

Does the Bible Teach that no one Gets Saved After Death?

(II Corinthians 6:2-3; Psalm 69:13, 32:6, and 49:8; as well as Isaiah 55:6)

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The Bible has repeatedly made reference to the enduring character of God's great "*unfailing love that fills the earth*" (Psalm 33:5) and to His endless mercy (Psalm 53:8-9) for all mankind (John 13:35.) According to the Bible, God did not create people in vain (Psalm 89:47.) Therefore the common evangelical idea that the Lord will no longer save lost people after they die would require a clear and monumental scriptural "platform" before it should be accepted. The Bible passages that are offered in defense of this concept (that it is too late to receive faith after death), however, supply no support for that view and deal instead with entirely different subjects. The importation of some false idea like this one ("*God saves no one after they die*") can be very divisive and totally against the overall message of the "gospel" (good news.) Let us examine each of these Bible references that is touted to demonstrate that it is too late, once you die.

In II Corinthians 6:2-3 the phrase "*..now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation*" does not teach God's ultimate refusal to save people posthumously. Most English Bible versions are mistranslations here, in that the definite article "**the**," altogether absent in the original Greek, has been brought into the English text. Because of this insertion of "**the**," a false cry of urgency is raised, whether intentionally or otherwise. Based on the original language, Marshall (1958) wisely replaced those two "**the's**" with the indefinite article "**a**." The

Greek is: “*idou nun kairos eurosdektos idou nun hEmera sOterias.*” The literal word-for-word translation is: “*behold now, time (perhaps in the sense of “season” or “period”) acceptable; behold now--day of salvation.*” The passage means exactly that: “*now* [is] *time* [or day, or season] *for getting saved.*” People can certainly get saved “right away, this very day.” But the Bible says nothing here that would prevent people from getting saved later, even after they die, if God so wills. With God there is always another day: “nothing is impossible with God

The phrase “**too late**” appears nowhere in the Greek or Hebrew Bible. God wants those who seek salvation to “**call on the name of the Lord**” (Romans 10:13) and this can be accomplished whenever the individual confesses Christ, repents, and expresses faith—whether before or after death. The only Bible passage which conveys an idea of something being “**too late**” is Christ's parabolically prophetic statement about the five foolish virgins in Matthew 25:1-13. While this scripture is inspired and entirely accurate, its meaning is controversial, having to do with some aspect of the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth: not with personal salvation of individual lost souls after death.

The King James Version (KJV) uses the word “time” for *kairos* in II Corinthians 6:2-3 and so does the New International Version (NIV). Furthermore, the NIV translates *kairos* as “time” in 50 out of its 85 occasions in the New Testament. Yet in a few instances, both the the KJV and the NIV have used the word “season” for *kairos* instead of time. The Concordant Literal Version has translated it both ways right in this very passage:

“ *Lo! Now is a most acceptable era. Lo, Now is a day of salvation!*” Using “season,” “period,” or even “era” here, instead of “time” helps steer away from the mistaken belief that God is a hurry to save people; that it is possible to miss the only favorable day of salvation and end up being damned forever to hell. It is good for one to experience salvation as quickly as possible, of course, but this is a quickness in light of benefits and of escaping God's righteous judgment; it is not quickness in order to escape a death deadline when all hope ceases. The gospel is the well-message; it is not a dire threat-warning or a “limited time offer.”

The whole of II Corinthians chapter 6 is in reality speaking about something very different than the possibility of salvation before or after death. The context states that God's grace was not given “in vain” verse 1, so that when we needed God to listen to us, He really listened (verse 2). When salvation was required, He saved us. The word “**now**” in verse 2 is directed to believers, telling them that they ought to start **now** letting God work out His salvation inside them, as stated in Romans 5:10 and Philippians 2:12: “*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God Who works in you...*” Believers are thus in the process of “*becoming saved*,” and it is Christ who works in them to minimize offenses which would otherwise bring disrepute on Christ's own name and ministry, as Paul so carefully and immediately proclaimed in verse 3. If we are actively being saved “now” (verse 2), we will be ready to face adversities such as afflictions, hardships, distress, beatings, imprisonments, tumults, labors, sleeplessness, and hunger (verse 5). And if we are experiencing God's salvation “now”, we will begin allowing Christ to build virtues in us such as purity, knowledge,

patience, kindness, love, words of truth, the power of God, and the weapons of righteousness (see verses 6-7 and onward in this chapter). Far from being a text showing a cut-off time for human salvation, II Corinthians 6:2 is part of an extended discussion on how to live the Christian life right now because **NOW is a day of salvation!**

A key example of someone actually getting saved after death is found in the book of Jonah. Inside the whale, Jonah had evidently died, as it clearly states that he was in *sheol* which is the domain of dead people. As a result of Jonah calling out to God from sheol, however, he was delivered. God's dealings with Jonah underscore His willingness to save dead people (Jonah chapter 2).

There are several more Bible passages that are cited by evangelical preachers in an attempt to demonstrate that people cannot be saved after they die. They quote David's words in Psalm 32:6: “...*let everyone who is godly pray to You while you may be found*” as if these words show that God stops saving people after death. But here in Psalm 32:6 the phrase translated “...while you may be found” (NIV) does not have the word “you” in Hebrew. Rotherham’s Emphasized Bible has it “...*in a time to obtain*” and it is translated “...*as the time to find*” in Young’s Literal Translation of the Bible. In either of these English renderings, the Hebrew says nothing about a posthumous time when God cannot be found. The verse instead commissions every blessed or benign individual to pray to God. Rotherham's “...*in a time to obtain...*” suggests that this prayer ought to go up to God at a critical times, like when

“...many waters overflow” verse 6. Verse 7 in the Concordant Version of the Psalms clearly shows this prayer to a prayer for deliverance: “*You are a concealment for me; From distress shall you preserve me, With jubilant songs of deliverance shall you surround me.*”

Psalm 69:13 recommends that we pray to God for salvation in a time of His favor: “*I will pray to you, O Jehovah, in a time of your favor.*” The KJV has “*in an acceptable time,*” as Paul quoted this verse in II Corinthians 6:3. This is no pronouncement of a deadline, after which opportunity is eternally gone. It is an encouragement to pray to God in a time of His favor.

An outstanding feature of the Old Testament books is that none of them speaks of *everlasting* hell for those who reject God in this life. The everlasting fiery hell concept was foisted onto Christ's New Testament words which meant something very different. They referred instead to a garbage dump (*geenah*) outside the city wall.

Psalm 49:8 is another verse sometimes quoted as a basis for the belief that there is a time beyond which all opportunity to be saved will cease—“*For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth forever*” KJV. This rendering makes it sound as if the chance of being redeemed comes to an end. But the NIV puts the verse into different English, conveying the message: “*the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough.*” With this newer translation, all support for cessation of salvation evaporates from Psalm 49:8. The whole

message shows instead that any monetary ransom for human life is impossible because whatever amount is paid, it is never enough. The context of Psalm 49:8 (Psalm 49:5-11) in no way deals with the timing of human salvation. It speaks instead about what human wealth cannot redeem, and it covers the fact that no person can redeem (buy back) the life of another!

Isaiah 55:6 is sometimes listed as sufficient reason to believe that grace forever ceases after death—“*seek the Lord while he may be found; call on Him while He is near*” NIV. But the verse that follows immediately states the very opposite: that the same evil people, who were previously consigned to chastening, will seek the Lord in the future! Thus verse 7 is an invitation for the reconciliation of sinners without any mention of a cut-off time for salvation: “*Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord and He will have mercy on him, and to our God, for He will freely pardon*” (Isaiah 55:7). The reason they will turn to God is that He does make future salvation possible, and He is always “near,” as is so clearly taught throughout the whole Bible. None of these verses nor any others show that death permanently prevents salvation or that it is ever “too late” to get saved. The Bible demonstrates instead that God is always merciful and draws all people unto Himself, as Christ so clearly stated in John 12:32 “*When I am lifted up from the face of the earth, I will be drawing all men unto myself.*”

For more information, consult: TURA (The Ultimate Reconciliation of All), 24635 Apple Street,

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