

# ***Teaching Sound Doctrine***

## ***“GOD HEARETH NOT SINNERS” Pt. 5***

Saul

As we have just noticed Saul was a persecutor and injurious to the way of Christ until Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus. Saul went into Damascus to submit himself to the will of the Lord. While in Damascus and prior to Ananias coming to him: “And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink” (Acts 9:9). When Jesus is speaking to Ananias, He tells him: “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” (Acts 9:11). Saul was not a child of God, yet the Lord told Ananias that he was praying. This situation is special to say the least of which everyone is in agreement. You cannot take a special situation and make it applicable to all. The Lord appeared to Saul in a blinding light, should we all expect the Lord to appear to us in a blinding light? No, because Saul is a special case. The same would be true of his praying. Even if God heard his prayers, we cannot take this special case and make it applicable to others.

Simply because God knew that Saul was praying does not mean that God heard or accepted that prayer. There is nothing in the context to indicate that God heard (accepted) Saul’s prayer. God knew that Saul was in Damascus, that he was fasting, that he was in need of salvation, et al., but that does not mean that God accepted him. God knows all things because He is omnipresent: “The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good” (Pro. 15:3). However, because God knows all things does not mean that he approves all things. When we are speaking of God’s hearing prayers, we are talking about his approving or accepting them. While God knew what Saul was doing, does not mean that He heard Saul’s prayer in the sense of accepting them. Since Saul was a Jew, it would have been natural and logical for him to pray. As a Jew faithful to the Law of Moses, he would have been expected to pray and had the right to pray, prior to the Gospel of Christ coming into effect. Saul was accustomed to prayer and believed in it. However, it is pure assumption to say God heard (accepted or approved) his prayers and an assumption which contradicts God’s Word. Even if the assumption is true, it is a special case and cannot be applied to anyone else.

Cornelius

The Lord appeared to Cornelius in Acts 10: “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” (Acts 10:4). The usual approach is that Cornelius was not a child of God, Peter was sent to him to show him what to do to be saved. It was not until later that he obeyed the gospel and became a child of God. Thus, we have one who is not a child of God whose prayers are heard by God. Thus, some conclude that as long as one is searching for the truth that God will hear his prayers. However, this is contrary to all we know in the Scriptures. Then, simply because God is faithful to what He says, does not mean that God will hear the non-Christians prayer. God has said, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened (Mat. 7:7-8). God being faithful to this promise does not mean that He hears the prayers of someone who is not His child.

What was said of Saul can also be said of Cornelius: it is a special case. The gospel was for all men everywhere. However, the gospel had not yet been taken to the Gentiles. God had established an order to take the gospel into the world. “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47). We see the progression as Jesus said, “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Now God was showing it is time to take the gospel to the “uttermost part of the earth.” Thus God appears to Cornelius and to Peter to show the Gentiles are now to have the gospel preached to them. Thus this is a special case and cannot be applied to anyone else.

It is this author’s conviction that we do Cornelius an injustice. Many boldly state that Cornelius was lost and not a child of God: this conclusion may not be correct. God says that he is devout which expresses one who has been approved by the Law of God. The Record also states that he feared God which indicates that he is doing God’s will. From all the information in the Bible concerning Cornelius, he was one who was in a right relationship with God. How can this be?

Let us consider the three dispensations. The first of those is the Patriarchal Period which began at Adam. This is the period in which the oldest father in the family served as the prophet (spokesman) for God and as the priest for his family (making sacrifices for the sins). If they accepted the law which their fathers revealed, then they were approved of God and would have the right of prayer. The second period is the Mosaic period. This is the law given to the

children of Israel at Mount Sinai. It was never given to all mankind but only to the Jews. It was added (Gal. 3:19) to the law of Patriarchy. When the Jews were faithful to that law of Moses, then they were in a right relationship with God and would have the right of prayer. All Gentiles (non-Jews) remained under the Patriarchal law while the Jew was under the Mosaic Law.

When Christ died on the cross He abolished, nullified, or did away with both laws. The Law of Christ came into being, which is a law given to all mankind. The application of what Jesus did was not seen for the Jew until fifty days later for the Jew on Pentecost in Acts 2.<sup>1</sup> During those fifty days a Jew would have remained in a right relation with God if he remained faithful to the Law of Moses. The Law of Christ had not yet taken effect for the Jew until Pentecost. The application of what Jesus did was not seen for the Gentile until Cornelius (Acts 10). During that time (between Christ's death and Cornelius) if a person was faithful to the Law of God given through the fathers (Patriarchal Law) then he would have been in a right relation with God and thus have the right to pray. This is the condition we find Cornelius. He was in a right relation with God, having the right to pray, because he remained faithful to the Patriarchal Law. Now the Law of Christ was coming into effect for the Gentile and he needed to hear the Word of Christ and obey it to be saved.

Cornelius' prayers had come up as a memorial (remembrance) to God of the great promise He had made to Abraham, that all families of the earth would be blessed through him (Gen. 12:1-3). Now it was going to be brought to pass, the Gentiles will also be blessed through the promised seed of Abraham. Thus, Cornelius had the right to pray. He was not a Christian, but he was in a right relation to God (a child of God) by being faithful to the law to which he was subject: the Patriarchal Law, until the Law of Christ became applicable to him. He then had to obey the gospel and become a Christian.

## CONCLUSION

We, as Christians, have been given a wonderful gift—the right of having our prayers heard by a loving heavenly Father and knowing that He will answer. “And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight” (1 John 3:22). Far too few Christians take advantage of the gift God has given to us. However, this is a gift that only the Christian has access to. The person who is outside of Christ does not have the right to pray.

Sadly there are those who teach that those who are not Christians need to pray to become such. Sadly, all those who have been deceived by such teaching along with the teachers are going to be lost. God will not hear the sinner's prayer. To

be saved one must obey the Truth. Upon one's obedience to the Doctrine of Christ, he then has the right to pray and God will hear.

i An example in the Bible of this principle is found in Hebrews 2:14. Through Jesus' death He destroyed Satan and death. Yet, Paul reveals the Christ "must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy *that* shall be destroyed *is* death" (1 Cor. 15:25-26). While Christ destroyed Satan and death the effect of what He did at the cross (destroying Satan and death) will not be seen till the second coming.