

# What Assured Hope Can We Have Beyond The Grave?

## Part 1

**It has been said there are two things that we can be sure of in life; death and taxes.**

**Taxes is something I cannot help you avoid, but eternal death I can.**

Science, particularly medical science, offers us many ways to improve and extend life, but we all know that its power is limited; in the end we all face death.

Death has been called "*the great equaliser*".

No-one has power over the day of his death, [Ecclesiastes 8:8].

We may surround ourselves with many physical possessions that bring us a certain joy and fulfilment, but in the back of our mind is the nagging thought that "*we can't take them with us*"!!

All the physical things for which we have laboured hard, will eventually become the possessions of others who will **not** have laboured to receive them.

**Ecclesiastes 2:18-19** [NIV] "*I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the work into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless.*"

**When a dear friend or loved one dies, we feel we have lost part of ourselves, and it is natural for us to mourn that loss and just as natural to seek comfort at such a time.**

But where can we go to seek real satisfying comfort to relieve the pain we feel deep inside our consciousness?

Science is silent; it has no convincing answers.

To medical science, death marks a failure.

**There is only one true source where we can find convincing answers to our questions about death and any existence beyond the grave.**

This source is a book that has been ignored by the vast majority of mankind and, by those who are aware of its existence, has been looked on as difficult to read and has been called "*the most misunderstood book ever written.*"

Most likely, you have a copy gathering dust somewhere in your home.

It is called The Christian Bible, the Word of God.

**The Christian Bible is inspired by The One who created life and also created death.**

What is revealed in its pages has to be taken in faith because only the author has faced death, died and been resurrected back to never-ending life of a far superior kind than any human being has ever experienced.

**The Good News is that such a never-ending, superior life is available to all mankind under certain conditions.**

Such understanding can really give us deep, long-lasting comfort as we face our own inevitable death or that of a loved one.

Long ago, one of the God-inspired writers of The Christian Bible, the Apostle Paul, appropriately called death *“the last enemy to be destroyed”* [1 Corinthians 15:26]

Paul was given great insight into human life, death, and what happens after death.

That can be a great source of encouragement and comfort.

The Good News is that there is hope; God the creator of all life, has worked out a plan to rescue us all from our inevitable fate, death.

The Christian Bible reveals the answers to the most fundamental questions you can ask about death; and what it reveals about the possibility of life after death is supremely hopeful and inspiring.

The death spoken of in The Christian Bible marks a complete shut-down of our conscious mind and brings an end to us as thinking, aware beings.

**Ecclesiastes 9:3-6** *“This is the evil in everything that happens under the sun. The same destiny overtakes all the hearts of men, moreover, are full of evil [affliction, calamity, sorrow or trouble] and there is madness [boasting and foolishness] in their hearts while they live, and afterwards they join the dead. Anyone who is among the living has hope, even a live dog is better off than a dead lion! For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward [for their labour] and even the memory of them is forgotten [eventually]. Their love, their hate, and their jealousy have long since vanished: never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun.”*

**There is a very good reason for what seems this finality of death.**

**God, our Creator, in His Great Love, could *not* allow weak, fallible human beings to live for ever in a body often full of pain and discomfort.**

A body always very limited, constantly unable to accomplish the desires of the wonderful mind that God has given us, and always without any hope of a change to this limitation.

**So God made us mortal, subject to death, so He could give immortal life and a far less limited spirit body to those who will not abuse it!!**

**1 Corinthians 15:50, 53-54** *“I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom [domain] of God, [i.e. the eternal spirit world] nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. For the perishable [our present human body] must clothe itself with the imperishable, and this mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with the immortality, then the saying that is written will come true ‘death has been swallowed up in victory.’”*

Human mortality [our being subject to death] exists as the consequence of what The Christian Bible calls sin.

The Bible defines sin as lawlessness, a violation of God’s Law [the way He conducts His Life] which is summed up in one word, *“Love”*.

What this society calls *“love”* is more often what should be called *“lust”*.

The Christian Bible clearly separates *“lust”* from *“love”*, what society often calls love is defined in:-

**1 John 2:15-17** *“Do not love the world or anything in the world”. [Society and the way society acts or responds]. “If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world, the cravings of sinful man, the lust of the eyes, and the boasting of what he has or does, comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the Will of God lives for ever.*

There are in these verses two Greek words both translated “love” in the English but with differing meaning. “Love of the world” [“agapaō”] to regard with favour, “love of the Father” [agapé] spontaneous love irrespective of the rights or response of recipient.

Real “love” is shown by certain basic principles referred to in:-

**John 15:12-13** *“My command is this: love [agapaō] each other as I have loved [agapaō] you. Greater love [agapé] has no-one than this, that he lay down his life [time and talents] for his friends.”*

We find this same “love” [agapé] expounded in:-

**1 Corinthians 13:4-8, 13** *“Love is patient, love is kind, it does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes [for the best in others], always preserves. Love never fails.”*

**From God’s perspective, we all have been living lawlessly because we have missed the mark of perfect love [agapé] for our Creator God and our fellow human beings.**

**Matthew 22:35-40** *“One of them, an expert in the law, tested Him [Jesus] with this question ‘Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?’ Jesus replied, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart [thoughts and feelings] and with all your soul [breath that gives us life] and with all your mind [intellect].’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it, ‘Love your neighbour as yourself. All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments.’”*

**Humanity has cut itself off from its Creator God through this disobedience, often without realising what has happened.**

**Isaiah 59:1-2** *“Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor His ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities [perverseness, persistence, movement away from what is reasonably required] have separated you from your [creator] God; your sins [habitual offences] have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.”*

Not that God desired this to happen, yet out of this self-made condition from which we cannot free ourselves by our own power comes the hope of God-given life after death.

**2 Peter 3:9** *“The Lord is not slow in keeping His Promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you and not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance [reversal of our decisions – to reconsider and begin to think differently].”*

**How is this accomplished?**

**By a re-birth!!**

**John 3:5-6** *“Jesus answered, ‘I tell you the truth, no-one can enter the Kingdom of God unless he is born [again] of water and the spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the [Holy] spirit gives birth to the spirit.’”*

We are born again of water through baptism after repentance and born again of spirit through the receiving of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

This is what is referred to in God's Word, the Christian Bible, as "*salvation*"; being saved from eternal death.

**Having been cut off from God by our sins, we need a mediator to speak on our behalf to God the Father.**

**I Timothy 2:5** *"For there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Jesus the Christ."*

Apart from Jesus Christ, death is the supreme enemy of humanity, but our Creator God anticipated this helpless situation of humans.

**Romans 5:6** *"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Jesus the Christ died for the ungodly."*

**Romans 5:10** *"For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son [Jesus the Christ], how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His Life!"*

This is a promise from the great Creator God for *all* humanity.

**John 3:16-17** *"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son [Jesus the Christ] that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world [all humanity] through Him."*

**Our Creator God has offered us two choices, very simply stated:**

- 1 Repent and believe that Jesus the Christ can save us from eternal death;
- 2 Ignore what God offers and remain in the dark about what follows physical death.

**John 3:18-21** *"Whoever believes in Him [Jesus the Christ] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men love darkness instead of light because their needs were evil [hurtful – malicious and degenerate]. Everyone who does evil [flawed – imperfect – blemished] hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."*

No-one likes to admit their mistakes or to have their mistakes exposed to the light.

This takes courage and conviction on the part of the person involved.

But we need to remember three things:-

**1. God already knows all the sins [mistakes] we have made in our lives.**

**Psalm 139:1-4** *"O Lord, you have searched me and you know me, you know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely."*

Although God knows all our past sins, He will **not** expose them to others **if** we repent of them because of the Great Love for us.

**Proverbs 10:12** *".... Love covers all wrongs."*

**Proverbs 17:9** *"He who covers over an offence promotes love....."*

**God wants us to come to love Him.**

**I Peter 4:8** *“Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins.”*

**2. Our repentance is towards God and between Him and us alone.**

**Acts 20:21** *“I have declared to both Jews and Greeks [Jews and non-Jews, hence all humanity] that they **must turn to God in repentance** and have faith in our Lord Jesus.”*

**Romans 2:4** *“Do you show contempt for the riches of His [God’s] kindness, tolerance and patience, not realising that God’s kindness leads you to repentance?”*

**Ask God and He will help you to come to a state of repentance.**

**Isaiah 1:16-17** *“..... stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the cause of the widow.”*

**All the above are contrary to the natural responses of our human nature, but God wants us to show we have an earnest desire to change, then He wants us to talk to Him about our past.**

**Isaiah 1:18** *“Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet [a very fast dye that would not wash out – i.e. deeply embedded in our nature due to repetition] they shall be as white as snow.”*

**3. Only by accepting the death of Jesus the Christ in our stead can we avoid the death our sins have earned us and receive eternal life as a gift from God.**

Throughout The Christian Bible we see emphasised that the final outcome of our sin is eternal death.

**Ezekiel 18:4** *“The soul who sins is the one who will die.”*

**James 1:15** *“..... sin when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”*

That is the bad news.

In part 2 we will see the good news of what God has done for us already and how we should respond to that good news.