

## TO PRAY OR NOT TO PRAY, THAT IS THE QUESTION : PART 1

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A Discussion On Salvation Prayers, Repetitive Prayers  
And Chants, Confessional Boxes, Private And Public  
Confession Of Sin, Forgiveness And Grace And Works

As many people who live in the western Christianized world are aware, passing out Gospel tracts is a popular and an effective means of sharing God's Word with the masses. In the case of Salvation tracts, these almost always contain some kind of short prayer to lead the repentant sinner to Christ. However, the question arises: Is a Salvation prayer really necessary? In fact, is even the practice of verbally praying with someone so that they might accept Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour based upon Scripture? Or is it just a ritual created by modern Christianity?

I believe that most of us can agree that Salvation is a matter of personal belief in and acceptance of the atoning Blood of Jesus Christ on the Cross. It is not simply a physical act of praying a certain prayer prescribed by a priest, preacher or evangelist, or included in a Gospel tract. It is you making the personal decision that you believe in the Good News found in the Bible; that you believe that Jesus Christ died on the Cross for your sins, as well as for the sins of all men everywhere. Salvation is based upon your conscious acknowledgment that you are a sinner in need of a Saviour; and your acceptance of that Saviour once you understand and realize who He is. This is the true essence of Salvation.

In a sense, saying a Salvation prayer is similar to the Disciples baptizing in the Book of Acts. It is just an outward manifestation of a personal decision and an inward spiritual change of mind, heart and spirit. As the Apostle Paul tells us:

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

2 Corinthians 5:17, KJV

"That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Ephesians 4:22-24, KJV

Saying a Salvation prayer simply serves as a landmark in a person's life so that they can look back and say with confidence, "This is the first time I really remember believing in who Jesus Christ is, and in what He did for me."

This is the first time I remember truly acknowledging Him as my personal Saviour." This idea of being certain of our Salvation is clearly expressed in the following words from the Apostle John:

"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."  
1 John 5:13-15, KJV

In other words, John is saying, "If you have accepted Jesus as your Savior, then you must now believe with all confidence that you have been forgiven for your sins, and that you have been born into the Kingdom of God by faith, even if you never see any kind of physical confirmation that it is so. You must simply know and believe because of your faith, or confidence, in God's Word, that God has granted you your petition for Eternal Life."

In addition to serving as a landmark and giving us confidence in our moment of Salvation, I also believe that saying a Salvation prayer adds a tone of seriousness to a person's decision to accept and believe in Jesus Christ. Throughout the Bible we find examples of the different covenants or agreements that God has made with His people. Saying a Salvation prayer is similar to a verbal covenant made between the person saying the prayer, and the Lord. Such an agreement adds a degree of finality to a person's decision to accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour. It is somewhat like signing a rent contract because you are asking God's Spirit to come and dwell with and within you, just as the Disciples received the Holy Spirit in Acts chapter two. In this sense, I believe that saying a Salvation prayer is a good positive practice. The main thing to remember is that it is only meant to serve as a symbolic act of acceptance. Any prayer you read or are taught should only serve as a guide or an example. This is exactly what Jesus did when His Disciples asked Him how men ought to pray:

"And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."  
Luke 11:1, KJV

Jesus then proceeded to give them an example by saying what has come to be known as the "Lord's Prayer" or the "Our Father". He wasn't being particularly adamant saying that we must pray those exact words or else it isn't effective; He was simply providing an example of how to pray, and not necessarily what to pray. Prayer is not meant to be some vain repetition as some religions practice. It is not a matter of repeating a certain prayer or chant over and over again to achieve some spiritual benefit. Consider what Jesus had to say concerning this matter:

"But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking."

Matthew 6:7, KJV

Frankly, I personally believe that these types of prayers do very little good for anyone. I don't believe that praying a prayer over and over again, such as in a rosary, absolves anyone of their sins. A person can pray the "Our Father", the "Hail Mary", or chant some mantra as much as they want, but it is not going to absolve them of anything. Doing such a thing might make them feel better, and help them to accept themselves afterwards; it might even make them feel a little more righteous; but that is about all it does. There is absolutely no Scriptural basis for this practice that I am aware of. Praying repetitive prayers are merely works of self-righteousness, trying to earn our Salvation through our own good deed of praying and chanting something over and over again. As I will explain more fully in a moment, true repentance isn't found in repeating a prayer or chant, it is found in asking forgiveness from those whom we have offended, and in making a positive change in our lives for the better. This whole idea of repetitious prayer as a means of earning forgiveness is totally contradictory to what the Scriptures tell us:

"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, KJV

"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."  
Ephesians 2:8-9, KJV

Additionally, I have no doubt that such repetitive prayers as chants, mantras, and rosaries, as well as practicing yoga, breathing exercises and other Eastern techniques, are extremely dangerous. Those poor people who do such things have absolutely no idea what they are opening themselves up to. When someone is not protected by God's Divine Spirit, instead of being an invitation to Christ, these things can actually be an invitation to ungodly spirits coming in and possessing their being! Demonic oppression -- negative influence from without -- and demonic possession -- negative influence from within -- are real things! They are a result of people yielding themselves to any spirit which might want to come in and take over. I am reminded of something the Apostle Paul said regarding yielding to sin in his epistle to the Romans:

"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"  
Romans 6:16, KJV

Sadly, today the spiritual reality of demonic possession or oppression have been given nice little scientific or medical names to keep people in the dark regarding their true nature and origin. Both the Old and New Testaments contain a number of examples of people who yielded themselves to the wrong spirits. In the Gospels we find the following example:

"And when he was come to the other side into the country of

the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time? And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding. So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters."

Matthew 8:28-32, KJV

We aren't told exactly how these people became possessed by devils, but it certainly wasn't through worship of the one true God. Somehow they had opened up their lives to the forces of Darkness. Could it have been through some of the ritualistic practices described above? Simply put, prayer is meant to serve as a connection between your heart and God's Eternal Spirit. It is you making intimate contact with your Heavenly Father and Creator in Heaven. How can you be accomplishing this if all you are doing is repeating some prescribed prayer ordained by the religious body you associate with? God wants to hear you speak from your heart, and not just repeat some vain babble which He never commanded. I don't doubt that God is sick of hearing twenty "Our Father's" and ten "Hail Mary's" and two "Glory Be's" or your "Om" chants or whatever your religious preference happens to be. Consider what Jesus said about personal prayer:

"But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

Matthew 6:6, KJV

Unfortunately, some churches have interpreted this verse in a literal sense instead of in the way Jesus really meant for it to be understood. Jesus is not talking about going into some manmade confessional box and praying to a priest. He is talking about closing your eyes in the privacy of your own home and praying to your Father in Heaven directly, in the name of Jesus Christ. You don't even have to close your eyes, but sometimes it helps to block things out around you so you can really concentrate on what you are saying. This is what is meant by going into your closet. As I explain in the series "Is Jesus the Only Begotten Son of God?", we must remember that Jesus is our only High Priest. Some of the verses which I include in that series are the following:

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;"  
Hebrews 3:1, KJV

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession."  
Hebrews 4:14, KJV

"Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."  
Hebrews 6:20, KJV

There is absolutely no mention of a third party in the previous verse from Matthew. It is just you and the Lord talking together. Jesus said to do it in secret between yourself and your Heavenly Father, and not with some earthly ordained father of some church. In fact, Jesus also said:

"And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven."  
Matthew 23:9, KJV

How can your prayer be in secret between you and the Lord when the priest knows, and everyone else sitting on the pews waiting their turn also know what a lousy sinner you must be for even showing up there? While this sign of humility on your part is a good thing, it doesn't negate the fact that this false practice is not ordained of God. It is based on a false and twisted interpretation of the following verse:

"Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."  
John 20:23, KJV

The Catholics in particular have taken this verse to mean that they are to set up their ecclesiastical hierarchy, and that people are to come to them to obtain forgiveness of sins, as well as Salvation. This whole idea of confessionals is a well-thought-out plan to keep people in bondage to the church. As a former Catholic myself, I can speak from firsthand experience. It is about power and control over people's lives. Confessional boxes are a means of forced humiliation to keep people in subjection. By falsely making their members believe that their Salvation is based upon their adherence to the church's teachings, instead of upon the sacrificial Blood of Jesus Christ, these poor people are coerced into going to confession to make their dirty deeds known to a priest. It is simply something which I cannot understand. If I were a priest having to endure such things, I think I would go crazy. I don't see how they can sit there week after week hearing people's sins and shortcomings. It must make some of them feel really proud and self-righteous, and glad that they aren't as bad as those they are listening to. I am reminded of something Jesus said in one of His parables:

"And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."  
Luke 18:9-14, KJV

Aside from the fact that this parable is a lesson in humility, notice also to whom they are directing their prayers. Are they praying or confessing to a temple priest? No! They are praying directly to God. It is a one-on-one contact with no third party mentioned whatsoever. This is the very same example Jesus gave us when He said:

"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name."  
Matthew 6:9, KJV

What we also see is that these two men did not pray some kind of ritualistic prayer pre-determined for them by the temple priests; they prayed directly from their hearts; at least the second one did. What I find interesting is that over the years, as some churches have drifted further and further away from the Lord themselves, they have become more lenient concerning hearing confession. When I was a young boy, weekly confession was a must, or else you were not supposed to partake of the Eucharist, something else which has become another idol with the Catholic Church. From what I understand, confession is now only required several times a year, and in some religions, only once a year.

The Apostle James made it clear that we are to confess our sins to each other, to forgive each other, to forgive and be forgiven by those whom we have offended, or who have offended us. This is what brings about spiritual healing of the soul. It also heals personal relationships. This is what is meant by a true confession, and not going to some priest who has absolutely nothing to do with the matter. It is only then, after clearing things up with the person we have offended, that the Lord tells us that He will hear us and forgive us:

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."  
James 5:16, KJV

Notice how in the above verse, confession is a two-way street. Each party is confessing their faults to each other. They are both forgiving each other. Is that what you see when you go to your confessional booth? Does your priest also tell you what a lousy sinner he is, or does he just sit there quietly on the other side of that partition waiting to dole out your penance like some magical formula which is going to save your soul due to the good graces of the "Holy Mother Church"? I don't know how many of you have ever seen the film "Brother Son And Sister Moon", but if you want to see a real expose on the Catholic Church, that is a movie to see. It caused quite an uproar when it first came out several decades ago. It exposes the hypocrisy of organized religion, and the Roman Catholic Church in particular. That is the only church I have ever heard of where you can literally pay for forgiveness of sins and bribe your way into Heaven. What a film! The director, Franco Zefferelli, must be a real iconoclast. His lengthy "Jesus Of Nazareth" is another film I highly recommend.

I can recall times in my childhood when I would have a

really hard time trying to think of something to say to the Catholic priest, some dirty sin I had committed during the week, even if there really weren't any. As I mentioned above, you were expected to go to confession every week if you wanted to feel worthy of communion on Sunday. Now tell me, how many serious sins can a little kid commit in one week? Trying to think of a venial sin was hard enough, but a mortal sin? Forget it! I am sure those priests must have gotten some good laughs out of some of the things we kids would tell them in all our childish seriousness. As I have already said, it was a complete bondage trip topped off with having to repeat the "Our Father", "Hail Mary" and "Glory Be" so many times in order to earn forgiveness and show repentance.

I remember times when we would just race through our penance prayers or even cheat just so we could get out of there. It was easy to tell who had the biggest sins by watching who had to stay to pray the longest. What humiliation! What embarrassment! As I have already shown, this is NOT what the Bible instructs us to do. In the previous verse from the Epistle of James, James was basing his teachings upon the words of Jesus Himself who said to go directly to your brother whom you have offended:

"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

Matthew 5:23-24, KJV

"And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us . . ."

Luke 11:4, KJV

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

Matthew 6:14-15, KJV

In the above verses, Jesus is clearly saying that before we can expect God to forgive us, we must first be reconciled with and forgive others we have been offended by, or whom we have offended. There is no mention here of a repetition of some established prayer to somehow merit forgiveness or atonement for our sins. Forgiveness and atonement only comes through forgiving others, and through accepting Jesus' overall Atonement for the sins of mankind by shedding His Blood on the Cross. If we forgive each other, God will then forgive us through the Death of His Son on the Cross. Consider what the Apostle John tells us in one of his epistles:

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

1 John 1:9, KJV

As I said earlier, if we are really sorry for our sins, it is through change in our lives that we show our repentance, and not by saying some prayer over and over again just to

fulfill the church's requirement. There is no place in the Bible where we are told to engage in such practices, and I challenge anyone to prove otherwise. The Scriptures I have shared thus far make this very clear.

Much like some churches today, the Scribes and Pharisees of old used the oral and written Law to place themselves over the common people. Their many traditions were the tool they used to control the masses. While everyone else was guilty of sin, they did their best to present themselves as the perfect examples of sinless perfection. It is for this reason that when Jesus, the True Son of Righteous arrived, they had to constantly judge and criticize Him in order to cover their own sins. But, as Jesus later said, once He had revealed The Truth to them, they no longer had a cloak for their sins:

"If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin."  
John 15:22, KJV

I am reminded of the time they dragged the woman before Jesus whom they accused of being caught in the very act of committing adultery. Consider their words:

"And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not."  
John 8:3-6, KJV

This was a deliberate act of entrapment. Have you ever stopped to consider how they caught her in the very act? Did they plan it? Did they go in there and pay someone to solicit her services like we have in law enforcement today? It's a very common practice. A law officer will solicit the hooker, and then arrest her when she takes the bait. In other cases, undercover agents will make a drug deal, and then bust the traffickers when they hand over the drugs. The whole reason the Scribes and Pharisees did this was to show how righteous they were in keeping the Law, while at the same time accusing Jesus of being a dirty Lawbreaker, a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a companion of sinners:

"The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! But wisdom is justified of all her children."  
Luke 7:34-35, KJV

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus completely turned the tables on them when He said:

"Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans



and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him."  
Matthew 21:31-32, KJV

Between their many rules and regulations, their confessionals, intimidating system of tithing, etc., some modern churches have become just as corrupt as the religious rulers of Jesus' day. Contrary to what they teach in their systems of bondage, the only One who can forgive us for our sins is our Heavenly Father through the Sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ. He is the only One who can grant us Salvation, contrary to the false teachings of modern religious institutions like the Roman Catholic Church.

Let me say again that we are not supposed to go to some priest who we have not offended. We are supposed to go directly to the person whom we have offended; and that takes a lot of humility. Once we know we have their forgiveness, or at least have tried to obtain it, then we can present ourselves before the Lord; for He is our only High Priest. By now, you the reader should understand that confessional boxes and repetitious prayers like penance and rosaries are a cop-out and a cheap way for trying to find forgiveness with God. They just aren't scriptural practices in the New Testament Church. They are rituals which were added and instituted later by organized religion, particularly by the "founding fathers" -- or so-called "Church Fathers" of the Roman Catholic Church, to maintain a hold on church membership. I have already presented sufficient Scriptural evidence which clearly shows that we are to go directly to God, through Jesus Christ, to seek forgiveness for our sins. King David is a prime example of one who knew how to approach the Lord directly. Psalm fifty-one is an excellent example of a prayer of confession from a sincere and repentant heart. In that psalm he said in part:

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest . . . Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit . . . For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."  
Psalms 51:1-4, 10-12, 16-17, KJV

In the above verses, the "burnt offering" King David is referring to are animal sacrifices. Up until the time of Jesus' Sacrifice on the Cross, building altars to God and offering up a variety of animals was the primary means of worship and atonement. This was practiced by Abraham and the early Patriarchs, by Moses, Aaron and the Levitical priesthood during the time of the Tabernacle, and then continued with the first and second Temples as well. These animal sacrifices served as a foreshadow of the Final

Sacrifice to come through Jesus Christ. As I have shown in other articles, with His Death on the Cross, God entered a New Covenant with His people, not based on the keeping of the Law, or on other works of the flesh like sacrificing animals, but rather based on placing one's faith in the final Sacrifice of His Son as the only means of forgiveness, atonement and attaining Salvation. As Paul said in part in his letter to the Hebrews:

". . . for this he did once, when he offered up himself."  
Hebrews 7:27, KJV

Thus, what we see in Psalm Fifty-One is David's realization that animal sacrifices are meaningless if one does not truly have a repentant heart. They are self-righteous dead works if there is no change of heart and attitude. This is the true sacrifice to God. The Apostle James also delved into similar issues when he explained how faith must be backed by works, not because the works are what save us, but rather because they are a manifestation of our faith:

"Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works . . . For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."  
James 2:18, 26, KJV

Please go to part two for the conclusion of this article.

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TO PRAY OR NOT TO PRAY, THAT IS THE QUESTION : PART 2

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A Discussion On Salvation Prayers, Repetitive Prayers  
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While the Roman Catholic Church outwardly claims to teach its members to have faith in Jesus Christ for their Salvation, anyone who is familiar with their doctrines will know that what they really teach is that the "Holy Mother Church" is the only one who can forgive sins and grant Salvation. In other words, contrary to the Scriptures, they are placing themselves between man and God, thus nullifying the one-on-one relationship I described previously. In essence, they are saying that one cannot approach God directly through Jesus Christ, but must go through the Catholic Church and its priests. If you are not a Catholic,

then you are lost and cannot possibly be saved. But what do the Scriptures really say?:

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;"  
1 Timothy 2:5, KJV

If this isn't bad enough, as I have already shown, even if one is a member of the Roman Catholic Church, the road to Salvation is still not an easy one. Similar to the Law-bound Jews of old, today's Catholic must keep and observe a multitude of church laws, sacraments and practices. If one does not do these things, then he may not be found worthy of forgiveness and Salvation. Because his faith is not directly in the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, but rather in the "Holy Mother Church", he falls under the bondage of having to fulfill all of these ecclesiastical obligations. In light of these many requirements, most Catholics are never quite certain of what their standing is with God. This uncertainty regarding one's Salvation is another clear example of how the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church are in conflict with the Scriptures. As I showed earlier through the verses found in the Epistle of John, God wants us to be sure of our Salvation. He wants us to have no doubt about it whatsoever. Sadly, with the Catholics, Salvation becomes a nebulous issue because one is never sure if he has said quite enough "Our Father's" and "Hail Mary's", or done enough other good works to merit what the Bible clearly teaches is a free gift of God:

"Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many . . . Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."  
Romans 5:14-15, 18, KJV

A free gift is a free gift. If any other requirements are added to it, be they keeping certain laws, or observing certain practices, or belonging to a certain church, then it is no longer a free gift. It then becomes something which must be earned and worked for. Through such corruption of The Truth, a religion of faith can easily be converted into a religion of works. In short, the Roman Catholic Church, and other churches and organizations as well, have simply replaced the animal sacrifices of yesterday with a new set of rules and practices which can't save anyone no matter how often they are kept, or how frequently they are repeated.

Returning to the issue of confession, there is one example in the Scriptures where public confession of sin may be warranted. By public confession, I am not referring to entering a confessional box to reveal your sins to a priest, but rather to admitting your errors before the congregation of believers with whom you may happen to be in fellowship. This belief is based on the oft-quoted phrase "They that sin before all, rebuke before all." This phrase has been

adopted from a statement made by Paul in his letter to Timothy:

"Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear."

1 Timothy 5:20, KJV

Notice that the verse does not actually say, "they that sin before all"; however, that is what it is usually understood to mean. After all, if it is just something between you and another brother or sister, or between you and the Lord, then why make a bigger issue out of it than it really needs to be? Most people don't care to hear about your personal sins. They already have enough of their own if they are being honest with themselves. On the other hand, if your sin is something major which has affected a lot of people in a negative way, then as Paul states, a public rebuke may be in order. A public rebuke should result in public confession and public repentance. As Paul says here, the whole purpose of a public rebuke is not only to let everyone know that these things have not been done in secret, but also to strike godly fear and reverence in those who might be following the same wrong path, or at least who might be contemplating such things. The attitude I am referring to is one that says "Well, if that person can get away with it, then maybe I can too". Public rebuke helps to put a stop to this type of behavior, or at least it should if those who are involved are sensitive to the Spirit of God. As I have shown in other articles, in these Last Days, some have already hardened their hearts against God and are past feeling the conviction of His Spirit:

"This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."  
Ephesians 4:17-19, KJV

Jesus followed this same practice of public rebuke on a number of occasions such as when He publicly rebuked the moneychangers in the Temple. In Matthew chapter twenty-three we find another example where He totally exposed the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees. Notice though that these rebukes, like those of John the Baptist, were not always followed by public confession of sin as would be expected if just one person were being rebuked and dealt with. The idea was to hopefully prick the public conscience so that some would come to repentance. That is why we are told that John preached a baptism of repentance:

"John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."  
Mark 1:4, KJV

John's whole purpose was to help people acknowledge their sins, and thus repent in preparation for He Who would come to give them full Salvation. Paul confirmed this in the Book of Acts when he said to the Ephesian Disciples:

". . . John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus."  
Acts 19:4, KJV

The Prophets of the Old Testament did the same thing and were constantly rebuking Israel because of her sins and rebellion against the Lord. Unfortunately, despite the many Prophets the Lord had sent unto her, many of which she persecuted and killed, by the end of the Old Testament, we find that Israel is still just as hardhearted and rebellious as ever. It is for this reason that the Lord had to send forth John in the Spirit and Power of Elijah as I have fully explained in other articles on this topic.

Returning then to the topic of Salvation prayers, I am not certain how the practice evolved. However, if we consider some of the verses commonly found in Salvation tracts, some of which I use myself, we will begin to understand why praying a Salvation prayer has become a commonly accepted practice amongst those who preach the Gospel. Some of the following verses emphasize an act of accepting and believing in the Lord as our Saviour. Other verses show us that in order to receive anything from the Lord, such as the Holy Spirit, we must ask for it. Whether this requires a verbal prayer or just simply a mental thought or desire is not made clear. Still others show that we must personally open the spiritual door of our hearts and enter into Communion with the Lord. I am not referring to the practice of the Roman Catholic host or Eucharist, but rather entering a spiritual relationship with the Lord. Finally, other Scriptures seem to indicate that confessing the Lord before others verbally is also a condition of Salvation. Taken as a whole, these verses seem to be saying that, while not absolutely necessary, a Salvation prayer sure couldn't hurt; and it strengthens the Faith of those who have prayed it:

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:"  
John 1:12, KJV

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."  
Matthew 7:7-8, KJV

"And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."  
Matthew 21:22, KJV

"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."  
1 John 5:14-15, KJV

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."

John 15:16, KJV

"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

Luke 11:13, KJV

"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 will sup with him, and he with me."

Revelation 3:20, KJV

"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. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Romans 10:9-10, KJV

As can be seen, asking is a very important part of our walk with the Lord. Granted, the Lord already knows that we have need of these things, particularly our physical needs, but it seems that this manifestation of our Faith by asking Him seems to be pleasing to Him:

"Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him."

Matthew 6:8, KJV

"(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."

Matthew 6:32, KJV

"For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things."

Luke 12:30, KJV

As Romans 10:9-10 seems to indicate, the very act of verbally confessing and telling others about Jesus seems to be another requirement for our Salvation. Could this be why in some places the Lord said that "he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved"? Could this be referring to those who continue to manifest their Faith by witnessing to others right up to the end in spite of ungodly antichrist persecution? This is the price the first Disciples had to pay. Why should we be any different? Allow me to clarify that this is not working for our Salvation; but rather it is a manifestation that we are truly saved, just as I pointed out earlier. On the other hand, what if we don't confess the Lord before others? Again, the scriptural answer is very clear:

"Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

Matthew 10:32-33, KJV

"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall

the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

Mark 8:38, KJV

"Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God."

Luke 12:8-9, KJV

What is very interesting about this act of publicly confessing Christ, is that the reason many people don't do it is simply because of pride. They have a personal image to uphold. They are afraid of what people will think of them if they start talking about Jesus and the Bible. In other words, they are menpleasers instead of God pleasers. As true Christians know, more and more each day, we are being made to look like fools in the eyes of the modern world. A typical response from the enemies of Christ might be: "With all of the 'truths' modern science has discovered in recent decades, how can you possibly be so foolish as to continue to cling to your ancient texts and religious 'myths'?" This type of reaction is nothing new. Satan has been using these same tactics to try to neutralize Christians for thousands of years. It all comes down to peer pressure and a fear of public opinion. Consider the following verses:

"These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue."

John 9:22, KJV

"Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue:"

John 12:42, KJV

What a paradox! The very ones who are supposed to be representing God's presence on Earth, are the same ones who fight against Him and His children who attempt to confess His name! Not only that, while non-Christians and atheists accuse us of believing in and serving our God out of fear, they are guilty of these very things themselves. They are so afraid of being considered a little odd, a little abnormal, afraid of not being accepted by their peers, that they bow down in fear to their false god Satan. If they would just take a step of Faith and believe, they would be liberated from their bondage and lives of darkness. In his perverted way of seeing things, Satan has twisted everything around and made the Lie appear as the Truth, and the Truth as the Lie. The Prophet Isaiah uttered a strict warning regarding such things when he said:

"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"

Isaiah 5:20, KJV

Sadly, these stupid foolish people fall for his lies, because they are guilty of the very same sins of pride and vanity as he is. In the book of Acts we find other examples where the

enemies of Truth persecute those who would dare to shine the Light into their world of darkness. Here is one example:

"And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men . . . and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go."  
Acts 5:27-29, 40b, KJV

If you think the same thing isn't happening today, guess again. Some of the large popular denominations just love to persecute the smaller ones, accusing them of being cults and sects. They will go after any smaller church, organization, group or individual who dares to defy or question their established beliefs and man-made traditions. I know because I have experienced my share of persecution in my days. As the old saying goes, "When you do it right, the devil will fight!" Or, as the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy:

"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."  
2 Timothy 3:12, KJV

Of course, to keep things in balance, we should also recognize that there are such things as cults which do gather around and exalt someone and/or some doctrine other than Jesus Christ and the Bible. As Jesus warned us in Matthew chapter twenty-four, there are many false Christs and false prophets in the world today:

"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."  
Matthew 24:24, KJV

Therefore, we must indeed be wary of them. If you would like an excellent list of Scriptures which refer to these types of false teachers and doctrines, please see the article entitled "Endtime Witnessing: Winning the Sheep and Waging the Warfare". What we need to realize is that some of the larger denominations use the fact that there are cults in the world today as a catch-all to harass and persecute other sincere Christians whose views may be different from their own. The point is, the minute you make a confession of Faith in Jesus Christ, either through a simple thought, desire, or a verbal prayer, and then begin to publicly witness the same to others, you should expect some degree of persecution from the enemies of Christ, even from some of those who claim to represent Him. Persecution is simply part of God's judgment process. Until the wicked have filled their cup of iniquity, God cannot judge them righteously. Such is the case with the judgment of Babylon The Great Whore in the Book of Revelation:

"Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double."



Revelation 18:6, KJV

If you are interested in my own surmisings regarding this mysterious woman, please read my series "Revelation's Babylon The Great".

In conclusion, perhaps we can regard a Salvation prayer as a means of priming our spiritual pump, or as a means of legitimizing our new relationship with Christ. If a Salvation prayer helps to bring more people to Jesus Christ, I personally see nothing wrong with it. It certainly can't hurt anything. Rather than getting technical and arguing over the method which is being used to bring lost souls to Christ, let's all be thankful for the fact that good fruit is being born in the lives of millions of people all over the world. After all, that is what being a Christian is all about. It isn't just a matter of our own Salvation, but rather of sharing the Message of Salvation with others by whatever means the Lord puts at our disposal. Let's not get so hung up with the method, that we forget the Message. It is through belief in the Message that we are saved, and not through the manner or method in which that Message is delivered. I pray that this article has been a help and a blessing in your life, and that The Truth it contains will liberate many from their current bondage. As Jesus said:

". . . If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

John 8:31b-32, KJV

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