**A Worshipper of God**

*by W. Curtis Porter*

In John 9:31 a statement is made by a man who had been born blind. Jesus had just given him his sight, and it had caused quite a stir among those who knew the blind man. The healing was done on the Sabbath day. Some of the Pharisees said: "This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath day." But there were others who said: "How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?" And so the discussion went on. They questioned the man about it; they questioned his parents; then they questioned the man again. They declared they did not know from whence the man was that wrought the miracle. The man who had been healed could easily tell from whence he was, because he had opened his eyes. A man with such power must be of God; he could not be a sinner. So the healed man 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."*

He reasoned that, as this man was heard, he was not a sinner! Yes, it is the language of the blind man. But he did not say, "I think God heareth not sinners;" nor even did he say, "We think God heareth not sinners;" nor did he use the expression, "I know." But he went beyond all these and said: "We know that God heareth not sinners." That included them as well as himself; they all knew it. And they knew it from many statements to that effect in the Old Testament Scriptures. With such statements they were acquainted, and knew that God heareth not sinners. When we use the language of the blind man, we are staying within the realm of scriptural teaching. So we have often used his words, along with many other statements in both Testaments, to prove that sinners will not get salvation in answer to prayer alone; that a man must be a worshipper of God and do his will.

**Some Erroneous Reasoning**

Cornelius and some others have been introduced to prove that God will hear the prayers of sinners. One thing is certain, however: if "heard" means "answered," Cornelius had not been praying for salvation; for even after the Bible says his prayer was heard (Acts 10:31), he was still unsaved (Acts 11:14). So he was not saved in answer to prayer before obedience. Every step that a sinner takes in obedience to God is a prayerful step, and from that standpoint God hears them, but he does not give a sinner salvation in answer to prayer short of obedience to his word. In a case of that kind he is turning away his ear from hearing the law, and his prayer is abomination (Prov. 28:9).

But some have advocated that if we stick to the argument based on John 9:31, away goes baptism for salvation, for "in 1 Cor. 14:23-25 we have a dear case of a man coming into the meeting-house in a state of unbelief and becoming a worshipper of God right in the house." The text of Scripture says: *"If therefore the whole church become together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of the heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth."* So this unbeliever comes into the assembly of the saints, is convinced and convicted of his sin, and "becomes a worshipper of God on the spot." It is not necessary to take him to the pool of baptism to make him a worshipper of God! And if to be a worshipper of God means to be saved, then this unbeliever is saved right inside the meeting place. But if it does not mean he is saved, at least it puts him where God will hear his prayer, for John 9:31 declares God will hear the prayer of one who worships him; so we are told by men who wish to set aside baptism. And they ask: "For what would a sinner prostrate on his face before God be likely to pray?" "Who ever knew of a convicted sinner on his face before God asking God for anything but pardon?" Therefore they conclude that this "worshipper of God" may, right there in the meeting-house, without going for baptism, ask God for pardon and get it, because God will hear a worshipper of him.

At first glance it looks like there might be something to all this and that they have "Campbellism up a tree;" that it does not make any difference which position is taken, it proves a sinner is saved without baptism, for he is either saved "right in the meeting- house" when he becomes a worshipper of God or he reaches the place where God will hear his prayer "right in the meeting-house" without going to be baptized. But a little closer study of the matter shows that so-called "Campbellism" is not treed, after all; for the language of the man who was blind does not say that "if any man be a worshipper of God, him he heareth." Neither does any other Bible statement so declare. If a man could prove that God will hear any man who is a worshipper of him, the case would be made out, and we would have a man saved "on the spot" without submitting to baptism, as unbelievers may be made worshippers of God before baptism.

A very essential part of the text is overlooked. What the verse actually says is this: "If any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth." And that puts an entirely different complexion on the case. God will hear the man who worships him and does his will, not simply the man who worships him. Many worshippers of God are not Christians; nor are they in a position to be heard of the Father. Concerning some Jews, Jesus said: *"But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men"* (Matt. 15:9). So here were people who were worshipping the Lord, yet their worship was vain. Will opponents of baptism say these were saved already because they were worshippers of God? If they eliminate this on the ground that it was merely a lip service, that their hearts were not in their worship, then what about the Samaritans who worshipped God in the mountain instead of in Jerusalem (John 4:20)? Will they say that none of the Samaritans were sincere in their worship of God? And yet their system was contrary to the authority of God. And what of Lydia, who worshipped God even before the Lord opened her heart, or before she heard the gospel proclaimed (Acts 16:14)? Had she been saved just before she worshipped God? And even Cornelius was a worshipper of God before the angel ever appeared to him to tell him to send for a man who would tell him what to do to be saved (Acts 10). Many men today are worshippers of God who are not saved and whose prayers would not be answered. Not only men must worship God, they must also worship him "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

So the unbeliever who is convinced in the assembly and falls down and worships God is not necessarily saved. Neither does that mean that God would grant him pardon right in the assembly in answer to his prayer. In addition to worshipping God he must do God's will. "If any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth." To this we might add the language of Peter: "In every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:35). Men must do God's will, they must work righteousness, to be accepted. A man might fall down on his face and worship God, yet refuse to do his will, and never be saved; and while refusing to do the will of God he might pray till the day of doom and never get his prayer answered. Something stronger than this will have to be found to destroy the words of Christ: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).