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## ***Biblical Misconceptions: The Sinner's Prayer***

Many people believe in Jesus and God. Most people in our culture would even say that they are Christians unless they have adopted other religious persuasions or are opposed to the ideas set forth in the scriptures about God and Christ. For those who believe, albeit passively, it is interesting to find that most do not know what the scriptures teach about how one becomes a Christian. Almost everyone believes that something has to be done in order to be recognized by God and will admit that there are things that one must change in their lives in order to be saved. This leads us to our discussion of the first Biblical misconception that plagues religious discussions. The issue has profound impact as it will determine where we will spend eternity. Some like to think they can be passive in their belief and when death comes, we will all be ushered into Heaven. This idea is not found in the scriptures and anyone who spends time with the Bible will find that we cannot be passive in our belief. There are two things that are needed in order for us to be pleasing in God's sight. The first we can all agree on and the second will be argued in religious circles. The first is that we must all believe in Christ and the power of God to save through Jesus great sacrifice. Without being convinced of the validity of this statement we are wasting our time. Those who believe will also agree that one must come into contact with the blood of Christ which saves us from sin. The question then is how this is accomplished. For the sake of argument we will agree that this is not a physical process and we will find little disagreement that this is done in a figurative sense. Most have been led to believe that they are saved through their belief and by praying to God for that salvation. We know this as the sinner's prayer. It may come as a surprise to find that this is not found in the scriptures, nor are there any examples in the Bible that would affirm this. Salvation is detailed in the New Testament, most notably in the book of Acts. In these examples we find common elements that appear in each case, or example

of conversion. On the day of Pentecost the multitudes were told to repent (**Acts 2.38-40**). The Ethiopian eunuch was told that he needed to believe and confess that belief (**Acts 8.26-40**). In the case of the Philippian jailor we find a combination of belief and repentance (**Acts 16.27-33**). Saul, was told to arise and wash away his sins calling on the name of the Lord (**Acts 22.13-16**). These are only a few of the examples that we find but in all of them there are common things that appear. In each of these cases they believed in Christ. It is logical to conclude that they **heard** the facts that were needed in order to **believe**. While not specifically stated there is an affirmation of the fact that they wished to change their lives (**repentance**) and were willing to affirm this (**confession**). The circumstance behind each example of conversion are different but looking at each case we can conclude that these elements are present. One thing that is common to each and every example is the final act of being baptized, that is immersed in water for the remission of sins. This is what Christ commanded his disciples to teach (**Matt 28.18-20, Mk 16.15-16**) and we can see it carried out in the above examples. We are told in the scriptures that baptism is a burial into the death of Christ from which we emerge to a newness of life (**Rom 6.1-6**) and that having done this we have put on Christ (**Gal 3.27**). Peter states that this is the answer of a good conscience toward God (**1 Pet 3.21**) and it is at this point that God takes sin from our souls and adds us to the church, the body of saved believers (**Acts 2.47**). What we find is that no one prayed through to be saved. If that was possible, Christ would not have commanded baptism and Saul, later known as the apostle Paul, would have been forgiven after three days of fervent prayer. Those today would argue that this is not necessary but the scriptures are clear on this point. Are you truly a Christian? If you have believed but have fallen short of the command of God you have been misled.

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