

The Fight for Joy

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[0 : 0 0] The following message was given at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

If you'd open your Bibles to Psalm 42, that's where we're going to be. Actually, Psalm 42 and 43. It's an old hymn that you might know that contains these lines.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take. The clouds ye so much dread are big with mercy and shall break in blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust Him for His grace. Why? Well, behind a frowning providence, He hides a smiling face.

That's from the hymn, God Moves in a Mysterious Way. And those lines are filled with hope for anxious and depressed and discouraged and doubting people.

[1 : 1 7] And it might surprise you to know that the author, William Cooper, battled significant depression throughout his life. And attempted suicide multiple times.

He's the one who wrote those words. Yet this hymn has comforted, it's written near the end of his life, it's comforted countless Christians for more than 200 years in their struggles with anxiety and depression and unbelief.

William Cooper is a great example, great reminder that those who know God's character and God's promises and even sing about them, don't always live in the good of them.

We don't always act like we know or believe what we're singing. We can judge the Lord by feeble sense.

That's right. Instead of trusting Him for His grace. And I should know, because in the mid-90s, I spent almost three years battling ongoing fear, anxiety, depression, confusion, all fueled by an overwhelming and continual sense that life was completely hopeless.

[2 : 3 8] I was serving as an associate pastor in the church that we had helped plant two and a half years earlier in Charlotte, North Carolina, and I'd been a pastor for nine years.

So I should have known better. I'd talk to people about this stuff. I was confused. I was fearful. I lived in a cloud, often pacing the floor at nights, unable to sleep, reciting scripture, wanting to sleep, but couldn't.

I sought medical help, had the heart test, the everything test. And the doctor said, you're fine. And I said, no, I'm not.

And I don't know what he was looking at, but what I knew and was experiencing was not fine. So at some point, I went on a 24-hour retreat, which only made me more anxious.

About three months in, I took a vacation. Our family took a vacation. Didn't help. Cut back on my responsibilities as a pastor. Didn't help. Nothing helped. And looking around this morning, when I'm in the front singing, I always take some time just to look around at everybody.

[3 : 5 4] And you all look great. This looks like a great congregation. Everybody's doing great. Everybody's happy. Everything's going fine.

Loving the Lord. No problem. That's not true, is it? We all can look great. But looks can be deceiving. That's because there's a difference between what people see on the outside and what's going on on the inside.

And I don't have any doubt that in a crowd this size, in a church this size, because we're not just a crowd, we're a church. In a church this size, there are some of you who, when I was detailing what I went through 30 years ago, you're going, Oh, wait a minute.

Someone else is going through this. There are some of you who have gone through stuff like that. And there are some of you who are going to go through something like that.

For those of you who are going through it now, or remember a time, you remember a time when God felt near. You remember a time when your singing was passionate and your joy was evident.

[5 : 03] And it was inside as well as outside. But now, it's gone. And you feel like God's gone. Sometimes we can go through the motions of joy.

Either because of our temperament, or our upbringing, or just out of habit. But inside we're beginning to fear. We're beginning to be anxious. Or we're beginning to be depressed.

Just feel disconnected. Like, I'm here, I'm doing this stuff, but it just doesn't feel right. And whether you can relate to my experience or not, sooner or later, every Christian has to fight for joy in God.

We have to fight for it. And the title of this message is, The Fight for Joy. That's why the Psalms are such a gift. They flesh out our internal struggles.

They detail them. And they give us hope in the midst of them. David Powlison, who's gone on to be with the Lord, but just a wonderful man of God.

[6 : 18] And a, so wise, so insightful. Said, the Psalms have always been favorites of God's people. Because they express honest human experience and emotion in the context of faith.

In the Psalms, you meet God where you are. In the Psalms, you meet God where you are. Isn't that kind of God to meet us where we are? He doesn't say, jump through this hoop, then I'll meet you.

Do these three things, then I'll meet you. We don't have to find a way to get to God this morning. He's come to us. And He's come to us through His Word. So as we study Psalm 42 and 43 this morning, one thing will become clear.

This is kind of the main point of what I'm going to say. In our fight for joy, God Himself is our only hope. Sounds simple, but hopefully by the time we get to the end, you realize that's really profound.

In our fight for joy, God Himself is our only hope. That's good news. It's comforting, and it's true. And rather than read through both Psalms together, we're going to read them as we go.

[7 : 34] We're going to look at three stages of the psalmist's fight for joy. And those sections are demarcated by a refrain that appears twice in Psalm 42 and once in Psalm 43 at the end.

So the first thing we're going to look at is the psalmist remembering joy. Remembering joy. And that's Psalm 42, verses 1 through 6a.

So hear the Word of God. To the choir master, a mascal of the sons of Korah. As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night.

While they say to me all the day long, where is your God? These things I remember as I pour out my soul. How I would go with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God.

[8 : 46] With glad shouts and songs of praise. A multitude keeping festival. Here's the first refrain. Why are you cast down, O my soul?

And why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God. For I shall again praise Him. My salvation.

And my God. So the psalm opens with this intense longing. It's not, come praise the Lord.

Make a joyful noise to the Lord. No, it's, I'm doing horrible. As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.

When shall I come and appear before God? Like I used to. He's longing for God's presence because he's currently not experiencing it.

[9 : 45] And apparently, the author's in a dry, remote, and distant place. And we don't know why he's there. We just know he feels like God is far away.

And it's painful. And part of the pain is remembering what he used to experience. So in verse 4, he says, I used to go with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God.

With glad shouts and songs of praise. Like we were celebrating. Not doing that anymore. Not surrounded by worshipers at the temple joyfully shouting and singing, celebrating God's steadfast love and goodness.

It's all gone. He's alone. And he's discouraged. And then he hears these other voices. His enemies taunt him.

Where is your God? Look at you. Look at how irrelevant and futile your faith is. God doesn't care about you.

[10 : 48] Why do you think he cares about you? He's got other things to attend to. Maybe life hasn't turned out the way you expected. Maybe your friends have let you down.

And you're starting to think, No, God has let me down. Where's God? He's supposed to be here. And he's not. And you know, you don't have to be in a remote place to experience these things.

And those enemies don't have to be people outside you. Those thoughts might show up tomorrow morning when you wake up. It happens to me sometimes.

Go to bed a Christian. Wake up not a Christian. You think, what happened overnight? I was just sleeping. That's all I was doing. But just the thoughts that come in. It's just like despair, discouragement, and doubt, and disconnectedness.

And it's like, where is your God? So his response to all those questions is grief.

[11 : 51] Deep sorrow. It's verse 3. This is the way he says it. My tears have been my food. And when you get really depressed, that's what happens.

Your sorrow becomes what you feed on. Sometimes we even lose our appetite. You know, when you get really depressed, you just don't even want to eat.

Our tears become our food. And I remember during that dark season, I was confronted every day with sadness and anxiety and hopelessness.

Hopelessness. And I did at times lose my appetite. I didn't want to eat. And at those times when life is that dark, you start to look anywhere for relief.

You just know something's got to change. Something's got to change. So we become susceptible right then to false hopes and false solutions and false gods.

[13 : 00] Which is why what the psalmist does right here in this first refrain is so important. He says, Why are you cast down, O my soul?

And why are you in turmoil within me? He's talking to himself. Now when you're walking down the street and you pass someone and they're talking to themselves, you go, This is a problem.

There's something going on here that shouldn't be going on. But he's actually doing something wise. He is talking to himself. He's speaking truth to himself. He's asking himself questions.

It's a book that was written years ago by the British pastor Martin Lloyd-Jones, Spiritual Depression. And he said, Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself?

And then he goes on to say this. You have to take yourself in hand. You have to address yourself. Preach to yourself. Question yourself.

[14 : 04] You must say to your soul, Why art thou cast down? What business have you to be disquieted? You must say to yourself, Hope thou in God, instead of muttering in this depressed, unhappy way.

Then you must go on to remind yourself of God. Who God is and what God is and what God has done. And what God has pledged himself to do. And that's exactly what the psalmist is doing thousands of years before Martin Lloyd-Jones said those words.

At this very moment he could sink deeper into depression and depressing thoughts and murmurings and grumblings. He begins to challenge himself. He says, Hope in God.

You'll praise him again. I shall again praise him. Now it would be sweet if the psalm ended right here. And everything was resolved.

I'm feeling bad. Hope in God. I forgot to hope in God. Okay, thanks. Thanks for that counsel. That's great. But it doesn't end there.

[15 : 14] This is, I find this just fascinating. He says, Why are you cast down on my soul? Why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God. For I shall again praise him.

My salvation and my God. My soul is cast down within me. It's like he's right back at the beginning. It's like, Did you make any progress?

Which takes us to the second step. Second point. The psalmist is not only remembering joy. He's pursuing joy. My soul is cast down within me.

This is verses 6b through 11. My soul is cast down within me. Therefore, I remember you. From the land of Jordan and of Hermon.

From Mount Mazar. Deep calls to deep. At the roar of your waterfalls. All your breakers and your waves. Have gone over me.

[16 : 11] By day. The Lord commands. His steadfast love. And at night. His song. Is with me.

A prayer to the God of my life. I say to God. My rock. Why? Have you forgotten me? Why do I go mourning?

Because of the oppression. Of the enemy. As with a deadly wound. In my bones. My adversaries taunt me. While they say to me all the day long.

Where is your God? Why are you cast down on my soul? Why are you in turmoil within me? Hope. In God.

For I shall again praise him. My salvation. And my God. God. Now the lands. Of Jordan. And Hermon. Were areas that were far away from Jerusalem.

[17 : 06] He's distant. Not only in his heart. But in actuality. And deep. Is calling to deep. There's this conversation. This. This.

Honest. Raw. Conversation. Between the psalmist and God. And we're listening in on it. And he's fighting for joy. The pursuit of joy isn't easy.

That's what we're seeing here. It's not the quiet flowing stream we saw at the beginning of the psalm. The deer pants for flowing streams. You might picture a little deer. You know. Just kind of. Oh where's my water?

Where's my. The flowing stream. You know. Just this beautiful picture. It's not that. It's a waterfall. And he's under it. These are breakers and waves that are coming down.

It's telling us of a time when you just feel like life is out of control. Like you don't have any control. And you know what those days are like. Pressures. Deadlines.

[18 : 05] I occasionally have one of these days. Things break. You run out of gas. You have a flat tire. Someone tells you you forgot to do this. And kids are asking you to do all this stuff. And you just.

I have no control. Oh. And it's. It's. Frustrating. It's. It's. Debilitating. It's. You just go. What in the world is going on?

But he says. The psalmist says. These are your breakers. These are your way. You're making this happen. I don't know why. Yeah. But you're making this happen.

And even in the midst of all that turmoil. He's aware. That. God is. Working. So he says. By day. In verse 8.

By day. The Lord commands his steadfast love. And at night. His song is with me. A prayer to the God of my life. No matter how far away God feels.

[19 : 01] At any given moment. He's involved. Day and night. The Lord. Commands. His steadfast love. It's steadfast love.

He shows to thousands. Thousands of generations. It's the steadfast love. That endures forever. So in the midst of pursuing joy. He says.

His song is with me. A prayer. To the God of my life. So what's happening here. He could be running from God.

He could be. We could be hearing more of. More of. You know. Why is this happening? What's going on? And there is some of that. But there is also. This pursuit of God. This pursuing joy.

Because in our fight for joy. God himself is our only hope. He's running towards. What he knows is the source. Of joy. Have you ever found yourself. Like maybe you come in on a Sunday morning.

[19 : 56] You think. I just don't feel like singing this morning. You know. Gil starts up the band. Yeah. Praise God. I just don't feel like singing. And sometimes we don't sing. And there's this struggle. Like should I sing?

I just don't feel like singing. Some mornings you come in. Yes. I want to sing. And then other mornings. You don't want to sing. Here's the good news. We don't have to feel like singing to God.

To sing to him. We can use it as a means. Of pursuing joy. Because singing not only expresses. Our emotions to God. It engages them.

I mean that happened to me this morning. As we were singing. And by the way. You guys sing great. You're saying great. So loud.

My soul was encouraged. As I listened. And sang along with. Everything we were singing. Singing reminds us of truths. That we might have forgotten.

[20 : 54] And you know what singing. Why God gave us singing. He gave us singing to feel the truth. That's why we don't come in and just recite things. He wants us to feel it. And so as we're singing God's word.

We're singing the gospel. We're counseling ourselves. We're reminding ourselves. When we're depressed. Or out of it. Or confused. We're singing. Come rest from sin and striving. Find endless stores of grace.

The heart that turns to Jesus. Is cleansed from every stain. Oh how deep and wide. Oh my gosh. Yes. Yes. How vast a love of Jesus.

It's bigger than our problems. But even as he's trusting God. He cries out in verse 9. I say to God my rock.

Why have you forgotten me? What? Why do I go mourning? Because of the oppression of the enemy. What is happening? And this is a really important point.

[21 : 56] This is life. This is where we live. Even as he expresses faith in God. He's honest about his discouragement.

He. In his pursuit of joy. He's not afraid to ask God questions. He's not putting on a show for God. And we don't need to put on a show for God.

Jesus is not looking for good sales people. Those who can you know. Do the PR bit for people. No Jesus is really great. How are you doing? Fine.

Good. I'm a Christian. I'm doing great. How about you? He's not looking for those kind of people. He really saves. And sometimes we have really difficult situations.

That we're going through. And we can be honest about them. That's the freedom we have in Christ. Now some people ask questions out of bitterness and anger.

[22 : 55] They're saying to God. You need to do something about this. They're resentful. That's sinful. But that's not what's happening here. He's recognizing that his experience doesn't line up with who he knows God is.

He knows God is faithful. He knows he's steadfast. He knows he's loving. He knows he's good. And what he's experiencing doesn't line up with any of that. So he's asking God questions.

And that's a great example of lament. Lament. Lament are a gift from God. That can help us be honest about our grief.

Honest about our sorrow. But better understand our hearts and the Lord in the process. And we discover what we're trusting in.

In the midst of lament. laments are an opportunity not to acknowledge that things are really bad that things are really confusing that things aren't the way they're supposed to be but God is still good and he still reigns and humbly asking questions about God most often leads to asking questions about ourselves which is what he does again in verse 11 why are you cast down oh my soul and why are you in turmoil within me hope in God for I shall again praise him my salvation and my God so right he just was asking God questions and verse 8 verse 9 I say to God my rock why have you forgotten me why do I go about mourning go mourning and then verse 11 he says why are you cast down on my soul it's like he's here and then he's here that's what progress often looks like questioning our perspective questioning our thoughts questioning our conclusions speaking the truth to ourselves over and over and over again William Cooper had someone who did that for him and sometimes God brings people into our lives who do it for us when we can't remember they help us remember William Cooper had a friend John Newton the author of

[25 : 37] Amazing Grace and many other great hymns John was Cooper's pastor for 13 years and he used to take walks with him and at one point because he knew his struggles with depression he asked him to work on a hymnal with him which became the only hymnal which contains Amazing Grace and then Newton moved away to pastor another church and wrote Cooper letters for 20 years that's the kind of friend he was and that's how much William Cooper needed someone to tell him these things I had someone who told me these things Julie was the main one she was very compassionate but clear with me about the things that I was forgetting when I had a friend Gary Rucucci who now serve I serve with at Sovereign Grace Church of Louisville one of the pastors there Gary and Betsy and Julie and I were having breakfast at a pastor's conference about a year into it and I just told Gary I was you know every every one that I respected I was just saying this is what I'm going through this is what I'm going through will help so I told Gary I just wake up every day feeling completely hopeless and Gary if you know Gary Gary is the consummate pastor he is he has a heart that is so big so kind so Gary I say I wake up every morning feeling completely hopeless Gary looks at me and says

I don't think you're hopeless enough what what did you just say I don't think you're hopeless enough no Gary you misunderstand I just said I'm completely hopeless no I don't think you're hopeless enough okay what are you saying if you're hopeless you'd stop trying to think that you could figure this out and you would trust in what Jesus has already done for you through his life through his substitutionary death and through his resurrection he is reigning and interceding for you and you that seems to be like totally out of the picture that thought was a turning point for me because after that whenever I'd feel hopeless I'd say to myself I feel completely hopeless and it was not I'm just it was I did feel completely hopeless and then I'd say but Jesus died for completely hopeless people and I'm one of them and then my thoughts were turned away from me to see what Jesus had done but I had to do that a thousand times so when you are battling for joy don't stop repeating the truth to yourself and don't stop listening to others sometimes we isolate ourselves from others we think that'll help it doesn't help no we need others we need to be with the saints the people of God and when we repeat the truth to ourselves we find over time and we don't know how long that'll take but eventually we find a growing trust growing confidence growing faith which leads to the third stage in the fight for joy and that is expecting joy and this is Psalm 43 he starts off vindicate me oh God and defend my cause against an ungodly people from the deceitful from the deceitful and unjust man deliver me for you are the God in whom I take refuge why have you rejected me why do I go about mourning because of the oppression of the enemy send out your light and your truth let them lead me let them bring me to your holy hill into your dwelling then

I will go to the altar of God to God my exceeding joy and I will praise you with a lyre oh God my God and then one more time why are you cast down oh my soul and why are you in turmoil within me hope in God for I shall again praise him my salvation and my God struggle is still going on but the psalmist is more aggressive in his pursuit vindicate me oh God defend my cause he's getting riled up about this saying something's got to change and in the midst of all he's going through he's making three choices the first is a choice to persevere he's choosing to persevere this is what's leading to an expectation of joy he's saying

I'm going to persevere he realizes there are no quick and easy solutions in the fight for joy the refrain keeps coming back the fight continues and this is how God grows our faith and the good news is he's the one who enables us to persevere Colossians 1:11 says that we are strengthened with all power according to his glorious might for all endurance and patience with joy God's the one giving us endurance and sometimes the wisest thing we can do when we're feeling disconnected depressed isolated discouraged hopeless is just take the next step just keep walking God will provide the strength that's what we're believing God will provide the strength remember during that season there were times I would wake up in the morning and think I don't want to get out of bed and I've talked to many people over the years because I've talked about this

I've written articles on it so people come to me and say I know what you're going through I identify with this and I've talked to many people who will say yeah I can't get up in the morning and I say well is that really true like are you physically unable or mentally unable so mentally I was unable I did not want to get up so then I thought about it what do I need to do get up brush my teeth take a shower get dressed can I do those things yeah I can do those things okay so that's how far it would take my day and I do those things then I think what are the next things I have to do then I do those things just put one foot in front of the other and just kept going I persevered because our kids at this time didn't know what was going on they didn't find out until I did a message on this at one point I said what what happened what was going on because I just kept taking the steps just one step in front of the other in front of the other second choice he made he chose to trust he chooses to trust he chooses to trust

[33 : 06] God and not himself in verse 3 send out your light and your truth let them lead me let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling send out your light and your truth you know how often we live by our own light and our own truth probably 90% of the time we just have a great deal of confidence in what we think I just have been experiencing that the last 24 hours one of the paradoxes of depression is that we claim to feel completely hopeless but we have absolute confidence in our perspective it's a paradox we're sure that no one has been through what we've been experiencing absolutely sure we're sure that nothing can help us and what we're doing is we doubt our faith and put faith in our fears that's what's happening we doubt our faith we put faith in our fears

I thought I was hopeless but actually what I found what I learned over a couple years and have been learning since then I was not hopeless I was filled with hope in my circumstances in my abilities in my perspective in myself and I learned that I had two particular idols that I worship they were called credit and control I wanted the praise and I wanted the power that's what I was wanting and when those idols didn't deliver when I couldn't get them my world fell apart and one time I felt like God was saying to me this is what life is like when you're in control I'm handing it over to you Bob go for it and I'm describing what happened as a result of that what I hoped for what I hoped in disappointed me and if we hope in anything outside

Jesus Christ outside of Jesus Christ we will be disappointed we will be discouraged we may be depressed we may get to be despairing because there is no hope outside of him and the problem is we're listening to ourselves not talking to ourselves and most importantly we're not listening to God so he's sending he's saying send out your light and your truth tell me what is your light what is your truth so John Piper has some good words for us here addressing the issue of self-confidence he says doubt your despairing thoughts whence this great confidence you have in your damnation a little skepticism is in order here who do you think you are making final declarations about your soul that lie hidden in the secrets of the almighty no no renounce such confidence if you have no ability for faith in the love of God for you make no such great pretenses to have such certainty of faith in your damnation this is not yours to know rather yours is to listen to Jesus such good counsel so he chooses to persevere he chooses to trust and thirdly in his in his expecting joy he chooses to find joy in God alone through God's light and God's truth informing his perspective his expectation of joy grows so in verse four remember at the beginning of 42 when he was saying

I remember when I used to go leading the procession in the house of God singing glad songs shouts of praise now he's saying verse four I will go to the altar of God to God my exceeding joy and I will praise you with the liar oh God my God our joy doesn't spring from a change in our circumstances or a change in our feelings but from a change in our perspective the way we're looking at things and what he's looking at right now can you tell it's God whom he mentions four times in this verse I will go to the altar of God to God my exceeding joy now I praise you with the liar oh God my God he's looking forward to joy because he knows it's only found in God which is why he can expect there to be joy

William Cooper when he was during his first bout with serious depression he experienced a dramatic relief on a calm and clear morning by the sea his heart became instantly joyful and so years later he often sought to alleviate his depression by going to the seaside a change of scenery might be helpful towards relief but it's not the ultimate answer in our fight for joy God himself is so it's not going to be a familiar location cup of coffee a nostalgic song some time away from the kids a good novel I mean all those things might be great they might do something to lift our depression or our fears but lasting hope only comes through true repentance turning from relying on our own perspective our own strength our own wisdom and turning to God as our exceeding joy and brothers and sisters that's God's purpose in every trial we go through it is his intention every disappointment every failure we might think there are a lot of other reasons for the things we're going through that's the ultimate one he wants us to find our joy in him alone because in our fight for joy

[39 : 29] God himself is our only hope I've talked with different individuals over the years about their struggles in this area depression anxiety fear hopelessness and sometimes some of them are waiting for the feelings never to come again that's not what God promises that the feelings won't come again because the goal of the battle against emotional turmoil or depression isn't simply emotional peace it's to know Christ he's the answer he's our refuge he's our joy removing depression is only one of the ways that God shows he's good and here the psalmist has learned something that he never would have learned if he had stayed in Jerusalem this is a lesson that we are benefiting from today and I remember there was one time early on when I was struggling with this thought am I going to have to live like this for the rest of my life am I going to have to live in this way where

I can't control my thoughts where I'm constantly tempted by anxiety thinking any moment I can be in a fetal position on the ground fears is this the way it's going to be for the rest of my life and I prayed to God God if being like this for the rest of my life means that I will know you better then leave me like this and you don't want to pray that prayer casually because I knew God was breaking me and saying what do you want good feelings or me which do you want if you had to make a choice which would you want and I said to the Lord I want you I thank God that he didn't leave me there and I don't know if I had to go through what I experienced to learn what a great sinner I am and what a great Savior Jesus is but that's what I've learned what a great sinner

I am and what a great Savior Jesus is so we finish with the third refrain comes back again he says why are you cast down oh my soul why are you in turmoil within me hope in God for crying out loud he didn't say that but for I shall again praise him I shall again praise him don't you feel a little more confidence there same words but after what he's just said you're thinking he's probably a little more confident about this I shall again praise him my salvation and my God the psalmist prayed that God would send out his light and his truth and he did for the psalmist and we can pray that too the good news for us is we know exactly where to find them God's light and God's truth are found in his word where we see clearly who God is what he said what he's done what he's promised and that word points us to Jesus who said

I am the light of the world I am the way the truth and the life God has sent out his light and his truth and his name is Jesus that's where he is that's where that light and that truth are and he came for us for you through the birth canal of a woman he created taking on our nature taking on our flesh so that he could bear our sins so that he could receive the wrath of God that we deserve and then rise from the dead and ascend to his father's right hand where he reigns and is interceding for us until he comes back for the bride he redeemed that's the light and the truth we need how much more hope than the psalmist can we have knowing where the light and the truth is and it gets even better through the work of

God's spirit we know that Christ lives in us so the light and the truth just aren't out there Christ lives in us if you're a believer in Christ the hope of glory we are not alone you are not alone so the psalmist's word to us is hope in God he will not fail he will not falter he will not forsake us not in our circumstances we are not going to hope in our counsel we are not going to hope in our feelings we are not going to hope in our intelligence or doctors in science or in past experiences or in our promises or in our discipline we are going to hope in God one last thing to remember before we sing a couple songs is that our fight for joy is never just about us never just about us think about the psalmist what he wrote is benefiting us today think about

[45 : 16] William Cooper what he went through produced these hymns that are serving Christians for hundreds of years I wouldn't be preaching this message to you if I did not go through what I went through think what God might want to do through you as you make it your aim to find your hope and your joy in him alone in the midst of whatever dark season you might be walking through or may walk through and by God's grace we can do that all for his glory all through Jesus Christ let's pray father we thank you that you have given us such hope you have given us such grace you have given us mercy when we deserve judgment and in the midst of whatever trials and difficulties and discouragements and disappointments and depression and fears we're walking through right now would you through these two psalms and what we've discovered in them would you give us grace to fight for joy in you to fight for joy in Jesus so that you might be glorified in our lives so that we might know your goodness and proclaim it to all those around us we thank you in Jesus name amen you've been listening to a message at a

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