

Repentance, Lordship Salvation, Cheap Grace, Easy Believism, Quick Believism, Easy Prayerism, Decisional Salvation and Evangelism

(Defining the Terms)

Pastor Kelly Sensenig

We live in a day when terms and various concepts are thrown around that are misleading and sometimes misunderstood by those involved in the work of evangelism. This study tries to clear up some issues regarding various terms that are used in connection with evangelistic outreach and addresses the wrong approaches to evangelism. If we are going to be an avid soul winner, we must present the Gospel clearly and understand what God requires for a person to be converted and become a Christian.

This study developed from several conversations we had at our annual street fair and our evangelism ministry. Several of us, as brethren, were concerned about the unbiblical approaches that some soul winners and ministries were adopting to win the unsaved masses. We concluded that there are wrong methods being used by soul winners (evangelists) today as they cast out the Gospel net. There are errant presentations of the Gospel and wrong methods of evangelism that distort the true meaning of faith and repentance. There are also pressure tactics being used by soul winners to gain converts. Some of the methods being implemented in evangelism confuse the lost, give the unsaved false hopes, and create legalistic conditions that poor lost sinners must follow in order to be saved, which in the end create doubt and fear in the sinner's heart. It's my prayer that this study will be used to help all of us develop a Biblical and healthy approach to evangelism.

Rebellion and Repentance

Repentance is part of the Great Commission (Luke 24:47) and is required by God (Acts 17:30) for salvation (2 Cor. 7:10). Repentance is a change of attitude within the mind and heart (Luke 13:3, 5; 15:7; Acts 3:19; 17:30; Acts 26:20) concerning one's sin and rebellion against God. A person cannot be saved when they are in rebellion against God! Therefore, when a person repents, he will *acknowledge* his own sinfulness before God (Ps. 51:4; Luke 15:18) and be *willing* to forsake, or

abandon those sins, which God is convicting him about and no longer desire to live in rebellion against God (“they turned to God from idols” - 1 Thess. 1:9). Repentance will prepare the person’s heart to believe on Jesus Christ to be his Savior (John 6:47). Repentance is a person’s recognition of their need for grace and is a preparatory step to receiving the free gift of grace (Eph. 2:8-9). Without repentance a person will remain in their state of rebellion, defiance, and stubbornness against God (John 5:40). Essentially, repentance involves the desire to be liberated from sin and no longer live under sin’s power. An unsaved person will certainly possess the desire to be freed from sin’s power if he is ready to be saved.

It should be noted that those who follow Lordship Salvation teaching demand that sinners must surrender their entire lives to God forever to be saved. This commitment to surrender is designed to bring the sinner out of his state of rebellion against God. However, this is man’s approach to changing a sinner’s rebellious spirit by leading him to make a legalistic promise to God that he will surrender his life forever to inherit eternal life. It must be remembered that a person’s repentance over sin will naturally produce a *desire* to be liberated from sin (Isa. 55:7; John 8:11); therefore, the evangelist or soul winner does not have to try and force it upon the sinner.

The soul winner should never set up “surrender” requirements or any other stipulations (discipleship, mastery, lordship, counting the cost) as the necessary *means* of salvation and entrance into eternal life. There are no specified “conditions” that a sinner must meet or actually “do” in order to receive eternal life (Isa. 55:1). When genuine repentance occurs in the heart, a person will naturally want to be released from his sins and no longer rebel against God. The soul winner can’t get the sinner to do something (repent) that only God can do in the sinner’s heart (Acts 11:8).

Romans 2:4

“Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?”

When witnessing to unsaved people I have been asked, “Must I give up my sin or change my life?” Of course, the way to answer this question is rather simple. I usually respond, “Not until you are ready to be liberated or released from your sin

will you want to embrace Christ as your Savior.” This is because repentance always precedes faith in the conversion response (Acts 20:21). Another way to address the sinner who asks, “Must I give up my sins in order to be saved,” is to simply reply, “God does not require that you must actually reform your life or give up all of your sins to earn salvation, but unless you are *willing* to turn away from your sins, then you are not ready to be saved.” You might also add, “God wants everyone to come to the place of repentance (2 Pet. 3:9) and no longer possess a rebellious spirit against Him.” These are simple ways to address people with the message of repentance without adding legalistic requirements of Lordship Salvation when speaking to sinners.

Scripturally speaking, a person does not have to actually give up his sins, change his life, make any promises to God, or meet any other conditions for salvation; however, when a person is under the Spirit’s conviction, that person will naturally want to be liberated from their sins and change their course in life, if they are truly repentant (John 8:32, 36). They will want to turn to God from their idols and rebellious ways (1 Thess. 1:9).

It’s one thing to repent before God (desiring liberation from sin), but it’s quite another thing to make legalistic promises to God, which actually require a person to surrender his life to God forever, turn over a new leaf, seek to follow Christ’s plan for discipleship, and pay the necessary price of following Jesus Christ in order to be saved. In repentance a person naturally possesses a broken and surrendered heart. However, a person can change biblical repentance into the lordship message of “surrender” or “commitment” which means a person must become something (a follower or disciple of Christ), do something, or accomplish something before God, in *outward demonstration and action*, so that God will accept them in the end and give them eternal life.

Luke 24:47 commands us that “repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations.” Preaching repentance occurs when the soul winner tells sinners they must possess a different attitude about God, sin, Jesus Christ, and the way of salvation (by grace) before they can be saved. We can share with the lost that they must change their attitude or thinking regarding their sinfulness before the only true Lord (Acts 16:31) or living God (Acts 17:24; 1 Thess. 1:9), that their sin separates them from this holy God (Isa. 59:2), that human

works cannot save them (Heb. 6:1), and that Jesus Christ is the only means and way to salvation (John 14:6).

We must also share with the sinner that he must also possess a desire to no longer live in sinful rebellion against God and turn away from his sinful living (Acts 26:18). However, we should never send the message to the sinner that God requires him to actually “do” something, such as reform his life, surrender his life to God forever, give up all his sins, become a disciple and follower of Jesus, in order to gain or merit eternal life. Preaching Biblical repentance is one thing; preaching legalistic reformation is another thing.

Acts 26:20 says that people “should repent and turn to God” (the root of repentance – an inward change of heart that occurs at conversion), “and do works meet (suitable) for repentance” (the fruit of repentance – the outward change of living that occurs after salvation). 1 Thessalonians 1:9 speaks of how the people “turned to God from idols” (the root of repentance – the conversion response) “to serve the living and true God” (the fruit response – the post-conversion response). The *root* of repentance involves a desire to no longer live in rebellion against God, but the *fruit* of repentance involves transformation and change that follows salvation (Matt. 3:8). The root of repentance, a desire to depart and be freed from sin, is all that is required for conversion, while the fruit of repentance (works and reformation) is what follows conversion (Isa. 55:7; Ezek. 14:6; 18:30; Luke 15:18, 20).

As we evangelize the lost, we should never confuse the root with the fruit. The soul winner should not expect the sinner to bring forth the fruit of repentance until after salvation (Eph. 2:10). He should not put the cart before the horse. Making the outward actions of transformation (commitment, surrender, discipleship, following Jesus), as a necessary requirement for salvation to occur in the sinner’s life, confuses the message of free grace and distorts the meaning of biblical repentance.

Repentance involves an individual possessing a newfound attitude or desire to be released from sin’s power, but it does not involve a sinner creating a list of “do’s” and don’ts” that he will follow, or promising God that he will surrender and commit his life to Him forever, or engage in certain actions that please God, since this can lead the sinner to think he can earn God’s favor or grace by following

certain codes and rules of conduct (“What shall I do to inherit eternal life” – Luke 18:18). The sinner must not “do” anything in order to inherit eternal life. He can only repent and believe in Jesus Christ which cannot involve any human meritorious acts (Rom. 3:20).

One thing is certain, if there is no genuine repentance, a change of attitude regarding one’s sinfulness before God and desire to be released from sin’s power, then there can be no genuine faith directed toward Christ (trust or reliance upon Christ alone for salvation). The simple truth is this, people need to possess a different *attitude* toward sin if they are going to be saved. If people have a change of attitude toward their sins, they will be *willing* to change the course and direction of their lives and no longer live in open rebellion against God. Therefore, there is no need to press them with legalistic lordship/master/discipleship requirements in order to get them to change their lifestyle. When an individual is ready to repent, they will not need coaxing or some kind of legalistic blueprint to follow.

Requirements for Salvation?

Adding requirements for the sinner to follow is not necessary, nor is it Scriptural. When a person repents, they won’t have to be presented with a list of requirements or a list of sins they must actually give up in order to be saved, nor must they be presented with the demands of discipleship. In other words, they don’t have to promise to become a disciple or follower of Christ the rest of their lives (Lordship Salvation).

A person must not be presented with the idea that they must do something, give up something, or become something so they can be saved. A person does not make a contract with God in order to be saved! Conversion is not making Christ Lord over every area of your life. Lost sinners are spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1-2) and cannot make Jesus Lord of *any* area of their lives, much less *every* area. However, sinners can experience brokenness over their sins and in a general ways desire liberation from their sins.

There is a marked difference between the “Lordship Salvation” approach to evangelism (sinners needing to meet certain requirements and conditions for eternal life) and presenting the message of repentance to unsaved people (sinners

changing their mind about their sins and wanting to be liberated from these sins). Let us remember that God will put His finger on those specific sins that a person has committed against His holy law and create repentance in a person's heart (Rom. 2:4).

This reminds me that soul winners should never be quick to tell a person that his social drinking, smoking, chewing tobacco or some other known vice condemned by many fundamental Christians, is a sin in the eyes of God. The sinner may not even realize that these types of things are sins against God. The Holy Spirit will reveal those specific sins that will bring inner conviction to the sinner's heart and it's these sins that will bring them to the place of repentance. Going through the Ten Commandments is the best way to get the sinner to see his sinfulness before God and need for repentance ("for by the law is the knowledge of sin" - Rom. 3:20).

Let us remember that we cannot create repentance in the heart of lost sinners by placing certain lordship demands upon them and getting them to promise that they will surrender their lives to God forever. God is the only one who can change the hearts of people (Ezek. 36:26). Adding demands upon the sinner will not create repentance in the heart. Only God's inner conviction can create a repentant heart and change a person's life forever. Only God can make a brand-new heart (Jer. 24:7).

Now let's pose several questions. Is salvation a game of percentages? What percentage of "lordship" or mastery over one's life must Christ possess, for a person to actually be saved and know that he is going to Heaven? It is 70, 80, 90, 95, or 100 percent? If it's 100 percent, we are all doomed since we are all imperfect (Gal. 3:10). If you must actually "make" and "keep" Jesus Lord (master) over every area of your life in order to be saved, then this is nothing less than a works approach to salvation. It also results in a lack of assurance regarding one's salvation. This is why the Lordship Salvation approach to evangelism confuses sinners and causes Christians to look at their *performance* instead of to Christ and the *promise* of eternal life that He gave to them (1 John 5:11-12).

Repentance is one thing (a change of attitude about one's sins and a desire to no longer remain in rebellion against God) but promising to *do* something, *become* something, and *follow* something to be saved (and essentially remain saved) is

nothing less than a works/salvation approach. It's frontloading and backloading the Gospel with works.

Lordship Legalism

Legalism appears in all types of forms and is given many different names (following, discipleship, lordship, surrender, paying the price) but it ends up being the same thing - the way of human effort. Reformed teachers stress that their view of works confirms one's faith and salvation. This is true after one's salvation and conversion has occurred (James 2:14-26). However, it is not true in relationship to the conversion experience, or placing faith alone in Christ, at the time of one's salvation (John 3:15-16; 6:47; Gal. 3:26). Works can be viewed as secondary confirmation of one's salvation, *after* a person is already saved (2 Pet. 1:10; 2 Cor. 13:5; 1 John 2:3-4; 3:6-10), but they should never be viewed as the primary *source* of one's assurance.

The whole underlying premise of the Lordship Salvation view might be better labeled "lordship legalism." This is because legalism involves man doing something to be saved instead of looking to Christ and His finished work (John 19:30) to rescue a person from hell. Legalism adds man's performance and promises to Christ's finished work and violates the message of free grace (Gal. 2:21; 5:1, 4).

Those who embrace the Lordship Salvation approach to evangelism will tell you that pressing the lordship of Christ upon sinners (discipleship/mastery salvation) is the only way for them to repent and become a genuine Christian. But they are sending the wrong message to sinners concerning repentance. Repentance is not reformation, commitment, paying back God, penance, or anything like this. It's merely brokenness over sin and the desire of the sinner to be released from sin.

On the following page a chart has been prepared to help the sincere soul winner see the difference between genuine, biblical repentance and the lordship view of repentance and salvation. The difference is easy to see so that we no longer must accept the position that Lordship Salvation is teaching repentance. It's just the opposite, it is teaching lordship legalism.

Lordship Salvation	Repentance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You must make Jesus Lord or Master over every area of your life. • You must become a follower of Christ. • You must meet the requirements of discipleship. • You must take up a cross and follow Jesus. • You must step out and obey His commands. • You must follow God's plan for your life. • You must give up all your sins and forsake your old ways. • You must die to yourself. • You must totally surrender you life to God. • You must promise to follow and serve Jesus the rest of your days on earth. • You must pay the price of following Christ. • You must promise to become a better person, improve your life, count the cost of discipleship, and determine to live right the rest of your life. • You must commit yourself to holy living, so you can examine yourself and be sure that your faith is real or genuine. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sorrow and conviction over sin, a different attitude about sin, which results in a sincere desire to be liberated from sin.

If it sounds like legalism; it is legalism!

The difference is clearly seen between true repentance and Lordship Salvation. In repentance, I am broken over sin and ready to be liberated or freed from sin's power, but I'm not *required* to follow a list, *required* to make Jesus Lord over every area of my life, and I am not *required* to follow the demands of discipleship. This is doing something to be saved and once again confuses the *root* of repentance ("afterward he repented" - Matt. 21:8 - a change of attitude regarding sin) with the *fruit* of repentance ("he went" - Matt. 21:9 - a change of life that follows salvation). A person can be truly repentant, possess a different attitude and brokenness over sin and want to be liberated from sin (John 3:19), without meeting a list of legalistic demands or requirements and be forced to do something in order to inherit eternal life. This is the crux of the whole issue that revolves around Lordship Salvation. They confuse biblical repentance (a desire to no longer live in rebellion against God) with lordship/mastery/discipleship salvation (the need to do something and become something in order to be saved).

Following Christ and changing one's life are matters that deal with the Christian life (2 Cor. 5:17). *You don't get better to get saved; you get saved to get better.* Repentance is one thing (a person's desire to no longer live in rebellion against God) but sharing Lordship salvation (discipleship salvation, following Jesus, making Jesus Master over every area of one's life, reformation, etc.) is something altogether different. People are not saved by obeying a plan but believing in a Person (Jesus Christ). Therefore, we must present Christ to them.

Acts 8:5 declares: "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them." We should do the same today. We must preach or proclaim Christ's death, burial, and resurrection but not Lordship Salvation to lost people. The goal in evangelism is preaching the claims of Jesus Christ regarding His personal work and promise of eternal life (John 3:15-18; 6:47). When we accomplish this task, we are doing the work of evangelism. Anything else is a diversion from true evangelism. In true evangelism, we should never present the Gospel message of Christ's death and resurrection to people and then demand that they must reform themselves, change their life, give up all of their sins, make Jesus Lord over every area of their lives forever, and become a follower of Christ in order to be saved. Again, this is frontloading and backloading the Gospel with legalism (salvation by human works) and no longer makes the "gift" of Gospel salvation free to receive and enjoy for one's entire lifetime (Rom. 3:24; 6:23).

The purpose in witnessing to the lost is not to present Lordship Salvation, which is essentially getting people to promise something, give up things, or become something, so they can be saved. The purpose in witnessing to the unsaved masses is to point them to the saving work of Jesus Christ and His promise which He gave regarding eternal life (John 1:29; 3:16; 6:47). When evangelizing the unsaved, we must allow God to work repentance in the hearts of people, so they can be prepared to place their faith in Christ. It's not our job or the message of the Gospel to get sinners to *promise* they must serve God the rest of their lives in order to be saved. Nor should we tell them that they must *make* Jesus Lord over every area of their lives forever, and *follow* Jesus Christ, or become a *disciple* of Jesus Christ as long as they live in order to be saved.

Many poor lost sinners have already tried to reform (change) their lives and have failed miserably. They don't need the preaching of reformation; they need the promise of eternal life (John 3:15). They need a message of grace - not legalism (works). They need a message of hope, comfort, and reassurance (Titus 1:2; 1 John 5:11-12) - not a message of striving, discipleship, and counting the cost. They need to look to Christ and Him alone (John 3:14-15; Isa. 45:22) for their salvation and find rest for their souls (Matt. 11:28).

The Triangle of Repentance

As soul winners, we must understand that a convicted sinner will *acknowledge* his sinfulness before God (Luke 15:21). He will also possess a different mindset about his sins (Acts 3:19) which offend God's holiness and be ready to turn away from those particular sins (1 Thess. 1:9) that the Holy Spirit convicts him about. Brokenness over sin and a willingness to turn away from sin naturally occurs in the heart of a repentant individual. The soul winner does not have to force certain requirements on a poor, lost sinner to try and make his repentance more genuine or real.

Repentance is like a triangle that has three sides. True repentance involves the MIND (a change of thinking – Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 26:20), the EMOTIONS (a change of heart – regret over one's sins - Matt. 21:29), and a change of WILL (a decision to change one's direction or course in life – Luke 15:10, 18). The third flows out of the first two. When a person changes their mind and heart regarding their sins, they will naturally want to be released or liberated from those sins,

which offend God by turning away from them. All three sides of the triangle are part of what it means to repent. So, what is repentance in the simplest terms? **When a person repents, they will change their mind or thinking about whatever is keeping them from coming to faith in Christ and possess a newfound desire to no longer live in rebellion against God.**

It must be noted that repentance is more than just sorrow. It involves a change of mind about a person's sinfulness before God, the penalty for sin that they deserve, one's need of salvation by grace alone without works, and the Savior's sacrificial provision for salvation on the cross as the only way of salvation. Repentance is part of a person's response toward God; however, faith or trust in the finished work of Christ on Calvary is the result of repentance. Repentance must be followed by faith in the Lord Jesus to save a person from sin's penalty and to give spiritual life to that person (Acts 20:28, John 1:12). Emphasizing only repentance without faith in Christ leaves the unsaved sinner with an incomplete message that does not give a clear understanding of the way of salvation.

Nevertheless, people need to repent of their unbelief, their wrong view of God, or Jesus Christ, their legalism (human efforts to attain salvation), and their own personal sins. Only after repentance has occurred is the sinner ready to place faith in Christ. Repentance prepares the heart for faith or paves the way for belief in Christ to occur.

I usually ask a lost sinner this question: *Is there anything keeping you from coming to faith in Jesus Christ?* If there is hesitancy in their reply, then they have not yet repented of their sins or whatever roadblocks are keeping them from faith in Christ. If they are not broken over their sins through the Holy Spirit's conviction and truly desire to be released from their sins, then they are not prepared to be saved. Another way to ask the question which deals with repentance is this: *Do you want to be liberated or freed from your sins?* If a person responds in the affirmative, then they have repented and are ready to express faith in Christ. People must repent of their sins, or desire liberation from sin's power, before they are ready to place faith in Christ.

There are various sins that the Holy Spirit might bring to a person's attention (Acts 2:37), sins that they must acknowledge before God and repent about if they are going to come to faith in Christ. Of course, sinners can experience brokenness

over their sins and desire liberation from their sins without making promises, contracts, bargains, and legalistic requirements with God (the Lordship Salvation approach to evangelism). In Matthew 19:16 a person came to Christ and asked, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Essentially, Lordship Salvation demands that a person must *do something right, or live a certain way*, if he is going to be saved. The truth is this, there are no good things that people can "do" to merit eternal life, since none of their works before God as unregenerate people are seen to be good (Rom. 3:12). So, the whole premise of Lordship Salvation is a legalistic approach to evangelism.

Cheap Grace

Cheap grace are code words that are normally used by those who teach Lordship Salvation. This unbiblical expression is designed to slander the biblical teachings regarding free grace and simple faith in Christ for salvation, a faith without commitment and obedience. The term "cheap grace" or inexpensive grace is a false concept of grace that is designed to take a potshot at the biblical teaching of "free grace" (Rom. 3:24; Rom. 5:15). If God's grace is received without any payment, promise, or performance on man's part (the free grace and biblical position), then it becomes cheap or inexpensive grace, since it does not cost man anything (his obedience or works). Of course, the word cheap is a manmade expression that the Bible never assigns to grace.

Let's turn the tables on Lordship proponents. The teaching of saving grace is actually cheapened when man tries to link his own acts of obedience to grace, since this distorts the true message of free grace. To conclude that someone must "pay the price" or "count the cost" of discipleship in order to keep grace expensive is a straw man argument. Actually, the price has already been paid on Calvary's cross (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23). It cost God's Son His very own life to rescue us from hell (John 3:16). Jesus declared while hanging on the cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30). Jesus paid it all and this alone makes grace very costly and priceless.

The sinner's response to God does not change the meaning of grace. Grace will always be God's unmerited, unearned, and unchanging favor extended to sinners. However, those who embrace Lordship Salvation often make the claim that if a person does not promise to follow Christ, become better, make Jesus Lord of his life, if a person does not make the commitment to surrender his entire life to God

forever, or make a discipleship deal with God in order to receive the gift of eternal life, then God's grace which was displayed upon the cross of Christ of Calvary can be viewed as something which is cheap or of no significant value, since it does not change the sinner.

According to Reformed teaching, saving people without human commitment and obedience supposedly distorts the purpose of grace, which is to transform people. Therefore, grace without works is called cheap grace, if people do not make a commitment to follow Christ, become His disciple, obey Him, and allow grace to transform their lives. Grace is cheap if man is not required to do something, become something, and promise something to Christ in order to receive salvation and eternal life.

It's true that grace sanctifies people (Titus 2:11-12; Rom. 6:14); however, the sanctification that is related to grace comes *after* a person's conversion. Sanctifying grace is NOT part of the conversion experience. This is what Catholics teach. Saving grace (Titus 2:11) precedes sanctifying grace (Titus 2:12). You can't sanctify someone who is not saved! Therefore, the salvation aspect of God's grace is all that should be presented at the time of evangelizing a person (Acts 15:11; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 2:11).

God's grace is not cheap, or of no value, just because some poor lost sinner at the time of his conversion fails to mention that he is going to try and follow Jesus perfectly, as His disciple, or count the cost and promise to live right the rest of his days on earth. *The meaning and description of grace is not preconditioned on man's response to grace or his reformation.* In other words, grace can only be one thing - "free grace" (Rom. 3:24); it can never become cheap grace based upon man's response to it or his desire for reformation. To attach a description of "cheap" (inexpensive) to the meaning of grace is sacrilegious. The Bible never speaks of grace in this way, and neither should we in order to try and prove a lordship/mastery/disciple salvation theory. Cheap grace is an unbiblical expression that undermines the unchanging meaning and message of grace which is God's unmerited and underserved kindness extended to us through the death of Christ.

One thing is certain, God's grace is not cheap when it comes to the saving of the soul! Grace is expensive. It cost God His dearly beloved Son (John 3:16). To use the word cheap with the word grace almost seems heretical, since it cost the Lord

Jesus His very own life. The unmerited favor of God extended to the sinner for his salvation is the grandest theme of the Bible.

2 Corinthians 8:9 says, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

"It took a miracle to put the stars in place,
It took a miracle to hang the world in space;
But when He saved my soul,
Cleansed and made me whole,
It took a miracle of love and grace!"

God's grace is not cheap! It cost the Father His own beloved Son (John 3:16). If God's grace is cheap then why did Paul repeatedly refer to it as "the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:7; 2:7)? Receiving God's grace and salvation does not cost us anything. It's free (Rom. 3:24). However, it cost Christ everything! This is why grace can never be cheap. Dear friend, it is free grace - not cheap grace! It is amazing grace - not cheap grace!

"Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me,
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind but now I see."

Who is there among blood-bought Christians today who can honestly call God's saving grace cheap? Away with such talk! Our Lord's grace which he showered upon us is not cheap or diminished in any way. Who can place a value on the work of Christ in paying for our sins on the cross? The payment was made (John 19:30) and it was not cheap! It was called "the precious (costly, highly valuable) blood of Christ" (1 Pet. 1:19).

Let's turn the tables on Lordship Salvation. The only way grace could ever be viewed as cheap or of no value is if the recipient were asked to contribute something to his salvation. This would "frustrate" (set aside – Gal. 2:21) the entire teaching of salvation by grace alone (Eph. 2:8) and cheapen its saving value to the sinner. The free gift of eternal life (Rom. 6:23) is also cheapened if it can be earned

in any way by the sinner. So actually, the position of Lordship Salvation, a works-oriented salvation which demands that a sinner must become better, improve his life, count the cost of discipleship, promise to live right the rest of his days on earth, and make Jesus master or lord of His life forever, cheapens the meaning of free and undeserved grace. Furthermore, how could grace be free, undeserved, and unmerited if it cost the sinner everything to receive it? How could it be free if the sinner thinks he must obey God the rest of his life to maintain his salvation?

Easy Believism

“It’s too easy if a sinner just believes in Christ for salvation. An unsaved person must also possess a working faith that steps out in obedience to Jesus Christ’s demands for discipleship.” This is the way many define faith today. The soul winners who espouse Reformed Theology view faith as a working or obedient faith, which is part of the conversion response. Therefore, every sinner, in order to be saved must demonstrate an obedient faith at the time of his conversion experience. He must be ready to step out and follow Christ and obey Him, or else his faith is too “easy” and therefore spurious and unreal. Faith at the time of a person’s conversion must also be accompanied with works for it to be genuine. This is how many soul winners view faith today.

The expression “easy believism” which is essentially “only believism” is misunderstood by many sincere soul winners today. In fact, many soul winners *wrongly* use this as a code word of disdain and scorn when it comes to evangelism. Be careful when you use certain expressions; you may not know their original background and meaning. You might actually be endorsing some aberrant teaching that you don’t agree with by using certain code words or sayings.

Reformed Theologians and Lordship Salvation teachers originally created this terminology (“easy believism”) to teach Lordship Salvation. They claim that if a person does not promise to make Jesus Lord over every area of his life (reformation) or promise to become a follower of Christ (discipleship), then his belief in Christ is not genuine, since his initial faith was not accompanied with works. However, faith or belief in Christ means only one thing - trust or reliance in Christ for salvation (Acts 16:31). Works have nothing to do with saving faith and the sinner’s initial response to Christ (Eph. 2:8-9). Works are not *part* of saving faith in Christ; they *follow* faith (Eph. 2:10). Faith is not doing something or

meeting certain conditions. Faith is not following someone – even Christ! Faith is not surrender, yielding, or trying. Faith is not obedience. Faith is trusting! Lordship Salvation teaching redefines the meaning of saving faith.

The kind of faith that saves is faith alone in Christ alone (Gal. 3:26). It's not a works faith, where one must promise to do something, become something, or serve God the rest of one's life, make Jesus Lord over one's life forever, or reform one's life. Instead, it's a faith that rests in Christ alone for salvation. The faith that leads to salvation is not *doing* something but *believing* in Someone! Faith is only one thing – faith (trust or reliance in Jesus Christ for salvation). We must be careful that we do not add anything to the meaning of faith. On the other hand, we have studied that a person must be willing to repent of his sins before God (Acts 20:21) before he is ready to express faith alone in Christ alone for salvation. A person in open rebellion against God is not ready to express faith in Christ.

The expression “easy believism” (only believism) is actually a mockery used by Reformed teaching which stresses that if a person only believes in Christ, without the accompanying promise of discipleship, following Christ, or making Jesus Lord over his entire life (sanctifying works), that his faith is too “easy” and becomes unqualified to save him. Therefore, faith must include works and essentially become “hard believism.” Reformed teachers say that we should make it hard for sinners to believe in Christ by reminding the sinner about becoming a disciple or follower of Christ, the need to give up their sins and promise to make Jesus “lord” over every area of their lives forever. This is a disguised version of a works-oriented salvation and once again frontloads and backloads the Gospel with works (a person must do something to be saved and prove that he is a genuine follower of Christ the rest of his life).

As far as “easy believism” is concerned, belief in Christ *without works* is the only true and Biblical expression of faith – not belief plus works (a faith that works – resulting in salvation).

Ephesians 2:8-9

“For by grace (*free grace*) are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is the gift of God: Not of works (promising something, doing something, becoming something, remaining something)* lest any man should boast.”

Actually, as it stands, the term “simple” or “easy” faith (believism) is a proper expression, understanding, and way to define faith. Faith is not complicated, and it certainly does not include works/reformation/discipleship. Faith is only one thing – trust or reliance in Christ alone for one’s salvation. Some have adopted the expression “easy believism” to mean “faith without repentance.” It’s true that repentance leads to faith in Christ (Acts 20:21), but repentance must not be wrongly defined as discipleship/mastery salvation for this becomes a faith/works perspective in a person’s conversion experience.

Faith is simple and easy to understand (“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” - Gal. 3:26). Faith is not something profoundly difficult or hard to express, nor is there anything else attached to the meaning and understanding of faith which is designed to make it harder. It’s true that faith won’t be expressed without repentance naturally occurring in the heart of the individual. But repentance does not change the meaning of faith (trust or reliance in Christ alone). It’s still faith alone in Christ alone (without works, discipleship, promises, contract, reformation) that results in the person being saved by grace alone. As evangelists and soul winners, we must not abandon the “easy” or “simple” faith (only believe in Christ) approach in exchange for the “hard” faith approach (lordship/discipleship/mastery/works salvation).

Let us remember that a sinner’s faith in Christ does not include works (Rom. 4:3-4). Faith and works are never mixed when it comes to the sinner’s response to God and his salvation (Rom. 3:27; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5). Therefore, the term “easy believism” (only believism) is not a bogus or untrue teaching when it comes to the sinner possessing faith alone in Christ alone without accompanying works. The soul winner should never look down upon this truth or wrongly use and apply the expression “easily believism” (only believism) in his witnessing outreach. This is because faith (not works) is all that God requires in the sinner’s conversion response to God. Faith is “easy” or “simple” in the sense that it is simply trusting in Jesus Christ without any human works (legalism) at the time of conversion. In the words of Jesus, “only believe” (Mark 5:36).

Quick Believism

A more appropriate expression to use for those who try and rush sinners to decisions for Christ and manipulate or coerce sinners to be saved is “quick

believism.” The misguided soul winner that tries to push decisions on lost sinners or get them to make rash decisions is attempting to take the place of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8). They are also manipulating people (2 Cor. 4:2), making converts of man (Matt. 23:15), and ignoring the fact that biblical repentance must occur in the heart of the sinner before a person can be saved (Luke 13:3).

As soul winners, we should present the lost with the person and work of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 2:2; 15:3-4) and invite sinners to be saved (John 7:37; Acts. 8:37; Rom. 10:13; Rev 22:17). However, the soul winner must be acutely aware that many people are not ready to be saved due to the timing of God’s work in the heart (John 6:44; John 3:8) and the sinner’s response to God’s work in the heart (Acts 7:51). On the other hand, if a person has fully understood the truth (1 Tim. 2:4) and their heart has been prepared by God and grace to be saved (Acts 16:14; 18:27) through inner conviction, then we should proceed to lead them to Christ if the opportunity arises.

We must remember that people can say certain things with their mouth and lips about Jesus Christ, but not be truly saved. God said to the prophet Isaiah: "This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me" (Isaiah 29:13). We must remember this when it comes to the error of “quick believism” which is leading a sinner to pray a quick prayer, directing words to Jesus, without the sinner contemplating who Jesus is, what Jesus has done for them, and possessing a desire for pardon and release from his sins.

Brothers and sisters, as we go out in the highways and byways of life (Matt. 22:9-10), let us not be rash, or act too hastily in our evangelism approach. Let us not be short with sinners. It often takes time to direct people to faith in Christ (John 4:6-27). We must allow the Spirit to work in the hearts of people and wait on the timing of the Lord, “To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith ... “ (Acts 26:18).

Jesus taught in John 3:8

“The wind bloweth where it listeth (purposes), and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”

Easy Prayerism

“Just pray this prayer and you will be saved.” How often have we heard this from a soul winner? The tragedy of this approach to evangelism is that many people pray prayers that are meaningless to them, and they go on in their rebellion against God, unbelief, and become confused about the true way of conversion and salvation. In fact, many sinners actually think that the prayer they have prayed had some magical, saving value and look to the prayer as the means of their salvation, instead of looking to Christ (Isa. 45:22).

I had a man tell me at our Ephrata Street Fair ministry say to me, “I already prayed that prayer.” I asked, “What prayer?” He said, “You know, the prayer that we are supposed to pray to get right with God.” This man, like others, can become very confused when evangelists press prayers on people when they don’t even understand about repentance and faith in Christ. Call it what you may, but “easy prayerism” is a good way to explain it.

Since repentance is a necessary part of a person’s response (conversion) to God for salvation, the Gospel evangelizer should never *assume* that everyone is ready to believe in Christ after presenting the Gospel facts to them (John 3:19; Acts 17:4-5; 28:24). Therefore, the soul winner should never attempt to quickly lead a person in a prayer so they can be saved. Before a person can believe on Christ for salvation, they must possess an inner awareness that they have offended a holy God (“I have sinned against heaven” - Luke 15:18, 21), they should be broken over their sins (2 Cor. 7:10) and possess the desire to be released from their sinful past and bondage (John 8:32, 36).

Dr. J. Gresham Machen so aptly put it:

"Without the consciousness of sin, the whole of the gospel will seem to be an idle tale."

Many Gospel evangelists are too quick to get people to pray an easy “sinner’s prayer” thinking that everyone is immediately prepared to receive Christ (John 1:12) after a brief Gospel witness. Quite the contrary, it normally takes time for a sinner’s heart to be prepared by grace (Acts 18:27; Gal. 1:15; Acts 16:14; 1 Pet. 1:2) and to “come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:9; Eph. 1:18; 2 Cor. 4:6). For this reason, when the soul winner attempts to get the unsaved to pray a

quick prayer so they can be saved, normally the lost are not prepared to be saved. In fact, there are some poor lost souls who actually believe that praying a quick prayer is what a person must do in order to be saved. The prayer saves them!

After personally witnessing to one couple, they responded to me, “We’ve already done that.” I asked them, “Done what?” They told me, “We’ve already prayed that prayer.” I did not ask them to pray any prayer; however, they associated what I was talking about (the Gospel and the way of salvation) with some kind of prayer they had previously prayed. Throughout the course of our conversation, I perceived that this particular couple did not understand what they prayed and why they prayed it. The consciousness of sinning against God was not understood and their lifestyle clearly demonstrated that they had not come to genuine repentance before God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, they understood nothing about true repentance and faith in Christ. In their mind, a quick prayer made them acceptable before God.

This then is the fallacy of “easy prayerism” which involves a soul winner getting the unsaved to pray an easy or quick prayer before repentance and heart preparation has occurred by the Holy Spirit. This trick of “easy prayerism” has damned many souls to hell by giving them false hopes of acceptance before God and entrance into Heaven.

Jesus taught in Luke 8:13:

“They on the rock *are they*, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root (no repentance), which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.”

This high-pressure tactics of the “quick prayerism” approach can easily bypass repentance where a person does not recognize their true sinfulness before God or understand the true nature of the Gospel or what Christ has done for them. The problem with “quick prayerism” is that it can produce converts of evangelists but not true converts of God. We must remember that conversion and the drawing power of God is a miracle. It is the work of God taking place in a sinner’s heart that leads a person the place of salvation (John 6:44; 12:32). Since conversion is a miracle, it is something God does in the sinner’s heart. No would-be soul winner can take the place of God and create the conversion response in the human heart,

through manipulation and pressure evangelism (easy prayerism). Only God can save a soul. God is true Soul Winner for He is “lord of the harvest” (Mark 9:38).

1 Corinthians 3:6

“I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.”

It’s “trickery” and even “damming” to the unsaved when the soul winner pressures a poor, lost sinner to pray a quick and easy prayer before God has drawn them and led that sinner to the place of repentance (“the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance” - Rom. 2:4). We cannot draw in the net before God has put the fish on the end of the hook! Yes, a person can come to Christ for salvation (John 6:37) but this coming or believing in Christ must be the result of God’s inner work of grace taking place in the heart (2 Thess. 2:13), which in return produces repentance. A person’s belief is counterfeit without repentance. There must be a change of mind or attitude regarding a person’s sinfulness before God and desire to be released from their sins, an understanding that Christ is the only way of salvation, and that their works have nothing to do with salvation. Again, Jesus taught that there is no “root” in this person (Matt. 13:21). In other words, an individual is not ready to genuinely believe in Christ without first repenting (Luke 15:17).

We are once again reminded that salvation is not the result of people doing something (baptism, church membership, discipleship, praying a prayer, reciting the apostle’s creed). Salvation does not involve any work related to man. In fact, salvation does not involve acknowledging a set of doctrinal teachings *about* Jesus Christ (James 2:19). Salvation involves believing *on* Jesus Christ (John 6:29). The only thing a person can do without doing anything is to believe on Jesus Christ (Acts 16:30-31).

Decisional Salvation and Charles Finney

Reformed Theologians also use the code word of “decisional salvation” (a soul winner getting a person to make a decision to be saved) as something which is leading many people to hell. They site Charles Finney and His decisional approach to salvation during his revivals in North America (1825-35) as the enemy to true conversion and the salvation of the soul. Finney undoubtedly reacted to the form of hyper-Calvinism in his day and in doing so was led into his own errors by

deemphasizing God's work and sovereignty in the salvation of the soul. It seems that the popular reception of Finney's teaching was in large part due to an overreaction against the errors of hyper-Calvinism (the extreme and umbilical teachings regarding God's sovereignty).

Finney's theology was not evangelical in its core teaching. Finney taught and believed that man did not inherit Adam's original sin (Rom. 5:12), as the heretic Pelagius taught in the fifth century. Man was not a sinner by nature but only by practice. Finney did not believe that the new birth is brought about by the Holy Spirit (John 3:8). Finney did not believe in justification by faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1). Finney did not believe in the imputed righteousness of Christ (Rom. 4:3). Finney believed that justification comes only by obedience up to the end of one's life which is contrary to Scriptural teaching (Rom. 3:20, 28).

Finney also taught that the atonement (Christ's death) was not a payment for sin (Isa. 53:10), but only a death designed to make us morally good and reform our lives. He taught that the new birth is the result of successful techniques and revival is the natural result of clever campaigns. Finney minimized the sovereignty of God's work on the human soul and will (John 6:44), enthroning the power of the human will and determination to react apart from God's work and initiative, which according to Scripture is impossible (John 1:13).

Finney insisted that depravity is purely a voluntary condition, and therefore, sinners can will themselves to be saved, since all people have a natural ability to obey God. However, the Scripture teaches the opposite (Rom. 3:10-20). He concluded that sin results from wrong choices, not from a fallen nature. According to Finney, sinners can freely reform their own hearts, and must do so themselves, if they are to be redeemed. In general, Finney constantly downplayed God's work in salvation. He *understated* the hopelessness of the sinner's condition and *overestimated* the power of sinners to change their own hearts through personal decision and choice.

Finney was known to use emotional tactics that led to fainting and weeping, and other excitements, including the invention of altar calls which resulted in thousands of people making decisions based upon their own human determination, outside the work of God on the human heart. As a result of Finney's emotional pleas, the emphasis on man's ability and determination, and

his lack of Christ-centered preaching, many people made decisions to be saved without realizing that Christ actually died on the cross to be their Savior, that Christ could save them forever (eternally), and that their repentance and faith needed to be directed to Jesus Christ, the One who paid sin's penalty for them on the cross.

As a result of a man-centered approach to salvation, there were many false or spurious "decisions" made during these alleged revival campaigns. In fact, one of Finney's contemporaries gave this assessment of his revivals: "During ten years, hundreds, and perhaps thousands, were annually reported to be converted on all hands; but now it is admitted, that real converts are comparatively few. It is declared, even by [Finney] himself, that 'the great body of them are a disgrace to religion' [cited in Warfield, 2:23].

In reacting to Finney's theology, some Reformed Theologians throw the baby out with the bathwater by refusing to acknowledge that a person has any decision or choice in his eternal destiny. However, what Finney believed and what the Bible teaches regarding free will and personal faith are two different things completely. The Bible never teaches individualism in salvation but a God-centered movement upon the depraved human soul.

Reformed teaching stresses that God decides who is saved by placing elective faith in a person's heart and that God remains sovereign (in total control) by not allowing the sinner to make any choice regarding his eternal destiny. According to the Reformers, the lost sinner does not and cannot make a personal decision, or choice, to believe on Christ. However, Scripture teaches otherwise (Acts 8:37; 16:31; Rom. 10:13; Eph. 1:13; Titus 3:5). A person is responsible for their belief in Christ (John 1:12) and this does not take away or diminish the sovereignty of God's ways (Isa. 55:8) but magnifies His sovereignty over all things (Ps. 115:3), even the souls of man (Ezek. 18:4).

Those who follow Reformed teaching oppose the biblical teaching that a person can make a personal decision for Christ that results in their salvation. They often term this approach to evangelism as "Finneyism and Decisional Salvation." They will use Finney and his extreme teachings and positions on human freedom, as an example of why there can be no personal choice in relation to the destiny of one's soul. Whoever teaches that a sinner can make a personal decision to believe on

Christ is labeled as a “Finneyite” and is indicted with teaching either Pelagianism or Semi-Pelagianism. Of course, this is erroneous and is the ploy of some Reformed teachers to lump everyone in the same mold who opposes their extreme views on the sovereignty of God.

Many Reformed Theologians argue that a person’s will is so bound by sin that God must regenerate a person first, make him willing, and only then can that person express belief in Christ. However, this is unscriptural, since the Bible teaches regeneration, salvation, and eternal life follows belief (John 1:12-13; 3:16; Acts 16:31; Heb. 10:39) and that a person can make a valid personal decision (volitional choice) to trust in Jesus Christ (Luke 7:50; Rom. 4:5; 1 Cor. 2:5; 1 Pet. 1:9) through the work and assistance of the Spirit upon his heart (John 16:8; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2) *God prepares the human heart for faith but He does not do the believing for the individual.* A person’s faith is an act of their will made possible by the work of God on the human heart. But let us be sure of one thing, belief is a decision. If a sinner does not decide to believe on Jesus Christ (“he that believeth not” – John 3:36), then he won’t be saved.

God *helps* us to have faith but does not *make* us have faith (Matt. 23:37 – “ye would not”). Nor does God soften the heart and make a person willing against their will (Acts 7:51). Man still has the responsibility to express his own faith (Luke 7:50; Rom. 4:5) in Jesus Christ, as God works on the heart, to initiate and inspire faith (John 3:16; 36; 5:24). Human will and volition enter the salvation picture (John 7:37-38). God *helps* us to have faith (John 6:44) but at the same time makes us *responsible* for it (John 6:37 – “him that cometh unto me”). Man, with God’s assistance, can decide to *use his own volition*, to express faith in Christ (Rev. 22:17). In short, God brings a person to the threshold of salvation by supplying him with light (John 12:35) and allows every person to make a valid choice (decision) regarding their eternal destiny (“While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be children of light” – John 12:36). God does not override the human will and man’s power of decision or choice, as He moves upon the human will, to inspire salvational faith. Jesus said, “And ye would not come unto me, that ye might have life” (John 5:40).

The human will still remains *autonomous* which means that it’s given the freedom to choose its own destiny, as God works upon the human will, promising deliverance and eternal life to the sinner. A prisoner behind bars, if given the

chance or opportunity to leave the prison cell, can choose to respond favorably to the opportunity. In a similar way, those who are imprisoned by sin and Satan can respond favorably to God's enlightening (2 Cor. 4:4), illuminating (Heb. 6:4-5), and convicting call (John 16:8) and make a valid choice regarding Christ and their eternal destiny ("And many believed on him there" – John 4:42). To conclude that the human will is only subject to the sin nature and has no freedom to exercise itself otherwise, even with God's aid and help, goes beyond the teaching of Scripture. Physical deadness is not the same as spiritual deadness (Eph. 2:1-2).

Acts 2:37 states:

"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Acts 16:30-31 adds: "... Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

Without the God-given power of choice, no one could be held morally accountable for anything, and the very terms of "right" or "wrong" would be meaningless. Free will simply means a person can choose to accept God's overtures (proposals) upon his heart and express faith in Christ (Acts 17:33 – "certain men ... believed") or choose *contrary* to faith (Acts 17:32 – "some mocked"). This is the Biblical understanding and definition of free will or freedom of choice. Even though a person lacks spiritual life (Eph. 2:1-2), he does not lack personal volition and responsibility toward God (Isa. 1:18), as the Holy Spirit opens his eyes and brings conviction upon his soul (Eph. 1:18; 2 Cor. 4:4). In the end, God must get the credit for the whole transaction of salvation from conviction to conversion since He is the initiator of salvation and the lover of souls ("salvation is of the LORD" - Jonah 2:9).

In reacting to Finney's man-centered approach to salvation, his emotional pleas, altar call tactics, and many false decisions for Christ, Reformed teachers downplay modern-day altar calls. They also speak against assisting an unsaved person to pray the "sinner's prayer." However, this is an overreaction to Finney's deceptive tactics. The Great Commission not only involves proclaiming truth (Mark 16:15), but it also naturally involves seeking a response from those we have witnessed to (Acts 17:30). We are never called to leave people in a state of "limbo" when sharing the Gospel. As opportunity arises, we should give them the privilege to respond in repentance and faith to the glorious message that will free them from

sin's penalty and power and give them eternal life ("And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" - Rev. 22:17).

Altar calls (one approach to evangelism within church meetings) can be done correctly when explaining to those who come forward that they are not saved by doing something (coming forward) or by simply praying a prayer. We need to remind them that the prayer itself does not save them but their faith in Christ is what saves them from hell. The soul winner might help the unsaved sinner to express their own personal faith in Christ by praying and having the sinner repeat a sinner's prayer after him. Both Jesus and Paul approached sinners in unique ways to lead them to salvation (John 4:6-29; Acts 17:22-34). We should not be stuck on just one approach. Of course, whatever approach we use to evangelism, we must remember that it's the Spirit doing the convicting and leading in the heart, the soul winner is just the bystander (1 Cor. 3:8), explaining to the sinner that God is waiting to hear their repentance and faith in the Son of God.

During the era of Charles Spurgeon, he did not use altar calls but untold thousands were saved under his ministry. Of course, this does not mean altar calls are necessarily wrong. I was saved *after* going forward in an evangelistic meeting. I was under deep conviction, and I knew I needed to be saved. I also knew that going forward did not save me. A very gracious man explained to me how I needed to express faith in Christ and be saved. He directed me to pray with him and I was saved. I knew that it was not his prayer that saved me, I understood fully that it was not my own prayer that saved me, but it was my faith in Jesus Christ that saved me. Glory Hallelujah! The problem is not necessarily with altar calls and sinners' prayers, but in directing the sinner to Christ alone through using various evangelistic approaches. This is what is important. Faith alone, in Christ alone, by grace alone (Eph. 2:8-9) must always be our ultimate goal in evangelizing the lost, no matter what approaches are used in the evangelistic outreach (altar calls, sinner's prayers, tract distribution, puppet ministries, chalk artistry, etc.).

Here is the important thing to remember. When witnessing to the unsaved, we must allow God to work repentance and faith in the hearts of people through inner conviction (John 1:13), so they can make a valid decision to trust Christ as their own personal Savior (John 1:12). When the sinner is ready to believe in Jesus Christ, the soul winner can certainly assist him in his response to the Lord through providing an appropriate prayer for him to pray as he (the sinner) expresses his

own faith in Christ (“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” - Rom. 10:13). When a person calls on the name of the Lord for salvation, they are placing faith in Him for salvation. The words “call” (Rom. 10:13), “receive” (John 1:12), and “come” (Rev. 22:17) are all synonyms of faith, which involves an act of the human will (a decision) to trust Christ as personal Savior.

The problem that arises regarding a person’s decision to trust Christ as Savior is when the soul winner gives the sinner the false impression, that if he makes the decision to pray a quick prayer, the prayer itself will save him and make him prepared for Heaven. The sinner might pray a prayer without understanding (1 Tim. 2:4) that he needs to place faith in Christ. In the end, he will say, “I prayed that prayer,” as a way to explain his salvation experience, and still be lost, since he has not truly believed in Christ. In the end, he had faith in a prayer but not faith in Christ.

When using a prayer, the soul winner must make sure that the person is trusting Jesus, not the prayer itself for salvation. To be sure, faith or belief in Christ is a decision of the human will to believe in Jesus Christ (Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:10, 13; 2 Tim. 1:12). Faith is essentially a commitment of a person’s will to Christ alone for his salvation. However, the problem with the modern-day practice of what some have derogatorily called “decisional salvation” is that many soul winners will often make the people believe that the prayer itself saves them and not their belief in Christ. Therefore, the practice of praying and making a quick decision for Jesus has damned many souls to hell, since their faith was never rooted in Christ but a prayer that could not save them.

Although a prayer can be effectively made to express belief in Christ (“God be merciful to me a sinner” – Luke 18:13), the prayer itself must not be presented as the way of salvation and what a person trusts in for his salvation. Prayers alone does not save souls; belief in Christ is what saves souls (John 6:47). The sinner needs to know that there is nothing magical about a prayer; it’s his faith or belief in Christ that saves him. Sometimes I say to the lost sinner who wants to be saved, "The prayer itself is just a guide. The prayer will not save you. The important thing is to come to Jesus and cast your faith upon Him during this time." We must love the people enough (Mark 6:34; Luke 19:41-42) to spend time with them (John 4:1-26) and help them find salvation through Jesus. This is our highest calling as winners of lost souls.

In the end, God gets all the glory for the sinner's salvation and not man (1 Cor. 1:31). The soul winner has nothing to boast about when he is given opportunity to point someone to Christ. The humble evangelist and soul winner will realize that it is "God that giveth the increase" (1 Cor. 3:7) and only "The Lord knoweth them that are his" (1 Tim. 2:19). This will keep the Gospel herald (Mark 16:15) from making outlandish claims that he has led great multitudes to Christ and make the assumption that he is somehow responsible for their conversions. There are some groups that brag about the large number of souls they supposedly have saved. This is erroneous, since only God save souls and since man is only a vessel (2 Tim. 2:21) that God uses to present the Gospel to the lost.

Jesus said in Matthew 23:15:

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves."

Saved (born again, regenerate) people are actually the converts of God; they are not the converts of man. If a person is a man's convert through manipulative, evangelistic techniques, and other gimmicks, that person cannot be saved, and he is on the way to hell (Matt. 7:13-14).

Charles Spurgeon, writing in the "Soul Winner," has said:

"Brethren, we have been greatly disappointed, have we not, with some of our converts? We shall always be disappointed with them so far as they are *our* converts. We shall greatly rejoice over them when they prove to be the Lord's work. When the power of grace works in them, ('Glory!') then it will be, as my brother says, 'Glory!' and nothing else but glory; for grace brings glory, but mere oratory will only create sham and shame in the long run."

To this we say, "Amen!"

As "fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19) and lovers of souls (Prov. 11:30), we must continue to cast out the Gospel net (John 21:6) and be prepared to answer people with the truth (1 Pet. 3:15). However, we must remember that it's God who actually gets the fish to swim into the net. It's God who catches the fish. We are simply fishers and heralds (Rom. 10:14) of the Gospel message that God uses to save souls (Rom. 1:16). It is not our pragmatic, evangelistic techniques and tricks

that will bring in the catch. It will be the work of God upon the hearts of lost people that will fill the Gospel net.

The Secret of Evangelism

A. Skevington Wood once said:

“It is the temptation of this pragmatic age to presume that technique is the secret of evangelism.”

This is true. Many soul winners, like Finney, sometimes think that certain techniques, emotional pleas, and various settings which stir the emotions will save people. However, we must remember that it’s the Word and the Spirit that save souls – not technique.

Lewis Sperry chafer once remarked:

“It may be conceded that genuine results are sometimes obtained even where misleading methods are employed; but there may be great harm done as well. Far too little has been said on this point.”

1 Thessalonians 1:5 declares:

“For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.”

The power of God’s Word and the work of the Holy Spirit taking place in the hearts of the unsaved is the secret to successful evangelism. In a day when pragmatism seems to be the rule of evangelism, God reminds us that His Spirit’s work still rules in the hearts of people.

John 6:63

“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”

I know firsthand that technique does not win souls. It is the power of God that saves souls (Rom. 1:16). Many years ago, I was witnessing to a man. He began speaking about all the good things he had done in life. He went on and on painting the picture that he was an acceptable man in the community. After he was finally

finished, I looked at him and said, "Have you ever done anything bad?" He immediately hung his head in shame. The man was brought under conviction by God for some particular sin that he had committed which he knew offended God's law. I think he mentioned that he sold some cars that were lemons (a mechanical nightmare), and he should not have done this for he knew that he was doing wrong. It's amazing how the Spirit used the Word to convict people and bring them to repentance and faith!

This convicted man kept his head bowed for about thirty seconds. There was complete silence in the room and then he finally lifted his head and began to speak. He revealed the particular sin that he had committed against God. It was an unusual sin, but nevertheless, the Spirit of God pricked his heart and prepared this man's heart for grace by revealing this sin to him (Acts 2:37). It was clear that this man's heart was repentant, and he was ready to believe in Christ for the salvation of his soul.

I invited this man to be saved as Christ invited the woman at the well to drink of His offer of salvation (John 4:13-14). I then directed him in a sinner's prayer, which he prayed sincerely from his heart (Rom. 10:10). As a result, this man was gloriously saved. In fact, later this same man died of cancer. His wife sent me a very nice note thanking me for being part of the answer to why her husband was in Heaven. Of course, it was God who did the work in this man's heart, saved his soul, and prepared him for Heaven. I was only the messenger (1 Cor. 3:5). However, on this day, I realized once again that technique has nothing to do with winning souls (1 Cor. 2:4); it's the work of God upon the human heart that saves souls.

As earnest soul winners, let us never forget that it's God's work, not ours, which prepares and paves the way for sinners to be saved. Any attempts to gain quick converts and press people for salvation decisions when they are clearly not ready to believe and be saved (John 3:36), or do not understand what it means to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4), brings shame upon the soul winner (1 Cor. 15:34) and reproach upon the truth and cause of Christ (1 Tim. 6:1). This kind of evangelism produces proselytes that are the products of pragmatism instead of precious souls that are saved by the power of God (Rom. 1:16).

Bringing in the Sheaves

Psalm 126:6 teaches us an important evangelistic principle:

“He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”

“Sowing in the morning, sowing seeds of kindness,
Sowing in the noontide and the dewy eve;
Waiting for the harvest, and the time of reaping,
We shall come rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves.”

Luke 19:41

“And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it.”

Jesus was moved with compassion and sympathy toward those who were lost and going to hell. When was the last time we wept for someone who was on their way to hell? Weeping means that we will possess compassion for the lost. Weeping means our hearts are broken and stirred over their lost condition, and we want to reach out to them.

This is an important lesson for us to learn as heralders of the Gospel message. But let us remember that *weeping* precedes *reaping*. The earnest soul winner will get God's results (God's converts) when he weeps and pleads for the lost, not when he tricks the unsaved into praying a prayer that is mindless and meaningless to the sinner. There are no shortcuts to true evangelism. We must love the lost enough to get to know them personally. We must love them enough to weep, pray over them, and listen to what they believe, so we can redirect their belief system to Christ alone as the only way of forgiveness of sin and salvation from hell.

When we sit down with a lost sinner, to talk to them about Christ, we should introduce ourselves and eventually ask them, "What do you want Jesus to do for you today?" If the answer they give has anything to do with forgiveness of sins, this gives us a great opportunity to present the Gospel to them as the only way of forgiveness before God and then seek a response from the sinner.

Years ago a visitor went to Dundee, Scotland, deeply concerned that his ministry was producing such meager results. He decided to visit the scene where years

before the saintly Robert Murray McCheyne had ministered in such evident power of the Spirit of God. McCheyne died at the age of thirty not before he had had moved Scotland. The visitor asked the old sexton (church maintenance man) at ST. Peter's if he could tell him the secret of the amazing influence of Robert McCheyne.

The old man led the young minister into the vestry. "Sit down there," he said. "Now put your elbows on the table." He did so. "Yes, that was the way McCheyne used to do it," said the old man. "Now put your face in your hands." The visitor obeyed. "Now let the tears flow!" "That was the way McCheyne used to do," the old man said.

Friend, there is a time for weeping! There is a time for bearing the burden and shedding the tears so we might see God truly bless and see souls saved! Souls are won through prayer, weeping, and the power of the Gospel (1 Cor. 1:21). Let us go (Mark 16:15) but remember again that God is the "Lord of the harvest" (Luke 10:2). Jesus once said that the harvest is at the "end of the age" (Matt. 13:39), meaning that it sometimes comes later, according to God's timetable. The harvest is not always at the end of a church service or immediately after we have witnessed to someone. It can be delayed. Many seeds are often sown; some good watering must also take place, before the reaping comes (1 Cor. 3:8). We often enter into the evangelistic labors of each other. One thing is certain, the harvest will come, and we will remember that the Lord is the true soul winner, and that God gets all the glory for the salvation of the sinner.

Galatians 1:4-5 declares:

"Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

"How can I say thanks for the things,
You have done for me,
Things so undeserved,
Yet You give to prove Your love for me,
The voices of a million angels,
Could not express my gratitude,
All that I am and ever hope to be,
I owe it all to Thee."