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## **THE SURE WORD by Jonnie Hutchison**

### **DOES THIS SURPRISE YOU?**

Sometimes people are surprised to learn what is actually in the Bible. It is easy to assume that the Bible teaches something simply because we have heard it all of our lives, but then, when we examine the scriptures, we find the Bible really doesn't teach it at all. It is vital that we "speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11). One cannot alter God's revealed truth with impunity (Galatians 1:6-9; Revelation 22:18-19). Each of us should examine carefully what we believe and practice in religion lest we be surprised at the judgment of the last day (Matthew 7:21-23).

It may surprise some to learn that the Bible doesn't tell a sinner to PRAY FOR SALVATION. By "sinner" we refer to someone who has never experienced the new birth. Such a person is outside of Christ and in a lost condition. Such people in New Testament times were never told to PRAY for salvation. Rather, they were told to believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God (Acts 16:31), repent of their sins (Acts 17:30), confess their faith in Christ (Acts 8:35-38) and to be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Those who did so received the cleansing of the blood of Jesus and were added to the church of Christ (Acts 2:41, 47). It is true that Saul of Tarsus prayed for three days while he waited in Damascus for the Lord to send someone to him to tell him what he "must do" (Acts 9:6, 11). However, when Ananias arrived to tell Saul what he "must do" he did not tell him to pray for salvation. Instead, he told Saul, "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Some might conclude that "calling on the name of the Lord" was a reference to prayer. However, the phrase simply means submitting to the authority of the Lord (Colossians 3:17; Acts 10:48). Saul submitted to the authority of the Lord by obeying the command to be baptized.

Cornelius was a devout man who practiced prayer before his conversion to Christ (Acts 10:2). Yet, Peter was sent to tell him words whereby he might be saved (Acts 11:14). Peter did not tell Cornelius to pray for salvation but commanded him to be baptized in the name of the Lord (Acts 10:48).

Every conversion recorded in the New Testament follows the same pattern. Conspicuously absent is any command for the sinner to "pray through" or to "pray the sinner's prayer." This being true it follows that praying the so-called "sinners prayer" has its origin, not with God, but with men. God has a plan of salvation with specific steps to obey. Prayer is not specified as a step in the conversion of sinners. Prayer is a privilege of the saved (John 9:31; 1 Peter 3:12). Does this surprise you?