

Back to Bible Basics

Issue 15

The Sinner's Prayer

Brett Rutherford

So many are deceived by the notion that remission of sins is bestowed upon an individual who utters a three minute prayer with an invitation for the Lord to come into their heart. There are no examples in the New Testament of anyone being added to the saved by a "sinner's prayer." Some have mistakenly concluded that John's statements in the first chapter of First John are a promotion of this idea of a "sinner's prayer" (I John 1:9). When John wrote, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins", he was addressing those who were already Christians (I John 2:12). John was writing to those who had already been baptized for the remission of sins according to the commandment of Christ, Peter and Paul (Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:38; I Peter 3:21; Colossians 3:26; Romans 6:1-4). John was simply stating that those who are already in Christ have the privilege of directly accessing God's forgiveness through prayer. This is the privilege of only those who have already been baptized into Christ. Simon the sorcerer is a perfect example of this principle in action (Acts 8:9-24).

Consider the example of the conversion of Saul. The conversion of Saul (Paul) is mentioned in Acts chapters nine, twenty-two, and twenty-six. Saul was on the road to Damascus in order to arrest

Christians for the crime of blasphemy. Saul was firmly convinced that the Christian doctrine proclaiming Jesus as the Son of God was an act of blasphemy that warranted their arrest, and even their execution.

As Saul approached the city of Damascus the Lord appeared to Saul, and asked why Saul was persecuting Him. When the Lord identified Himself as the Christ, Saul realized the enormity of the error of his ways. In response to the terrifying realization that he had been working against God, Saul cried out, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" The instruction that the Lord gave in response to Saul's plea did not include the directives on how Saul could be exonerated of the guilt of his sins. Saul was instructed by the Lord to go into Damascus, and there Saul would be told what he needed to do to have forgiveness for his transgressions (Acts 9:6).

Saul was fasting and praying for three days in Damascus before Ananias was finally sent by the Lord to tell Saul what to do in order to have his sins removed from his charge (Acts 9:9,11). Ananias asked Saul, "Why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

Three days of sincere, penitent praying and fasting did not wash away Saul's sins. If three days of sincere and humble prayer did not remove Saul's sins why would anyone believe that a "three minute" sinners prayer is going to cleanse one from all unrighteousness?

Paul would later write in his first letter to Timothy that his conversion was to be viewed as a pattern to be followed by all who desired everlasting life (I Timothy 1:16). If we are to believe the words that Paul spoke to Timothy, then we will follow the same course of action that Paul went through in order to have his sins washed away. Inspired by godly sorrow Paul was baptized to wash away his sins (Acts 22:16).

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Mersey Bluff church of Christ
232 William Street
Devonport, TAS 7310
Email:
merseybluffcoc@yahoo.com
ianandmabel@iinet.net.au

Download additional copies at:
www.merseybluffcoc.com.au

Lessons from “Lady boys”

Ian McPherson

Recently I was watching a TV programme explaining the revolting and perverted procedure of sex change surgery in Cambodia. Thousands of men undergo this surgery. The narrator of the show called them “Lady boys” They have breast implants, silicone and Botox treatment for the lips and hips, “nose jobs”, Adam’s apple reduction, continual hormone treatment, and monthly facial hair removal. Although many decide against it, some of them go through complicated surgery to remove their male sex organs and have artificial female type organs manufactured. After they have treatment they receive an official certificate saying that although they were born males they were now women.

In spite of what mankind chooses to call them, or what they choose to call themselves, no amount of surgery or medication could alter their sex. Although badly mutilated they are still males. This is because our world is subject to the law of reproduction established in Genesis, that seed reproduces after its kind (Genesis 1:11, 12, 21, 24, 25). There are no exceptions to this rule. The seed that is planted in the womb produces either male or female. All the surgery in the world cannot alter this fact. The Bible says: *God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created he them* (Genesis 1:27).

Although these “lady boys” may look in many ways like a woman, the fact is they are not women because the seed that was originally planted in their mother’s womb produced a male child. Mutilation by surgery may change their appearance to look like a woman, but the natural law of reproduction makes sex change impossible.

This law of reproduction is also true in the spiritual realm. We enter God’s spiritual

kingdom, by being born again (John 3:3,5). The seed of this rebirth is the word of God (1 Peter 1:23). It takes place when we are buried with Christ in the waters of baptism, when our old man of sin is put to death and become a new creature in Christ (Romans 6:3-6, Colossians 2:12, Acts 22:16).

There are many people who in general appearance look like Christians. (They are good to their neighbour, praise God continually, and claim Jesus as their personal Saviour) However, unless they have obeyed the truth by being baptized into Christ they can never be a child of God because the true seed, the word of God, has never germinated in their heart (Galatians 3:26-27)

This is illustrated in a parable that the Lord gave in Matthew 13:24-30. He speaks of tares (weeds) that looked remarkably like wheat being planted in the farmer’s field by an enemy while men slept. In the interpretation of the parable the Lord said, *“The field is the world; the **good seed are the children of the kingdom**; but the **tares are the children of the wicked one**”* (Matthew 13:38). The Lord is teaching in this parable that there are many who are deceived into thinking they are children of God, but in actual fact are the children of the devil.

Satan is doing in the spiritual world what evil surgeons are doing in the physical world. He is continually deceiving people to think they can become a child of God by saying “the sinner’s prayer” or “asking the Lord into their heart”. These are the seeds of Satan’s deceptive tares. The only way to become a child of God is through the incorruptible seed the word of God (1 Peter 1:23, Matt 7:21-23). How tragic it would be to be among this number.