

Is There No Possibility Of Repentance After Death?

All my life I was taught, and believed, that our place in eternity was completely determined by our choices in this life. I believed that if any person did not receive Jesus Christ before they died, it was then too late for them to ever do so. As I studied the Bible, I searched for Scripture to support this view. But I found only one verse in the Bible that could be used to support the idea that once a person dies, there is no further chance for them to change: Hebrews 9:27.

HEBREWS 9:27 KJV

27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

Does this verse actually say we cannot repent after death, or even after judgment? Or is it possibly just telling us that we will only die once, and not multiple times.

If the intent of this verse was to clearly communicate there is no possibility of change after death -- then the verse fails. It could have said, "it is appointed unto men once to die, but immediately after death is the one and only final judgment that determines your eternal destiny after which you have no chance of ever changing for eternity." That would be clear. But when I read this verse, while trying to lay aside the tradition I was taught, all it says to me is that we only have one life on earth, and that judgment comes some time after our death. To say this verse means anything more, would be adding to Scripture.

Can Death Separate Us From God's Love?

The Bible seems to say the opposite -- even death cannot separate us from God's love!

ROMANS 8:38-39 KJV

38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

What is it about death that would cause God to lose His compassion and willingness to save people willing to repent?

Scripture tells us death is an enemy (1 Corinthians 15:26) which will be abolished some day. The devil is associated with death (Hebrews 2:14). Are we to believe that God would turn His back on people because of the work of His enemy?

Scripture indicates death is not a barrier for God, but only for us. He is God of those we classify as dead just as much as those we know are alive.

LUKE 20:37-38 KJV

37 Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.
38 For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him.

In this passage Jesus makes it clear that no one is “dead” from God’s perspective. Death is a barrier to us that we cannot see past clearly. But to God, a human’s death is just their transition from one state to another.

Jesus Preached To The Dead

1 PETER 4:6 KJV

6 For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

1 PETER 3:18-20 KJV

18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

19 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;

20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

If no possibility exists for anyone to change after death, why does the Bible say Jesus preached the Gospel to the dead? And if these people who were dead at that time had the Gospel preached to them, how do we know that all people will not have a similar opportunity?

Please do not misunderstand me. I believe we should do our best to share the Gospel with everyone while we are alive on Earth. Jesus commanded us to do that. But, if we are honest, we realize we are not now reaching, and never have effectively reached everyone with our message. Will God condemn those we failed to tell about Jesus, simply because of our failure?

God Does Not Play Favorites

Six times the Bible tells us God does not play favorites. The KJV translates it as "respect of persons" but the meaning is clearly shown by looking at any modern translation which will say something like "God does not show favoritism" or "there is no partiality with God."

2 CHRONICLES 19:7 KJV

7 Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.

ACTS 10:34 KJV

34 Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

ROMANS 2:11 KJV

11 For there is no respect of persons with God.

EPHESIANS 6:9 KJV

9 And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.

COLOSSIANS 3:25 KJV

25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

1 PETER 1:17 KJV

17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:

If the eternal destiny of every person is determined only by the choices they make in this life, then God is guilty of "respect of persons" or favoritism, because many have never even had the chance to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ, let alone be able to have, study, and understand a copy of their own Bible. If people like this, who have never seen a Bible nor ever heard the Name of Jesus, get no chance to repent after death, then surely they will be able to rise up in judgment and justly accuse God of favoritism.

How can it be true that God does not play favorites, if there are people who never hear the Gospel, yet after they die there is never any chance for them to repent and accept the Lord Jesus Christ? If people like this are to be condemned to eternal torture, then these assurances of God's impartiality in the Bible have no meaning, for no honest, reasonable being could say that was fair. It would truly be the most notorious example of showing partiality or favoritism in the history of the world!

Somehow we have come to accept the idea that death is the end of any opportunity for a human to change. It may be true, or it may not be true. Only God knows. But I cannot find it taught in the Bible. It is only a human tradition. And the more I think about it, the more it seems silly to think death would be a reason for God to change His attitude toward people.

Yet if someone were to take this information and decide to live in sin, thinking they will repent after death, they would be greatly deceived. Sin harms us. It is the devil's lie that sin will make us happy. Jesus came to save us from sin, and we can rejoice that we are now free so we don't have to sin. Not only does sin kill, steal, and destroy lives, but the Bible clearly teaches we will be judged by God for what we do in this life. With one hundred percent certainty, I can assure you that you will greatly regret any decision to turn away from Jesus and embrace sin. So don't use this information as an excuse to live in sin now, thinking you will repent later. Only a fool would think like that.