

Elder Bobby Willis



Our Hope Is In Christ

I Thessalonians 4:13, **“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.”**

Questions are asked frequently from those who have uncertainties in their mind as to the status of their loved ones who have passed from this life. These are not new questions, as there were those in Thessalonica who did not understand to the point they were disturbed or uncomfortable. Paul knew this and spoke to them about it, **“Wherefore comfort one another with these words”** (I Thessalonians 4:18). The apostle had given powerful words of comfort to the church at Rome, **“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope”** (Romans 15:4).

Concerning I Thessalonians 4:13, notice the first important point which Paul made when he referred to the dead as **“them which are asleep.”** In rightly dividing the scriptures, we must understand that the word “asleep” is used to explain the condition of the “body” in death, NOT the SPIRIT. There are some who falsely believe the soul “sleeps” until the Resurrection. Not so, the spirit returns unto the Father which gave it. Notice II Corinthians 5:8, **“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”** That which is absent from the body at death is the spirit which goes to be with the Father until it is reunited with the body at the Resurrection. When Jesus referred to **“Our friend Lazarus sleepeth”** (John 11:11), He was indicating a parallel. The sleep of the natural body is only temporary, in like manner the death of the natural body is also only temporary. Jesus knew that the body of Lazarus was dead, but said that he would go, **“that I may awake him out of sleep”**. In Mark 5:39 we find the Lord referring to a damsel as **“not dead, but sleepeth.”** Paul teaches this concept well in I Corinthians chapter 15 about the Resurrection.

The second point Paul makes is “**that ye sorrow not.**” No where does Paul say that we are not to sorrow when we lose our loved ones. We sorrow because of our love for them and that we will miss their presence and fellowship. A good example of this is in Philippians chapter 2 and the account of Epaphroditus, who he referred to as his “**brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier.**” Epaphroditus had been deathly sick. “**For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow**” (Philippians 2:27). The point is we do sorrow, but not as those who have no hope of the Resurrection.

The third point which Paul makes in I Thessalonians 4:13 is there are those who have no hope. They have no hope of any Resurrection. What a sad condition to be in. The prime example of this is the group called the Sadducees. They were a sect or group of Jews who were active during the time of Christ’s tenure on earth. They were usually thought to be of the highest social and financial status and helped to maintain the Temple. It has been said that they believed that man has a free choice of good or evil; that the soul is not immortal, therefore there is no afterlife; and there is no such thing as “an inheritance.” It is this point of believing in no afterlife which concerned Paul to the degree that he wanted to drive the truth home to those in Thessalonica. He did not want them to sorrow after their loved ones as the Sadducees who had no hope because they did not believe in the Resurrection. Paul, in I Corinthians 15:13-19, told the church at Corinth that if there is no resurrection of the dead, then 1- Christ did not rise from the grave, 2- Our faith is in vain, 3- We are still in our sins, 4- Those who have died are perished, and 5- “**We are of all men most miserable.**”

Surely, if there was no Resurrection there would be no Heaven, no Paradise, no Inheritance, and no Eternal Life. No wonder Paul said, “**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.**” Having no hope would make them “**most miserable.**” *Think About It!*