

Does God hear the prayers of sinners?

- John 9:31 Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshipper of God and does His will, He hears him.
 - The speaker was the recently-cured man-born-blind. He was not inspired and not necessarily correct. He spoke a popular teaching of that time.
 - Other incorrect statements are accurately recorded in the Bible. A few examples:
 - John 7:20 You [Jesus] have a demon.
 - Matthew 26:65 He [Jesus] has spoken blasphemy.
 - Most of Job. In Job 42:7, God says that Job's three friends were wrong.
- What is meant by "hear"?
 - A prayer does not obligate God to do what is being requested.
 - Ignoring a request and responding negatively have the same result.
 - So the question is whether the prayer of a "sinner" always goes unheeded.
- What is meant by "sinner"?
 - Romans 3:23 All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
 - In the New Testament, sometimes the word is used in contrast to the faithful, but also, in 1 Timothy 1:15, Paul calls himself "the chief of sinners" in the present tense.
 - A "sinner" who prays is, by the action of prayer, reaching out to God. At what point does this qualify as "faith."
- So, perhaps the question should be re-worded, "Does God sometimes respond positively to the prayers of outsiders, of those whom God considers lacking faith?"
 - Luke 11:13 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him.
 - Acts 10:1 Cornelius, not a Christian, prayed and was heard.
- Passages often cited as example of prayers that go unheeded:
 - Isaiah 59:2 Your iniquities have separated you from God and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He will not hear. (Read verse 1. The point is that God is not unable to respond. Rather, He will not hear because they do not ask appropriately.)
 - Malachi 1 is cited to support that God does not hear sinners. Actually, those described do not care about God at all, but are looking for minimum requirements like pagans.
 - Jeremiah 14:10 – 12 Although cited in defense of God not hearing the prayers of sinners, it actually says that God, in this case, will not have compassion on those who brought punishment on themselves. See the next point about the many times that God has responded to the prayers of sinners
 - Proverbs 1:20 – 33 Same as above. The point is not that God does not hear, but that God will let calamity happen to those who brought it on themselves by ignoring God.
 - Proverbs 28:9 The one who is ignored is the one who ignores God, not "sinners."
 - Proverbs 21:13 This is very similar to the passages that say that we will be judged with the same standard by which we judge, that we will be shown mercy to the degree that we show mercy, and such like. The admonition is not limited to the "sinner."
- On many occasions, the Israelites cried out to God and were heard, despite the fact that they were obviously insincere, just wanting out of the present difficulty. Sometimes God had compassion, sometimes not. As Romans 9:15 (Exodus 33:19), "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have

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compassion.” Examples of times that God has heeded the prayers of Israel despite their sin:

- Exodus 3:7 God heard the cries of Israel in bondage. Yet, they did not follow Moses willingly, rebelled repeatedly, and complained constantly. Only Caleb and Joshua were deemed faithful enough to enter the Promised Land.
- Samson: He made lots of terrible errors, yet God heard him and gave him strength.
- 1 Samuel 9:16 The people wanted a king; God did not want a king for them. Yet, God heard their ill-conceived, faithless cry and helped them.
- David: Several psalms of David are his response after some great blunder.
- The faithful are told of several reasons why their prayers may be unfruitful. In fact, most passages cited to prove that “God does not hear the prayers of a sinner” are passages that were addressed to the faithful, explaining to them why their prayers did not bring the desired results.
 - James 4:3 You ask and do not receive because you ask amiss.
 - James 1:6 – 8 Let not the doubter suppose he will receive anything.
 - Psalm 66:18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear.
- God has made promises to believers concerning prayer. Asking that God make them happen may be approached with boldness.
 - 1 John 3:22 And whatever we ask we receive from Him because we keep His commandments... (also 1 John 5:15)
 - Luke 18:7 – 8 Shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?
 - Matthew 6:9 – 13 Pray for God’s will to happen on earth (which does not happen a lot), also for food (promised in Matthew 6:36), forgiveness (promised in Acts 13:38 – 39 *et al*), and lack of temptation (promised in 1 Corinthians 10:13).
 - 1 Timothy 2:1 – 2 Therefore, I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life...
 - Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
 - James 1:5 – 8 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.
 - James 5:13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray.
 - James 5:15 – 20 The prayer of faith will save the sick and the Lord will raise him up. And, if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven...pray for one another
 - 1 John 5:16 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give to him life...
- Faithful people have prayed, as recorded in the Bible, for several things God did not promise or suggest. These are presented to God as requests, not demands.
 - Matthew 6:9 – 13 Pray for God’s will to happen on earth (also for food, forgiveness, lack of temptation, which are promised).
 - Philippians 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God
 - 3 John 2 Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.