

Is Anyone Asking Us about Our Hope?

I Peter 3:14-15 says, “But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you...” (ESV).

We often look at this passage and talk about being prepared to give a reason for the hope that is in us. Usually, we talk about that from the perspective of how to teach the gospel. We talk about personal work lessons. We talk about the plan of salvation. We talk about commitment to Jesus Christ and faith in Him. All of these things are necessary. We talk about why a person needs to be baptized. All of this is part of explaining the hope that is in us.

But recently I was humbled by some striking thoughts and questions. What good is being prepared to give this response if no one is asking me about the hope I have? And yet, this passage suggests people will be asking me about the hope I have. So I ask, why aren’t more people asking me about the hope that is in me?

What about you? Has anyone asked you about the hope that is in you lately? Has anyone ever asked? Have you ever wondered why?

Why aren’t more people asking us about the hope that is in us? Before you keep reading, think about that for a minute. Why?

Let’s keep this statement in context before we consider our own context. Peter was talking about Christians who were suffering for righteousness’ sake. Then in **I Peter 3:18**, he goes on to remind them about Jesus’ own suffering. Then he talks about Noah’s deliverance from the flood. Do you think anyone asked Noah about his hope? Why? Because he was doing something significantly different from those around them. As **Matthew 24:38** explains, the people around Noah were putting their hope in things continuing as they always had. They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. Noah, however, was putting his hope in something completely different. He was putting his hope in a big huge boat. And he was apparently telling everyone about it (cf. **II Peter 2:5**).

That leads me back to my question. I am certain people were asking Noah about the hope he had in his boat. Why aren’t people asking me about my hope? Is it because to the naked eye, my hope looks no different from theirs?

What is the hope of the worldly? Don’t they put their hope in government? Don’t they put their hope in retirement accounts? Don’t they put their hope in decent jobs? Don’t they put their hope in nice cars, nice houses, nice clothes, neat gadgets? Don’t they put their hope in things continuing as they always have?

But here is the problem. Things will not always continue as they are. As **II Peter 3:7** explains, just as the world was once destroyed by water, “by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly” (ESV). We don’t know the length of time. But we do know judgment is coming. Fire will consume this world. Our jobs will be destroyed. Our governments will be overthrown. Our retirement accounts will come to naught. Our clothes, homes, cars, gadgets will count for nothing. Noah was putting his hope in a boat. What are we putting our hope in?

According to **I Peter 1:13** you must “set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (ESV). For Noah, showing his hope was easy. He was building a big boat in his backyard. How can we show our hope? Unfortunately, for most of us we do that simply by being nice people who go to church on Sundays. But it seems to me that isn’t getting the job done.

Why aren’t people asking us about our hope? They don’t see our hope as being significantly different from theirs. How can we change that? How can we show the world that our hope is different from theirs? What about being more involved in spreading the gospel? And while that includes talking to people, what about using significant portions of our income to promote the spread of the gospel? What about giving ourselves first to God and, by that, giving even beyond our means to help take care of our brothers and sisters the world over (cf. **II Corinthians 8:3-5**)? Do you think any of Barnabas’s family and friends wondered about the crazy hope he had when he sold his property and laid the full value at the feet of the apostles in **Acts 4:36-37**? What about not being always so entertained by the world’s recreations but by finding our joy in God’s things? I’m certainly not suggesting we aren’t allowed to watch TV or go to a ball game or be a fan of some team. But if it looks to the world like our greatest enjoyment comes from these venues instead of God, what will they think about our hope? What about making huge sacrifices for the Lord? I know one man who learned the gospel of Jesus Christ and discovered that he was in an unlawful marriage. Because he was putting his hope fully in Christ, he got out of his unlawful marriage, reconciled with his lawful wife, and then served the Lord. One of the greatest personal evangelists I know today was that

man's cousin. When this second man was still in the world and decided he needed to change his life, guess who he looked to first. He looked to his cousin that everyone else in the family said was crazy. Why? Because his life had said he had an amazing hope. What about enduring suffering? Do we lead too safe lives? Do we wait around until we think talking to someone about the gospel simply can't be rejected? Do we hang on to safe jobs that pay the bills instead of going somewhere the gospel hasn't gone and rely on Him to care for us? (I'm talking to me here as much as to you.) Do we take an annual vacation to Disney World, Gatlinburg, or Branson and never sacrifice a week to go help a preacher or congregation in a third world country?

These are some questions I'm asking myself this week. I don't necessarily have all the answers. But I hope we keep asking these questions and let them lead us somewhere that makes it completely obvious that our hope is different from the world's so that people start asking us more, "What are you putting your crazy hope in?"

—Edwin L. Crozier