



Seek The Old Paths

“Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths. . . and walk therein”
(Jeremiah 6:16)

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THE SO-CALLED SINNER'S PRAYER

Randy Kea

Essentially, all of the denominational world and their preachers believe in and practice “The Sinner’s Prayer” — instead of Gospel obedience as plainly taught in the Bible. The following is an example:

“Oh God, I know I am a sinner.

I am sorry for my sins, and I want to turn from them. I trust Christ alone as my Savior, and I confess Him as my Lord. From this moment on, I want to serve Him and follow Him in the fellowship of His church. In Christ’s name, I pray. Amen.” —Billy Graham, *The Heaven Answer Book*

This can be found nowhere in the Bible.

Billy Graham in the last half of the 1900s was clearly the premier and most visible practitioner of calling upon multitudes to pray the sinner’s prayer and be saved. It is estimated that Mr. Graham preached to some 215 million people who attended one or more of his 400 crusades in 185 countries and territories.

The “Sinner’s Prayer” goes back further than Billy Graham. Out of the denominational preaching of the Reformation Movement in the 1700s, there began to be a practice of using the following passage as a tool for the conversion of non-Christians: “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 sup with him, and he with me” (Rev. 3:20).

Any serious Bible student can clearly see that Revelation 3:20 was not originally written to, nor should

ever be applied to, non-Christians. The passage was written to the church at Laodicea, one of the seven churches of Asia recorded in Revelation chapters 2-3. Laodicea was a “lukewarm” church. Through the letter written by the Apostle John, Jesus condemns their lukewarmness, calling on them to “*be zealous therefore, and repent*” (Rev. 3:19. Verse 20 is an invitation and pleading of the Lord for these brethren to be restored. This passage has no application whatsoever to non-Christians as if this is all a sinner has to do.

Over the last 50 years as a Gospel preacher, I’ve heard people use other passages to justify the so-called “sinner’s prayer.” For example, Luke 18:9-14. In this parable Jesus speaks of two men who went to the temple to pray, a Pharisee and a publican. One prayed in arrogance, the other prayed in humility, saying, “*God, be merciful to me, a sinner.*” The Bible obligates us to rightly divide God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). These two men in the parable lived under the Law of Moses. As Israelites, they had been born into covenant relationship with God. In other words, they were already children of God. The New Testament Gospel with its terms of salvation (faith, repentance, confession, baptism) had not yet been revealed. There is nothing in this passage that justifies the modern concept of the sinner’s prayer.

Here are two other passages that have been brought up to me in studies concerning this subject: Acts 8:22, “*Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee*”

and 1 John 1:9, “*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*” In the first passage this command was addressed to a man who had already been baptized to become a Christian (Acts 8:12-13). In the second passage John was writing an epistle to his brethren — Christians. So again, neither has application for a non-Christian to pray the “sinner’s prayer.”

Closely associated with this is the idea that one can be saved like the thief on the cross who said, “*Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.*” This example is cited by those who want to negate the essentiality of water baptism. Once again, by rightly dividing God’s Word, we find the answer to this erroneous application. By reading Hebrews 9:15-18, you will see that the New Testament of Jesus Christ had not yet been revealed nor was binding with its terms of salvation. Therefore, the thief on the cross was not subject to the one true Gospel plan of salvation — (faith [Mark 16:16], repentance [Acts 17:30], confession [Acts 8:37], baptism [Acts 2:38]).

Other phrases we sometimes hear closely associated with the “sinner’s prayer” are: “invite Jesus into your heart,” “accept Christ as your personal savior,” and “receive Jesus as your savior.” None of these phrases have any basis in the New Testament language of salvation through Christ.

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Sinner’s Prayer...



Editorial...

MANY THINGS SAVE SINNERS, PRAYER IS NOT ONE OF THEM #1

Garland M. Robinson

Pulpits and air waves are flooded telling the masses that all one has to do to be saved is pray the “sinner’s prayer.” Perhaps the most well-known of these “champions” is **Billy Graham** (1918-2018) and his son **Franklin**. On *billygraham.org* we read these words:

“We can’t earn salvation; we are saved by God’s grace when we have faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. All you have to do is believe you are a sinner, that Christ died for your sins, and ask His forgiveness. Then turn from your sins — that’s called repentance. Jesus Christ knows you and loves you. What matters to Him is the attitude of your heart, your honesty.

We suggest praying the following prayer to accept Christ as your Savior: ‘Dear God, I know I’m a sinner, and I ask for your forgiveness. I believe Jesus Christ is Your Son. I believe that He died for my sin and that you raised Him to life. I want to trust Him as my Savior and follow Him as Lord, from this day forward. Guide my life and help me to do your will.’”

Vast numbers of others say similar words but they all have one thing in common — just pray that you accept Jesus as your personal savior and invite him to come into your heart. The reason they don’t use the exact words of the Bible is because no such words exist. Masses address prayers to Jesus, but we’re not told anywhere in the Scriptures to pray to Jesus.

Many say salvation is by “faith only” or “faith alone.” Some say “grace only” while others say “grace alone through faith alone.” Some say “grace only through faith.” They can’t make up their mind. Which is it? All these statements cannot be true. The word

“only” is defined as: “nothing more besides; solely, exclusively, alone, solitary, single.”

If salvation is by “faith only” then grace is excluded. If salvation is by “grace only” then faith is not included. When the word “only” or “alone” is attached, nothing else can be involved. Actually, the New Testament does use the words “faith only.” But it makes clear that salvation is NOT by faith only! James 2:24: “*Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.*” Martin Luther has been quoted as saying the book of James was an “epistle of straw” — counting it to be inferior in rank to other New Testament books. I have personally talked to some preachers who claimed the book of James is not inspired and should not be in the Bible! Instead of “rightly dividing” the word, they seek to discard it altogether. I can see why they dismiss it, it condemns their perverted view of salvation.

The majority of denominations have embraced the teaching of John Calvin (Calvinism) and believe that it’s impossible that salvation requires obeying God. They start with the premise that man can’t do “anything” that would contribute to their salvation. Once a person refuses to let the Bible tell them what TO DO, the door is open to all kinds of error.

Jesus came into this world to obey the will of the Father (John 4:34). He likewise teaches everyone to obey the will of the Father. Jesus plainly 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*” (Matt. 7:21). The next two verses make it clear that many will say “Lord, Lord” but will not be saved (vs.22-23). In Matthew 12:50 we have these words: “*Whosoever shall DO the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.*”

Jesus also said, “*why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and DO NOT the things which I say*” (Luke 6:46)? Hebrews 5:9 makes obedience essential to being saved. Speaking of Jesus we read, “*And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that OBEY him*” (Heb. 5:9).

Salvation is not by any one thing “alone” (by itself). There are MANY THINGS the New Testament teaches that are involved in a sinner being forgiven of their sins to be saved. ALL the Scriptures are in perfect harmony. We must study to show ourselves approved of God and recognize their harmony.

MANY THINGS SAVE US

There are numerous things the Bible says that are involved in receiving the forgiveness of sins. Nothing “alone” or by “itself” is singled out. Here’s a sampling of some of the many things that saves sinners.

Love, God’s love for man — but not love only or alone. It is God’s love that made the way of salvation possible for sinful men. “*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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 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*” (John 3:16-18). “*...Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour*” (Eph. 5:2).

Grace, the grace of God — but not grace alone. Grace is the favor or benefit that God bestows toward man. “*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: [it is] the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*” (Eph. 2:8-10; Rom. 3:24; Titus 2:11-12). Calvinists latch on to the words “not of works” and conclude that everything man does is a work and therefore cannot have anything to do with salvation. But even “faith” itself is a work. When one has faith in Christ, it is something one DOES. John 6:29 says faith is the WORK

THE PLAN OF SALVATION IN ACTS

TEXT	TEACH	BELIEVE	CONFESS	REPENT	BAPTIZED
Acts 2:38	YES	Implied	Implied	YES	YES
Acts 8:12	YES	YES	Implied	Implied	YES
Acts 8:13	YES	YES	Implied	Implied	YES
Acts 8:37-38	YES	YES	YES	Implied	YES
Acts 9:1-18	YES	YES	Implied	Implied	YES
Acts 10:1-48	YES	YES	Implied	YES	YES
Acts 16:14-15	YES	YES	Implied	Implied	YES
Acts 16:25-34	YES	YES	Implied	Implied	YES
Acts 17:32-34	YES	YES	Implied	Implied	Implied
Acts 18:8	YES	YES	Implied	Implied	YES
Acts 19:1-5	YES	YES	Implied	Implied	YES

When all the accounts of conversion are examined together, we learn that everyone did exactly the same thing to be saved. Water baptism is essential, but by itself it does not save. One must first **Hear** the word (John 6:46-47; Rom. 10:17). One must **Believe** that Jesus is the Son of God (John 8:24; Heb. 11:6). One must **Repent** of their sins (Luke 13:3,5; Acts 17:30). One must **Confess** faith that Jesus is the Son of God (Matt. 10:32-33; Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:9-10). One must be **Baptized** (Acts 2:38). **Water Baptism** is the step that takes one who is “out” of Christ and puts him/her “into” Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27). Each one **heard, believed, repented, confessed** and were **baptized** in water for the forgiveness of their sins. In water baptism, one contacts the blood of Christ that washes sins away (Rev. 1:5; Eph. 1:7; 1 Peter 3:21). Jesus said, “He that **believeth** and is **baptized** shall be **saved**” (Mark 16:16). He also said, “Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say” (Luke 6:46)? Will you fight against Christ and his inspired word or will you humbly and sincerely submit in full obedience to his Word? Don’t go to judgment fighting against the Lord. Why not obey the Gospel today and you will be added to, and be a member of, the church of Christ (Acts 2:41,47)? You then must live **Faithful** to the Lord the rest of your life (1 Cor. 15:58; Rev. 2:10; James 1:12-16).

that God commands us to DO. “I” must have faith, “YOU” must have faith. Without faith, no man can please God (Heb. 11:6). God does not have faith for me, that’s what I MUST DO. I have faith for myself.

Faith, faith in Jesus as God’s Son — but not faith only. “Without faith [it is] impossible to please [him]: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and [that] he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb.

11:6). “But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? ... Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (James 2:20,24). How can men say salvation is by “faith only” when this verse says salvation is “not by faith only?” Men change this verse just like they change Mark 16:16 where Jesus said, “He that believeth AND is baptized shall be saved....” But men say, “He that believeth and is NOT baptized

shall be saved.”

Mercy, the mercy of God — but not mercy alone. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5). “And his mercy [is] on them that fear him from generation to generation” (Luke 1:50).

Blood, Christ’s blood — but not blood alone. “...Without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb. 9:22). “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him” (Rom. 5:9). “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:7). Water baptism is where sinners make contact with Jesus’ blood He shed on the cross. Jesus connected believing and baptism to be saved (Mark 16:16); and, He connected repentance and baptism for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). There is no passage that shows sinners come in contact with Christ’s blood at the point of faith, repentance, or confession. It’s in water baptism that one contacts the benefits of Christ’s blood. “Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness” (Rom. 6:18).

Born again of water and of the Spirit — but not by water and Spirit alone. Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and [of] the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). Being “born again” (v.3) involves both “water” and “the Spirit” (v.5). The fact that a sinner is “born again” (v.3) removes it from being a birth of water from our mother — birth as a human. Jesus is talking about another birth when he says “born again” (v.3), born of “water and the Spirit” (v.5). The only water that is connected to salvation is the water of baptism. Notice in this verse that both water and Spirit are connected by the word “and” — water and the Spirit can’t be separated. Being “born again” involves both water and the Spirit. It is one birth involving two elements: water and the Spirit. Men desperately say “water” is physical birth and “the spirit” is spiritual birth. They hopelessly want to re-write the Scriptures. They fight against the Lord’s plain words because their mind is closed so they cannot see.

More to follow next month

DID CHRIST DO ALL THE WORK ON THE CROSS?

Jason Patrick Hilburn

Christ finished His main mission on earth by giving His life on the cross, saying, *“It is finished”* (John 19:30). But today, some are twisting His statement into a false doctrine. They claim that since Christ on the cross said, *“It is finished,”* there are no “works” (no actions) men can do that will have any effect on their salvation. This has led some to the conclusion that water baptism cannot be essential, and that once a person is saved, there is no work he is required to do. Please notice the following points:

First, the importance of what Christ did on the cross should never be minimized. The veil of the temple being rent from top to bottom when Christ died symbolized the fact that Christ’s sacrifice was required for men to enter the Most Holy Place of Heaven (Matt. 27:51). Man could not be saved without Christ’s sacrifice, but if God says that men must obey His commands to access the benefits of Christ’s sacrifice, man has no right to say otherwise (Matt. 26:28; Acts 2:38-41; Rom. 6:16-18; Heb. 5:9; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 1:6-7). Also, just because a good-hearted person wants to obey every command of God, that does not mean he is trying to earn his salvation. Satan uses derogatory terms such as “legalist” to try to discourage the faithful, but those who know the Truth and love God wholeheartedly will not be discouraged. The Truth is that salvation cannot be earned (Eph. 2:8-9), but that does not mean man can ignore God’s commands. God has repeatedly said that **He will only save those who obey Him** (Matt. 7:21; Rom. 6:16-18; 1 Peter 1:22; Heb. 5:9). God “by grace” saves WHEN man “by faith” obeys (Gal. 3:26-27; 5:6).

The context of John 19:30 must be considered. When Christ said, *“It is finished,”* we must be careful when defining what He meant by “it.” His statement must be understood in the context of what He was accomplishing on the cross. He finished His main mission on earth via His death, which enabled men to receive forgiveness (saved) by contacting His blood through obedience (Matt. 26:28; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-5, 16-18), but not all work was

done related to man’s salvation.

Christ worked after the cross. The Bible literally says Jesus was “working” after He returned to Heaven, confirming the Word, while the Truth was being revealed in the first century A.D. — *“the Lord working with them”* (Mark 16:20).

Christ is still working today. He is interceding as the Christian’s High Priest: *“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them”* (Heb. 7:25; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:1). It is therefore erroneous to interpret Jesus’ statement in John 19:30 to mean Christ’s work on the cross was the last work that ever needed to be done related to man’s salvation.

Christ said that **BELIEF** is a work (John 6:27-29). “Work” is not a bad word as so many seem to assume. A work is something men choose to do. Some works are not involved in man’s salvation (such as works of the Law of Moses, Eph. 2); and, some works are required, such as obeying God’s New Testament commands for salvation (Acts 10:34-35, 48; cf. 2:38-41; 22:16).

After the cross, Christ gave His followers the greatest work the world has ever known. After His death and resurrection, Jesus commanded His followers to preach the Gospel to everyone and baptize those who want to be saved — *“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”* (Mark 16:15-16, man says “he that believeth and is NOT baptized shall be saved”). The work of preaching the Gospel and baptizing those who believe will last until the end of the world (Matt. 28:20). To say there is no work to do today is to do away with the greatest mission ever given to man.

Those who use John 19:30 to allege that water baptism is unnecessary are contradicting the very Lord they claim to serve. Jesus Himself taught the necessity of water baptism, which is why it was included in the Great Commission — to save people all over

the world until the end of the world (John 3:5; Mark 16:15-16; Matt. 28:18-20). Inspired men like Peter told people who already believed in Jesus to *“repent and be baptized”* to *“save themselves”* (Acts 2:38-40). Why would he say that if they could not do anything to affect their own salvation? The necessity of water baptism is emphasized throughout the New Testament (Acts 2:38-41; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-5; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 5:26; Col. 2:11-13; Heb. 10:22; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 3:20-21).

Christ will judge everyone by their works, not simply what they believe. This is plainly taught throughout the Bible (Psalm 62:12; Prov. 24:12; Jer. 32:19; Matt. 16:27; 25:14-46; John 5:27-29; Rom. 2:5-11; 11:22; Gal. 6:7-9; Phil. 2:12; 1 Cor. 3:8; 2 Cor. 5:9-11; 1 Peter 1:17; Rev. 2, 3).

Christ commands His followers to be busy working. Inspired men like Paul wrote the commandments of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37). Paul said the only thing that will “avail” us is *“faith which worketh by love”* (Gal. 5:6). Again, these are not works of the Law of Moses (Gal. 5:1-4; Eph. 2:8-16), but working God’s righteous commands of the New Covenant (Acts 10:34-35; Col. 2:11-17; Heb. 7:11-14; 10:8-9). True love for God necessitates obedience: *“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous”* (1 John 5:3; cf. John 14:15; 15:14). The Bible teaches that anyone who claims to be a Christian without obedience is lying: *“And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him”* (1 John 2:3-4). *“They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him...”* (Titus 1:16; cf. 2:11-14). James said that *“faith without works is dead”* (James 2:26; cf. 2:14-25). The New Testament repeatedly emphasizes the need for Christians to be busy working for their Lord after they initially become saved (1 Cor. 15:58; Gal. 6:9-10; Eph. 2:10; Titus 2:11-14), and how does the idea of “no work for men today” harmonize with verses like these?

- *“...In every nation he that feareth*

him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34-35).

- “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).
- “Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, ac-

ording to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...” (2 Cor. 5:9-11).

- “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12; cf. Acts 2:40; 1 Peter 1:22; Jude 21; Rev. 2:2, 9, 10).
- “Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest...” (Heb. 4:11; cf. 6:10; 1 Thess. 1:3).

God has spoken plainly, but Satan does not want anyone obeying God or working for God, and he has deceived many through popular preachers and their numerous followers.

Friends, there is work being done by Christ today, there is “work” (action) required to become a Christian, all Christians should be busy working for the Lord, and one day we will all be held accountable for the work we did or refused to do (Matt. 25:14-46).

PO Box 759
Baker, FL 32531

“BE STRONG IN THE LORD”

Gary McDade

The key is for members of the Lord’s church to remain keenly aware of the value (John 8:31-32; 14:6) and position of the truth in God’s plan (Romans 2:2).

The tricks and methods of the devil are many and formidable. The whole armor of God is required to stand against them. True then, and true today, are the words of inspiration which instructs, “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Eph. 6:12-13).

The name of **Kathrine Maher**, CEO of **National Public Radio**, is nationally well known. A former journalist with NPR recently observed the unanimous stance of the radical left liberalism of the network and resigned due to the extreme prejudice. The United States of America is funding its own demise by financing the \$300,000,000 annual budget of NPR. The money for NPR comes indirectly from the Federal Government through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. NPR does not launder money but uses the same strategy called “layering” in an attempt to hide the actual amount of its government income from the public.

Kathrine Maher came into the public light when her former journalist resigned. She lectured the nation on truth not being the driving force or even the foremost principle behind

NPR’s reporting appearing multiple times a day across the entire nation. Her belief that truth is relative — each person has his and her version of truth and there is no objective standard of truth — is the boldest stance for pluralism and relativism, as it technically is called, in recent memory. The popular **DEI — Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion** — now has a new champion under her leadership of this influential and ubiquitous mass media source. Favorite additional abbreviations that partner with DEI are the better known **LGBTQ+** initials for abominations before God (Rom. 1:18 especially, also see: vs.19-32).

Better advice to defend the faith against this onslaught could not be given than Paul’s urging, “Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” All are aware of the decline in interest among religious people in general and the Lord’s church in particular. The Bible says, “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair” (2 Cor. 4:8). The key is for members of the Lord’s church to remain keenly aware of the value (John 8:31-32; 14:6) and position of the truth in God’s plan (Rom. 2:2). And, to measure up to the church being “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15) in the world today.

1804 Skyline Dr.
Chattanooga, TN 37421

CONTRIBUTIONS

Anonymous	\$200
Orville D. Grossarth	\$100
Jean Ware	\$25
Baker C/C, Baker, FL	\$25
Mary Lois Moore	\$30
Jack C. Holland	\$500
Billy Free	\$20
Marilyn Brantley (memory of Jim Green)	\$50
Anonymous	\$50
Naomi Rieben	\$100
Ed Waggoner	\$100
Gloria R. Taylor	\$200
Victor & Kathy Sicard	\$75
Allen & Irene Tate	\$100
Kenneth W. McPeak	\$50
Midway C/C, Murfreesboro, TN	\$100
Chuck & Nancy Verkist	\$50
Oneida F. Humphries	\$200
M/M Carl O. Cooper	\$100
Anonymous	\$300
Carey Wheatley	\$750
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IF BIBLE RULES (LAWS) ARE NOT POPULAR, CHANGE THEM

Marvin Weir

The ungodly LGBTQ+ movement has put tremendous pressure on denominational churches to capitulate to their sinful demands.

Chaos would prevail if every man were accountable only to his own set of rules. There would be little peace or accord without standard laws and guidelines to which all men are amenable. Yet, in the religious realm, rules mean very little to most denominations. Rules may be here today and gone tomorrow because of pressure exerted on the “powers that be.” The ungodly LGBTQ+ movement has put tremendous pressure on denominational churches to capitulate to their sinful demands. And, many denominations are more than happy to listen to the voice of the ungodly rather than listen to the voice of God — God speaking through His inspired Word.

In this study let’s consider **marriage, divorce, and remarriage**. An article in the January 26, 2000 *Dallas Morning News* revealed that the Church of England was considering approving remarriage for divorcees. Recommendations were “published by a group of bishops.” It was stated that they could be “adopted by the church’s governing General Synod in 2002.” The article revealed that England had “one of the highest divorce rates in Europe. Roughly one-third of Anglican

priests already remarry divorcees, and the church says 10 percent of its marriages now involve divorcees.” Among the proposed conditions: “Divorced people should be honest about the reasons for the failure of their previous marriage, adequate provision should be made for supporting children, the new relationship should not be the cause of breaking up the previous marriage, and ‘a reasonable time’ should have passed since the divorce.” “Bishops also recommended that remarriage should normally not be permitted for people who have been involved in more than one divorce. The decision in each case would be made by the local priest in consultation with the bishop.”

The Church of England has had man-made **rules** regulating marriage for years. Why cast them aside for another set of man-made rules? How long will it be before human pressure again dictates that the rules be changed? According to God’s Word, the decision regarding one’s remarriage is not “made by the local priest in consultation with the bishop.” One will search the Scriptures in vain to find such an implication or statement. To most, it does not matter that God

has set forth in Scripture the **only** binding rules regarding marriage, divorce and remarriage. Once one ignores what God’s Word clearly states regarding M-D-R and other matters, it becomes easier to not be able to correctly identify whether one is a man or a woman. As ludicrous as this may sound, we now have a person serving on our Supreme Court who does not know the definition of a woman.

In the beginning, God created one woman for one man (Gen. 2:18-25). They were instructed by God to “*be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth*” (Gen. 1:28) — something that two homosexual couples cannot do! Man chose to practice polygamy, and Moses tolerated such under the old law. Shortly before the establishment of the church, the Pharisees seeking to trap Jesus, asked, “*Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause*” (Matt. 19:3)? In giving His answer Jesus goes back to the beginning of creation (Matt. 19:4-6). After establishing the concept of one man for one woman, Jesus says regarding divorce, “*Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her*

Sinner’s Prayer...

(Continued from page 41)

Add to this that in several modern Bible paraphrases (The Living Bible) and modern speech versions (New International, Revised Standard, etc), the doctrine of “faith only” without further acts of obedience is promoted.

One can read from Acts 2 with the apostles preaching in Jerusalem, through Acts 28 with Paul preaching in Rome, and never read where someone was told to pray the “sinner’s prayer.” Where is the “sinner’s prayer” in Acts 2:36-41? Where is the “sinner’s prayer” in Acts 8:5-22? Where is the

“sinner’s prayer” in Acts 8:26-38? Where is the “sinner’s prayer” in Acts 9:1-6? Where is the “sinner’s prayer” in Acts 10 and 11? Where is the “sinner’s prayer” in Acts 16:13-15? Where is the “sinner’s prayer” in Acts 16:30-36? Where is the “sinner’s prayer” in Acts 18:8? Where is the “sinner’s prayer” in Acts 19:1-6? In not one of these recorded conversions of sinners (Jews on Pentecost, Samaritans, the eunuch, Saul of Tarsus, Cornelius, Lydia, Philippian jailer, Corinthians, Ephesians) was any lost person ever instructed to pray the “sinner’s prayer” or any other prayer for that matter.

By cross-examining the above accounts of conversion in the Book of

Acts, it is clear to become a Christian under the Gospel of Christ, after **hearing** the truth of the Gospel, one must place his **faith** in Jesus, **repent** of his sins, **confess** his faith in Jesus to be the Son of God, and based on that confession, be **immersed** in water for the remission of his sins. These are simple, yet indispensable terms of New Testament salvation.

“*And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord*” (Acts 22:16). Saul was calling upon the name of the Lord by being baptized.

100 Sweetbriar Walk
Stockbridge, GA 30381

when she is put away committeth adultery” (Matt. 19:9).

If the Lord’s **rule** regarding divorce and remarriage is respected, there will be no need for the proposed recommendations by the bishops of the Church of England. Fornication is the **only** reason for which the innocent one can Scripturally put away the guilty mate and remarry. The guilty party is *put away*, and may not (with God’s blessings) remarry. The innocent party (the one doing the legitimate putting away) has the God-given right to remarry one eligible to be married.

Without the exception that Christ gave, God’s rule for marriage reads, “...the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to an-

other man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man” (Rom. 7:2-3).

The **rule** for marriage under the New Covenant is that it is binding until the death of either the husband or the wife. To divorce and remarry **makes** one an adulterer. Christ does not, however, expect one to tolerate immorality; thus He gives the **only** exception to the rule of marriage. It matters not that there are many reasons given by men for divorce and remarriage. There is only **one** reason that God will recognize.

Where God has not recognized a Scriptural putting away of one’s mate, the couple is **not** loosed from their marriage vows. To divorce and remarry without a Scriptural reason is to live in adultery. Since such a union is an

adulterous relationship, it is called a marriage only in an accommodative sense. Unless people repent (sever the adulterous union), they will be lost (1 Cor. 6:9).

Denominations have long made up their own rules and changed them at will. Now many congregations of the Lord’s church are copying the denominations. The number of unscripturally divorced people continues to grow. But it matters not if 90 percent of husbands and wives have unscripturally divorced and remarried, God’s rule for marriage and divorce will not change (Matt. 24:35; Psa. 119:89). Man has never been given the right to add to or subtract from God’s Word (Deut. 4:2; Rev. 22:18-19)!

484 CR 44700

Blossom, TX 75416

countryboy357@hughes.net

DO WE OFFEND?

Denver Thomas

How sad it is; but it does seem we have arrived at a time and place in history when many people are so every easily offended. Offenses may result from a variety of actions. A word spoken in jest may offend some. Awkward behavior on someone’s part may offend others. Tone of voice may offend some. Citing Scripture may offend still others.

Offenses are spoken against repeatedly in God’s Holy Word. Some form of the word (offend, offended, offender & offence) occurs some 74 times (22 in the Old Testament & 54 in the New Testament) in the KJV Bible. Among the definitions of the word offered by *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary* are: 1) To transgress the moral or divine law; sin and 2) To cause dislike, anger or vexation; displease. A child of God surely would not want to be found guilty of any of these.

James wrote, “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one [point], he is guilty of all. ... For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same [is] a perfect man, [and] able also to bridle the whole body” (2:10; 3:2). Since few, if any of us are “perfect,” it is reasonable to admit that we are apt to offend on

occasion. Sadly, we may offend someone and yet be totally unaware that we have been offensive in some way.

Jesus said, speaking concerning small children and the seriousness of offending, “But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and [that] he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matt. 18:6).

Proverbs 18:19 reminds us, “A brother offended [is harder to be won] than a strong city: and [their] contentions [are] like the bars of a castle.” James spoke to this, “Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins” (James 5:19-20).

Paul, in his writing to the church in Rome said, “[It is] good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor [any thing] whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak” (Rom. 14:21). In Romans 16:17-18 he wrote, “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord

Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.”

Psalms 119:165 says, “Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.” Even Christian people are known to take offense at some teachings they dislike or find disagreeable and just “drop out” or relocate to another place of worship. Might this suggest they are weak in the faith? Or, they do not “love thy law?” Or, might it suggest the teacher has been too outspoken or too harsh? “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men” (Rom. 12:18).

Problem resolution is no longer an active part of many congregations of the Lord’s people today. Fear of offending has become an ever-present deterrent in “earnestly contending for the faith” and “reprove, rebuke and exhort” teaching (Jude 3; 2 Tim. 4:2). Just “keep peace in the family” has become standard operating procedure for some; since quantity seems to have taken precedence over quality. Where is “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3)?

5 Bexley Dr. Apt 117
Scott Depot, WV 25560

THE LORD'S CHURCH HAS NO EARTHLY HEADQUARTERS

Jon Gary Williams

That the church found on the pages of the New Testament had no centralized, earthly headquarters is a fundamental truth. The same is true of churches of Christ today. Of all the differences between the Lord's church and the practices of the denominational world, this one difference looms above them all — no earthly headquarters.

However, on the other hand, all man-made churches have an official, earthly headquarters through which their local churches are governed. The fact is, they could not exist as separate denominations without such headquarters. This is much the same as large business firms that reach into vast areas; they must have a headquarters somewhere.

So, the question is. How can thousands upon thousands of congregations of the churches of Christ (spread the world over) exist without an earthly headquarters? At first thought, this doesn't seem possible, and yet, it is true. People of the denominational world find this difficult to comprehend.

Several years ago I had a discussion with a young preacher of the **Church of God of Prophecy**. I inquired about how his church was organized. In his response he seemed pleased to tell me that their headquarters was in Cleveland, Tennessee.

Knowing nothing about churches of Christ, he asked where our headquarters was located. I told him that our headquarters is in heaven. I could see he was unable to grasp that thought. A few seconds later he came round that way again and asked, "Now what did you say about the headquarters of your church?"

I thought to myself, the door is open to explain to him a truth he'd never before heard. So I asked him, "Who is the head of the church?" He answered correctly, "Jesus." I then asked him, "Where is Jesus?" He hesitated briefly and then said, "Heaven." I told him that if Jesus is the head of the church and if Jesus is in heaven, then the headquarters of the church must be in heaven. He was able to see how logical this was and told me he had never thought of it in that way.

After a few moments he said he had a question. He asked, how we were able to maintain harmony among so many thousands of churches throughout the world without having an earthly headquarters, and a church creed. That puzzled him, for to him that just didn't seem possible. I explained that our harmony existed because we follow the same pattern of the church found in the New Testament — and that we did not need a man-made church creed.

I further explained that should a congregation depart from the teachings of the New Testament and begin following false doctrines, it would, of its own accord cease to be a part of the spiritual body of Christ.

Now, I say all this to emphasize what seems to be a somewhat neglected thought among us. For some time I have noticed that when we write about the Lord's church showing how it is different from denominationalism, while a variety of ideas may be given, rarely is mention made that the church has no earthly headquarters.

Yes, we all know there is no such thing. But have we, without realizing it, been overlooking to focus on this one essential difference — a difference that stands out and allows people to see how we are actually unlike and separate

from the entire denominational world?

Here is a question I have asked a number of people, including preachers. "What do you consider the most outstanding difference between churches of Christ and the denominational world as a whole?" Although many differences were given, no one said that the Lord's church has no earthly headquarters. This confirmed what I had suspected — a lack of attention to this basic difference.

Brethren, in our writings, in our sermons and in our classes, shouldn't we give more attention to this fundamental, core, difference — no earthly headquarters for the Lord's church.

The apostle Paul wrote that all Christians belong to God's spiritual "family" which reaches into heaven (Eph. 3:15). He also said, "For our conversation (citizenship, ASV) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20).

Indeed, as members of His church, our relationship with Jesus extends up to heaven and we all, in every congregation, look only to Him as our exalted "head" — and to nothing of an earthly nature.

jongaryw@aol.com
www.jongarywilliams.com

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