

Our Only Hope

When Paul wrote to Timothy, he made three statements connected by one word: hope. In **I Timothy 4:10**, he wrote, “For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe” (ESV). In **I Timothy 5:5**, he spoke of widows saying, “She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day...” (ESV). Finally, in **I Timothy 6:17**, he recorded, “As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God...” (ESV).

Interestingly, though Paul mentions our hope, he doesn’t actually define it, which leads me to believe He expects it to be common sense. Think about it for a moment. What is everyone hoping for?

Our hope is life. Our hope is abundant life. Our hope is life filled with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Our hope is being led to green pastures and beside quiet waters, overflowing cups and anointed heads, enemies who can do nothing to stop us. Though I’m describing this with all kinds of biblical language, isn’t this really what everyone is hoping for? We want an enjoyable, meaningful, fulfilled life absent pain, oppression, torment. Boiled down to one word, we hope for happiness.

Perhaps there are exceptions to this, but I contend everyone has the exact same hope—Christians and non-Christians alike. The difference between Christians and non-Christians then is not what we hope for. The difference is how we believe our hope will be fulfilled. The worldly believe this hope will be fulfilled somewhere in this world. Thus, their lives are marked by chasing after the things of the world, leading them through sin and immorality.

Disciples of Jesus, however, learn those pursuits may provide moments of pleasure, but real life, true happiness can’t be found through the things of this world. Paul demonstrated this in his defense before Agrippa and Festus claiming he was on trial for the hope of God’s promise to the fathers and then cried out, “Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?” (**Acts 26:6-8**, ESV). Our hope, a truly joyous life, comes in the resurrection. The only way to have true life in the resurrection is in God through Jesus Christ. Therefore, the suffering widow lives in supplication and prayer because she knows abundant life only comes in one place. The wealthy learn not to hope in riches because abundant life only comes in one place. We do not sit on our backsides, but toil and strive knowing the joyous life only comes in one place. We will give up everything else to be in that place—in Jesus Christ (cf. **Philippians 3:8-11**). Therefore, we surrender to Jesus Christ and His will. Not because our hope is in our ability to obey Jesus, but because our hope is in Jesus. Jesus Christ is our only hope for the happy, joyous life we long for, therefore we will do whatever He asks and whatever it takes to be in Him.

This leads us to a question, what will my life look like if my only hope really is Jesus?