

Does God Hear a Sinner's Prayer?

Last week I heard someone say, "We know God does not listen to the prayers of sinners." I was surprised he would say such a thing since he appeared to be knowledgeable of the Bible. I then wondered how many other people may think this.

This concept comes from John 9:31, "*We know that God does not listen to sinners.*" But as with all scripture, we must not take it out of context. Who said this? Was it God, Jesus, an apostle, or a prophet? No, it was a blind man that Jesus healed who was speaking to the Pharisees. Was he divinely inspired to say such a thing?

From John 9, we see the blind man did not seek out Jesus, but Jesus healed him to teach His disciples a lesson. We can't tell how much knowledge the blind man had of Jesus. He did say Jesus was a prophet (v.17), and had disciples (v.27), but he did not know if Jesus was a sinner or not (v.25). We do know his parent had close ties to the synagogue (v.22), so maybe he heard this concept taught by the Jewish leaders.

So, does God listen to the prayers of sinners? I hope so, since we have all sinned (1 John 1:8). In the prayer Jesus taught His disciples, He said, "*Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors*" (Matthew 6:12).

There is also the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector found in Luke 18. The latter prayed, "*God, have mercy on me, a sinner*" (v.13). Jesus said, "*this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God*" (v.14).

Probably the best account of a sinner praying is Cornelius of Acts 10. It says he "*prayed to God regularly*" (v.2). Luke records that Cornelius was "*devout and God-fearing*" (v.2), but he was not a Christian. God sent an angel to him which said, "*Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God*" (v.5). Eventually, he heard the gospel from Peter and was baptized.

From these scriptures, we can see that God does listen to the prayers of sinners. And keep in mind, we may be God's answer to those prayers.

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