

# *The Professor's Theological Home Page*

*"...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved..." (Acts 16:31)*

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## **Hope where there is no Hope – Part 1**

**By Mario Velez**

Welcome once again to our bible lesson for today. Our lesson comes from a story on the local news, once again. The story has to do with a mother who shot her son and then turned the gun on herself. Police said that it was a disturbing scene.

When we read of such news we may ask ourselves why a mother would commit such an act. What could drive someone to conclude that a situation is so hopeless that murder and suicide are the only answer? The key would be in the word “hopeless.”

Webster dictionary states that the word “hope” means “to cherish a desire with anticipation, to desire with expectation of obtainment, or to expect with confidence.” Unfortunately, when the obtainment of what we were so confidently expecting fails to meet our expectations, we end up with hopeless frustration. Don’t we? This should not be surprising, especially in the case for an unbeliever, since the Bible teaches that the unbeliever has no hope.

*“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. “ (KJV 1Thessalonians 4:13)*

The figure of sleep that Paul uses here is a reference to the physical death of believers. The “others” that Paul refers to are to unbelievers.

Grieving over the death of fellow believers is a normal human experience, and even the Lord wept for his friend Lazarus (John 11:35). The difference between the grief of an unbeliever and a believer is that the believer has the assurance of a future bodily resurrection in glory with the Lord forever, the unbeliever does not. The believer has the assurance of seeing their believing loved ones in heaven when they depart to be with the Lord, the unbeliever does not. How can we have this assurance?

Well, since the beginning of time mankind has struggled with death and what comes afterwards. Philosophers, spiritualists, and even the scientific world have been trying to find the answer to the mystery of life. The speculations are endless when we struggle on a limited humanistic viewpoint. Although there was no motive in our featured story for her action, the lady in our story might have come to the conclusion that in death, she would find peace from whatever problems she was facing.

In the midst of the confusion and speculations in the world about the afterlife, how can the believer be so sure about his future in eternity? Paul gives us the answer in 1 Thessalonians 4:15:

*“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive [and] remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.” (KJV 1Thessalonians 4:15)*

The believer does not have to wonder about death and the afterlife because God has revealed the answer to us in His most Holy Word. Why would we substitute human speculation for the divine revelation that is in the Bible?

Very simple, a person does so because they choose to do so. We can choose to believe the authority of God's Word and find assurance and comfort in our future resurrection in glory. Of course, the alternative is to hold on to the hopeless humanistic speculation that when we die everything is over. If death is the end, then all the accomplishments that we achieve in this life are void by physical death. Aren't they? So basically, physical death guarantees that an unbeliever accomplishes nothing.

The only concern of someone who dies without accepting Christ, as their Savior, while they are in the lake of fire, will be for the torment to stop, as the example of the rich man and Lazarus teaches in Luke 16:19-31.

They will not be thinking about all the accomplishments and accolades they amassed during their short and fleeting life, but only for the torment to stop. This is why the Bible teaches the reality that we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we will not take anything out (1 Tim. 6:7)

*For we brought nothing into [this] world, [and it is] certain we can carry nothing out. (KJV 1 Tim. 6:7)*

When teaching about the resurrection in 1 Corinthians Chapter 15 Paul illustrates that if there is no resurrection and we are still in our sin, we might as well just eat and drink because tomorrow we die!

*"If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die." (KJV 1 Corinthians 15:32)*

The empty hope of this world does not go beyond this world and is no real hope at all because it ends with physical death. Doesn't it? Is it any wonder that those who hold to the hope of this world many times end up committing suicide?

The believer in the saving work of Jesus Christ has the assurance of God's true hope. Our hope is not ignorant, uncertain, nor does it vary; yet, the basis for our hope is on the perception of God's Word.

Therefore, it is paramount that believers know, understand and live in the hope that they are to hold dear to while traveling through this life in anticipation of the life to come.

We will see this great hope that the Lord has for us as we continue in part 2 of this article series.