

Because he was told to go to Peter, of whom it was promised, **"He will tell you what you must do"** (10:6).

This helps us answer our questions. When non-Christians pray, their prayers, like those of Cornelius may be heard by God as **"a memorial,"** but not in the same way as those of Christians. There is more they need to do—they need to obey the gospel and become a Christian. Prayers for forgiveness on the part of those outside of Christ essentially are prayers that God would forgive us apart from the blood of Christ. They are prayers that we might be forgiven while continuing in the very sin that separates us from God. They are prayers for God to violate His own will. We are only promised that God will hear and answer prayers in accordance with His will. It is the Christian who can trust in this great assurance. John wrote, **"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him"** (1 John 5:14-15).

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We are so glad that you joined us today.
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Let us know if you have any questions.

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BULLETIN OF THE OLSEN PARK CHURCH OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings



Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM
10:00 AM
11:00 AM
Wednesday: 7:00 PM

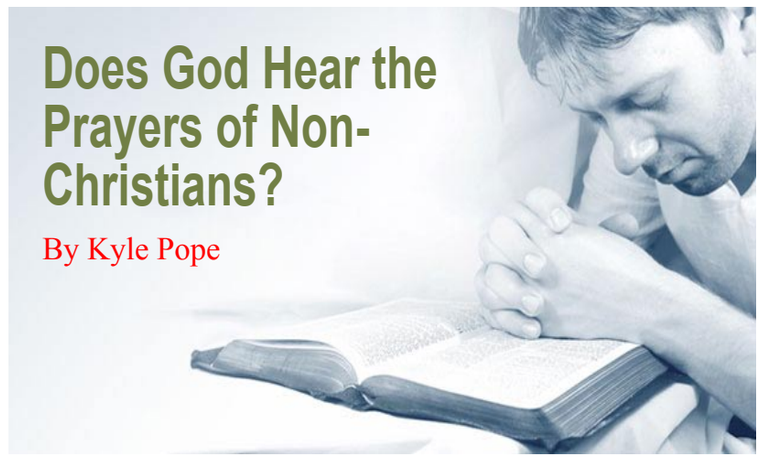
Elders:
Pat Ledbetter
Jeff Nunn

Deacons:
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Ryan Ferguson
Arend Gressley
Ben Hight
Blake McAlister
Brady McAlister
Walker McAnear
Sam Nunn
Lance Purcell
Rusty Scott
Justin Smiley
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Evangelist:
Kyle Pope

Does God Hear the Prayers of Non-Christians?

By Kyle Pope



It is commonly taught in the religious world that all a person must do to be saved is pray to God. In order to determine if this is true, we must first consider if the Bible teaches that God hears the prayers of those who stand outside of Christ. If He does not, then we cannot imagine that a prayer to God to save us from sin will be heard and answered.

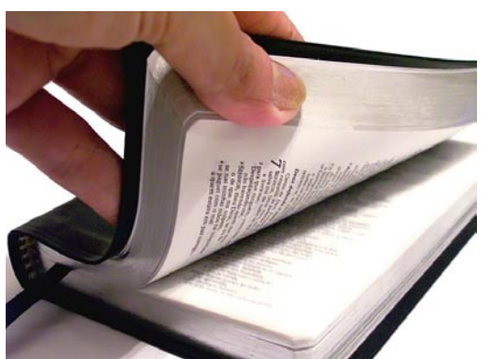
The issue rests on what is meant by the word *hear*. There is no question that God knows and hears all things that go on within His creation. Proverbs 15:3 declared,

God Hears Prayer



"**The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good"** (NKJV). David declared, **"There is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD, You know it altogether" (**Psa. 139:4). However, the Bible also tells us there are those whom God *does not hear* because of their separation from Him brought on by sin. Isaiah declared, **"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"** (Isa. 59:1-2). Notice here it is not that God is *unable* to hear a prayer offered to Him. Rather, He is *unwilling* to hear the prayer of those separated from Him by their sin.

When it comes to prayer, this means that God will not accept the prayers of one in sin. Peter taught, **"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). Is this only true of the vilest of sinners but not most people? No. Peter warned husbands to treat their wives properly, **"that your prayers may not be hindered"** (1 Pet. 3:7). When one is separated from God because of sin, the Wise man tells us, **"even his prayer is an abomination"** (Prov.28:9). In fact, the Bible teaches that praying to God to forgive our sins is a privilege only available to those already in a relationship with Him (cf. 1 John 1:3-7). When one puts faith in Jesus (Mark 16:16), confesses that faith before men (Rom. 10:9-10), repents of past sins (Acts 2:38), and is baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 22:16) he or she enters into a covenant relationship with God. It is then that Christ hears our prayers for forgiveness and acts as an Advocate on our behalf (1 John 2:1-2). So we may answer generally that God does not *hear* the prayers of non-Christians in the same sense He hears those of Christians.



With that said, what does Scripture teach us about prayers offered by those who are seeking the Lord? God knows when people are of the right disposition that they will obey the gospel if only given the chance. God told Paul when the Jews of Corinth rejected him, **"I have many people in this city"** (Acts 18:10). Philip was taken by the Spirit to the Ethiopian Eunuch, who then obeyed the gospel (Acts 8:26-40). How does God know the disposition of such potential converts? As noted earlier, the Lord knows all things. Jesus was often described as knowing the thoughts of men (cf. Luke 5:22; 6:8; 11:17). So, God knows man's disposition whether prayer is offered or not. However, Acts 10:1-6 gives us an example of a man who was not yet a Christian, but offered prayers to God. What does this example teach us? The man was a centurion named Cornelius, and he is described as one who **"prayed to God always"** (10:2). Did God hear him in the same way that He hears the prayers of Christians? Was he acceptable to God in that condition? Was prayer all that he needed to do? From the text we are forced to answer each of these questions "no!" An angel of the Lord revealed to him, **"Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God"** (10:4). The word translated **"memorial"** is defined as "*reminder*…, that is a *record, memorial*" (Strong's). God *heard* his prayers as a remembrance, but not in the same way that He hears the prayers His people. How do we know that?