

**PRAYERS & ENCOURAGEMENT**

Those who are sick or need our prayers — Pat Espy, Linda Reagan, Richard Branum, Margaret Blake, Phillip Stevens, Joe Turner

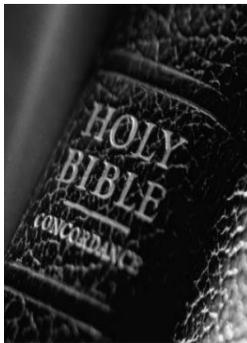
Continue to remember in your prayers those who are unable to attend worship services regularly: *Billie Sue Atkins, Freda Dunn, Romona Stokes, and Marjorie Baringer.*

Please pray for those who have forsaken the Lord that they may be reconciled to God.

**READING THE OLD & NEW TESTAMENTS IN ONE YEAR**

*Monday - Ezekiel 46-48; John 16*  
*Tuesday - Daniel 1-3; Psalm 88; John 17*  
*Wednesday - Dan 4-6; John 18*  
*Thursday - Dan 7-9; Psalm 91; John 19*  
*Friday - Dan 10-12; John 20*

***Week #46***  
***Nov. 12 – Nov. 16***



**VISITORS** - We would like to get to know you better, and ask that you stay a while after services. We encourage you to visit our website at <http://www.parkhillchurchofchrist.com> where you will find sermons, articles, and daily bible studies to encourage you in your daily walk with God.

**QUESTIONS?** *We Welcome the opportunity to study God's word with you any time.*

*All sermons are recorded on CD & DVD -  
If you would like a copy, please ask one of the men.*

**ELDERS**

Carl Dolan.....479.414.1972 ~ Ron Roberts .....479.452.0347 ~ Joe Turner....479.459.6023.

**DEACONS**

Wayne Carson...479.648.1087 ~ Luke Dolan.....479.357.9547 ~ Joe Dugas .....479.629.4046 ~ David Meek.....479.459.0820

**PREACHER**

Bryan Loughmiller.....479.434.3939

**November 11, 2018**

**THINK ON THESE THINGS**

*Welcome to the Park Hill Church of Christ*

3536 GRINNELL AVENUE FORT SMITH, AR 72908 479.782.2415

*It is our desire to worship God in spirit and in truth, and to glorify Him in all we do.*

**SCHEDULE OF SERVICES**

SUNDAY MORNING	SUNDAY EVENING	WEDNESDAY EVENING
Bible Study.....9:30 am	Worship..... 5:00pm	Bible Study.....7:00pm
Worship.....10:15 am		

***Do We Build Walls Around Prayer?***



John 9:31 "We know that God does not hear sinners; but if any one is God fearing, and does His will, He hears him."

Our verse today comes from one of the longest investigative chapters of the Bible. Jesus healed a blind man. He healed him on the Sabbath. That put these Jews into orbit. They were certain that Jesus was not a man of God. So the investigation began. They questioned the blind man. Unhappy with his answers, they questioned the blind man's parents. Still not

getting the answers that they wanted, they grilled the blind man a second time. Frustrated, angry and not finding concrete evidence against Jesus, they removed the blind man from their presence. They had enough of him.

Our verse arises out of this interrogation. It was said by the Jews to the blind man, but the subject, the sinner, that they have in mind is Jesus. Interestingly, no prayers are actually said in this chapter. Jesus restored the blind man's sight by spitting in the dirt and putting that on his eyes and commanding him to go wash in a specific place. The Jews considered what Jesus did to be work. He made mud and he applied it to the man's eyes. That alone was enough to declare in their minds that Jesus was a sinner. Our verse begins with the expression, "We know." They know that God does not hear sinners. How did they know that? A few Psalms reveal that. What they didn't know was Jesus.

Before us is one of the great circumstances of what we know and what we see clashing. What the mind knows and what their eyes were seeing just didn't match. They knew that God is never

wrong, so, it had to be that Jesus was in the wrong.

They assumed that Jesus on His own could not have restored sight. They assumed He had to pray for this to be done. Yet, by violating the Sabbath, in their minds, Jesus proved that He was not following the will of God. Therefore, God could not hear Jesus. The man could not have been healed by God. Nice. Neat. Logical. Except one problem, a blind man was now seeing. If Jesus didn't use the powers of God, then what powers? Their only conclusion was to assume that the man wasn't blind to begin with, or it's a different man or there was some mix up somewhere.

From this passage, and supported by what the Psalms teach, we have built walls around prayers and made it exclusively for Christians only and have even gotten upset when someone who is a "sinner" prays. God doesn't hear sinners, we proudly boast.

Let's walk down that path for a moment. Immediately comes to our minds are some exceptions to that rule. God heard Cornelius. Saul of Tarsus was praying to God. It was Jesus who invited those who were seeking, to knock, and to ask. The Lord said, "For every one who asks receives; and he who seeks find; and to him who knocks it shall be opened." I don't think Jesus had in mind, seeking our car keys in the morning. He is referring to a person finding salvation in Jesus Christ. That person seeks, knocks and asks. The asking part is prayer.

We also know that John wrote that if we confess our sins, God is faithful to forgive us. He further added, if we say that we have no sins, we are deceiving ourselves. So we have sins. We confess those sins in prayer. God hears us and forgives us.

Suddenly, the black and white statement, God doesn't hear sinners, must be qualified and explained. What do we mean by sinners? We all sin is what Romans teaches us. When Simon the sorcerer, having been baptized, tried to buy the gift of imparting the Holy Spirit from the apostles, Peter rebuked him and told him that he was in the bond of iniquity and pleaded with him to pray and perhaps God would forgive him. Sinful Simon was told to pray. Would God hear him?

Here are some things in the midst of all this ought to help us:

First, the Pharisees didn't fully understand the passage that they were quoting. Yes, for a person who does not regard God and follow God, prayer is not a guaranteed parachute to pull out in times of trouble. Prayer is our way of communicating with God. We are always to pray. All relationships are built around trust and communication, including our relationship with God. To ignore God, never consider God, and definitely never worship God, but to reach out and pray because a loved one has cancer or I'm about to lose my job, with the sole purpose of simply getting me out of this trouble that I am in, knowing full well, that after this, I will continue to ignore God, no, He probably won't answer that prayer. However, they missed it by declaring that Jesus was a sinner. What Jesus did was not a violation of the Sabbath law. It bent and broke their traditions but not the law of God. Jesus was without sin.

Second, God hears all things, but it is His prerogative to decide which prayers will be answered. Just because someone is baptized does not granted positively that his prayers will be answered. Peter told husbands that if they do not treat their wives correctly, their prayers would be hindered. The Lord said, if we do not forgive others, then God will not forgive us. Those are prayers that we may ask but may not be answered favorably because of the way we are living.

We love to sit on the throne with God and rule for Him. We love to decide who goes to Heaven and who goes to Hell. We love to declare who is in fellowship with God and who is not in fellowship with God. We love to determine which prayers God will answer. We do well to get out of

that throne seat and allow the Lord to be the Lord. The Pharisees thought they had everything nicely figured out. They were wrong.

Third, when these discussions come up, as in this account in John, rarely do we look at ourselves. We want to know about a cousin who is not a Christian giving thanks at Thanksgiving. That bothers us. That concerns us. We want to know whether that prayer got past the dinner room ceiling. Yet, in all of this, do we consider our walk with the Lord. Do we consider our hearts? The Pharisees never looked at themselves. Their radar gun was pointed directly at Jesus. They assumed that their prayers were heard by God, an assumption that one cannot assume.

Fourth, hearing our prayers and answering them to the way we like are not the same thing. God hears all. If God only heard the words of the righteous, then God would never hear blasphemy, falsehoods or lies. Everything we say is heard by God. The Lord answers prayers according to His will. No, is an answer. Parents use that every day. A child will ask something and if the parent doesn't feel that it is good, they will say no. The child may say, "Why don't you answer me." The parent has. It just wasn't in the favorable direction the child wanted.

Finally, prayer is a privilege, obligation and blessing to those who walk with the Lord. We are God's children, His family. God wants to hear from us. God wants us to be close to Him. God wants us to be honest with Him. Prayer is not to be abused. Prayer is not a divine wish list. Prayer is inviting God's will into my life. It is much more than asking, it is thanking, praising and honoring God. The very concept of prayer shows that we are not running this world and that we need God. We need Him for everyday physical things, like our daily bread. We need Him for the deep spiritual things such as forgiveness.

When I hear someone loudly repeating what the Pharisees proclaimed, "God doesn't hear sinners," I'm sitting there thinking, I hope He hears me. The sinful publican, in Jesus' parable proclaimed, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Did God hear that one? Jesus told that story. Jesus said that man went to his home justified. He was heard. He was forgiven. God heard the prayer of a sinner.

Lifting verses without understanding the context, the language used and the intent of the passage is nearly as dangerous as never using the Bible. We do this with verses like Hebrews 10:25 and apply that to Wednesday Bible classes. Here is a guy who comes on Sunday, but not Wednesday. We guilt him by saying that he is forsaking the assembling of the saints. Standing with the Pharisees, we miss what that passage truly says. Satan did the same thing in the temptations of Jesus. He quoted Scriptures and told Jesus to jump. The word of God promises that you'll be not be hurt. Misused. Misapplied.

Beyond seeing the power of Jesus healing this blind man in John 9, maybe this long encounter with the Pharisees is an opportunity for us to see how we handle the word of God. Timothy was told to handle it accurately. More than just good advice, essential if we want to follow God.

One other thought that is often overlooked in this passage. The Pharisees put the blind man out of their midst. They were finished with him. Jesus went looking and found him. Jesus had yet another conversation with this man.

Jesus went looking... He's looking for you!