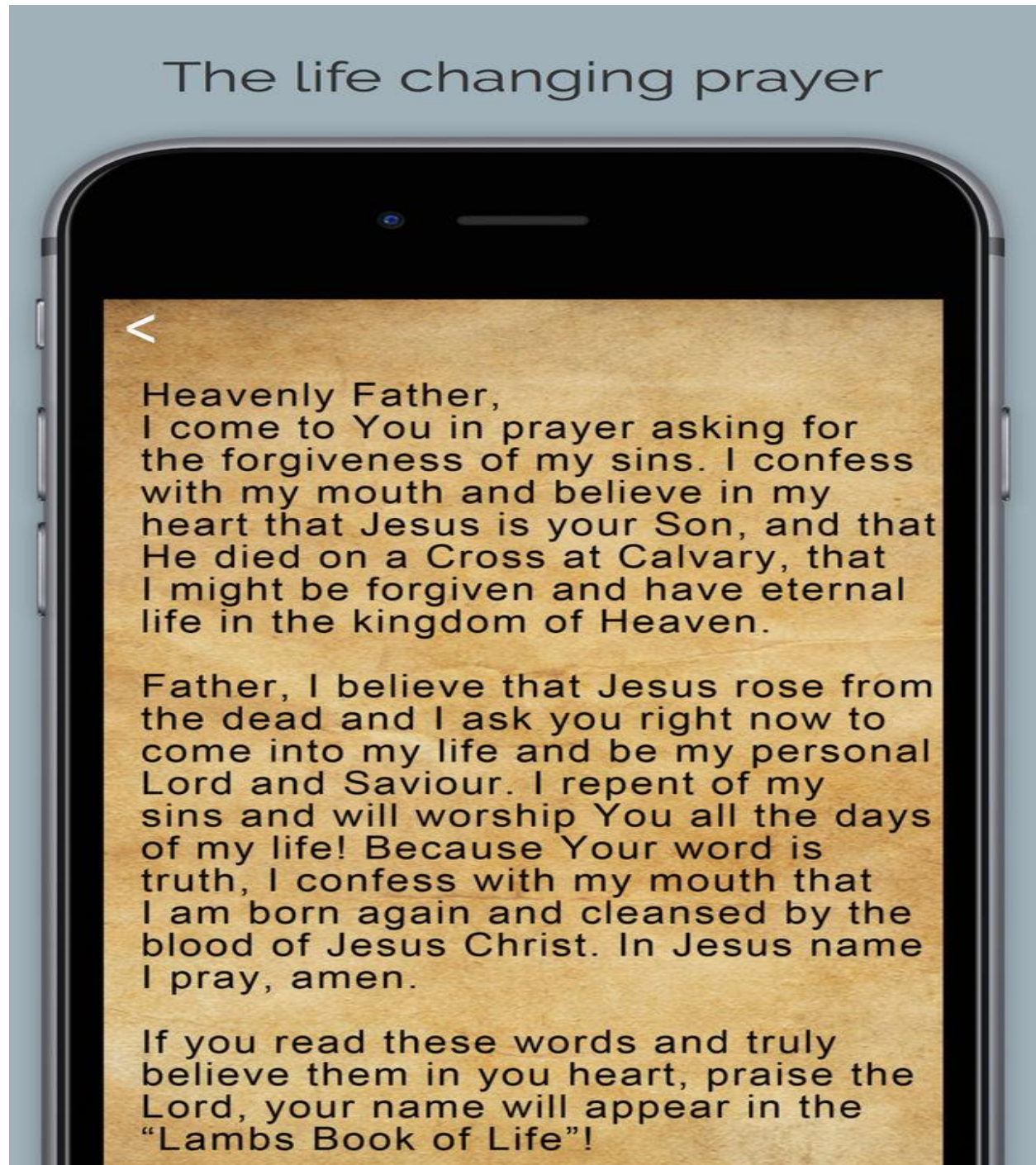


Does God Even Hear The "Sinner's Prayer?"

By David Lee Burris

The life changing prayer



Today's Trendy I-Phone Sinner's Prayer Salvation

Difference Between Hearing & Listening

LISTENING VERSUS HEARING

Hearing is passive

Listening is active

Refers to the act of perceiving a sound through the ear

Refers to the act of making a conscious effort to perceive the sound

Does not require a conscious effort

Requires a conscious effort

Involuntary

Voluntary



Hearing- sense that allows you to perceive sound; physical act- only requires reception of sound waves



Listening- mental process that requires concentrating on sound, deriving meaning from it, and reacting to it

Define Hearing and Listening

Hearing – Physical process, natural, passive

It is an act of perceiving sound by the ear. If you are not hearing- impaired, hearing simply happens.



Listening – Physical as well as mental process, active, learned process, a skill

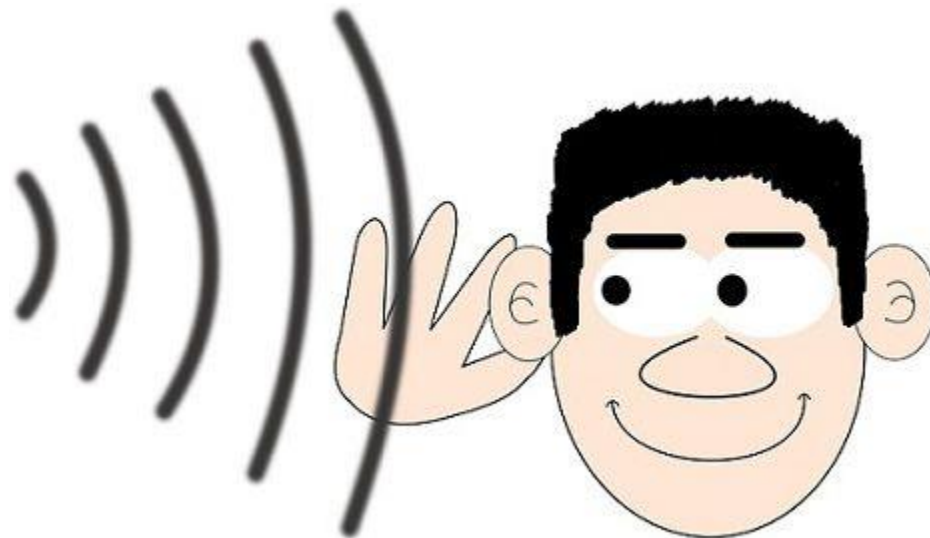
It is something you consciously choose to do. Listening requires concentration so that your brain processes meaning from words and sentences. Listening leads to learning.



“listening is hard”



Difference Between Hearing and Listening



Someone rightly said, “**Hearing is through ears, but listening is through the mind.**” The two activities hearing and listening involve the use of ears, but they are different. The hearing is nothing but a sense that helps you receive sound waves and noise by ears. It is the power of perceiving sounds.

On the contrary, listening is when you receive the sound waves and understand it by paying full attention to the words and sentences of the speaker. It is one’s ability to correctly receive and interpret the message transferred by the other party in the process of communication.

For many people, these two activities are one, but the truth is, the difference between hearing and listening is vital. so have a glance at this article to understand the terms completely.

Comparison Chart

BASIS FOR COMPARISON	HEARING	LISTENING
Meaning	Hearing refers to one's ability to perceive sounds, by receiving vibrations through ears.	Listening is something done consciously, that involve the analysis and understanding of the sounds you hear.
What is it?	An ability	A skill
Nature	Primary and continuous	Secondary and temporary
Act	Physiological	Psychological
Involves	Receipt of message through ears.	Interpretation of the message received by ears.
Process	Passive bodily process	Active mental process
Occurs at	Subconscious level	Conscious level
Use of senses	Only one	More than one
Reason	We are neither aware nor we have any control over the sounds we hear.	We listen to acquire knowledge and receive information.
Concentration	Not required	Required

Definition of Hearing

The natural ability or an inborn trait that allows us to recognize sound through ears by catching vibrations is called the hearing. In simple terms, it is one of the five senses; that makes us aware of the sound. It is an involuntary process, whereby a person receives sound vibrations, continuously.

A normal human being's hearing capability ranges from 20 to 20000 Hertz, called as audio or sonic. Any frequency above and below the given range is known as ultrasonic and infrasonic respectively.

Definition of Listening

Listening is defined as the learned skill, in which we can receive sounds thru ears, and transform them into meaningful messages. To put simply, it is the process of diligently hearing & interpreting the meaning of words and sentences spoken by the speaker, during the conversation.

Listening is a bit difficult, because it requires concentration and attention, and the human mind is easily distracted. People use it as a technique to comprehend, what is being said, thru different verbal and non-verbal signs, i.e. how it is being said? What type of words is used? Tone and pitch of voice, body language and so on.

Active listening is the key element; that makes the communication process effective. Further, it encompasses making sounds that show listener's attentiveness and providing feedback. It had a greater influence in our lives and used to gain information, learn and understand things and so on.

Key Differences Between Hearing and Listening

The following points are vital so far as the difference between hearing and listening is concerned

1. An individual's ability to perceive sounds, by receiving vibrations through ears, is called the hearing. Listening is something done consciously, that involve the analysis and understanding of the sounds you hear.
2. The hearing is the primary and continuous in nature, i.e. the first and foremost stage is hearing, followed by listening and it occurs continuously. On the other hand, listening is temporary, as we cannot continuously pay attention to something for long hours.
3. The hearing is physiological, which is through one of our senses in the living organisms. On the contrary, listening is a psychological (conscious) act.
4. While hearing is a passive bodily process that does not the involve use of the brain. As opposed to listening, it is an active mental process, which involves the use of brain to draw meaning from words and sentences.
5. Hearing involves receipt of the message through ears. Conversely, listening encompasses interpretation of the message received by ears.
6. The hearing is an inborn ability but listening is a learned skill.
7. In the hearing, we are not aware of the sounds that we receive, however in the case of listening, we are completely aware of what the speaker is saying.
8. Hearing involves the use of only one sense i.e. ears. In contrast, listening, involves the use of more than one senses i.e. eyes, ears, touch etc. to understand the message completely and accurately.
9. In the hearing, we are neither aware nor we have any control over the sounds we hear. On the other hand, in listening, we are aware of what the other person is saying and so we listen to acquire knowledge and receive information.
10. Hearing does not require focus whereas listening does.

THE SINNER'S PRAYER

The Sinner's Prayer — Is It Biblical?

By [Wayne Jackson](#)



“Preachers often tell lost people that they need to ‘pray the sinner’s prayer.’ Exactly what is this ‘sinner’s prayer’? Is this prayer biblically based? If not, where did it come from?”

The so-called “sinner’s prayer” is a popular phenomenon in Protestant circles. It is employed at the conclusion of various denominational revival services in appeals to convince sincere people to “get saved.” It frequently is found as the ending in religious tracts or in books urging folks to “repeat these words from the bottom of your heart.”

The **Sinner’s Prayer** takes various forms, all of which have the same general thrust. Here is one form of it:

“Heavenly Father, I know that I am a sinner and that I deserve to go to hell. I believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for my sins. I do now receive him as my Lord and personal Savior. I promise to serve you to the best of my ability. Please save me. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

The following observations concerning this “prayer” should be carefully considered.

Is the “Sinner’s Prayer” in the New Testament?

The sentiments of this prayer are **not found anywhere** in the literature of the New Testament as it pertains to the **alien sinner’s responsibility** under the law of Christ.

A careful study of the conversions in the book of Acts will reveal that in **not a single instance** is the lost sinner instructed or encouraged to “pray” for his or her salvation.

Rather, those honest souls who longed for redemption were admonished to **believe on the Lord** (Acts 16:31), **repent of their sins** and **be immersed for the forgiveness of their sins** (Acts 2:38; cf. 22:16) in order to enjoy a relationship with Christ (Gal. 3:27) and enter his spiritual body (1 Cor. 12:13).

What about Acts 2:21?

Some claim that Acts 2:21 is a proof-text for the so-called sinner’s prayer. Let’s compare this verse with several others from the same book, the same author.

“And it shall be, that whosoever shall **call** on the name of the Lord shall be **saved** (Acts 2:21).

“And Peter said unto them, **Repent** ye, and **be baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ **for the forgiveness of your sins**; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

“And now why tarriest thou? arise, and **be baptized** and **wash away thy sins, calling** on his name” Acts 22:16).

The claim that Acts 2:21 provides authority for the “sinner’s prayer” is baseless. The “call” contemplated in this passage was fulfilled when penitent sinners **surrendered to the terms of the gospel** plan of redemption explicitly announced later on the same occasion.

The “forgiveness of sins” (Acts 2:38) is the equivalent of “saved” (Acts 2:21). Accordingly, the “call” of verse Acts 2:21 is obviously a generic term which embraces the “repent ... and be immersed” which was commanded of believers in verse Acts 2:38.

Moreover, this calling-obedience connection is further established in Acts 22:16. Note that the very act of submitting to the Lord’s command to be immersed is the manifestation of “calling” on his name.

Saying “Lord, Lord” Is Not Enough

Scripture elsewhere makes it very clear that the mere act of **calling out the Lord’s name** in an attempt to access divine mercy in the absence of obedience is an exercise in futility.

“Not everyone who says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he who **does** [present tense—persistently does] the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Mt. 7:21).

Again, the Savior pointedly inquired:

“And why do you call me, Lord, Lord, and **do not** the things that I say?” (Lk. 6:46).

Prayer Is for the Child of God

Prayer is an avenue of communication between a “child of God” and his heavenly Father. The model prayer begins: “Our Father in heaven” (Mt. 6:9). One becomes a child of the Father by means of the **born-again process** (Jn. 3:3-5), not by praying.

Saul's Prayers Did Not Save Him

Saul of Tarsus prayed for three days after arriving in the city of Damascus, yet his sins **were not washed away** until he was immersed in water in obedience to the divine command (Acts 9:11; 22:16). If there ever was a case of the “sinner’s prayer” being exercised, surely this was it. Yet his prayers did not avail in removing his sins.

Where Did the “Sinner’s Prayer” Come From?

The sinner’s prayer model probably evolved in some form or another in the early days of the Protestant Reformation movement, as a misguided reaction against the Roman Catholic dogma of justification by means of **meritorious works**.

For example, Jacobus Faber (c. 1450-1536), who has been called “the father of the French reformation” (though he never formally left the Catholic Church), wrote a commentary on the epistles of Paul in 1512. This was five years before Luther’s break with the Roman Church in Germany. In this volume, Faber argued that justification is obtained through faith without works (see McClintock & Strong 1969, p. 441). Later, rebelling against the “merit works” system of Romanism, Luther would contend that salvation is on the basis of “faith alone.”

So convinced was Luther of this proposition that, when producing his own translation of the New Testament, he altered the text of Romans 3:28 to read: “a man is justified by faith **only**.” The word “only” is not in any Greek manuscript available. Luther even rejected the divine origin of the book of James because of its emphasis on “works” in addition to faith. To believe, therefore, that a sinner may be justified from sin, by simply praying the sinner’s prayer as a substitute for obedience to the plan of salvation, is to labor under a delusion that is void of biblical support.

Undoubtedly, many who offer the sinner’s prayer are exceedingly sincere. Sincerity alone, however, is unavailing (Prov. 14:12; Acts 23:1; 26:9).

“The Sinner’s Prayer”

Recently, I heard a preacher tell the story of his visit to a hospital where a man with a terminal disease was saved through prayer. Many call this “the sinner’s prayer.” Friends in all candor, we do not read in the word of God about an alien sinner being saved by prayer. In fact, the expressions, “The sinner’s prayer,” is not found one time in the Bible. Such is the figment of a man’s imagination.

In the world-wide commission of Jesus, given after his resurrection, he never said anything about prayer. He said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16), and that “repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations” (Luke 24:47).

In all the cases of conversion recorded in the book of Acts, not one time was an alien sinner told to pray. On Pentecost, the inspired apostle Peter told the Jews, after they had asked, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” to “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). Nothing about praying, here. When Philip preached Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch the first thing the eunuch asked was, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” Philip, after hearing that he believed that Jesus is the Son of God, baptized him (Acts 8:35-38). No prayer, here. This harmonizes with what Jesus said in Mark 16:16. In the conversion of Lydia (Acts 16:14-15) and the Philippian jailor (Acts 16:30-33), we do not read of them being told to pray. However, they were baptized after faith and repentance. The Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized (Acts 18:8). All of them did what Jesus said to do in the great commission, and for the same purpose Peter stated in Acts 2:38 — for the remission of sins.

Saul of Tarsus, who was praying, was told by Ananias to “arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Here was an alien sinner who was told to quit praying, get up, be baptized & wash away his sins. “Calling on the name of the Lord” is an expression that means “appealing to the name of the Lord,” or “appealing to the authority of the Lord.” This is what a person does, rather than what he says. The word “call” is the same word translated “appeal” in Acts 25:11 where Paul said, “I appeal to Caesar.” In other words, Paul is saying, “I will call upon Caesar.” He has the power as emperor to exonerate me. To be saved, we need to appeal to Jesus, obeying him.

The blind man who had been healed by Jesus rightly said, “Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth” (John 9:31). This comports with Proverbs 28:9, “He that turneth his ear away from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination.” Yet, preachers say that an alien sinner can pray for the forgiveness of sins, and God will forgive, while at the same time he ignores water baptism (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38) and the plain teaching set forth in the examples of conversions in the book of Acts.

– *Guardian of Truth Magazine*

WHEN IS GOD LISTENING?

La Vista Church of Christ

Question:

I am writing, wondering your understanding of the Scriptures that point to God without willing to hear because of sins or God not hearing a sinner's prayer, or even yet, God hears open to the prayers of the righteous? Those Scriptures all point to two truths:

- ***God is aware of the sinners' prayers, but choose not to hear them***
- ***God's ears are open to the righteous***

Answer:

Isaiah explains clearly that when a person sins and remains in that sin, his sins separate him from God. "*Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear*" ([Isaiah 59:1-2](#)). Thus the problem isn't a restriction on God's ability but on man's refusal to conform to God's will. This is because God finds the prayers of the lawless disgusting. "*One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination*" ([Proverbs 28:9](#)).

The blind man whom Jesus healed, summed it up well, "*Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him*" ([John 9:31](#)).

Nor will God listen to the prayers of person contemplating sin. *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear"* ([Psalm 66:18](#)). James warns of much the same, *"You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures"* ([James 4:3](#)).

What is missing is a lack of distinction between a person actively engaging in sin and a person seeking forgiveness of his sins. A person who has sinned and is not yet forgiven is a sinner in one sense of the word. But generally, the Bible talks of sinners as people who are actively engaging in sin. God doesn't hear the prayers of those involved in sin. *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear"* ([Psalms 66:18](#)). In the passage commonly cited:

"Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, And your fingers with iniquity; Your lips have spoken lies, Your tongue has muttered perversity. No one calls for justice, Nor does any plead for truth. They trust in empty words and speak lies; They conceive evil and bring forth iniquity. They hatch vipers' eggs and weave the spider's web; He who eats of their eggs dies, And from that which is crushed a viper breaks out. Their webs will not become garments, Nor will they cover themselves with their works; Their works are works of iniquity, And the act of violence is in their hands. Their feet run to evil, And they make haste to shed innocent blood; Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; Wasting and destruction are in their paths. The way of peace they have not known, And there is no justice in their ways; They have made themselves crooked paths; Whoever takes that way shall not know peace. Therefore justice is far from us, Nor does righteousness overtake us; We look for light, but there is darkness! For brightness, but we walk in blackness!" ([Isaiah 59:1-9](#)).

The answer to why God was not listening was because the people were engaged in sins. It is the same warning James gave:

"You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" ([James 4:2-4](#)).

When a person seeks out God, the Lord can be found. To expect answers from God when we are not concerned about following God isn't sensible. But when a person seeks God, He will point the sinner to the way of righteousness. Even in Cornelius' case, God did not directly tell Cornelius what he had to do to be saved. He told him where to find the answer. Even today, I believe God answers the prayers of those seeking Him. The answers may come in the form of access to a Bible or just "happening" to run across a Christian who is able to teach that person the truth. The person still must respond, but I don't think God ignores all but those who have already been saved from their sins. The case of Cornelius shows us that.

Yet, I don't tell people who have not made their lives right with God that they cannot pray. I tell them it is foolish to pray for approval of their sins or to think that prayer alone is going atone for their sins. They have to leave their sins and mold their lives to God's will. If they haven't become a child of God as God specified, they need to do so. If they are a child of God and have strayed, they need to straighten up. But even in the process, if they pray, at least their mind is focused on God. See the example of Saul. "So, the Lord said to him, "*Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying*" ([Acts 9:11](#)).

If a person who is in sin is praying for good to happen, they might not gain an audience with God, but at least they are focusing their thoughts in the right direction.

Does the Case of Cornelius Prove the “Sinner’s Prayer” Doctrine?

By [Wayne Jackson](#)

•

Does not the case of Cornelius, the Roman soldier (Acts 10), prove that God hears the prayers of those who have not been baptized? The angel told Cornelius, ‘your prayer has been heard’ (Acts 10:31), and yet the centurion was not baptized until later. Can you explain the apparent conflict between this case and the idea that God does *not* hear the sinner’s prayer?

There are several important facts that need to be established in responding to your question —for which we are grateful. Reason with me, please.

God is omniscient

One of the fundamental Bible truths relative to God is that of [omniscience](#). This is a term that signifies “all-knowing.” Jehovah knows everything there is to know —past, present, and future. He is “a God of knowledge” (1st Sam. 2:3), who “knows all things” (1 John 3:20). The Lord’s “understanding is infinite” (Psalm 147:5). All things are “naked and laid open before the eyes” of the Almighty (Hebrews 4:13).

It is quite clear, therefore, that God is **aware** of the sinner’s prayer.

The key question, however, is this. Does God respond to the alien sinner’s prayer, in **granting forgiveness of sins**, separate from the plan He Himself initiated within the New Covenant? By the expression “alien sinner,” we mean the sinful person who has never surrendered to the conditions of the Gospel system, and thus who stands outside of a Father-child relationship with the Creator.

The New Testament reveals God's "New Birth" plan

The New Testament is unequivocal in its instruction as to what it takes to access a praying relationship with God, whereby the Heavenly Father bestows pardon for sins committed. The Father-child connection in the spiritual family of God is accessed (as in a physical relationship) by means of a "birth" process.

This was precisely the message of Christ in his instructive conversation with Nicodemus (John 3:3-5). This process, in principle, consists of:

1. the implantation of the seed (gospel preaching — 1 Corinthians 4:15);
2. a conception (the production of "faith" — 1 John 5:1 — ASV; 1 Peter 1:23); and,
3. the birth process (deliverance out of the water of immersion — Ephesians 5:26; Titus 3:5).

This new union with God grants the Christian the privilege to pray, "My Father in heaven ... "

Examples in Acts

There is not one case of conversion in the book of Acts in which the outside-of-Christ sinner prayed for (and received) pardon from his past sins. Saul of Tarsus, in fact, is a demonstrable case to the contrary. Indeed, Cornelius himself is another example.

Saul prayed for three days, and yet was instructed: "[A]rise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins" (Acts 9:18; 22:16).

Similarly, though there was a **sense** in which the prayer of Cornelius was "heard" (Acts 10:31), clearly it was not "heard" in the granting of pardon. This is evidenced by the fact that the prayer was "heard" before the centurion ever met Peter, and yet, it was by the apostle's mouth that he was to hear "words" (the gospel) whereby he **might be saved** (Acts 11:14). That settles the Cornelius-prayer issue.

Having argued our case upon the basis of biblical evidence, we feel that we must add one dimension yet that warrants exploration. We would urge the reader to consider the following facts.

Heaven's Desire

There is ample inspired testimony that our loving God is not desirous of seeing any person die in a mode of rebellion (1 John 4:8; Ephesians 2:4; 1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9). He is moved by the honest person who is of a contrite disposition (Psalm 34:18). He wants those who hunger and thirst after righteousness to be filled (Matthew 5:6).

His compassionate interest in lost humanity is so intense that he was willing to sacrifice his beloved Son as an atonement for human iniquity (John 3:16), even though man was the sinful enemy of his Creator (Romans 5:6ff). File this concept away for the moment.

The Honest Response

The most terrifying thought that a person will ever entertain is the reality that he is lost — that there is the potential that he could be separated eternally from the “Father of all mercies and God of all comfort” (2nd Cor. 1:3). What will be the attitude of an **honest** person when he comes face-to-face with this stark reality, and yet he **does not know** what to do in order to access divine forgiveness? Most likely he will pray instinctively — just as Saul of Tarsus did (Acts 9:11).

The venerable David Lipscomb once noted that “when a man believes in God and realizes that he is lost, he cannot help praying” (*Queries and Answers*, Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1963, p. 341).

Does this imply that the Lord will set aside the plan he has implemented across the centuries, and save that person **independent of obedience** to the terms of sacred law (Hebrews 5:8-9)? It does not. It might well be suggested, however, that God could, and would, respond to the honest sinner's prayer by setting in motion such providential actions as would allow the searching person an exposure to the gospel plan. This is a marvelous thought to contemplate.

The Macedonian Man: Begging for the Gospel

Let us consider a case in the book of Acts that strongly points toward the concept suggested above. When Paul (together with Silas) began his third missionary journey, he traveled westward across Asia Minor (Acts 16:1ff). After stops at Derbe and Lystra (where Timothy joined them), they proceeded through that region known as Phrygia/Galatia.

Even though they labored under the great commission, with the obligation to preach the gospel to every creature in all the nations (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16), for some curious reason the Holy Spirit forbade them to preach in the Roman province of Asia. Accordingly, they skirted the border of Mysia and started to enter Bithynia.

Again, though, the Spirit of Jesus (i.e., the Holy Spirit) did not permit them to proceed. The New Testament student cannot determine whether these two “road-blocks” were effected miraculously, or by providential means. Clearly, however, these men were being guided by divine influence (Acts 16:6-7).

Presently they arrived in Troas. Here, in a vision at night, Paul saw the image of a Macedonian man, pleading, “Come and help us.” Concluding, then, that it was Heaven’s will that they evangelize in Europe, Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke (who joins the group here in Troas — see “we” v. 10) sail across the Aegean Sea and ultimately make their way to Macedonia. The conversion of Lydia and her household, together with that of the jailor and his family, in Philippi, are perhaps tokens of the “ripeness” of this area for gospel teaching.

Now here is the point toward which we’ve been progressing. The man in Paul’s vision, who “kept on begging” for help (so the force of the imperfect verb in v. 9), quite obviously represented *the longing of honest hearts* who were searching for the truth. Clearly, God “heard” their cries and responded by dispatching his men to that region. It is important to note, however, that the Lord did not circumvent his own plan of salvation, by issuing pardon to these folks independent of the law of conversion. He did see to it, though, that they had access to the sacred message. Might he not likewise operate today, in some providential, indirect fashion?

Does God Hear The Alien Sinner's Prayer?

Many in the religious world believe in the "sinner's prayer." This is the "prayer" which you would hear, say, at the end of a Billy Graham crusade, or in various denominational churches around the country, in which the sinner is encouraged to come to Christ and "invite Jesus" into his life and thus be saved by prayer. Going even further, there are some who believe that God hears and answers the sundry prayers of those who have never even obeyed the gospel, who are not Christians. But what does the Bible say about this issue?

The first point that needs to be made is that there is a **difference between the alien sinner and the child of God**. Addressing the situation of the Gentiles under the Old Covenant, Paul said that "at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). While the alien sinner is now amenable to the New Covenant, as all men are because it is universal (e.g., Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16), because he has not submitted himself to God's covenant, he does not enjoy the benefits of that covenant.

When Jesus said, for instance, "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28), He was saying that those who do not come to Him cannot have rest from their sins. There is a difference, therefore, between the one who has come to Him and the one who has not. In fact, all spiritual blessings are in Christ (Eph. 1:3). There are no spiritual blessings that are not found in Christ.

Prayer, however, is a spiritual blessing. It is the prayers of the saints which John says rises as an odor of spiritual incense in the nostrils of God (Rev. 5:8; 8:3,4). It is the prayer of a righteous man that avails much (James 5:16). Because prayer is a spiritual blessing, and all spiritual blessings are found only in Christ, prayer is only effectual to the one in Christ. The alien sinner's prayer is no more effectual than the alien sinner's Lord's Supper.

Furthermore, there are various passages which state explicitly that God does not hear the alien sinner's prayer.

- **John 9:31** – *Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth.*
- **I Peter 3:12** – *For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.*
- **Isaiah 59:1,2** – *Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear.*
- **Proverbs 28:9** – *He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.*
- **Proverbs 15:29** – *The LORD is far from the wicked: but He heareth the prayer of the righteous.*

These passages are indeed clear. However, because God is omniscient (I John 3:20; Job 37:16), He actually knows what the alien sinner is praying. Therefore, the question, Does God hear the alien sinner's prayer, is not simply a question of God literally hearing and knowing what the alien sinner is praying, but does God hear with the intent of answering those prayers. Clearly, according to scripture, God does not listen to, with a view to answering, the alien sinner's petitions to God.

Sometimes, Cornelius is offered as an example of an alien sinner whom God heard. Cornelius was neither a Christian nor Jew. Yet Acts 10:31 says, "Cornelius, thy prayer is heard." How can this be reconciled with the previous passages and the thrust of the argument presented in this article? Here are two possible answers to this.

First, while it is said that God heard Cornelius' prayer, his prayers were heard as a memorial that came before God. Notice verse 4: "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God." It is not that God had heard and answered the specific prayers Cornelius prayed, but that God acknowledged that Cornelius was praying and that he was a good man. This is in perfect harmony with the view that God knows all things and would know Cornelius' prayers.

We don't know all that for which he was praying. Did Cornelius think he was doing right? The fact that he was giving alms and praying to God presupposes he was doing what he thought was acceptable to God. Like others who believe that they are acceptable to God, he very likely was praying for quite a lot of things, good health, wisdom, temperance, patience, etc. But did God answer those specific prayers? The implication surely is that when the angel first appeared to Cornelius, that this was the initial response to Cornelius's actions, both prayers and alms. If God hears with a view to answering the alien sinner's prayers, then God would have been answering at least some of his prayers all along. But Acts 10 suggests this is not the case. The word used for "hear" in Acts 10:31 is defined by W. E. Vine as "'to listen to' (eis, to, and No. 1), has two meanings, (a) 'to hear and to obey,' 1 Cor. 14:21, 'they will not hear'; (b) 'to hear so as to answer,' of God's answer to prayer, Matt. 6:7; Luke 1:13; Acts 10:31; Heb. 5:7." The basic idea of the word is "to listen to." Vine says that this word when used in Acts 10:31 means "to hear so as to answer." Because God is omniscient, He knew Cornelius was a devout man seeking Him. Because of this, God responded to his prayers and his deeds by sending an angel to instruct him to send for Peter who would give him the information needed to obey Him (Acts 10:6). Cornelius' case was unique in that he was the first Gentile convert to Christ who was not first proselytized to Judaism. Even in this, God heard his prayers as a memorial, and did not specifically answer his petitions.

A second answer to this question of Cornelius' prayer was offered by Guy N. Woods. Brother Woods suggested that Cornelius was still under the law of patriarchy and that is why his prayers were heard. Under this view, he was not an alien, but an obedient child of God living under the final moments of the Patriarchal Law.

Brother Woods wrote:

*"That the devout officer was worshipping God under the system of patriarchy is the only conclusion harmonizing the difficulties of the case. It is, to this, no valid objection that, after the angel's visit, Cornelius was to hear words whereby he and his house were to "be saved" ; at the moment the angel appeared to him he became accountable to God under this, the Christian dispensation; prior to the visit of the angel he was answerable only under the system which alone was available. Nor, can it be affirmed, from these premises, that on the foregoing assumption, all men, who have not heard the gospel today ought to be regarded as in his category. No one lives in his category; the gospel had never been extended to embrace the Gentiles prior to the events of Acts 10. It follows, therefore, that the condition of the Gentiles, from Pentecost to the house of Cornelius was legally that which characterized the Jews from the cross to Pentecost. When one law supersedes another, the effects of the superseded law carry over to the point where the newer law becomes effective" (**Questions and Answers Open Forum Freed-Hardeman College Lectures, 1976**).*

Either one of these two possibilities answer the question regarding Cornelius' prayers. Whatever may be the answer, the correct answer will not contradict the clear teaching in both Testaments that God does not hear, with a view to answering, the alien sinner's prayers. - Eric L. Padgett

DOES GOD HEAR THE PRAYERS OF SINNERS?

John 9: 1- 34

Introduction:

We are taught the value of prayer:

James 5:16 -- 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.

Luke 18:1 -- And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;

1 Thessalonians 5:17 – Pray without ceasing.

1 John 5: 14 – 15 -- 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.

Some consider prayer valued only when our TEMPORAL concerns are endangered: health, life, work, etc. Could it be all too many take prayer for granted and use it only when “needed” instead of when thankful, joyful, or even to PREVENT the approaching temptations of life?

But just how effective are we in prayer? How serious are we about our prayers? Consider the parable Jesus gave regarding the prayers of the Pharisee and publican ... on the HUMBLE prayer was acceptable: (God, be merciful to me, a sinner.) God says through Joel, “**rend your hearts and not your garments.**” The fervency of our prayers must be distinct and not just “mere words to ask a favor.”

WHO SAID “GOD DOESN’T HEAR SINNERS?”

John 9: 30 – 34

Note what the healed man already observed!

Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner. He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: **one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.** (verse 24 – 25)

Regardless of WHO healed him (sinner or no) he was grateful for his sight. The statement “God doesn’t hear the prayers of sinners” HAS NO FOUNDATION IN SCRIPTURE but was in fact the consideration of these Jews (and perhaps others) of this synagogue.

HOW CAN WE DETERMINE IS THE STATEMENT IS TRUE OR FALSE TODAY?

Saul of Tarsus

Acts 9:1 – 9

Still breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord.

The voice asked, “Saul, Saul, why persecutes thou me?”

Though he recognizes the authority speaking to him, there is NO indication he has repented and submitted to the complete will of God at this time. In fact, the Lord says, “Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.”

Jesus commanded Ananias to go to Saul: "Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, **behold, he prayeth,**" – **If God doesn't hear the prayers of sinners, how did He know this?**

Ananias is afraid of him: "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name." (vs. 13 – 14)

The message to Saul: (Acts 22:16) -- "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." IF SAVED BEFORE VIA HIS PRAYING ... HE WAS SAVED WHILE STILL IN HIS SINS!!!

BTW – Could we say of Saul, "**He was blind, but now saw?**"

Cornelius – Acts 10

Acts 10: 1 – 2 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, **and prayed to God alway.**

Note the very similar context of instructions given to Cornelius that were given to Saul: And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, **What is it, Lord?** And he said unto him, **Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.** And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: **he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.**

Peter's involvement: Acts 10: 9 – 22

Peter's concern: Acts 10: 25 – 29

Cornelius' defense -- And said, Cornelius, **thy prayer is heard,** and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. (31)

Does God hear the prayers of sinners? Was Cornelius here a "saved soul?" – Read Acts 10: 44 – 48 and explain.

If Cornelius was saved BEFORE BAPTISM, he was saved in his sins!!

WHAT ABOUT US?

Example – Simon the magician – Acts 8: 9 – 24

He was in the bond of iniquity and gull of bitterness; his money was going to perish WITH HIM!!! He is a SINNER!!!

Peter's statement to his sin -- Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.

Simon's reply -- Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.

1 John 1: 5- 10

Does God hear the prayers of sinners?

Yes, but He answers them all in the same way – REPENT & OBEY ME!!!

Does God Hear The "Sinner's Prayer?" NO!

Does God Hear The Prayer of Sinners? MAYBE.

Hearing

- Accidental
- Involuntary
- Effortless

Listening

- Focused
- Voluntary
- Intentional

The Difference Between
God Hearing & Listening
Is By Whether Or Not We
Are Active Listening To
His Word & Responding
Through Obedient Faith

JUDGEMENT PREPARED
FIVE STATES FIVE STEPS
Five States of the Soul:

- **EXEMPTION:**
- **Ezekiel 18: 20; Matthew 18: 1 – 3**
- **CONDEMNATION:**
- **Galatians 3: 22**
- **JUSTIFICATION:**
- **Romans 5: 1, 2; 8: 1, 2**
- **DAMNATION:**
- **Matthew 23: 3; Mark 16: 16**
- **GLORIFICATION:**
- **Romans 8: 17, 30; II Thess. 1: 7 - 12**

JUDGEMENT PREPARED
FIVE STATES FIVE STEPS

Five Steps For Saving:

- **HEARING:**
- **Romans 10: 17; Matthew 7: 24 - 27**
- **BELIEVING:**
- **Hebrews 11: 6; Mark 16: 15, 16**
- **REPENTING:**
- **Acts 2: 38; 17: 30; Luke 13: 3**
- **CONFESSING:**
- **Matthew 10: 32, 33; Acts 8: 36, 37**
- **BAPTISM:**
- **Romans 6: 3 – 5; Acts 8: 36 - 38**

