

What About the Sinner's Prayer?

James Buchanan

It is common to hear denominational preachers telling people to pray a certain prayer in order to receive salvation. This prayer, called the sinner's prayer, does not find its origin in scripture.

1. **God has not promised to hear the prayer of sinners.** It is written, in 1 Peter 3:12, that God hears the supplication of the righteous. The formerly blind man of John 9:31 knew that "God heareth not sinners." So, the sinner's prayer is a prayer with neither a reasonable hope nor promise of even being heard, let alone answered.

2. **There is no New Testament example of a sinner praying for salvation.** This fact, often overlooked by our denominational friends, is crucial to our discussion. After all, it is not only the lack of a sinner's prayer that they overlook. They also overlook baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Were it possible to pray a certain prayer in order to be saved, surely one of the New Testament evangelists would have bound such a prayer. No such prayer was bound, but belief (Acts 16:30), repentance (Acts 2:38), confession (Acts 8:36-38), and baptism (Acts 2:38) were all bound upon those wanting to be saved.

3. **What about Cornelius?** Many often object and bring up Cornelius, who prayed to God and evidently received an answer. Several facts, however, are often overlooked by those who would use this example. First, the angel says that Cornelius' prayers had "gone up for a memorial before God." (Acts 10:4). Did God know Cornelius prayed? Of course God knew! However, did God directly answer Cornelius' prayer? We have no scriptural evidence that He did. Second, even after Cornelius prayed, the angel gave Cornelius instruction to "send men to Joppa, and fetch one Simon, who is surnamed Peter." (Acts 10:5). What would Peter do when he got there? Acts 11:14 tells us that Peter would speak words by which Cornelius would be saved. Cornelius' prayer was not adequate toward salvation.

What then is the conclusion? The conclusion we must reach is that the sinner's prayer is something invented and bound by man upon man and will cause souls to be lost. Let us go with God's clear plan for our salvation and be content with that.