

Thought for the Day 16th September - John Reed

Read 1 John 5:6-15

On October 31, 2018, Sydney “gangster” John Macris was gunned down while sitting in his wife’s car parked outside his home in Voula in Athens. This week, two Bulgarian brothers have been found guilty of his murder and associated crimes in a Greek court. Macris’ widow, Viktoria Karyda, said outside the court that she was satisfied that justice had been served. However, it was not just she who was satisfied, but her dead husband too. She said: “What my husband, who sees and listens to everything from the sky, wanted, happened ... He's satisfied now and so am I.”

It was that comment that made me stop and think. I often hear people talk about those who have passed away being somewhere “up there,” watching over us – whether it be approving our good deeds, or “turning in their grave” at our failures. But what does the Bible say?

Off the top of my head, I can’t think of anywhere in the Bible (with the possible exception of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31?) where it suggests that those who have passed away are watching what is happening here, either approving or disapproving. I am open to being proven wrong.

However, we are told repeatedly that there is *someone* watching, and either approving or disapproving: God.

Jesus said in Luke 12:2-3, for example: “Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops.” And Ecclesiastes 3:17 says: “God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time for every matter and for every work.”

However, one interesting thing I realised as I reflected on this is just how often God – who sees and hears everything – chooses *not* to hear. Consider the following verses:

Psalms 66:17-20 “I cried to him with my mouth, and high praise was on my tongue. If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. But truly God has listened; he has attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me!”

Proverbs 15:29 “The LORD is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous.”

Isaiah 59:2 “But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.”

John 9:31 “We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him.”

1 Peter 3:12 “For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

God closes his ears to, or turns his face away from, or distances himself from and refuses to listen to, the ungodly. That is, he knows what they are doing (since he sees and hears everything), and will call them to account one day; but he will not register or respond to their prayers.

On the other hand, people of faith are told: “And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.”
(1 John 5:14-15)