
BIBLE TALK

This week we are considering this question: **Does God listen to everyone's prayers?**

We are going to begin this study by reading a simple passage of scripture found in John chapter 9:

John 9:31

31 "Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him.

This statement was made by a man who had been born blind. He was standing in front of the Jewish high court when he said this. Here's what prompted him to say what he did:

- a) Jesus healed this man of his blindness on the Sabbath day and it created a great controversy. The Jewish leaders, who hated Jesus, accused Him of being evil for having healed on the Sabbath like this.
- b) This healed man was arguing in Jesus' defense. In doing so, he appealed to a commonly known fact which none of these Jewish leaders could argue with: God does not hear sinners. What he meant by this was that God did not listen to the prayers of evil men who habitually sinned.
- c) The conclusion was obvious. Since God empowered Jesus to heal blind people, God must be listening to Jesus' prayers; but, God would not be listening to Jesus' prayers if He were an evil man who habitually sinned.

These Jewish leaders could not argue with this logic. They knew very well that God does not listen to habitual sinners when they pray. They knew this because their own scriptures taught it:

Proverbs 28:9

9 One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, Even his prayer is an abomination.

In the New Testament we read virtually the same thing written by the apostle John:

1 John 3:22

22 And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

According to these passages, if we want God to hear our prayers, we must (a) be a worshiper of God and (b) be obedient to God.

Many men and women live disobediently. They choose to live their lives as they wish. Eventually when hard times come they want to call upon God and they expect Him to help them out now that they have fallen upon hard times. The Bible is teaching that we cannot expect God to listen when we refuse to seek after His will continuously.

SALVATION BY GRACE
INCLUDES BAPTISM

Concerning sinners and prayer, there is another important point to learn. The New Testament scriptures teach that sinners are not saved by praying for forgiveness. In Acts 9:1-11 you will read of a sinner who was praying, but he was not saved by prayer. According to Acts 22:16, he was saved when he obeyed the Lord in baptism.

Acts 22:16

16 'And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'

In other words, for a sinner to be saved by grace, he must be immersed in water for the remission of sins.

In contrast to an alien sinner, a Christian does not have to be re-immersed every time he sins. When a Christian sins he is allowed to pray for forgiveness. Here is what the apostle John wrote to Christians, members of the Lord's church who had already been immersed:

1 John 1:8-9

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

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

This was not written to alien sinners, but to Christians. Notice also:

1 John 2:1

1 My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Do you see the point? These things were written to children of God. Sinners are never told in the New Testament scriptures to pray for salvation.

Again, notice:

James 5:16

16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

This passage teaches that the prayers of righteous people avails much. Because habitual sinners are not righteous people, they cannot pray for forgiveness because their prayers are not heard.

Immersion in water is God's way of washing the sinner clean by the blood of Jesus. Confession and prayer is God's way of re-cleansing a Christian who lapses into sin.