelicalism's most cherished traditions -- the "sinner's prayer." And let's be honest. That's all the sinner's prayer is: a tradition -- a tradition created by sincere Christians who want lost people to come to genuine faith in Jesus Christ.

Again, let's be honest. There is not a single verse or passage of Scripture, whether expressed in a command from Christ or one of the New Testament writers, or expressed by example in one of the many New Testament narrative passages, that gives any credence to the belief that the "sinner's prayer" is biblical. It is simply not in the Bible.

The Gospel Cannot be Sold

The gospel cannot be sold because the gospel is not for sale. No sales pitch offered by man will ever give the recipient anything more than a false hope and a false assurance.

If you are reading this and have bought the sales pitch that walking down an aisle, or bowing your head and closing your eyes, or raising your hand, or repeating a prayer, or putting a date in the back of your Bible, or trying Jesus for 60 days, or any other man-made gimmicky tradition is the way to receive eternal life, then you must understand none of these *traditions* of men provide any assurance of salvation. Salvation is of the Lord.

Now, are there genuine followers of Jesus Christ who have done the above-mentioned things (except trying Jesus for 60 days)? Yes. I know many Christian brethren who, as part of their salvation testimony, have done some of the before-mentioned man-made, man-initiated responses. But none of them are saved *because* they did one or more of the before-mentioned things. They were saved by the grace of God alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone. The assurance of their salvation is found in Jesus Christ--not in any prayer uttered, or by any other act of piety, or outward response to the gospel.

God and God alone saves, and God and God alone seals those whom He adopts into His eternal family. Those whom He saves He keeps. No work of man saves a man; and no work of man keeps a man saved.

You may be asking yourself, "Well, then what? You've poked a finger in the eye of all my evangelistic traditions. So, what should I do if someone seems ready to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?"

Closing gospel conversations this way leaves me completely trusting in the sovereignty of God for the person's salvation. It is not manipulative. It doesn't leave the person with a false sense of assurance. It keeps me from taking any credit whatsoever for any work the Lord accomplishes in the person's life. After all, I am merely one of the King's ambassadors. Only the King has the power and authority to forgive and to save. I have no such power.

Remember, God does not need your help to save anyone. Yes, He uses the preaching of the gospel to convert souls. But salvation is of the Lord. He doesn't need us to emotionally prep or prod lost people. He doesn't need us to make the gospel more palatable. He doesn't need us to add prize packages (Your best life now; health, wealth, and prosperity; a purpose you'll get a kick out of; mended relationships; etc.) to the gift of eternal life. In fact, I believe these kinds of "gospel helps" are an offense to God.

Simply proclaim the gospel to the lost. Bring every single person with whom you speak to the foot of the cross. And trust, *really trust*, God to save.

SUMMARY

What we have done in this first part of this topic is to bring out our online investigations concerning “Altar call” and extracts from the explanation of others on it. We look forward to having a second part series on this, wherein we shall no longer run to literature reviews of men required in explaining a man deduced practice as the Altar call ritual clearly is. Rather we shall run to our Lord and Master Jesus Christ in his doctrine in order to bring out his teaching and that of his apostles as the carried out his Great Commission, as we understand it too.

We enjoin our readers to familiarize themselves with our previous literature titled “Temple Worship”. We recommend that you get and read this literature before hand, because an altar is tied to a temple and the worship therein.

We declare here without any atom of reservation that the Altar call system is “a leaven of the Pharisees and scribes” of the CAO based on the teachings and commandments of men that leadeth many away from the true understanding of how it is that God saves, and how one gets born again through the faith of Jesus Christ as it were. By belief in this CAO doctrine, one stands at the risk of being a castaway on the last day and having no eternal reward for all your so called evangelical efforts on earth. Unfortunately many CAO adherents being in the deception thereof do not consider it to be that serious. **Mtt 7:20-23**

We pray that your faith may not be based on the wisdom of men that perisheth, but on the wisdom of God in Christ that endureth unto everlasting life. Amen.

FEEDBACK

Thank you for taking time to read this literature. If you have been blessed by it and wish to send comments, make enquiries or get access to various other literatures that the author has put out, then you can contact us via email info@devoutmenministry.com or send SMS to 08091764495 or visit us @ www.devoutmenministry.com

God bless and keep you heaven bound while ye still walk on this earth. MARANATHA.