

The Sinner's Prayer {continued}

by Ryan Hasty

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In the early 1900s, well known baseball player **Bill Sunday** had a conversion experience in Moody's Chicago mission and therefore left the diamond to pursue preaching. Sunday was one of the most popular, charismatic, and entertaining speakers of his generation. He used various antics, showmanship, and humor to stir up the emotions of his listeners. Sunday preached that one could be saved simply by walking down his tent's "**sawdust trail**" to the front where he was standing. Later on, people were said to have received salvation simply by publicly shaking Sunday's hand and stating that they would follow Christ.

Finally in the 1940s, the next big crusade preacher hit the scene. A young man named **Bill Graham** trained counselors to encourage those who responded to his "altar call" to pray that Jesus would come into their heart. This concept of praying for your salvation came from a tract Graham developed called "Four Steps to Peace with God" which merely originated from another tract 50 years prior called "Four Things God Wants You to Know." In the 1950s, **Bill Bright** took this concept and coined the expression, "The Four Spiritual Laws" which ends with the so-called "Sinner's Prayer." This prayer goes something like, "Lord Jesus, I need You. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be."

Sadly, the concept of the Sinner's Prayer can be found neither in Jesus and the Apostles' teaching nor seen in the numerous conversions found in the book of Acts. It is entirely man made and falls under the category of "*another gospel*" that Paul confirms and then reaffirms in Galatians 1:6-9 will condemn those who proclaim it.

The **true method of conversion** can be found in our Lord's teaching in the Great Commission and then following the "**Acts**" of the **Apostles** as they attempted to follow our Lord's instruction. Jesus taught the apostles in the Great Commission that they were to teach belief, repentance, and baptism (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47). We know the Apostles followed His instruction because we see this being done in the conversion of the 3000 Jews on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:36-39), the conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:35-39), the conversion of Saul of Tarsus (Acts 22:16), the conversion of the Philippian Jailor (Acts 16:29-35), etc. And while the temptation is great to listen to the words of men as they tell us a simple prayer will do the trick, let us instead listen to the simple words of God and put our trust in His plan and no other.

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