Will I Be Saved if I Ask Jesus to Come into my Heart or Repeat the "Sinner's Prayer"?

Countless multitudes of people in Christendom, especially evangelicals and fundamentalists,[1] have taught that the way to be saved is to pray and ask Jesus into one's heart, quoting Revelation 3:20. Many more have taught, claiming Romans 10:9-10 and 10:13 as support, that one must pray and ask to be saved by confessing Jesus with one's mouth and calling upon him in a "sinner's prayer," as well as believing in Him, and after one both believes and then asks to be saved he is forgiven of his sins. People who say the sinner's prayer or ask Jesus into their hearts are then given assurance of salvation because of what they just did.

On the other hand, many Bible-believing and practicing churches teach that salvation is by repentant faith alone in Christ. Consequently, the lost do not need to ask Jesus into their hearts, confess anything with their mouths, or pray anything whatever in order to become Christians—they simply need to trust in Christ to save them from the penalty and power of their sin. If the lost trust in Christ while praying, that is wonderful; if they trust in Christ without praying, that is equally wonderful. These churches teach that salvation does not come by praying, nor does assurance come from remembering that one prayed a "sinner's prayer." They teach that directing the lost to ask Jesus into their hearts in order to be saved does not help anyone understand the gospel, but actually creates tremendous confusion and large numbers of people who are not truly Christians but think that they are because they have performed a man-made religious ritual. You may ask: "What is the truth? Can I become a child of God by asking Jesus into my heart or praying the 'sinner's prayer,' or not?"

What is the Gospel?

1 Cor 15:1-4 states that it is "the gospel . . . by which also ye are saved." To understand whether or not you need to ask Jesus into your heart or say the "sinner's prayer," a proper understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ is required. There are four things a lost person must know in order to be saved.[2]

1.) *Why you need the gospel: You are a sinner*

God's standard is "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Mt 5:48), but you have fallen miserably short of His holy glory. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). "There is none righteous, no,

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[1] Evangelical and fundamentalist readers are highly encouraged to read the pamphlet "Do You Want to Worship God?" available at: http://faithsaves.net/do-you-want-to-worship-God/.

[2] Compare "Do You Know You Have Eternal Life?" at http://faithsaves.net/salvation/.

not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Rom 3:10-12). You can say, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps 51:5), since you sinned in the first man, Adam (Rom 5:12-19), and were born with a "heart [that] is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer 17:9). Your corrupt nature makes you "as an unclean thing, and all [your] righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Is 64:6). It only takes one sin to keep you out of God's presence: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (Jam 2:10), but you have committed numberless sins, every one of which is written down in God's books (Rev 20:11-15). The Lord Jesus Christ said that unjust anger is murder (Mt 5:21-22), and a lustful thought is adultery (Mt 5:27-28), so you are a murderer and an adulterer. You have lied (Prov 6:16), been proud (Pr 6:16-19), bitter (Ro 3:14), unthankful (2 Tim 3:2), covetous (2 Tim 3:2), and hypocritical (Is 33:14). You have broken the greatest commandment of all, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Mt 22:37). Indeed, until you are born again (Jn 3:3), you "cannot please God" (Rom 8:8) in any way, but are "defiled and unbelieving" with "nothing pure; but even [your] mind and conscience is defiled" (Tit 1:15). This very moment, "the wrath of God abideth" on you (Jn 3:36). You are "condemned already" (Jn 3:18). You "have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out" (Num 32:23).

2.) *Why you need the gospel: you deserve a penalty for your sin*

God's law says, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal 3:10). You have not continuously and perfectly obeyed, so you have earned His curse. Since "the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23), you deserve both physical death, the separation of the soul and spirit from the body (Heb 9:27), and spiritual death, the separation of a person from God. Until one is born again, he is "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1), his "damnation is just" (Rom 3:8), and he is consequently headed for the second death, eternal separation from God in the lake of fire: "This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev 20:14-15). In the lake of fire the lost "shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and [they] shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night" (Rev 14:10-11). The question arises: "How can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (Mt 23:33).

3.) *What the gospel is: Christ died for your sin, was buried, and rose again from the dead*

Jesus Christ is "God manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim 3:16). The Son of God, who existed from eternity past with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the three eternal Persons of the one and only true God (1 Jn 5:7), took to Himself a human nature, so that, although He was

still 100% God, He became 100% Man as well. He lived a sinless life and then died on the cross, where His Father "made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor 5:21). He then rose bodily from the grave and ascended to heaven, from whence He will soon return to judge the world. On the cross God laid your transgressions upon His Son, who suffered to pay your sin debt. The law demands perfect righteousness for entry into heaven, but Christ died as your Substitute so that His death and shed blood could pay for your sin, and you could have His righteousness put to your account and be counted righteous in God's sight for the Savior's sake. You can be saved, not through your own works, but through His work; not by your attempts to obey the law, but by His perfect obedience to it and death to satisfy it. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal 3:13). "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but [made alive] by the Spirit" (1 Pet 3:18). Since by "one offering he hath perfected for ever" those that are washed in His blood (Heb 10:14), there is nothing that you can do to save yourself, or to keep yourself saved. "Salvation is of the LORD" (Jon 2:9).

4.) *The way to receive the gospel: Repentant faith in Jesus Christ*

To have the Lord Jesus' blood wash away your sins, you must place your faith in Him. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Jn 3:16). Saving faith in Jesus Christ involves:

a.) *Repentance*. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Lu 13:3). "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Ac 3:19). In repentance, you agree with God that you are as bad as the Bible says you are, that you are headed to hell and deserve it for your sins, and you turn from your sins to submit unconditionally to God as your Lord. Jesus Christ said, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life [wants to live his own way and will not turn to God's way] shall lose it [in hell]; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:34-36).

b.) *Faith: trust in the Lord Jesus alone to save*. You do not believe on Jesus Christ for salvation if you think that any good deed you have done, are doing, or will do helps save you, or if you believe that any religious ritual, such as baptism, communion, confessing your sins every day, or saying a one-time "sinner's prayer," is the instrumentality through which you receive the forgiveness of sin. Salvation is based on Christ's work on the cross alone and is received by repentant faith alone. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For by grace [undeserved favor] are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." If salvation is "by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more

grace: otherwise work is no more work." (Rom 11:6). "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us" (Tit 3:5). Saving faith is also not just mental assent to facts, and nobody can say that he has always believed in Christ. You must come to a specific point in your life where you see yourself as a lost, helpless sinner, you turn from your sins, and you trust solely in the Lord Jesus for eternal life. You must forsake all confidence in your supposed goodness, your religious rituals, and any other false trust, and place your confidence in the Savior's blood and righteousness alone.

If you will come to Jesus Christ for salvation, He will keep you saved; no one who has ever truly believed in Him can perish (Rom 8:28-39). Once you are saved, you are always saved, both from sin's penalty, eternal damnation, and from sin's power: "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor 5:21). If you will repent and believe in Him, he promises you everlasting life with Him in heaven upon His return or your death, and a holy life on earth now, freed from the bondage of sin.

Have you ever turned to the Lord Jesus Christ in repentant faith? If not, you need to receive Him immediately to save you from your sin (Jn 1:12). He promises, "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (Jn 6:37). Turn to Him today—tomorrow it may be too late. "Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." (Pr 27:1).

What About Asking Jesus to Come into my Heart?

Since the clear truth of the gospel of Christ is that sinners become the children of God by repentant faith alone (Gal 3:26; Jn 3:16, 18, 36; 6:47; Rom 3:28; 4:5; 5:1), the overall teaching of Scripture makes it clear that you do not need to ask Jesus to come into your heart in order to be saved. However, there are many further reasons why salvation is not based on whether you pray such a prayer. Consider the following fourteen:

1.) *The Bible never commands anyone to ask Jesus to come into his heart.*

Despite the widespread use of this phrase in modern times, God's Word never commands any lost sinner to ask Jesus to come into his heart. The Old Testament sacrifical system set forth the gospel in picture and pointed forward to Christ's work on the cross. God gave Israel many extremely detailed instructions concerning the sacrificial animals and ritual so that the Lord Jesus Christ and His saving work would be properly pictured. Never once was there a command or a suggestion that any Jew was to ask into his heart the sacrifical animal or the coming Messiah the animal pictured. Furthermore, there are no examples in the New Testament of Christ telling people to ask Him into their hearts. Nor are there any examples of the Apostles telling anyone to ask Jesus into his heart. Someone who simply read the Bible would never conclude that

asking Jesus into his heart is the way the lost are forgiven of their sin.

2.) *Asking Jesus into your heart is not the way to be saved.*

When a lost man asked the Apostle Paul, "What must I do to be saved?" the Apostle did not say, "Pray, ask Jesus into your heart, and you will be saved." Paul said: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Ac 16:30-31). Likewise, the Apostle Peter taught: "he that believeth on [Christ] shall not be confounded" (1 Pet 2:6). The Lord Jesus Himself regularly preached to the lost: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life" (Jn 6:47; 3:16, 18; 5:24; 6:35, 40; 11:25-26, etc.). According to Christ and the Apostles, the lost must believe on Christ to be saved, not ask Him into their heart.

3.) *You can ask Jesus to come into your heart without repenting and without believing on Christ.*

Scripture commands the lost, "Repent . . . that your sins may be blotted out" (Ac 3:19), and warns that "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Lu 13:3, 5). However, someone can ask Jesus to come into his heart without understanding his need to repent, without knowing what repentance is, without any desire to repent, and without ever repenting. If you ask Jesus into your heart ten thousand times, but never repent, you will perish. If you repent, but never ask Jesus into your heart, your sins will be blotted out. Likewise the Bible affirms: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (Jn 3:36). Someone who asks Christ into his heart but never believes is still under the wrath of God, while someone who believes on Christ but never asks Him into his heart has everlasting life. Nor should you assume that you believed on the Lord Jesus because you asked Him into your heart. A lost man can ask Jesus into his heart without understanding or assenting mentally to the facts of the gospel. He can also assent mentally to the gospel and ask Christ into his heart without ever "believ[ing]" and "trust[ing] in Christ" (Eph 1:12-14). Saving faith involves understanding the gospel, assent to it, and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb 11:13), but asking Jesus into your heart does not require any of these three things.[3]

4.) *Real salvation involves a miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, but no such work is required to ask Jesus into your heart.*

All lost people are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1-3). Since sin has corrupted every part of their fallen nature (Jer 17:9), they have blinded eyes, hardened hearts, and minds unable to submit to God (Jn 12:40; Rom 8:7; 3:11). They are so utterly enslaved to sin (Rom 6:17) and Satan (2 Tim 2:26) that they are unable to repent or believe (Jn 12:40) apart from God in His grace miraculously drawing them to Himself. God must supernaturally give the lost the repentance (2 Tim 2:25) and faith (Phil 1:29)

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[3] See "Bible Study #5: *How Do I Receive the Gospel?*" at http://faithsaves.net/Bible-studies/ for more on the nature of true repentance and saving faith.

that they will never produce in themselves (Jn 3:6)—they will only believe "if God permit" (Heb 6:3). The Lord Jesus explained: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (Jn 6:44). The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit must inwardly "teach" and "draw" the lost (Jn 6:44-45; 12:32; 16:8-11); the Son must supernaturally reveal the Father to them (Mt 11:27), and the Holy Spirit must "renew" them (Heb 6:6) and produce faith in them through the Word of God (Rom 10:17). Just as God took a world in darkness and miraculously and creatively spoke light into existence (Gen 1:3), so believers can say, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor 4:6). At the same moment a sinner is enabled to believe by God's mighty grace, he is born again (Jn 3:5) and made a new creature (2 Cor 5:17). God miraculously shines His gracious light into his dark heart, renews him and makes him willing to come to Christ, gives him repentance and faith, draws him to embrace Christ, and raises him from spiritual death to spiritual life in a miracle as real as the physical resurrection of the Lord Jesus' body from His tomb (Eph 2:1-6). A lost sinner coming to Christ in repentant faith is an astonishing display of Divine power that brings the new Christian into living fellowship with God (Jn 17:3; 1 Jn 1:3), removes his fundamental bent towards sin and creates a new bent toward holiness (Eze 36:26-27), and leaves him radically and permanently changed. On the other hand, nothing miraculous or supernatural must take place for someone to ask Jesus into his heart. A winsome personality, emotional music, manipulative salesmanship, psychological techniques, and many other merely human and natural traits have been sufficient to lead millions to ask Jesus to come into their hearts without any work of the the Holy Spirit whatsoever.

5.) *Asking Jesus into your heart directs you away from what Christ has done to what you are doing.*

The gospel is the good news that "Christ died for our sins . . . was buried, and . . . rose again the third day" (1 Cor 15:3-4). A lost sinner must not look to himself, his religious actions, or anything he has done, is doing, or will do for salvation. He must look away from and outside of himself to trust in what the Son of God accomplished in history when He paid the penalty for his sins on the cross and rose victoriously from the grave. The gospel call is: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). The Savior declares: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" (Is 45:21-22). The "preach[ing] of the gospel" is the "preaching of the cross"; when "Jesus Christ is evidently set forth [as] crucified," then one is "preach[ing] the gospel" (1 Cor 1:17-18; Gal 3:1). On the other hand, the sinner who asks Jesus into his heart is very likely to look away from Christ to his own heart and to the fervency, sincerity, and attitude in which he made his prayer. He is likely to rely on the non-biblical promise, perhaps made to him by some zealous but misguided convert-maker, that if he will ask Jesus to come in he will be saved, instead of relying on the many

Biblical promises made by God that all who believe on Christ will be saved. The best prayers, the greatest fervency, and the most complete sincerity ever found in a fallen man are but as filthy rags before God (Is 64:6)—there is no hope in them. The gospel is not that a sinner must pray, ask to be saved, and have faith that God will answer his prayer. The gospel is that Christ died in the place of sinful men, was buried, and rose again, and those that entrust themselves to Him are given eternal life (1 Cor 15:1-4). The lost must turn from every false hope—including the false hope that salvation is received by faith and prayer, rather than by faith alone in Christ alone—and place their confidence in what alone is a sure ground for their souls—the substitutionary death and shed blood of the Son of God.

6.) *Asking Jesus to come into your heart confuses the means of salvation with a result of salvation.*

When a lost sinner, enabled by God's grace, repents and trusts in the Savior, he is spiritually united to Christ, what Scripture calls being "in Christ" (Eph 1:3). He passess from death to life (Jn 5:24), from being unrighteous to being justified or declared righteous (1 Cor 6:9; Rom 3:24), from being without peace to having peace with God (Is 57:21; Rom 5:1), from having no access to God to having direct access to Him through Christ (Rom 5:2; 1 Tim 2:5), from having no hope to having a sure hope (Eph 2:12; Heb 6:19), from being a child of the devil to being a child of God (Jn 8:44; 1:12), from being without Christ to having Christ live in him (2 Cor 13:5; Gal 2:20), from being without the Holy Spirit to being indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:9), and so on. He now has "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph 1:3). One of the blessings of being united to Christ is that He does indeed make the believer His dwelling place (Col 1:27; Rom 8:10), but that does not mean that a person is saved by asking Christ to come in, any more than one is saved by asking to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit or asking to have all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. No, the lost must trust in Christ and His saving work on the cross alone, and when they entrust themselves to Him, they receive every good thing on account of their union with Him, whether justification, a sure hope, adoption into the family of God, the indwelling presence of Christ, direct access to the Father, or any of the other glorious blessings possesed by the people of God.

7.) *Asking Jesus into your heart can bring false assurance to a lost person and prevent a saved person from having true assurance.*

Since the Bible never promises salvation to a lost sinner if he asks Jesus into his heart, those who perform this human work and think that they are saved because they did it are almost surely just as lost as they were before. There are literally millions of people who have asked Jesus into their hearts instead of coming to the Lord Jesus in repentant faith. They were, perhaps, told that asking Christ to come in would guarantee them a happy life, peace, or perhaps financial success and a good marriage. If none of these things come to pass, they become bitter towards the Lord Jesus and His people,

disillusioned with the Bible, and inoculated against the true gospel by the spiritual counterfeit they adopted. When someone comes to them and tries to show them that, Biblically speaking, they never were saved and they need to submit to Christ as Lord and rely on Him as Savior from sin, they say, "I tried Jesus already and it didn't work." Others ask Jesus into their hearts over and over again, hoping that the prayer will finally stick and they will finally have freedom from sin's control. Others rely on the assurance given to them by the convert-maker who told them to ask Him to come in and conclude that they must be saved, although they are just as much in bondage to sin as they were before, because of the supposed Biblical promise that all who ask Christ to come in will go to heaven. These often remain deluded until the day they die and "in hell . . . lift up [their] eyes, being in torments," hearing in horror from Christ, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Lu 16:23; Mt 7:23). Many such people never even come to church, although the book of Acts records that those truly born again not only attended church and submitted to baptism but even stood for Christ despite life-threatening persecution and showed incredible sacrificial love for their fellow believers (Ac 2:41-47). Others ask Jesus to come in, attend church for a while, and then drop out because they have no root of spiritual life within them from true conversion (Mr 4:6, 17). Others come to church out of habit, but their carnality, divisiveness, and lack of true spirituality causes their pastors and fellow church members untold heartache. Others ask Jesus into their hearts as little children and keep coming to church because their Christian parents enforce godly habits in their home. They outwardly imitate true Christians and perhaps even go to Bible college and end up in the ministry, where they teach others to ask Jesus into their hearts just like they did—but having never themselves personally trusted in the substitutionary work of Christ on the cross, they are just as lost as were the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah.[4] Such people may be very sincere, but God warns: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov 14:12).

Finally, some people understand the gospel and truly repent and trust in Christ's substitutionary work on the cross despite being told to ask Jesus into their heart. Many of these true Christians lack assurance of salvation because they wonder if they were sincere enough when they prayed or if they said the right words. They constantly think back to the time they asked Christ into their hearts and wonder if they did it the right way. They can get no assurance of salvation because neither salvation nor assurance of salvation can come from something that is foreign to Scripture. No one has ever been saved or

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[4] See, for example, the testimony "The Other Jesus: Justification by Faith vs. Asking Jesus into one's Heart," by Ovid Need (http://faithsaves.net/soteriology/). The author is a Baptist pastor who was lost because he asked Jesus into his heart instead of trusting in the Redeemer's blood. He finally understood the gospel and was born again after years as an unconverted preacher, during which time he lead hundreds and hundreds of others to ask Jesus into their hearts.

received Biblical assurance of salvation by asking Christ into his heart.

8.) *Telling children to ask Jesus into their hearts is confusing and hinders them from understand the gospel.*

Children do not think the same way that adults do (1 Cor 13:11). They think very literally and concretely. If they are told to ask Jesus into their hearts, they are likely to think that the Lord Jesus in His human body somehow comes to be inside of the organ that pumps their blood. Many adults who are told to ask Jesus into their hearts have no idea what they are doing and what the ritual is supposed to mean; how much the more are children confused by this non-biblical terminology? How many children have been led to think about their circulatory system and the beating of a heart muscle, and hindered or prevented from looking away from themselves to rely on the completed work of Christ on the cross, by being told to ask Christ into their hearts? It is true that a skilful teacher can manipulate many children into doing almost anything, including asking Jesus to come into their hearts. However, the fact that children can repeat some words does not mean that they understand the redeeming cross of Christ and trusted in the Lord Jesus as their own Substitute, Savior and Master. There is not one gospel for adults—repentant faith in Christ for salvation—and a different one for children, asking Jesus to come into their hearts. A child who has not been convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit and enabled to understand and trust in the crucified Redeemer's Person and work is not ready to be saved, although he may be ready and willing to ask Jesus into his heart so that he can please a convert-maker or so that he can, as he supposes, become ready for heaven by saying a prayer.

Furthermore, since a sinner must understand the gospel before he can believe or trust in Christ (Eph 1:13), a child who is led to ask Jesus into his heart, but does not understand the true gospel, does not become a Christian if some time later he intellectually assents to the truth that salvation is by repentant faith alone, not by prayer. One cannot first be born again and then, some months or years later, believe on Christ. A child who asks Jesus into his heart is fearfully likely to always think, "I'm saved because I did what my godly leaders or parents told me: I asked Jesus into my heart." He may go on to later understand the necessity of trusting in Christ, but unless he rejects his false profession and realizes that he is yet a hell-bound sinner who must come to the Lord Jesus for forgiveness, he will be eternally damned (Lu 5:31-32). Neither children nor adults grow into salvation—they must repent and believe the gospel after first understanding Christ's substitutionary work on the cross.

9.) *The Bible gives us many examples of people who were saved without asking Jesus into their hearts.*

The Old Testament records the father of the faithful, Abraham, being saved when he "he believed in the LORD; and [the Lord] counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen 15:6; cf. Rom 4:1-5; Gal 3:6). King David wrote: "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye

perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him" (Ps 2:12). The prophet Isaiah proclaimed salvation for those who believed in the coming Messiah, the virgin-born Immanuel, and warned, "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established" (Is 7:9-14; 28:16). Nobody in the Old Testament ever asked the Messiah to come into his heart, promised blessing to those who performed this work, or warned of judgment on those who do not. In the New Testament, the Lord Jesus repeatedly told people who had believed in Him, but who had never even thought of asking Him to come into their hearts, "Thy faith hath saved thee" (Lu 7:50; 18:42). While Christ was preaching "many believed on him" (Jn 8:30; 10:42) and were saved without asking Him into their hearts. In the book of Acts, the Apostles preached that "whosoever believeth in [Christ] shall receive remission of sins" (Ac 10:43; 16:31), and while they were preaching people would believe and be indwelt by the Holy Spirit without ever asking Jesus into their hearts (Ac 10:44-48). The Bible records the Apostle Paul's conversion (Ac 9) and the Apostle's giving his salvation testimony twice (Ac 22, 26), but never gives the slightest hint that Paul asked Jesus to come into his heart. There are no examples in Scripture of people who were born again when they asked Jesus into their heart, and many examples of people who were saved but never did any such thing.

10.) *Revelation 3:20 is not about the lost asking Jesus to come into their hearts.*

The only text in the Bible that is frequently used[5] to persuade people to ask Jesus into their hearts is Revelation 3:20: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Supposedly this verse proves that Jesus Christ is knocking at the "heart's door" of the unsaved, waiting to come in if He is asked. If a lost person asks Jesus to come into his heart, then Christ comes into him and he is saved. However, the fact is that the verse has nothing whatsoever to do with asking Jesus into one's heart. The words "ask," "Jesus," and "heart" are not in the text at all. The verse actually portrays Christ standing outside the backslidden church being addressed in the passage (3:14) and calling on the members of the church to repent and return to being zealous for Him (3:19). The

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[5] For example, the pamphlet "The Four Spiritual Laws," distributed by Campus Crusade, never mentions hell and promises people a "wonderful . . . life" on earth (contrary to Jn 16:33) if they say the "sinner's prayer." It concludes by quoting Revelation 3:20, contains a printed prayer for people to recite, and then declares: "Did you receive Christ into your life by sincerely praying the suggested prayer? According to His promise in Revelation 3:20, where is Christ right now in relation to you? Christ said that He would come into your life. Would He mislead you? . . . Christ is in your life . . . from the very moment you invite Him in." This pamphlet had, by 2003, been distributed to over 2.5 billion people and translated into over 200 languages (*Congressional Record, V. 149, Pt. 15, July 28, 2003-September 5, 2003, 20379*). It has now been given to billions more people, likely making it the most widely distributed religious booklet in history. Similarly, Campus Crusade's JESUS film has been watched by over six billion people. In its summary of what the organization views as the gospel at the end of the film, hell is likewise omitted, but Revelation 3:20 is quoted, followed by a "sinner's prayer" to repeat for salvation.

"door" in 3:20 is not the "heart's door" of a lost person but the door of entry into the church. Furthermore, the Lord does not say that He will come "into" a heart or anything else in the text; "in" and "to" are different words in the English text. Christ is not promising to penetrate "into" the heart of a lost person in Revelation 3:20, but to "come in" to "sup with" or have fellowship with the members of a church that would deal with their sin. The verse employs the Greek verb "come in" followed by the preposition "to," a different and following word; the word "into" is not found in the Greek text, just as it does not appear in the English. The Greek construction employed in the passage[6] is always used in the New Testament of entering a building to stand before someone, not penetration into a person's heart. Consequently, Revelation 3:20 is a promise that Christ will spiritually come in to stand before and have fellowship with church members who turn back to Him. It is by no means a promise that He will penetrate inside the heart of a lost person who asks Christ to come into him.

11.) *Nobody asked Jesus to come into his heart to be saved for the overwhelming majority of church history.*

An examination of centuries of early Christian writings reveals no evidence that anyone thought that salvation came to those who asked Jesus into their hearts. Furthermore, no Baptist or evangelical Protestant confession of faith, or any other significant confession of faith of Christendom whatever, has affirmed that salvation comes by asking Jesus into one's heart. Church history reveals that this idea is a modern innovation[7] that would have been foreign to the vast majority of believers since Christ started His church in the first century. Someone who thinks that asking Jesus into his heart is proper because "everyone does it" ignores the position of vast numbers of modern Bible-believing churches who oppose this extrabiblical practice. Such a person also ignores the fact that for century after century not only was it false to say that everyone did it, but in fact absolutely nobody did it.

12.) *There are infernal spiritual powers that can make you feel happy when you ask Jesus*

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6 *Eiserchomai + pros*. Besides Revelation 3:20, the construction appears in Mr 6:25; 15:43; Lu 1:28; Ac 10:3; 11:3; 17:2; 28:8.

7 Dr. Paul Chitwood notes:

> Although the Sinner's Prayer is widely used and enormously popular today, no variation of it is found in the Bible. . . . In addition to the Sinner's Prayer not occurring in the Bible, it is also absent from the pages of church history. We fail to see it even through the rise of revivalism and mass evangelism [in] the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. . . . Leading lost persons in praying the Sinner's Prayer is a relatively new method in evangelism . . . [with] no occurrence before the twentieth century. The routine use of a model prayer for salvation in any form is also absent before the twentieth century. . . . . [Likewise,] the concept of bringing or inviting "Jesus into your heart" is one that does not occur readily before the turn of the twentieth century. . . . The Sinner's Prayer was not popularized until late [in] the twentieth century, possibly as late as the 1940s or even the early 1950s. . . . The Sinner's Prayer must not be understood as the means by which a person is saved. (pgs. 3-4, 43-44, 69, 125, *The Sinner's Prayer: An Historical and Theological Analysis*, Paul H. Chitwood. Ph. D. Diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2001. Elec. acc. http://faithsaves.net/sinners-prayer-historical-theological-analysis-chitwood/)

into your heart.

While nobody has ever become a Christian because he asked Jesus to come into his heart, there are many, many people who have experienced peaceful, pleasant, and joyous sensations after engaging in this man-made religious ritual. However, such feelings do not in the least prove that one has become a Christian and a child of God. Pagans worshipping demonic idols have had many genuine religious experiences (1 Cor 12:2). Hell-bound false prophets have had fantastic and incredible encounters with the supernatural (Num 22:9-13, 20, 28-34) and even performed miracles themselves (Ex 7:10-11, 22; 8:7). Judas, the betrayer of Christ who never was a true Christian (Jn 6:70; 12:6), experienced the personal presence of Christ Himself for years and was able to perform miracles because of his Apostolic office (Mt 10:5-8). People can have the Holy Spirit powerfully working in their lives, but never truly repent and believe on Christ, and consequently be eternally damned (Heb 6:4-9). The Bible warns about "another Jesus," a false "Jesus" that cannot save because associated with "another gospel," a false gospel (2 Cor 11:4). A "Jesus" that gives salvation to those who pray, rather than to those who believe, is not the Redeemer of the Bible, for the real Christ never said He would save those who said the "sinner's prayer," but promised many times to give eternal life to those who trust in Him (Jn 3:16, 18, 36; 5:24; 6:47; 11:25-26). Nevertheless this false "Jesus" is associated with "another spirit" that counterfeits the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 11:4) and is able to give the lost many powerful religious experiences.

You need to recognize that your own heart is "deceitful above all things" (Jer 17:9). Furthermore, the "Devil . . . deceiveth the whole world" (Rev 12:9), "blind[ing] the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor 4:4). Millions of Satan's demons, working in conjunction with human indwelling sin, are easily capable of creating all sorts of marvelous but damningly deceptive feelings and emotions in the lost. The frightening ease through which people can be follow lies explains why Scripture is full of warnings about spiritual deception.[8] Vast multitudes of people who said Jesus was their Lord, enjoyed marvelous spiritual experiences, and performed great works in His name will hear, in horror, Christ say to them: "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Mt 7:21-23). Some who read this pamphlet, but reject its warning and trust that they are saved because of their experiences when they asked Jesus into their heart, will be among them. How you felt when you asked Jesus into your heart does not matter in the least. The only thing that matters is the plain teaching of God's Word about salvation: "repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mr 1:15).

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[8] For example, see Mt 13:22; 24:4, 5, 11, 24; Mr 4:19; 7:22; 13:5-6; Lu 21:8; Rom 1:29; 3:13; 7:11; 16:18; 1 Cor 3:18; 6:9; 15:33; 2 Cor 4:2; 6:8; 11:13; Gal 6:3, 7; Eph 4:14, 22; 5:6; Col 2:8; 1 Th 2:3; 2 Th 2:3, 10; 1 Ti 2:14; 2 Ti 3:13; Ti 1:10; 3:3; Heb 3:13 Ja 1:22, 26; 2 Pe 2:13; 1 Jn 1:8; 3:7; 2 Jn 7; Rev 12:9; 13:14; 18:23; 19:20; 20:3, 8, 10.

13.) *If you tell people to ask Jesus into their hearts, and they never are saved because you confused them, you will be accountable for their damnation*.

Scripture is clear that you are only "pure from the blood of all men" if you "have not shunned to declare unto [them] all the counsel of God" (Ac 20:26-27; Jam 3:1; Eze 3:18-21; 33:6-9). Clarity on the gospel is not some insignificant and non-essential matter. If, instead of clearly setting forth Christ's substitutionary death, and salvation through repentant faith in Him, you tell people to ask Jesus into their hearts to be saved, you should expect to be accountable to the infinitely holy God for their eternal damnation. You will be guilty, not of physical murder, but of a sin infinitely worse—the spiritual murder of people you gave your distorted "gospel" to, whether people in the world, adults or youth in your church, members of your family, or even your own children. You will face an incomprehensibly horrible and tragic surprise when you have to give an account to God.

14.) *If you asked Jesus to come into your heart instead of repenting and believing in Christ, you will be eternally damned.*

Friend, you need to recognize that there is only one way you can get into God's kingdom and have everlasting life—faith alone in the Christ who died and rose again as your own personal Lord and Savior. The means through which you can personally receive the salvation Christ purchased on the cross is not prayer, faith and prayer, faith that God will answer your prayer, or faith plus prayer that you mean with all your heart (Pr 16:25). These is many "a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof [is nonetheless] death" (Pr 16:25). To personally receive any benefit from Christ's redemptive work you must come directly to Him in a helpless and dependent trust (Jn 6:37). There is no other true gospel—only many false gospels (Gal 1:8-9). Heed God's Word: "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (Jn 3:18). All those who do not trust in Christ alone through faith alone will burn in hell for all eternity, regardless of whether they asked Jesus into their heart or not. There are vast numbers of people in hell this very moment who have asked Jesus into their hearts. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" (2 Cor 13:5), lest you join them in torment for all eternity.

What About Repeating the "Sinner's Prayer"?

Some people recognize that there is no Scriptural authority whatsoever for asking Jesus to come into one's heart, but affirm, nonetheless, that people ought to repeat the "sinner's prayer" in order to be saved, based, as they suppose, on Romans 10:9-10 and 10:13. Romans 10:9-10 supposedly teaches that one must confess with his mouth, that is, as 10:13 allegedly clarifies, pray and ask for salvation, and then one will receive

forgiveness for his sins. Those who repeat the sinner's prayer are given assurance with Romans 10:13 and told that if they meant what they said, they are now Christians. However, neither Romans 10, nor any other passage of Scripture, teaches anything of the kind.[9]

First, while Scripture commands the lost to repent and believe the gospel (Mr 1:15), and warns that those who do not repent and believe will perish (Lu 13:3; Jn 3:18), the Bible never commands the lost to repeat the "sinner's prayer" in order to receive forgiveness, nor warns that those who fail to say the prayer will be damned. Promising the lost that they will enter heaven if they repeat the "sinner's prayer," but will be damned if they refuse to say it, is proclaiming the traditions of men instead of the truth of God.

Second, the Gospel of John, the only specifically evangelistic book of the Bible (Jn 20:31), never teaches or implies that the the lost must pray a sinner's prayer to receive pardon from God. On the contrary, the Gospel of John employs the verb *believe* 100 times,[10] making the truth exceedingly clear that the lost must place their faith in the Son of God to be saved. Furthermore, 1 John, the inspired book written to explain how one can have assurance of salvation (1 John 5:13), never states or hints that assurance is in any way connected to having prayed a "sinner's prayer" or that those who have not prayed such a prayer should lack assurance. 1 John promises assurance to those who believe on Jesus Christ (5:1) and consequently love and serve God and other Christians (3:7-19; 4:7).[11] If salvation and assurance were actually associated with having repeated the "sinner's prayer," one would be driven to the impossible conclusion that God's perfect Word was unclear about the way of salvation, but the writings of imperfect modern men make clear the supposed truth not clearly found anywhere in Scripture.

Third, during His three year ministry, the Son of God brought many people to faith in Himself without ever commanding them to pray. Christ said to a sinful woman who, in repentance, came to Him and washed His feet with her hair, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace" (Lu 7:50, cf. 37-49). The Lord said "her sins, which are many,

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[9] The material below is mainly abridged from "Romans 10:9-14: Sinner's Prayers for Salvation?" at http://faithsaves.net/soteriology/. Anyone who wants a more detailed exposition of Romans 10 in relation to the question of the "sinner's prayer" is highly encouraged to view this composition.

[10] John 1:7, 12, 50; 2:11, 22–24; 3:12, 15–16, 18, 36; 4:21, 39, 41–42, 48, 50, 53; 5:24, 38, 44, 46–47; 6:29–30, 35–36, 40, 47, 64, 69; 7:5, 31, 38–39, 48; 8:24, 30–31, 45–46; 9:18, 35–36, 38; 10:25–26, 37–38, 42; 11:15, 25–27, 40, 42, 45, 48; 12:11, 36–39, 42, 44, 46–47; 13:19; 14:1, 10–12, 29; 16:9, 27, 30–31; 17:8, 20–21; 19:35; 20:8, 25, 29, 31. Note that the *belief* John discusses is a repentant faith that will lead to a changed life (3:19-21; 5:29; 8:30-32; 15:6) in submission to the King of the heavenly kingdom (3:3, 5; 12:13), not an unrepentant, rebellious "belief." The Greek verb for *believe* can even be translated "commit" (2:24; cf. Rom 3:2; Tit 1:3), for saving faith involves repentant surrender to Christ as Lord. Compare "'The just shall live by faith'—Faith and Salvation in All Its Apects," at http://faithsaves.net/the-just-shall-live-by-faith/.

[11] To learn more about Biblical assurance of salvation, see Bible Study #6, "The Christian: Security in Christ and Assurance of Salvation," at http://faithsaves.net/Bible-studies/.

are forgiven" (v. 47), although no record of her saying a "sinner's prayer" is recorded. The Lord said to a Samaritan leper who believed in Him, "thy faith hath made thee whole" (Lu 17:19, cf. 17:15-18), although he had never said a "sinner's prayer." He said to a woman with an issue of blood who, unlike the crowd that surrounded Him physically, came to Him spiritually in faith (cf. Jn 6:35, 37), "Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole" (Mat 9:20-22), although she had said no "sinner's prayer," or any kind of prayer whatever. The Lord Jesus said, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee" to a man sick of the palsy when He "saw th[e] faith" of the man and his four friends (Mr 2:5). Nothing in the text indicates that the forgiven man prayed anything. Zaccheus was converted in a tree (Lu 19:6), a Samaritan woman was converted while conversing with the Lord by a well (John 4:1-42), a centurion whose servant Christ healed (Mat 8:10-13), and many others, were justified by faith without reciting anything like a "sinner's prayer." Crowds of people would simply believe on the Lord Jesus while listening to His preaching, without ever praying anything (Jn 8:30). Likewise, the book of Acts records that "many" people believed on Christ while listening to apostolic preaching (10:27, 43-48). When Peter, for example, recounted the justification of such persons, not a word was said about their repeating a "sinner's prayer" (11:14-18). The Apostle baptized those who had simply believed on Christ, recognizing that they had been born again, although they had said no "sinner's prayer" (Acts 10:47-48). Besides the Apostles, other New Testament preachers simply preached repentance and faith in Christ and baptized those who had believed, although no "sinner's prayer" was ever recited (8:35-38). The example of the Lord Jesus and His servants in the apostolic churches demonstrates that the lost are simply to be called to repentance and faith, rather than being told that they must repeat the "sinner's prayer" to be forgiven of their sins.

Fourth, Romans agrees with the rest of Scripture that people are justified or declared righteous before God simply by faith in Christ as Lord and Savior, regardless of whether they repeat a "sinner's prayer." The book is clear that "the gospel of Christ . . . is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth . . . for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Rom 1:16-17). People receive the righteousness of God and are declared just in the sight of God simply by faith: "the righteousness of God . . . is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe . . . God hath set forth [Christ] to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins . . . that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. . . . Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:22, 25, 28; see also 3:30-31, 4:1-5:2; 9:30-33; 10:4-17, 11:20, 23, 13:11, 15:13; 16:26). It would be very strange for Paul to teach the necessity of prayer for justification before God in one passage in Romans 10 while teaching justification by direct faith in Christ in vast numbers of passages, not only in the general body of his epistles (cf. 1 Cor 1:21; Gal

2:16; Eph 2:8-9, Phil 3:9, etc.), but in Romans itself.

What, then, is the "confession" of Romans 10:9-10? If we consider Romans 10:9-14 in context, the answer is clear:

> 9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. 14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

One notes that Romans 10:10 does not say that "with the mouth prayer unto God, asking to be forgiven, is made," but "with the mouth confession is made." Confessing with the mouth is not the repetition of a "sinner's prayer" in private to God, whether in one's heart or out loud, but is public confession and testimony with one's mouth for Christ before men—a mark that one has already become a true Christian. The *confession* of Romans 10:9-10 is the same as the *confession* of Matthew 10:32-33, where Christ declares: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." The vast majority of verses in the New Testament with the verb translated *confess* in Romans 10:9-10 refer to public testimony before men, and not a single one of the passages with the verb refers to a lost person engaging in prayer, asking for his sins to be forgiven.[12] The fact that the confession must be made "with the mouth" provides further proof. Advocates of the "sinner's prayer" very rarely argue that those who say the prayer in their hearts without moving their lips or saying anything out loud are still lost—repeating the prayer inwardly is considered as effective as speaking it out loud. However, the word *mouth*, in its 79 appearances in the New Testament, never once refers to some sort of symbolic, inward "mouth" through which one prays in his heart.[13] Therefore, the word in Romans 10:9-10 necessarily refers to one's actual, literal mouth—so if the passage were about saying the "sinner's prayer," everyone who did not say the prayer out loud, moving his lips, would be lost—including

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[12] The complete list of texts with the verb *confess*, *homologeo*, is: Matt 7:23; 10:32; 14:7; Luke 12:8; John 1:20; 9:22; 12:42; Acts 23:8; 24:14; Rom 10:9–10; 1 Tim 6:12; Titus 1:16; Heb 11:13; 13:15; 1 John 1:9; 2:23; 4:2–3, 15; 2 John 1:7.

[13] When the word *mouth* appears with reference to mankind in the New Testament, reference is made to an actual mouth the overwhelming majority of the time. The only times the word is not literal are the uncommon instances where it is employed as an anthropomorphism for God, or used in the Greek idiom for the edge ("mouth") of a sword (Luke 21:24; Hebrews 11:34). Not a single text refers to some sort of non-literal human "mouth" that does not actually open and say words: Matt 4:4; 5:2; 12:34; 13:35; 15:8, 11, 17–18; 17:27; 18:16; 21:16; Luke 1:64, 70; 4:22; 6:45; 11:54; 19:22; 21:15, 24; 22:71; John 19:29; Acts 1:16; 3:18, 21; 4:25; 8:32, 35; 10:34; 11:8; 15:7; 18:14; 22:14; 23:2; Rom 3:14, 19; 10:8–10; 15:6; 2 Cor 6:11; 13:1; Eph 4:29; 6:19; Col 3:8; 2 Th 2:8; 2 Tim 4:17; Heb 11:33–34; James 3:3, 10; 1 Pet 2:22; 2 John 1:12; 3 John 1:14; Jude 1:16; Rev 1:16; 2:16; 3:16; 9:17–19; 10:9–10; 11:5; 12:15–16; 13:2, 5–6; 14:5; 16:13; 19:15, 21.

all who suffer from the disability of being mute. The fact is that the passage refers to employing one's actual mouth to confess Christ before men and has nothing whatever to do with the repetition of a "sinner's prayer."

The question then arises: "Why does Romans 10:10 affirm that 'confession is made unto salvation'?" Surely the verse cannot be an affirmation that everyone is yet unforgiven and on his way to hell who has not yet publicly spoken up for Christ—that would contradict the many clear Biblical testimonies to justification by faith alone. Such an idea would contradict the testimony of the very next verse, which promises: "Whosoever believeth on [Christ] shall not be ashamed" when he stands before God (10:11). Justification by public confession of Christ would also contradict the statement earlier in the chapter that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (10:4). What, then, does the statement mean? The recognition that *salvation* can refer to a number of different things in the Bible makes the answer clear. *Saved* can refer, among other things, to physical deliverance or salvation from death (Mt 8:25), to the moment of justification, when one's sins are forgiven and he is counted righteous because of Christ and is saved from sin's penalty (Lu 7:50), and to the moment when one enters heaven and is finally and forever saved from the presence of sin (1 Cor 3:15). In Romans 10:9-10, the Bible teaches that one first "believeth unto righteousness," that is, at the moment one trusts in the crucified and risen Christ, his sins are forgiven, he is justified or declared righteous because of what the Lord Jesus did on the cross, and he becomes a Christian. After being justified, the Christian, because he has a new and holy nature, confesses Christ with his mouth before men. This new nature, which evidences itself in good works such as confessing Christ, shows he will, at the return of Christ or his death, receive "salvation"; that is, he will enter into heaven. This use of *salvation* for heaven is found frequently elsewhere in Romans. For example, Romans 5:9 states: "being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him"; believers are now *justified*, but final *salvation* refers to entry into heaven. Romans 13:11, referring to Christ's return, affirms: "now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." Here again, people who are already believers have not yet received *salvation*; that awaits the return of Christ, when Christians are taken up to be with Him. Those that have been redeemed have been freed from the power of sin (Rom 6) and consequently will practice holiness and righteousness (1 Jn 3:3, 7; Heb 12:14), confessing Christ with their mouths and standing for Him instead of hating, rejecting, and opposing Him (Rom 10:9-10). Clearly, Romans 10:9-10 refers to simple belief in Christ as Lord and Savior as a prerequisite to justification, which is followed by a Christian lifestyle marked by holiness and good works such as publicly confessing the Lord Jesus with one's mouth. The passage has nothing whatever to do with the lost praying a "sinner's prayer" as a prerequisite to justification.

What about Romans 10:13—is the verse a promise that lost people who say the

"sinner's prayer" will be justified? Considered in context, the answer is a clear "no." First, while "calling on the Lord" actually does refer to prayer, unlike the *confession* of 10:9-10, nothing in the context indicates that a specific type of prayer like the "sinner's prayer" is in view. In fact, *calling on the Lord* in the Bible refers to any sort of Christian prayer, whether thanking God for food, asking for help in a difficult situation, or offering Him praise because of His glorious character. An examination of parallel passages clearly demonstrates that *calling on the Lord* speaks of the many different kinds of petition and praise that fill the lives of the people of God, rather than referring to the repetition of a specific "sinner's prayer" by the lost through which they supposedly become God's own (Gen 12:8; 13:4; 21:33; 26:25; 1 Ki 8:43; 18:24-26; 2 Ki 5:11; 1 Chr 16:8; Ps 80:18; 99:6; 105:1; Is 12:4; 41:25; 64:7; Jer 10:25; Lam 3:25; Zeph 3:9; Acts 7:59; 9:14, 21; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Tim 2:22; 1 Pet 1:17). The righteous are those who call on the Lord in their life; the wicked are those who do not (Job 27:10; Ps 14:4). Second, the Bible is clear that the prayers of the lost are "sin" and an "abomination" to God; a sinner has no access to God until he is justified by faith and has the Lord Jesus as his Mediator (Ps 109:7; Pr 15:8, 29; 28:9; Ro 8:8; 14:23; Tit 1:15-16; Heb 11:6). The lost cannot be justified by praying the "sinner's prayer" because their prayers are rejected until they believe on Christ and have been reconciled to the Father by the blood of His Son. Third, Romans 10:13 is a quotation of Joel 2:32, and the verse in Joel is not about the lost repeating a "sinner's prayer" in order to be justified, but about those who are already believers, and who consequently are people who pray, entering the future kingdom at the time of Christ's return. The Hebrew word employed in Joel 2:32's promise that people who call on the Lord "shall be delivered" is never used of the lost receiving justification by praying the "sinner's prayer"—on the contrary, it refers in all of its 63 instances to deliverance from physical death.[14] Joel 2:32 is not a promise that the lost who say the "sinner's prayer" will become Christians, but a promise that those who are people of prayer will not be slain at Christ's return, but will live to enter His glorious coming reign over the earth, and so receive future salvation. Since the New Testament never takes the Old Testament out of context—God never misuses His own Word—Romans 10:13 cannot be about the lost praying the "sinner's prayer" to be justified but must, like Joel 2:32, be a promise that those who belong to God are people of prayer who will enter Christ's future kingdom. Finally, the idea that Romans 10:13 refers to unbelievers repeating the "sinner's prayer" ignores the very next verse. Romans 10:14 is crystal-clear

[14] Joel 2:32 contains the Hebrew verb *malat* in the *Niphal* form. This verb in the *Niphal* appears elsewhere in the Hebrew text in: Gen 19:17, 19–20, 22; Jud 3:26, 29; 1 Sam 19:10, 12, 17–18; 20:29; 22:1, 20; 23:13; 27:1; 30:17; 2 Sam 1:3; 4:6; 1 Ki 18:40; 19:17; 20:20; 2 Ki 10:24; 19:37; 2 Chr 16:7; Est 4:13; Job 1:15–17, 19; 22:30; Ps 22:6; 124:7; Pr 11:21; 19:5; 28:26; Eccl 7:26; Is 20:6; 37:38; 49:24–25; Jer 32:4; 34:3; 38:18, 23; 41:15; 46:6; 48:8, 19; Eze 17:15, 18; Dan 11:41; 12:1; Am 9:1; Zech 2:11; Mal 3:15.

that only those who have already believed and become Christians[15] can call on the Lord: "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" Nobody can begin a life of prayer, a life of calling on the Lord, until he is already a Christian. Romans 10:12-14 proves that God is not partial to either Jews or Gentiles (10:12). Rather, all those who believe are justified, regardless of their nationality, and the holy hearts of the justified give them a desire to pray to their heavenly Father, who will bring them into His eternal dwelling place in the future (10:13-14). Romans 10:13 is not the prayer of the unbeliever, but of the Christian; the *salvation* under consideration is not the initial forgiveness of sin at the moment of conversion, but the future glory of heaven; and the text speaks not of the one-time repetition of a "sinner's prayer," but of the lifestyle of prayer that characterizes the sincere believer. God's blessing those who call on His name is not a promise that the lost who say the "sinner's prayer" will be forgiven of their sin, but a promise that Christians, as people of prayer, will be brought home to live forever with the One they love and pray to.

What Should I Do?

This study began with the question, "Will I be saved if I ask Jesus to come into my heart or repeat the 'sinner's prayer'?" God's Word makes the answer to that question clear. Nobody, including you, has ever been saved because he did these things, and nobody, including you, will become a Christian by doing such things in the future. If you recite the "sinner's prayer" or ask Jesus to come into your heart but never repent and believe the gospel, you will without a doubt perish eternally. There are vast numbers of souls in hell today who accepted the Satanic delusion that repeating a prayer was the means through which they would become Christians. There are millions of people who have asked Jesus into their hearts but give no more evidence that they are new creatures (2 Cor 5:17) than did Judas Iscariot—all these will eternally perish unless they truly come to Christ. There are countless others who are religious, moral, and unsaved, because they have never truly embraced Christ in a repentant faith, instead seeking to channel His salvation through prayer. Friend, it does not matter if you meant every word you said

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[15] One cannot claim that Romans 10:14 refers to a *belief* that falls short of saving faith until it is somehow activated by saying the sinner's prayer. The *believing* must refer to actual justifying faith for the following reasons. First, every time the verb *believe* (Gk. *pisteuo*) appears in the immediate context of 10:13, it refers to saving faith (Romans 9:33; 10:4, 9, 10, 11, 16). Second, this Greek verb is never used of a non-saving, merely intellectual acknowledgment of facts, a "belief" that a lost man can have in any of the 21 instances *believe* appears in Romans. Third, the verb is never used in any of its 56 occurrences in the Pauline epistles for a non-saving "faith" in Christ (Ro 1:16; 3:2, 22; 4:3, 5, 11, 17-18, 24; 6:8; 9:33; 10:4, 9-11, 14, 16; 13:11; 14:2; 15:13; 1 Cor 1:21; 3:5; 9:17; 11:18; 13:7; 14:22; 15:2, 11; 2 Cor 4:13; Gal 2:7, 16; 3:6, 22; Eph 1:13, 19; Philip 1:29; 1 Th 1:7; 2:4, 10, 13; 4:14; 2 Th 1:10; 2:11-12; 1 Ti 1:11, 16; 3:16; 2 Ti 1:12; Ti 1:3; 3:8; Heb 4:3; 11:6). Therefore, Romans 10:14 must of necessity refer to saving faith, a saving faith that exists before the calling of Romans 10:13 begins.

with your whole heart when you said the "sinner's prayer." If you think prayer must be added to faith to become God's child, you are lost, whether you have said the "sinner's prayer" once or ten thousand times. You have adopted a false gospel, just like those who assert baptism, communion, prayer to Mary, speaking in tongues, or any other combination of works, are needed to be counted righteous for Christ's sake. Reject your false gospel and, in faith, come to Jesus Christ today!

On the other hand, if you have truly come to Christ, and so have been brought into a living, life-changing union with Him, you do not need to lack the blessed assurance God wants for His children because of anything connected with the "sinner's prayer." You are eternally secure in the Father's hands (Jn 10:27-30), even if you never asked Jesus into your heart; even if you said the "sinner's prayer" but cannot recall what words you said; even if you are worried about whether you were sincere enough when you said it. All of that is totally irrelevent. The Bible gives us examples of people who trusted in Christ and were justified while praying (Lu 18:13)[16] and without praying (Jn 8:30). There is nothing wrong with the lost praying while coming to Christ in repentant faith, and there is nothing wrong with receiving the Lord Jesus as one's own Savior and Lord, turning from sin to trust in Him, without praying anything. If prayer helps someone to come to Christ, that is wonderful, as long as he remembers that God did not inspire a command that sinners pray to be saved; He commanded them to believe in His Son, and live! If you have believed on the Son—a decision that will always result in a changed life—you do not need to doubt your salvation because of anything associated with the "sinner's prayer." What you need to do is make sure that you are serving the Lord with

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[16] There is nothing wrong with suggesting to one who is seeking salvation that he find a place alone and seek the Lord, crying as did the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner," as long as it is very clearly stressed that faith, not prayer, is the means through which the redemption that is in Christ Jesus is received, that the prayers of the unregenerate are corrupted by sin and not acceptable to God, and that the call of the gospel is to come directly to the Lord Jesus Christ through the sole instrumentality of repentant faith in His Person and work. While there is nothing wrong with those seeking salvation praying, reading the Bible, coming to church and listening to preaching, and engaging in other similar acts, they must not be informed that God has promised to save all those who sincerely ask. Having the lost repeat the words of a prayer after a convert-maker will very likely do them no good, but eliminate their convictions and give them false assurance, and so produce great evil. If the lost are to pray, they must be told to look to Him who was "lifted up [on the cross], that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life," (John 3:14-18), and they must seek Him until they find peace through faith in His blood and righteousness. The example of the tax collector in the temple illustrates what sort of prayer the unconverted man can pray. The verb "be merciful" in the passage is related to the words rendered "propitiation" in Rom 3:25 and in 1 Jn 2:2; 4:10. The repentant tax collector's prayer was not for some general mercy from God, but came from his looking to the place of sacrifice, the place where God's wrath was propitiated or appeased in the temple, and thus was in line with the Old Testament faith in the coming Messiah and the true sacrifice that would be accomplished by Him. It should also be noted that the publican did not say one time, in the manner of the modern "sinner's prayer," "Lord, be merciful to me. Thank you for saving me. Amen," but he sought the Lord, looking to the coming sacrifice of the Messiah, until he found peace through believing, and went to his house justified. He continued in prayer and seeking, until, enabled by God's powerful grace, he placed his faith in the Savior and received pardon through the blood of atonement.

an upright heart as a member of a Bible-believing and practicing church[17] and helping that church in its holy work of clearly preaching the gospel to every single person in your local community and around the world.

Perhaps you say, "I am not sure if I am saved. Have I truly trusted in Christ, or have I simply said a prayer or asked Jesus into my heart?" It is extremely important that you are not wrong on this point—it is the difference between the infinitely terrible torments of hell and the infinitely glorious and everlasting pleasures of God's presence in heaven! If you are not sure if you are saved, it will not do you any good to say the "sinner's prayer" again or ask Jesus into your heart one more time. Instead, consider the following. 1.) You must be willing to accept and act on the truth, whatever it is. The Lord Jesus revealed the truth to those willing to receive it but hid the truth from those who were not willing to receive and act on it (Jn 7:17; 12:38-40). 2.) The answer will be found in the Word of God, for the Word is what the Holy Spirit uses to create and confirm faith (Rom 10:17; Eph 6:17). Pray that God will show you the truth in His Word (Ps 25:4; 86:11). Carefully read and study the Gospel of John, for it was written to show people how to have eternal life (Jn 20:31). Carefully read and study 1 John, for it was written to show Christians how to have assurance (1 Jn 5:13). Carefully study the explanation of the gospel in this booklet. Study carefully what the Bible teaches about sin, about God and His grace, and about the gospel.[18] Read classic, Biblical presentations of the gospel, the kind that true churches and Christians employed before the modern development of the "sinner's prayer" methodology.[19] Separate from all religious organizations that corrupt the gospel (2 Cor 6:14-7:1; Gal 1:6-9; 2 Jn 7-11); instead, faithfully attend the services and carefully consider the preaching and teaching at a Bible-believing and practicing church where the gospel is purely and clearly taught (Heb 10:25). Such a church is a great place to get godly, Biblical counsel from the pastors and other spiritually wise members in the congregation (Pr 11:14); God can give them spiritual ability and discernment to help you diagnose the needs of your soul (Heb 13:17). Do not stop seeking (Lu 13:24) until you either get full assurance from the Spirit through the Word that you are indeed a child of God, or the Lord shows you that you are still lost—and if the Lord shows you that you are lost, immediately repent and believe the gospel: "behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor 6:2).

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17 See "Bible Study #7: The Church of Jesus Christ" at http://faithsaves.net/Bible-studies/ for a study of what a true church is; a directory where one can find such a church is also available.

18 Bible Studies #3-6 at http://faithsaves.net/Bible-studies/ are a great place to start.

19 For example, *Sinners in the Hands of An Angry God* by Jonathan Edwards, *The Blood of Jesus* by William Reid, *The Almost Christian* by Matthew Mead, and *All of Grace* by Charles Spurgeon; these resources, and many others, are available at: http://faithsaves.net/resources-about-salvation/.