

“Analyzing the Worldwide Crisis of Hopeless Suffering,
the Solution of a Biblical Worldview, and Our Role in It”

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May 2, 2022

Senior Thesis

Thoughts of individuals form the basis of ideas, which translate into ideologies and worldviews that shape society. Many of these patterns of ideas have advanced the very state of our civilization to what it has become today. Worldviews shape how the world is. They are the lens through which we view the world. Our actions are dependent upon this. Thus societies are built on worldviews, and the impacts have been massive. They are a set of patterning thoughts. One example is Gerhard Kretschmer. He was a young infant killed in July 1939. Why? Simply because he had physical disabilities. However, it did not stop there. During the Nazis' regime, 17 million human beings were slaughtered by the Nazis just because they were not part of the "elite race," known as the holocaust. It marked the beginning of the tide of eugenics by the Nazis. This tragedy was an example of a worldview called fascism. The Nazis believed that there was only one actual race, thus resulting in millions dying. Like every worldview, each one has impacts and consequences, good or bad, but the consequences were massively awful in this instance. If worldviews are therefore so important, what is the definition? Dr. Jeff Myers, the president of Summit Ministries, which prepares Christians to respond to other worldviews, states that it is: "a pattern of ideas, beliefs, convictions, and habits that help us make sense of God, the world, and our relationship to God and the world".¹

As Dr. Myers notes, it allows us to make sense of God and the world, or for non-Christians, making sense of the world without a God and the implications that a world would be without Him. Each person has a set of glasses with which they see the world. These glasses formulate their actions and reactions to life circumstances. We see this most prevalently in suffering and how the world questions why there is suffering. This worldwide crisis has existed since the fall, and all worldviews agree that there is suffering and a crisis around the globe. It is an undeniable fact. The human soul struggles to reconcile why there is suffering in

this world and seeks to find answers to ease the pain which accompanies suffering. The difference between all religions is how they address suffering. For this reason, one must evaluate the different worldviews and analyze their perspective on suffering. More specifically, a subset of suffering that one can reduce to near elimination is hopeless human suffering. This topic is the area of focus that will be discussed.

When addressing this issue of hopeless human suffering, different worldviews address the idea differently. However, analyzing all the worldviews objectively, they boil down into two main groups, a bold claim but believable as the idea is explained. One group is known as graced based, and the other is works based. A biblical worldview, (the term biblical is preferred as with modern slide of cultural, anyone can call themselves Christians, but not be biblically accurate), is excluded from all other worldviews because it is they only graced based worldview, entirely dependent upon Christ for being saved, or having hope. All other worldviews will fall into the works because Salvation depends on one's works if the individual does "good enough." As for atheism or other similar worldviews that have nothing to do with eternity or life after. They do not even believe in that concept and thus are irrelevant when discussing the matter of hope. This concept is essential to address as it will lay the foundation for explaining why a biblical worldview is a solution to the worldwide crisis of hopeless human suffering.

As for the purposes of this thesis, is to analyze each worldview, not necessarily prove or disprove the rightness or wrongness of the worldview, but from a logical perspective of observing the worldviews, that a biblical worldview is a solution to the worldwide crisis of hopeless human suffering. One will find that the Christian biblical worldview is the only answer to what is perceived as hopeless human suffering. This worldview will be proven, by going into a deeper analysis of the proposed problem, the worldwide crisis of hopeless human suffering, what

is truly meant by this, concerning all other worldviews, and why it is a problem. The second will be how this is solved, proving that the biblical worldview alleviates hopeless human suffering with moral certainty, whereas others do not.

Thus a biblical worldview is a solution to the worldwide crisis of hopeless human suffering. That does not eliminate one hundred percent of all current hopeless human suffering because if a biblical worldview simply existing did that, then the world would have already seen that. It has to be the individual's choice of whether they want the solution. However, this solution does not eliminate the problem but removes the problem's difficulty. This idea entails that a biblical worldview in an application can end hopeless human suffering for the individual and the world if the solution is applied to the fullest extent.

According to Hannah Ritchie at *our world in data organization*, sixty million people die globally every year, which is not even to add the most significant cause of death, abortion, which would bring that number to approximately 110 million.^{2,3} This is simply a devastating statistic but is highlighted because suffering, when drawn to its fullest extent, the maximally worst form it could take, would be death. For two reasons, suffering is "physical or mental pain."⁴ It is a pain that individuals experience, in which death falls into it. The second reason is that death causes the individual's suffering due to the pain of the process and very much to all others connected. Ukraine, for example, affected the whole globe. Everyone can commonly agree that suffering is a significant issue affecting every human being, and the hopelessness often connected with it is a form of suffering.

However, the claim that must be proven entails: Is a hopeless human suffering a worldwide crisis? Understanding the three aspects of this include: first, what is hopeless suffering, how is it a worldwide crisis compared to other worldviews, and why is it such a

significant issue in the first place. When observing hopeless human suffering, what does it entail, and how does each world view engage with it?

One must start with hope as the standard and what the absence of it is. Such as evil is the absence of goodness. What genuine hope is being discussed here is not "to wish for, to expect, but without certainty of the fulfillment; to desire very much, but with no absolute assurance of getting your desire."^{5,6} Such as some say, "hope you make it to the airport." The issue is that it depends on not only one's actions and all other circumstances going smoothly. It is temporary and not guaranteed. It is solely a mindset of thinking. The genuine hope to be understood is not hoping that depends upon many variables that are also changing or relying upon ideas such as the prosperity gospel proclaims of "willing ones winnings." These are not assurances. It needs something outside of oneself and temporary things of the earth. Something eternal and unchanging, and an outside standard that is assured. Whatever the world view, from an earthly perspective, nothing in life is entirely guaranteed of what an individual hopes for, except, unfortunately, death. With that, the hope of death is not to hope at all.

Thus the real hope is twofold, not only of thinking but proactive trust. The previous ideas of hope are not all entirely wrong; they express uncertainty. Aspects of general hope can be seen in the bible, but what John Piper, a profound theologian, notes about the critical difference is that "biblical hope is a confident expectation and desire for something good in the future."⁷ The difference is the expression of certainty versus uncertainty. It is not only a desire for good in the future but also expects it to happen. It is a confidence that it will happen and faith that it will happen. John Piper keys the term "moral certainty". By this, he means a certainty based on the individual's character but, more importantly, God's character. This idea will be expounded upon later when discussing the solution to this problem of hopeless suffering, but for the present

discussion, this will suffice. Thus one is led to the opposite of hope, which is hopelessness, hopeless suffering. Hopeless human suffering is at face value, based on the definitions of physical or emotional pain (death when taken to the fullest) without a trusted assurance of a reasonable future expectation that is not yet gained or without moral certainty. At its core, some people are not saved and do not have an assurance of Salvation. A hope that after they suffer some on the earth and then pass away, they will live in eternal life with God in heaven, forever. The last thing to note is that the idea of hopelessness is not unidirectional. It is bi-directional, meaning that suffering can cause hopelessness, and hopelessness can also cause suffering. However, in both cases, they fall under hopeless suffering.

Next, the second point of analysis is seeing how this problem is a worldwide crisis. By worldwide crisis, it is meant that it is connected throughout the world. It meets the criteria of crisis: it is a stressful thing, a time of extreme difficulty to deal with, and can not be solved through ordinary simple problem skills.⁸ To prove this, it will be done in two ways, first from a relational perspective of comparing other worldviews and then from a mathematical perspective. On a macro level, there are six prominent worldviews, which direct the majority of the population and are evangelistic, meaning to invite others to join. One of the six is Christianity which will be addressed later in the first point of the solution, that it does provide genuine hope. As Dr. Jeff Meyers refers to in his book *Understanding The Times*.⁹ Other smaller worldviews will not be focused on, such as those like Jedism (those who practice being Jedi warriors), as those are on a micro-level and not global.¹⁰ The first two worldviews that Dr. Myers highlights are Secularism, and Marxism, both of which are theologically dictated by atheism. These are both interesting to address, but a wiser move is to first hear from none other than The New York

Times about why atheism does have hope, to understand their perspective first. Steve Baughman writes an opinion saying this in responding to the Christian worldview of hope:

"I am puzzled by Pope Benedict XVI's recent statement that "a world without God is a world without hope." Tens of millions of atheists around the world lead lives filled with hope. We hope for many things that Christians hope for: peace in our time, a better life for our children, justice for all, an end to poverty, and a chance to enjoy our lives here and now."¹¹

This reasoning becomes very intriguing, but unfortunately, a misunderstanding of what Christians mean by biblical hope or what John Piper stated. To Mr. Baughman's surprise, Christians agree with the idea of this type of hope. One can see this form of hope in the bible, but the misunderstanding is when this general idea of hope is used interchangeably with biblical hope. This hope they are talking about is the hope referred to early when defining terms; it is based on uncertainty, of only thinking, instead of moral certainty and a proactive trust of guarantee. It is once again dependent upon the individual. Therefore atheists do not have true hope. The last thing to note about atheism is that it is built on the idea that there is no meaning to life, and this is all there is. It is the reason why Jeffrey Dahmer did what he did. From a purely objective standpoint, it is clear that if one is seeking to find the best of best solutions to hopeless suffering and genuine hope of certainty, atheism is not the place to turn.

The subsequent worldview is known as postmodernism, which is one of the most uncertainty-filled worldviews. Theologically, Jeff Myers labels it as theologically suspicious.¹² Why? Because although it is very atheistic, it is not built upon those ideas. Because it was founded as a skeptical reaction to modernism, that there are no objective standards, and as a skeptical distrust of all religions claiming there is objective Truth, but not disbelief. All religions can coexist, and what works for one person, whether Christianity or atheism, is acceptable.¹³ This worldview is summed up in the statement that the only objective Truth is that there is no

objective truth. This idea, of course, is self-defeating. The word that is very defining of this religion is "uncertainty." Thus this religion does not have any form of biblical hope. It rejects this idea of hope because it is certain and objective. It may even not believe in the cultural idea of hope.

The last two significant worldviews are the most difficult to address, as they partially believe in biblical hope. Meaning that they believe in an expected future good outcome independent of ourselves, that the hope is not passive thinking but active trust. That hope is given by an eternal divinity that transcends humans, such as God, through Salvation, granting Christians eternal life to live with Him in heaven. In very basic concepts, the ideas of the subsequent worldview's results of hope could be similar to the idea in a biblical world but very different in reality. Now the means of how the end is achieved is where these two worlds do not meet true hope (biblical hope) because, by definition, it is based on moral certainty. Whereas these two worldviews are not, meaning the results of the worldviews are not guaranteed and are unachievable. These two last worldviews are known as New Spirituality and Islam.

This fourth world view, as introduced above, compares to see if it has any influence on biblical hope, is new spirituality. This worldview is one of the more complicated ones, as it is a newer modern movement but very influential. Theologically, as Jeff Myers states, it is "a pantheistic worldview that teaches everything and everyone is connected through divine consciousness." ¹⁴ They embrace that everything is God, everything is spiritual. They cannot embrace true biblical hope as they see divinity on every hand and recognize the Christ in every human being. We all know that true hope, by its definition, is based on something outside of one's self to be anchored too. Thus, New Spirituality offers no true hope.

The fifth worldview is Islam. Islam teaches that hope is something one needs and is essential to our lives. Hope is the light source for those who yearn to have the best in all things. However, it falls short here because it then takes on a path of how Allah reveals and how one creates hope for our earthly life and the life hereafter. Islam is close to Christianity in that it teaches one to have hope in Allah, similar to how Christians have hope in their Savior, Jesus Christ. However, the hope in Allah also involves a work-based need. Islam teaches that one must have a goal. They have hope and expectancy in that goal and take positive action to achieve it. It leaves one hopeless when the goal is not attained. There is no certainty because it is based on if one did good enough when there is not even a standard of good enough to measure one's actions. Furthermore, as is seen, true hope is based on certainty. Thus, relying on one's work again to have hope. Islam leaves one with no hope as they ultimately must wait on the mercy of Allah. As can be seen, all the five other worldviews do not provide true hope, by definition given, which ties in to prove why hopeless suffering is a worldwide crisis in the next point.

Secondly, from a mathematical perspective, if only a biblical worldview provides an accurate confident expectation and desire for something good in the future, of moral certainty (known as real/biblical hope), Then that means only 2.38 billion people known as Christians have the option of true hope, according to *World Population Review*.¹⁵ Which is generously speaking, because Mormons, Catholics, and Jehovah's Witnesses, among other religions, teach ideas contrary to the people, and are works based and not graced based, but are still categorized within this number of 2.4 billion. This number means, based on the previous point of rationality, that because all the other worldviews do not have genuine hope, and if Christianity is the only best solution to hopeless suffering, then that leaves approximately 5.5 billion other people in the world to deal with hopeless human suffering (according to world meter of the current

population), without a proper solution.¹⁶ Thus, by pure reasoning, this is the definition of a worldwide crisis.

Lastly, when addressing the problem of hopeless suffering, one must know why does it happen? Why is there hopeless suffering? Because if there always has been hopeless human suffering, then why is it considered a crisis in the first place? Was there ever a time without it in the world? The key for any person to know entails it was not always this way. Just as there is goodness, there is evil. Analogies do not give due service to the whole scope of an idea, but they give a grasp of the concept. Thus, take good, for example; if it were all humans ever knew, Then there would be no evil or idea of it. Goodness would be something normal, just as the air one breathes. It is not thought about daily because most people on earth have not experienced what it is like not having clean air, let alone no air at all. There is a standard because there is hopefulness and hope. For a standard to exist, for hope, goodness, and even clean air, there must have been a time when it was all perfect, a time when there was no hopeless suffering. This idea is indeed true that there was a time without it. First, it is rationally proven because each person does not have immunity to hopeless suffering themselves or when others go through it. It is an awful thing to have to walk through. This reason is the first proof that, initially, there must have been a time when there was no hopeless suffering in one's being.

Whatever the worldview someone holds, the above can still exceptionally be commonly agreed upon by all. The second is evidential proof. The following example most accurately aligns with the reasoning above. More than the other five worldviews, the example of Christianity shall be used. A biblical worldview explains the creation of the world. That is used to be perfect, but man's disobedience caused the fall, which affected the rest of the world and everyone today. Jack Zavada, based on history, summarizes it this way:

God created Adam, the first man, and Eve, the first woman, and placed them in a perfect home, the Garden of Eden. Everything about earth was perfect at that moment in time....God put two essential trees in the garden: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam's duties were clear. God told him to tend the garden and not eat the fruit of those two trees, or he would die. Adam passed that warning on to his wife. Then Satan entered the garden, disguised as a serpent. He did what he is still doing today. He lied:

"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3:4-5, NIV)

Instead of believing in God, Eve believed in Satan. She ate the fruit and gave some to her husband to eat. Scripture says, "the eyes of both of them were opened." (Genesis 3:7, NIV) They realized they were naked and made hasty coverings from fig leaves. God invoked curses on Satan, Eve, and Adam. God could have destroyed Adam and Eve, but out of his gracious love, he killed animals to make clothes for them to cover their newly-discovered nakedness. He did, however, cast them out of the Garden of Eden." ¹⁷

This historical excerpt was the fall of man, which affected the rest of humanity with the curse of sin and separation from God through Adam and Eve. That was when sin, problems, and hopeless suffering were non-existent, but because of the fall, that is the root reason why hopeless suffering is a worldwide crisis. Fortunately, things did not stop there; God had implemented His plan of Salvation, before the creation of the world.

When analyzing the problem of hopeless human suffering, every person on the earth should care about this problem of hopeless suffering. One needs to know how much it affects others and try to grasp the depth of the pain this problem causes, so a desire for the solution expounds. Thus, by recognizing the depth of the problem, a solution of the same depth could be applied. Because if the problem is not thoroughly analyzed, then the need for a proper solution for the long term will not be seen as needed and only wanted. Thus this hopeless human suffering is a problem, a crisis worldwide, in dire need of the best of the best solutions.

This train of thought leads to the second aspect of this thesis that Christianity is the only worldview that, by the definition of hope, offers a solution that genuinely answers hopeless

human suffering. In analyzing the different worldviews and their definitions and applications of hope, one can see that Christianity does not fall under any of the other worldviews, which are either works based, evaluated by the merit of one's efforts, or a sense of the Christ within them when approaching the issue of hope. It has been proven that all other worldviews can not be the solution or best solution to hopeless suffering. Thus the question remains, if they do not, does Christianity? The short answer is yes. The reasoning of why this stands true can be broken down into three key points, the exclusivity of a biblical worldview about other worldviews, moral certainty of biblical hope, and outcomes of a biblical worldview being the solution to hopeless suffering. However, before the solution to hopeless suffering is proven, something must be made clear, which is as follows.

This thesis is not written upon the presupposition that Christianity is the only Truth and all the other worldviews are wrong. Nor is it written to disprove the soundness of each other's worldview, by no means. It is built upon the idea that if Christianity is true, among other worldviews as well, and one is looking at a solution to the problem of hopeless suffering, a biblical worldview is the best option, and it is the only solution. A logical defense was used to prove that Christianity was the best option. One beautiful similar concept that explains this idea beautifully is Blaise Pascal's wager. He proposes the idea the same way one would in gambling. In gambling, one already has a wager, which entails how one plays the game of life. There are only two possibilities:

If God REALLY exists, and we believe (= bet that God exists), we have an infinite gain (heaven). If God REALLY exists, and we do not believe that, then we have the potential of an infinite loss (hell, or at least eternal separation from God). If God really does NOT EXIST, and we believe that God exists, we essentially lose nothing. If God really does NOT EXIST, and we believe that God does not exist, we essentially gain nothing.¹⁸

In the same way, the solution to hopeless suffering is seen. If one chooses God, and it solves hopeless suffering (an infinite gain), If Christianity is not valid, then one is still left a better person due to the good moral teachings of the bible to reduce hopeless suffering and increase hope. (a finite gain).

With that aside, the exclusivity of a biblical worldview must be proven. The exclusivity of Christianity means that it is not like any other worldview, that in the context of a biblical worldview, and the term, many hold it to mean that Christianity is graced based providing certainty of hope, whereas all other worldviews do not. Which, as seen previously, is true. It is the only worldview that fulfills true hope. It meets the criteria for having genuine hope. It is entirely dependent on Christ to be saved. John 3:16 explains the premise of the plan of Salvation which God has to save humanity, in essence, allow the ending of hopeless suffering caused by the fall that a biblical worldview holds. It says this: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son [who died, buried, and raised on the third day], that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."¹⁹ Christians have an assurance of hope, a certainty of an excellent future outcome, of after they die, they will live have eternal life living with God forever in heaven. It is not based on one's works, as Ephesians 2:8-9 states: "For you have been saved through faith by grace. Moreover, this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."²⁰ It depends on the grace of God given to us as a gift, which is specific and grace-based, producing a hope of assurance of Salvation.

The certainty of assurance of an expected outcome is a crucial foundation to hope. That is where the concept of moral certainty that was previously discussed arises. John Piper notes that it is not mathematical or logical certain when addressing biblical. Although still important and still

amiable to prove Christianity, the key idea being referred to it is moral certainty.²¹ John piper expounds upon the ideas stating :

"I call it moral because it is rooted in the commitment of persons' will. Furthermore, the will is the seat of morality. That is, we can only speak of moral right and wrong in relationship to acts of will. So whatever has to do with the will is an issue of morality. Moreover, moral certainty is a certainty that is based on acts of will." ²²

This means that one's Salvation is from God, and God is perfect; thus, certainty from him is of the highest condition of assurance. It is such the idea John piper continues, "When the word says, "Hope in God!" it does not mean, "Cross your fingers." It means to use the words of William Carey, "Expect great things from God."²³ Such as in court, moral certainty is proof beyond any doubt. The hope God provides is a certainty of confidence of assurance of a good future outcome. (i.e., eternal life with God). Hebrews 11:6 says this: "And we desire each of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end."²⁴ In this is both a call to action and a promise to love others as Christ would, but know that hope of a biblical worldview is morally certain, assured for Christians.

Thus it can be seen, through comparison to other religions, analysis of each, through logic, rationale, and evidence, that indeed a biblical worldview is a solution to a worldwide crisis of hopeless suffering, as it provides true hope and is by far the best solution. However, specific to choosing a biblical worldview as a solution because it is available, but like medicine to help sickness, it has to be chosen to be used. There are two specific results of a biblical worldview being the solution to hopeless suffering. The first is relatively apparent, hopeless suffering, which is eliminated because through a biblical worldview, one can have an assurance of Salvation, a moral certainty of an eternal life of living with God in heaven after one passes away.

This thought process is not endorsing having more hope-filled suffering, which is a terrible thing. A biblical worldview does not promote striving to have a martyr complex.

A biblical worldview is the solution to a worldwide crisis of hopeless human suffering as true hope of Salvation is guaranteed, providing moral certainty and benefits of solving hopeless suffering. moreover, what it discusses is that because one has hope in God, through the midst of suffering, there is hope, which in turn produces steadfast endurance and joy of heart, knowing God is more significant than what one is going through. He will take care of the individual as a by-product of having biblical hope in suffering produces endurance, endurance, character, and hope. Thus creating a perpetual production of hope, as Romans discusses.²⁵ The second indirect result of a biblical worldview is that it will help alleviate the type of suffering inflicted by hopelessness, such as anxiety, depression, or loss of meaning in life. Each person should care about this because it is not only a matter of quality of life here on earth and even a matter of eternal life and death. Thus the urgency of the matter is vitally important.

Now one must take the time to refute those who would disagree with the fact that a biblical worldview is the only answer to hopeless human suffering. A major conflict that arises that must be addressed is that some people would disagree with the proposition that the biblical worldview is the solution to a worldwide crisis of hopeless suffering for one primary reason. They would disagree with the term hope, the foundation of the proposition, because it was taken from a biblical perspective. Thus it is biased. Therefore, other worldviews can solve the idea of hopeless suffering if an unbiased definition is used. This proposition is interesting for many reasons. Everyone technically has a bias already; the critical thing is whether they are leading with that, ignoring facts because of it, which in this case is not happening.

The subsequent refutation is that that definition of the term is the most accurate and fulfilling because it best fits the context of the proposition. Logically, looking at the idea of a solution to fixing a problem and, in this case, hopeless suffering, the certainty that it will happen, and action to enable it to happen is vitally important. Both of which a biblical definition of true hope provides, unlike a secular or general idea of hope does not. The vital thing to note is that the proposition is not stating that the other religions are inherently wrong. That is not the purpose. It is choosing the best solution, which happens to be a biblical worldview, as the others simply do not work. It would be similar to saying walking gets one to a place faster than flying because flying is biased. That it should not count because the individual uses a plane, mechanics, and technology, it should not count. However, as everyone knows, that claim is untrue, the plane will always be faster and better, and the actual bias is on the side of the person making this claim. Thus, the claim of some individuals who hold disagreement can not and does not stand valid or sound.

Worldviews, such as Christianity, conduct a major role in the world and have the potential to do even more. One of which is that a biblical worldview is the solution to the worldwide crisis of hopeless human suffering. The impact which a solution such as this could make in the face of a crisis is literally world-changing. From a philosophical progression to proving the validity of the biblical worldview being a solution, it is true that a biblical worldview is the best solution and the solution to hopeless human suffering. This problem is a worldwide crisis, true among all the other worldviews. Although it was caused by the fall of humanity, God provided a solution of hope of Salvation. That the solution of a biblical worldview provides true hope, alleviating hopeless human suffering with moral certainty. Thus, through the rationale and evidence presented, one's role as a Christian is to spread the news that a biblical worldview is a

solution to the worldwide crisis of hopeless human suffering. That Jesus Christ is the only one who can protect and provide an individual with a straight path to heaven. His work of Salvation is guaranteed, and His love for humanity was evident on the cross and His resurrection.

Everyone should care about this issue because a false diagnosis of a problem leads to a false prescription, which worsens the problem. Thus the Truth that a biblical worldview is the only true solution to the problem of hopeless suffering most prevail. It is a worldwide crisis in need of a solution. The urgency of the matter is vitally important for others to know and take action on because, ultimately, it could literally mean a matter of eternal life or death.

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