

ISSUE

20.29

BULLETIN OF
THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

July 22,
2018

Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM

10:00 AM

11:00 AM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Jeff Nunn

Deacons:

Steve Dixon
Ryan Ferguson
Arend Gressley
Ben Hight
Blake McAlister
Walker McAnear
Ryan Matney
Sam Nunn
Lance Purcell
Rusty Scott
Justin Smiley
Kevin Wise
Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope



Balancing Concepts of Prayer and Sin

By Kyle Pope

Ever since I first began preaching the question arises from time to time—“Does God hear the prayers of non-Christians?” To answer this from Scripture, two things have to be balanced.

1. The Omniscience and Omnipresence of God. The Bible makes it clear that the God of Scripture is a God who knows all things that happen within His creation. He is a God who fills heaven and earth (Jer. 23:24). **“The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and**



the good” (Prov. 15:3). David acknowledged, **“there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD, You know it altogether”** (Ps. 139:4). God is the One who **“searches the hearts”** (Rom. 8:27). Jesus was said to know, **“what was in man”** (John 2:25). God has such knowledge of both the wicked and the righteous. David told Solomon, **“the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be**

found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever.” (1 Chron. 28:9). This leads, however, to the second thing that must be balanced...

2. Sin Changes God’s Response to Us. In the text in 1 Chronicles we notice, although God **“searches all hearts,”** those who **“forsake Him”** will be cast off by Him. Isaiah 59:1-2, makes this clear—**“your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.”** Sin affects the manner in which God responds to us. Peter wrote, **“For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the LORD is against those who do evil”** (1 Pet. 3:12). Does this mean that God loses some measure of omniscience? No. God stills knows all things, but His response to this knowledge is what is being addressed when Scripture says **“He will not hear.”**

The case of Cornelius illustrates this. Did God know what Cornelius was praying? Yes. He was told, **“Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God”** (Acts 10:4). Does that mean that God accepted Cornelius as he was? No—he needed to obey the gospel, and Peter still needed to teach him the truth. Because God knew the content of Cornelius’ prayers did that mean He accepted his prayers as He would the prayers of those in fellowship with Him? Absolutely not! Jesus taught, **“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you”**





(John 15:7). Cornelius was not yet *abiding* in Jesus' words, so he could not make requests of God in the assurance that God would hear him. This is a privilege reserved for those in Christ for whom Christ stands as an intercessor (cf. Heb. 7:25).

The Obedient and Disobedient Child

Let's illustrate it this way. To which child will a parent respond? Two children ask their mother, "can I have some ice cream?" One of the children has been obedient—he cleaned his room, did his homework, didn't fight with his brother, and faithfully did what his mother asked. The other child has been disobedient—he did not do any of these things? Which child will the mother *hear*? She knows both children asked for ice cream, but the one who is obedient is the one whose request will receive a favorable response. So it is with God. The only assurance we have that God will favorably respond to our prayers rests in having the proper relationship to Him.

The Proper Balance

So let's balance these concepts with one another. If we say, "God *hears* the prayers of non-Christians" we are failing to acknowledge the effect the Bible teaches that sin has on God's willingness to accept prayers directed to Him. This is one of the biggest problems with the false concept of praying the "Sinner's Prayer." According to Scripture prayer is not what can change our condition so that God will accept our prayers. It is in baptism that one comes into Christ (Rom. 6:3).



On the other hand, we must also take great care that when we say, “God does *not* hear the prayers of sinners,” we do not give the impression that we are saying God *can’t* hear what is said. That would diminish His omniscience. Nor is it that God doesn’t *want to* hear the prayers of those outside of a

saved relationship with Him. That could give the impression that He is uncaring, insensitive, and calloused to man’s needs. This is part of Isaiah’s point, when He says, **“the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear”** (Isa. 59:1). It’s not that God is incapable of hearing or disinterested. He wants us to come to Him, but we must do it on His terms. Anything else is actually an offense to Him. The wise man said, **“One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination”** (Prov. 28:9).



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**We are so glad that you joined us today.
Please come again.**

● **Let us know if you have any questions.**