

1 Thessalonians 4:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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—ουθελομεν δε υμας αγνοειν, αδελφοι, περι των κοιμωμενων, hina me lypeesthe kathos kai hoi loipoi hoi me echontes elpida (οὐ θέλομεν δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, περὶ τῶν κοιμωμένων, ἵνα μὴ λυπησθε καθὼς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐλπίδα). Paul introduces the rapture passage (vv. 13-18) addressing Thessalonian confusion about believers who died before Christ's return. Koimaō (κοιμάω, 'to sleep') is Christian euphemism for death—not soul-sleep but peaceful rest awaiting resurrection.

That ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope—Paul doesn't forbid grief (that would be inhumane) but hopeless sorrow characterizing pagans. Hoi me echontes elpida (οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐλπίδα, 'those having no hope') describes pagan despair: death ends everything, no resurrection, no reunion. Christian grief differs qualitatively—we mourn loss but not without hope of resurrection and reunion. This hope doesn't eliminate sorrow but transforms it. Jesus wept at Lazarus's tomb (John 11:35) despite knowing resurrection was imminent; Christians can grieve while maintaining resurrection hope.

Historical Context

Pagan views of afterlife were bleak: Hades/Sheol as shadowy, joyless existence; reincarnation trapping souls in endless cycles; or materialism denying any afterlife. Tombstones revealed despair: 'I was not, I became, I am not, I care not.' Against this hopelessness, Christian resurrection hope was revolutionary. Some Thessalonians apparently feared believers who died before the parousia would miss the resurrection or be inferior to living believers. Paul corrects this misunderstanding by teaching that dead believers will actually rise first (v. 16) before living believers are transformed.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Christian hope transform grief over death compared to pagan hopelessness?
2. What evidence demonstrates that your sorrow over loss includes resurrection hope rather than despairing as those with 'no hope'?
3. How can you comfort grieving believers with resurrection hope without minimizing present pain?

Interlinear Text

Οὐ	θέλω	δὲ	ὕμᾱς	ἀγνοεῖν	ἀδελφοί	περὶ	οἱ
not	I would	But	you	to be ignorant	brethren	concerning	which
G3756	G2309	G1161	G5209	G50	G80	G4012	G3588
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κεκοιμημένων,	ἵνα	μὴ	λυπῆσθε	καθὼς	καὶ	οἱ	λοιποὶ
them which are asleep	G2443	no	ye sorrow	as	even	which	others
G2837		G3361	G3076	G2531	G2532	G3588	G3062
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οἱ	μὴ	ἔχοντες	ἐλπίδα				
which	no	have	hope				
G3588	G3361	G2192	G1680				

Additional Cross-References

Daniel 12:2 (Parallel theme): And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

1 Thessalonians 5:10 (Parallel theme): Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

1 Thessalonians 4:15 (Parallel theme): 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.

Ephesians 2:12 (Hope): That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

2 Peter 3:4 (Parallel theme): And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

1 Corinthians 15:6 (Parallel theme): After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

Acts 7:60 (Parallel theme): And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Ezekiel 37:11 (Hope): Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts.

Acts 13:36 (Parallel theme): For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption:

Romans 1:13 (Parallel theme): Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.

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