

How I messed up the sinner's prayer?

This chapter taken from the book *When Faith Came* by Franklin Whittenburg © 1998-2006

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Once again I must visit the past to show how I finally met Jesus. I must have prayed “the sinners prayer” asking Jesus to come into my heart and save me, a thousand times while watching my life fall apart around me. I am going to discuss this in detail in my testimony. I believe that “the church” has totally lost the Gospel of the Kingdom message.

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 (Romans 10:8)

And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved (Acts 2:21).

Apparently confessing Jesus with my mouth or “calling on His name”, didn’t seem to be the problem I had with the plan of salvation, it is “the believing in the heart” was the bump in the road that I couldn’t seem to get over. This is where the problem that I had the most was opening the door to let him in. I asked Jesus to come into my heart and save me many times with the “sinners prayer”, but He knew my heart and I wasn’t truly serious even though I thought I was. What I was doing was asking Jesus to come into my heart, yet I was still holding the door shut with my foot. This is where the “believing in your heart” part comes in. At the point when you truly believe in Jesus, then it is God that will bear witness for you! He knew I was pushing the door shut while asking Him into my heart.

And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how HE had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles (Acts 14:27).

This is very important! Whether or not you truly believe in Jesus is not determined by you, but by God! If you are really serious about totally surrendering your life to Jesus, instead of trying to make him a part of your life, God will confirm the covenant that you are making with Him and He will give you the Holy Spirit as the seal of that covenant. This process is called the “Circumcision” and it is not what most people think. Please read the chapter “Understanding Circumcision”. This sealing of the Holy Spirit is a very real, very special, experience that I will never forget. It did not feel anything like a warm fuzzy, electrical spine tingling impulse or emotional crying. It was very, very, intense. Also, the sealing of the Holy Spirit takes place in the heart, which is the seat of the spirit. Because of this experience, my faith now is not built on the fact that I made a plea for salvation, but my faith is now built on His ANSWER to my plea for salvation. The main

key that unlocks the unbelieving heart is not you, but God! You can bear witness with your mouth while God bears witness with your heart!

And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bear them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith (Acts 15:7-9).

And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul (Acts 16:14).

The reason why the Holy Ghost is not bearing witness in your life is maybe because God is still looking at your heart, waiting for a total surrender. When I was in the Baptist religion, after you said the “sinners prayer”, the Holy Spirit was something you believed you had, but the only time you felt Him was when He convicted you of sin. There was never any peace, love, joy, etc. (spiritual fruit) that I experienced, but I had enough conviction of sin for everybody in the church. I found out later, your heart can lie to you, but the Spirit of Truth cannot.

For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God (1 John 3:20,21).

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water (Hebrews 10:22).

His Spirit bears witness with our spirit now, that we are sons of God.

And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us (1 John 3:24).

The Bible says, “***His Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are sons of God***”(Romans 8:16). I still hear people that claim to be Christians say, “I sometimes question whether I am saved or not”. Many people claiming to be a Christian by saying “the sinners prayer” has never waited for the confirming by God of the covenant they are trying to make to bear witness of their sincerity, but they have been told by religion they don’t have to. The church today doesn’t need you walking in victory to complete its mission; it needs you walking in unity. The “sinners prayer” that most Christian religions use, only requires a plea for salvation as the sole bases for being saved (some add works).

Whether or not you truly “believe in your heart” and truly sincere when you pray is irrelevant to the “sinners prayer” and most religions. Just by saying the prayer, assumes

you truly believe, or you wouldn't be saying the prayer. Once again, this prayer may have worked well for everybody else, but I seemed to always end up at the scripture where Jesus said,

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matthew 7:21-23).

This verse that you just read also seems to stand in direct contradiction to (Acts 2:21), or does it?

And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved (Acts 2:21).

Is it possible to confess Jesus and not truly believe in Him? YES! In the book of Acts, there were people that were even trying to do ministry in Jesus name yet they did not know Jesus in a personal relationship. Their relationship with Jesus was strictly through another man's relationship with Jesus.

Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? (Acts 19:13-15).

The Bible teaches it is the "believing in the heart", and not just confessing with your mouth, that brings salvation. It takes both as the Bible plainly teaches.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (Romans 1:16).

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Romans 10:10).

I went for years hanging on to just the witness of the Word of God that is used for confession of the resurrection of Jesus, now I have the witness of the Spirit of God also for sincerely believing in the resurrection of Jesus. The Word of God declares the new covenant, but the Spirit of God seals the new covenant! The Bible calls this sealing of the covenant "Circumcision". Please read the chapter on "Understanding Circumcision". In

fact for all the people that desire to keep God's commandments, only by being "circumcised in the heart" are you even be able to keep God's greatest commandment!

And the Lord thy God will *circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live* (Deuteronomy 30:6).

Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment* (Matt 22:36-38).

As we just read in Deuteronomy 30:6, it says plainly you cannot even keep God's greatest commandment without first experiencing the "circumcision of the heart".

Religious Trap!! Many "new testament" pastors like to quote a verse in Jeremiah 17:9 and claim it as referring to the Christian who has been given a new heart through circumcision.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9)

And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: (Colossians 2:10,11).

And God, which knoweth the hearts, bear them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith (Acts 15:8,9).

How can a desperately wicked heart (Jeremiah 17:9) love the Lord and keep God's greatest commandment? It can't! It must be changed. What religion is doing is telling you to keep a "commandment of love" and then taking away any chance you have of keeping that commandment by saying you still have a wicked heart! Be watchful for this trap! It will run you around in circles.

In my experience, "Circumcision" is also a real physical experience in the heart and is felt in the chest area. The Word of God bears witness that I am a child of God, but now so does the Spirit of God.

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God (Romans 8:16).

Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit (1 John 4:13).

For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that

of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God (Romans 2:28,29).

And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us (1 John 3:24).

This is the part of the salvation experience that I want to mainly focus on that I was missing. It was what hindered me for so long. So instead of just asking you to pray “the sinners prayer” to be saved, I will just give you my testimony how I found peace with God and everything I could ever want and more in Jesus Christ. If the “sinner’s prayer” has worked for you, and you are content with your relationship with God, Great! But my testimony is for people that are not at peace with God. People that are weary from trying to be someone that God approves of, weary of trying to get the sin out of their life and always under condemnation. Weary of desperately seeking to please God, but somehow always falling short. If you do not have peace with God or peace with yourself, or you are not experiencing the abundant life (not in worldly possessions, but peace, love, joy, etc.) the Bible promises you should in Jesus, then maybe you may need to step back and take another look to see if you are truly in the faith like I did. Here is how the Lord showed me to tell if I was “in religion” or truly “in Christ”.

Number one: A religious person will tell you what they do for God, a true Christian will tell you what Jesus Christ has done for them. They carry a testimony of a real, alive Jesus working in them and through them. You must understand, a “cell / small group” equipping team or anybody else cannot “equip” you with a testimony. Do you have a testimony or are the only changes that are being made in your life to please God, being made by you? The reason that Jesus isn’t working in someone’s life is because they may never have given Jesus their life. I know that this is a tough question to consider, but to evaluate for yourself where you maybe at, it has to be considered.

When I talk to someone who claims to be a Christian, I am listening for one key thing. What is the foundation of their testimony? If the person says I got saved (saying the sinners prayer), then I joined the church, then I quit smoking, then I quit drinking, then I am trying to quit cussing, then my guess is that persons foundation is built on “I”. But if the person starts telling me how Jesus came and pulled them out of the things that were killing them because they couldn’t get out by themselves, and they start telling me about how Jesus totally changed their life around when they couldn’t, then my guess is that persons foundation is built on Jesus. If you listen to people speak, their mouth will tell you what is wrong with them. The mouth speaks from the heart. A person’s mouth will tell you who they are. If Jesus is in their heart, then words of life will come out of their mouth. Also, by doing Christian things does not make a person a Christian. This is why the law could not make anyone perfect in God’s eyes, because it was weak through the flesh. The law required you to become something that was totally against your nature. Religion tells you that you are in Adam and still in the flesh and then commands you to keep a spiritual law. The problem is, a natural man (in Adam) cannot keep a spiritual law and a natural man cannot bear spiritual fruit either. You must be born of the Spirit (in

Christ) to bare spiritual fruit (peace, love, joy, etc. Gal 5:22). After experiencing the Holy Spirit enter my body now the changes that are being made in my life to please God are not being made by me, but by Him working in me!

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. (Hebrews 13:20,21).

For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10).

Number Two: Have you ever tasted of the heavenly fruit? This is very important to understand. The reason that many “Christians” are not out sowing seeds is because they may not have ever tasted of the fruit that the seeds that they are trying to sow produce. The reason some people don’t witness is maybe they don’t have one. How can you give if you don’t have? The Bible says,

The husbandmen that labors must be FIRST a partaker of the fruits. Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things (2 Timothy 2:6,7).

A true Christian works diligently to sow seeds of the Word of God, because they have tasted of the good fruit it produces. A farmer that has just eaten the best tasting apple in the world will work tirelessly to plant more of those very same seeds. The farmer knows what the fruit taste like that he is planting and this is what motivates him. If you try to do God’s will in the flesh it is very hard work, but doing God’s will in the Spirit is a very precious gift. If a farmer has never tasted of the fruit that he is trying to sow seeds to, then his heart will not be in it. In like manner, the church today through “cell / small groups” and “discipleship / equipping” courses and “servant evangelism” are trying to get people in the church to sow seeds of a fruit they may not have ever tasted or try to teach them how to operate in their “spiritual gift”, which is in direct contradiction to the Bible (1 John 2:27).

These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him (1 John 2:26,27).

You can train a seal to catch a ball on its nose, but that is not what a seal was created for. If the people resist “the work of the ministry” then there is a follow up of condemnation for not doing enough for God to fulfill the “Great Commission”. The Bible says that the disciples were addicted to the ministry (1 Corinthians 16:15). How can you be addicted to something that does not bring some sense of pleasure? This is very important that you understand. The responsibility of making Christianity work is not

yours, but God's! The Gospel of peace is a ministry of reconciliation that was started almost 2000 years ago by Jesus Christ. You are just a part of it, not the power of it!

Number three: A religious person sees the fall of man; but the true Christian sees the victory of Christ. A religious man will look at a prostitute, drug addict, or a thief and see a swine that is wallowing in the mire. A true Christian will look at the same people and see sons and daughters of God that are just waiting to happen. The true Christian knows that the transforming power to make the very changes that Jesus made in their own life, can transform that prostitute into a redeemed daughter of God and receive her as His spotless bride! The true Christian knows that the Holy Spirit can give that drug addict a better feeling than the best drugs that the world has to offer. And the true Christian knows that God will even trust a repentant thief with the keys to the kingdom of Heaven. The only requirement is that they truly die. Jesus asked Peter, "Who do you think will love me most?" Peter answered, "I guess who you forgave the most". Jesus said, "you have answered correctly (Luke 7:42,43). The worst people seem to make the best Christians when they come to the end of themselves and die.

Number four: A religious person sees a fallen creation; a true Christian sees a new creation.

I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. (Romans 14:14)

Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate (Titus 1:15).

Number five: A religious person looks forward toward death. They keep saying that when they die and go to heaven, they will finally have a true relationship with Jesus. The true Christian looks forward toward life and peace and they already have a true relationship with Jesus. For they have already died with Him (Galatians 2:20).

For to be carnally minded is death, to be spiritually minded is life and peace (Romans 8:6).

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life (John 5:24).

The Bible calls the Gospel, the ministry of reconciliation. And this word of reconciliation, I pass on to you.

