

God's Answer to Despair

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 October 2009

Preacher: Steve Woodman

[0:00] I wanted to say once again that I appreciate the opportunity to come and be with you. The opportunity to renew fellowship with many and meet some new friends as well.

! I do want to convey again the love and fellowship and greetings from Kemp Road Baptist Church. If any of you ever have the opportunity to come visit Cedarville or come to the Air Force Museum, which is free, then I hope you look us up and take that opportunity to come and see us.

If I were to start out this evening by saying that tonight I'm going to speak to you about depression, I wonder how popular of an intro that would be in this day and age.

It would be pretty depressing to speak about depression if we just left it right there, but the glorious thing about this chapter is that we don't stay in depression, in despair, but we see in this chapter the way out.

Now I wanted to say a couple of things before we take a look at this together. The issue of depression, despair, discouragement is actually a pretty weighty matter.

[1:15] And I can't claim to know everything about depression or be able to even begin to address everything about it in one sermon.

I do believe the Bible has the answers, but I also understand that sometimes life is complicated, and I don't want to pretend I'm just going to give pat answers tonight to what can sometimes be very complicated issues.

I believe, for instance, personally, that the physical condition of a person can play into depression. I don't think we should use that for an excuse to sin, but I think it can play in.

I also want to be careful tonight that you don't come away with the impression that I'm saying that our discouragement or depression is always directly related to the fact that we're being punished for something that we've done.

Sometimes we get that idea when we start going through difficult times that the Lord is judging us or pounding us. I do believe that God disciplines his children in love, but I'm not saying that when we sin that the Lord comes after us in judgment, because I believe that was taken care of at the cross.

[2:43] But as we look at Psalm 130, what I would like to do is move us through this scenario, if you will, and move from the despair that is felt in the first couple of verses to the hope and even the encouragement to others that we see in the last couple of verses of this psalm, as our brother just read for us.

Now, I don't have to spend a lot of time here in the introduction trying to convince you that the world is filled with despair or reasons to despair. And so I'm not going to take a long time, but what's going on in your life?

Relationally or financially or vocationally or with your schooling, your friendships? It doesn't take much to begin to look around.

And certainly in this present economy, there are maybe even more reasons for some people to struggle. And the war that goes on and the skirmishes around the world that we know really are probably not going to completely be eliminated as long as we're waiting for Christ to return.

And one of the complicating issues is that the world looks for hope in a lot of the wrong places. And so that sends us off on a whole other journey. You know, we're feeling a sense of discouragement or despair.

[4:05] And so where do people look for hope, for some kind of encouragement, for something to say, I have reason to get up today and tomorrow and continue on with my life as it is.

Some people hope for the weekend. Everything will just be okay if I can make it to Friday night. Or if that doesn't work, or perhaps you need a little bigger jolt, I'm just waiting for the holidays. I'm waiting for the vacation time.

I'm waiting for that diet that will finally work. Or if I can just make it through the day and get to the bar. If I just had a new boyfriend or a new girlfriend or another wife, a different one, different husband.

If I just had a better job. I think in our culture, a lot of times it's about the next big event, you know, the big game, the next movie premiere. And we look for some kind of something from these things because our lives and our hearts can be so unsettled.

But the problem is those things don't satisfy. They just maybe divert from the pain or they mask it or shield it for a time. But really, eventually, they can add to it because we realize that these things are not bringing the answers that we want them to bring.

[5:17] Now, depending on where you're coming from tonight, you might see this in a different way. If you know the Lord, I believe this directly addresses us.

If you don't know the Lord, then I think you could see this as something of a starting place. Perhaps like John Owen, as we just heard. One of the neat things about the truth of God is that there can be all kinds of questions and complexities in life.

But oftentimes, the answers are found in the same place, in the word of God and in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so whether you're a believer or an unbeliever tonight, I'm going to point you to him.

Because that's where true hope is going to be found. Now, my outline tonight is rather complicated. So I'm going to see if you can hang with me. The first part of the outline is despair.

And the second part is hope. Try to take it easy on you here on a Sunday night. Let's take a look here for a few minutes at this despair.

[6:23] Because until we address these kinds of things, until we address the sin issue, we can't really get to the hope. In fact, it's dangerous. I'm going to show you in a few minutes.

It's actually dangerous to try to deal with the despair issue without addressing our sin. Very dangerous. So let's take a few minutes to ask, where does this discouragement, this despair come from?

And what does it feel like? Well, in verse 1, the description is out of the depths. The imagery here is of an ocean or a pit of some kind.

And the implication is deep affliction, dejection or distress. And I think that we can boil it down probably to a couple of sources where this level of discouragement can come from.

Number one, and this is probably at the root of a lot of it or certainly intertwines with the other. And that is the despair that we can get from sin.

[7:22] Despair from sin. When we plunge into the depths that you can feel when you're under the consciousness of guilt.

When the Holy Spirit peels back the layers of self-righteousness and pride and shows us what we really are apart from Christ. We can have sometimes this level of discouragement.

Or as a believer, as we're living in unconfessed sin and sin that we are not repenting of. We can fall into this level of despair.

So despair from sin. And certainly this encompasses a great deal. But this level of despair can also come from outward affliction.

For instance, in your life or in the lives of people that you know, have you known anybody to die unexpectedly?

[8:22] That level of affliction can bring a despair with it. Or if you've had a house burned down, some kind of destruction of property, that can bring a despair as well.

Bodily suffering maybe doesn't result in death, but you have some kind of an ailment, a serious situation that brings a deep affliction to your soul.

Maybe a job loss. Or a divorce. Some kind of emergency or crisis or even abuse can bring us to this level of depression.

Now as you consider these two things, I've mentioned despair from sin and despair from outward affliction. You notice how the second one really is related to the first.

All of these things that I'm mentioning are related either to specific sins of ourselves or someone else, or the curse of sin on the earth from the fall.

[9:24] For instance, if someone is suffering from having been abused, that's the direct result of somebody else's sin.

Or if your house burns down accidentally, then I think we could put that under the category of living in a fallen world. But it's still related to sin.

So you see, you cannot get to real hope unless you deal with the sin issue. And that's what I like about the Psalms is that they squarely deal with real issues and bring us through real agony to real answers.

I've heard preachers say before that you don't really understand the Psalms until you've gone through some deep waters. We love them. We sing them. We memorize them.

But if you really want to understand them, wait until some serious affliction comes into your life. And then there will be an experiential knowledge of what the psalmist is really saying.

[10 : 29] Well, what is this despair that comes from sin and that comes from outward affliction? What does it feel like? Well, we would put it in certain terms ourselves.

Some form of mental anguish. We might talk about our spirits being low or our melancholy or a darkness of mind or a loss of hope. Extreme disappointment.

Perhaps the anguish we feel has been caused by someone's ingratitude for something we've done. They just aren't showing the appreciation for us.

Maybe our children or someone close to us. Or we see people committing crimes and hurting other people. And there can be a sadness of heart that can even grow from that.

You know, the condition of the world. I mean, I imagine there are some of you who have seen the world or part of the world in a time of war. And it may have really crushed you to see what happens to some of the weaker ones in society when a war is occurring.

[11 : 33] Now, this despair can be felt by both those who know Christ and those who don't.

And so we have to kind of come at it from two different perspectives depending on our relationship with God. You know, the unbeliever has no real way of dealing with his despair apart from Christ. Trusting Christ is the beginning of hope. And until they do that, and maybe some of you have the opportunity or may have the opportunity to counsel someone, remember that there's no way to real hope outside or around the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we can talk self-help or we can talk about principles and discipline and habits and all kinds of things. But to try to find real hope while circumventing the only Savior is really impossible to do.

On the other hand, the believer has Christ. And the resources of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. But since we're still living in a fallen world, and since you and I still sin, we have remaining sin, we can also be prone to despair.

[12 : 49] The difference is that we have great reason to hope. So we need to be brought back, in a sense, to where it all began. Where we found forgiveness in the first place.

The source of all true comfort. Are you ever tempted to think, as you walk your Christian journey, that you're a low life because you struggle with despair?

Despair? Do you ever feel like maybe you're a second class believer because you're prone to discouragement? You know, it's true. Some of us are more prone than others.

As you read, you know, some great men throughout church history, you realize that some of them had serious issues with discouragement. I would say probably most pastors from time to time have had issues.

And maybe it's because of the spiritual warfare that they're engaged in. But when we come to the Psalms, you don't find people pretending everything is okay.

[13 : 48] And that's part of the beauty. You see the psalmist buried in an overwhelming despair that is about ready to take him down, it seems.

So let's take a closer look here at the way through and out of this. Let's think first of all about the despair of an unbeliever.

Despair in an unbeliever is certainly rooted in sin and compounded by sin and all of the circumstances of life that I've mentioned so far. But they're coming at it from another perspective because they have not availed themselves of the grace of Christ.

They have not turned from their sin and really ever found hope in the first place. And I think there's kind of a turning point description of this in Pilgrim's Progress. John Bunyan in Pilgrim's Progress describes that feeling of despair because of the sin that keeps them from being reconciled to God. But there's a very picturesque story in Pilgrim's Progress that shows us two responses to this. And some of you probably know what I'm talking about.

[14:59] If you would bear with me for just a moment. I know it's Sunday night and I'm probably breaking some homiletical rules here. But I'm going to read you a brief story, okay? It's complete on two short pages, so it won't take too long.

But do you remember the... I think you can call it... There are about two or three pronunciations for this. I think you can call it a slew. Does that sound right? I always... It's one of those words that kind of throws me sometimes.

S-L-O-U-G-H. I think slew will work. Do you remember the slew of the spawn? You probably... If you've read this before, you remember this. But I want you to see here... Remember the slew illustrates for us the discouragement that comes with deep conviction of sin.

But at the end of this, I want you to see the two responses. Now I saw in my dream that just as they had ended this talk, they drew nigh to a very miry slew that was in the midst of the plain.

And they, being heedless, did both fall suddenly into the bog. The name of the slew was Despond. Here, therefore, they wallowed for a time, being grievously bedaubed with the dirt.

[16:07] And Christian, because of the burden that was on his back, began to sink in the mire. Then said Pliable, Ah, neighbor Christian, where are you now?

Truly, said Christian, I do not know. At that, Pliable began to be offended and angrily said to his fellow, Is this the happiness you have told me all this while of?

If we have such ill speed at our first setting out, what may we expect twixt this and our journey's end? May I get out again with my life?

You shall possess the brave country alone for me. And with that, he gave a desperate struggle or two, and got out of the mire on that side of the slew which was next to his own house.

So away he went, and Christian saw him no more. Wherefore, Christian was left to tumble in the slough of Despond alone, but still he endeavored to struggle to that side of the slough that was still further from his own house, and next to the wicked gate, the which he did, but could not get out because of the burden that was upon his back.

[17:18] But I beheld in my dream that a man came to him, whose name was, do you remember? Help. And asked him what he did there.

Sir, said Christian, I was directed this way by a man called Evangelist, who directed me also to yonder gate, that I made escape the wrath to come, and as I was going thither, I fell in here. But why did you not look for the steps? Fear followed me so hard that I fled the next way and fell in. Then, said he, give me thy hand.

So he gave him his hand, and he drew him out, and set him upon sound ground, and bid him to go on his way. And then if you continue reading, Bunyan describes the fact that this place was not able to be healed, because it was filled with the, really the conviction, the doubts, the apprehensions of those who were falling under conviction of sin.

And so was unable to be fixed, as it were. Now, I think that that is a picturesque story that shows us the two responses to this despair, and this conviction of sin.

[18:37] At least Christian took steps, if you will, to reconcile with God, even though he missed the steps through the slough. But pliable did not. He got rid of the despair, if you will, by rejecting the situation, and going back to the city of destruction.

This is an important question for any unbelievers here, who maybe have begun to come under the weight of conviction. And that is, what side of the slough are you going to get out on?

If you get out on the side closer to the city of destruction, you're basically rejecting God and saying, I'm going back to my pleasures, going back and trying to do what I've always done, which has never worked.

But if you get out on the other side, even if you need help from your pastors and your parents and your friends, then that is a wonderful blessing to get rid of the despair by addressing the sin and coming to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But you know, it's a very dangerous thing to lose your despair without reconciling with God. People try it every day, but it's a very dangerous thing to do to become satisfied without God.

[19:57] So the unbeliever will try to address this issue, but if he remains an unbeliever, he really has no answer. And so he must begin here with a thorough addressing of sin.

And we'll take a little bit of a closer look at that sin in a few moments. But for the believer, we do have, as I mentioned earlier, remaining sin after conversion. Other people sin, and that affects us.

And we do still live in a fallen world, and that is felt every day. So problems with despair can exist in a believer as well. But the good news for us is that the biggest cause of despair is gone.

That breach between us and God, if we're believers, then that has been taken care of. But we do need to address the ongoing sin, the sin that remains, the current breach.

Not that we're no longer believers, but perhaps our sin has grown up and caused a breach between us and God, a breach of fellowship. And as our Father, that fellowship is broken.

[21:07] And so even as believers, we can feel a consciousness of guilt and a need for fresh forgiveness if we're living in unconfessed sin or if we're going through some of those outward afflictions that I've mentioned.

I want to pause here for just a moment. As I make that connection, I want to say something about this again. Whoops. I'm going to do this yet.

I have a hard time standing still when I preach, and I hit that about three times earlier, so now I have peace. Ryan, which one of these waters... Or Aaron, your son, man. Which one of these waters?

This one? Okay, good. Thank you. Whenever I make a connection between sin and outward affliction and those kinds of things, I think it's important for us to remember, like I said in the introduction, we need to be careful that when things begin to afflict us, sometimes we call them dark providences, or as Thomas Boston put it, the crook in the lot.

Those things that come our way that we would just rather they not be there. And they can be very complicated because if you're like me, you can begin to ask, Lord, am I being punished for something?

[22:20] Am I being judged for something? Now, as I said, I believe the Lord can discipline His children and will discipline us, but it's in love. Sometimes we can be tempted to feel like the Lord is coming at us in anger as if maybe we weren't even believers.

And it can get very confusing when outward affliction presses upon us. And so, we need to be careful and try to address that issue biblically. I don't believe that God punishes us as if we were paying for our sin.

I do believe, as the author of Hebrews says, that in love the Father chastens His children and He may use affliction to do that, but it's in love for His sheep.

But sometimes when that affliction comes, it can be difficult. And it's important for us to understand as we move forward here that when outward afflictions come, even if they're not a result of your sin, they generally tend to stir up memories of your sin or it brings it, it makes you aware of your sin.

So, for instance, let's put it like this. Let's say, for instance, that your house burned down. That issue could very easily attach to it all kinds of sin in your life.

[23:45] For instance, you might be tempted to unbelief. You might be reminded of things that you did last week where you broke God's law and be tempted to wonder how that all fits in.

You might get angry with God for in His providence allowing this to happen. You might begin to get very discouraged. How are you going to replace all of your belongings and the homeschool stuff you had in the kitchen and those irreplaceable pictures and albums and those kinds of outward afflictions can have all sorts of things kind of attached to them.

So whether it's directly a result of your sin that has brought the despair or whether it's outward affliction that has kind of stirred everything up and made you take a closer look at yourself once again we still have to address that issue of Lord search me and let me see myself in truth.

Well let's move off of this despair then and look at how the psalmist finds hope. We find despair in the first couple of verses and a serious cry for help here.

In fact I would say there's one word essentially that could summarize verses 1 and 2 and really that one word is help! I'm about ready to go down for the last time!

[25:10] Help! So here is a very important question how do I get hope? Well it starts I think in verses 3 and 4 I must be forgiven I must find fresh forgiveness with the Father to get hope or to have that hope renewed.

And you know I've mentioned something similar to this already but for any unbelievers here the way to find hope is really quite similar for believers and unbelievers. So for believers we might be coming back to the cross for the 673rd time for an unbeliever you have to start there and come there for the first time.

But that's where we come to find forgiveness and reconciliation with the God who made us. It's impossible to have real hope and real peace while remaining an enemy of the one who made us.

So we must deal with that even as believers we cannot remain in our sin and expect to have hope and to feel that hope. So how do we get hope?

There are a number of things I want you to think about. First of all despair can be used as a tool to drive us to repentance and dependence. Listen to the depression and the desperation in verse 2. [26:25] Lord hear my voice let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. Have mercy I need help I need compassion I need blessing I need deliverance my guilt and my sin and my sorrow are burying me alive.

Lord hear me hear my cry. Now it's important for us to understand that this desperation in and of itself is not meritorious.

You know it's not like if we can really whip up some really desperate feelings that somehow we're gaining something from God. But if that despair is used as a tool to bring us to repentance it can be a wonderful tool as long as we don't stay there.

So despair can be used as a tool to drive us to repentance and dependence. Number two we need to be convinced of our utter sinfulness and helplessness as we're in this process of finding hope through forgiveness.

Be convinced of our utter sinfulness and helplessness. We see that not only in verse 2 but in verse 3 and we'll look a little bit more closely at that in a moment. Lord I have nothing to stand on.

[27:42] You are my only hope. Without you there is no way out. Lord I am like a man in the ocean with no flotation device no buoy nothing.

I have no strength left to stay up and hold my head above the water. I'm nowhere near shore there's no boat in sight and I'm about ready to go down for the last time.

That's the feeling we have here in this psalm. Out of the depths I've cried to you oh Lord I am helpless I am desperate I am dependent I have no one and nothing but you.

You know that's not a bad place to get back to as a believer to come back and remember that just like we had to feel a sense of that when we came to faith in the first place it's a good thing to come back to that.

You say Pastor Steve where did I go in between? Well how quickly do we come back to self-sufficiency? I can do it Lord got this one I'm good and we start trusting in our own strength our own abilities our own talents our own history and then that affliction comes or that serious reminder of sin comes and we remember I never could do it help me Lord.

[29:02] So we need to be convinced of our utter sinfulness and helplessness once again.

Number three we need to be convinced of God's absolute holiness the fact that he alone is God take a look at verse three if you Lord should mark iniquities or take note of my sin oh Lord who could stand?

We need to come back to that place where we fully confront the idea that my sin has offended God God is eternal and infinite his holiness his holiness is eternal and infinite he is absolute moral perfection there is a complete absence of sin and darkness in him and all of those characteristics about him are eternal and infinite so if I were trying to stand before him and he were to take note of and record my iniquities I would not have a chance could you imagine the eternal infinite God with a clipboard and his task is to take a look at our sins and to record them thoroughly what kind of a feeling an overwhelming feeling would I get if I knew that the Lord was going to do that who could stand my sins which are many violating an eternally and infinitely holy God and omniscient and he's going to get out his clipboard and start taking note of and recording and setting up a file on my sins it would be a big file and knowing

God as he's recorded in the word he would perfectly record my sin he would record things that I've completely forgotten about he would record things that I hardly even know and he would certainly record things that have troubled me my entire life and if I were in his courtroom standing on my own I would not have a case I would have nothing upon which to stand but what a wonderful thing to be able to plead the righteousness of Jesus Christ to have him as our advocate to have him stand before the father and say not only am I going to defend this person but I'm actually taking care of his debt the father looks at the son and we know on the cross the father punished the son for our sins and the other side of that beautiful deal is that we get the righteousness of Jesus Christ that perfect obedience that we didn't obtain or perform but even under the old covenant understanding of these things the psalmist knew that if the lord were to mark iniquities he didn't have a chance who could stand so we have to be convinced of God's absolute holiness and then we need fourthly to call out for mercy trusting in the sacrifice of Christ for our sins and we

see here in verse 4 that there is forgiveness with him there is that concept of propitiation the wrath of God has been turned away there is that concept of reconciliation those who were his enemies have been made his friends and there is certainly the concept of pardon that our sins are being addressed and eventually even the presence and the power of sin will be removed when our redemption is complete in glory now what comes along with forgiveness that's kind of the issue of repentance and forgiveness but that results in a number of things as well and that's where I want to spend a few moments here and pick it up again in verse 4 what comes along with this forgiveness well in the second part of verse 4 a holy fear and an awe of God perhaps we could say a renewed sense of fear and awe reverence and worship that's what this fear I think really is entailed entails we are serving him fearing him worshipping him sometimes we should just worship God and ascribe greatness to him because he is holy and yet he still forgives I mean I think you see that combination right there in verses 3 and 4 I mean what a beautiful thing to think about that an eternally and infinitely and perfectly holy God before whom we could not stand if he kept a record provides forgiveness so that we may worship him provides a way for us to deal with that very issue that keeps us from him along with this fear and awe of God we have a return of this hope and this complete dependence upon God for redemption verses 5 and 6 I wait for the Lord my soul waits and in his word I do hope my soul waits for the

[34:31] Lord more than those who watch for the morning yes more than those who watch for the morning you know the interesting thing about this psalm is a couple things really the psalmist is not addressing enemies here so there's no specific relational element to this psalm other than with God and there's no specific affliction mentioned you know there are other psalms where the psalmist talks about being sick or the psalmist talks about being pursued but in this psalm the focus is on hope and you get the sense that this is possible even if the outward affliction does not change do you get that that brings my soul a lot of hope there is hope for hope even if the outward affliction does not change you can find peace in your soul not just peace with God but the peace of God you can find hope you can find joy in a renewed relationship with God even if the outward circumstances are less than perfect what a wonderful truth to grab a hold of we are encouraged here to expectantly wait for

God to wait upon him in faith because I'm helpless on my own so I'm going to bank on his word his promise because they are reliable and they are worth waiting on but sometimes we forget that and in the midst of our despair and our discouragement we start to doubt or maybe our doubt brings those other things about Barnes said thus under deep conviction for sin and deep apprehension of the wrath of God that night dark dreary gloomy often long the soul looks for some ray of comfort some intimation that God will be merciful and will speak peace and pardon there are times that we're in the midst of an affliction or we're in the midst of this serious conviction of sin and we don't always find an answer immediately maybe the outward circumstances aren't changing maybe the hope doesn't just immediately fill our souls there's a sense here of expectancy and longing and waiting for God knowing that he is faithful knowing that he hears the prayers of his people he's inclined to hear and answer the prayers of his sheep and sometimes when we don't seem to have the answer we were looking for we're right in this position here in verses five and six trusting even though we can't see believing even though we're still waiting on an answer banking on the person and work of God as I described in this morning's message even though nothing seems to be giving in the current scenario and so we say I wait for the Lord my soul waits and in his word I do hope it's not just a pie in the sky kind of thing but it's in the maker of heaven and earth and my redeemer king I wait in him and in his word and the imagery in verse six is interesting those who wait for the morning I don't know if you've ever had the opportunity to be up all night for a particular reason sometimes it's enjoyable to be up in the middle of the night you know like if you hunt and you get up in the wee hours of the morning and at least there's a purpose to it it's kind of enjoyable but it's kind of freaky too to be out there in the pitch dark and maybe be up in a tree and you hear things and you're not sure what they are and kind of spooky but sometimes you can be up in the middle of the night and it's not a fun situation maybe some of just keeps throwing up six seven eight nine times in the night that just go right by man wow that went fast those nights go on and on and on and sometimes you know you finally get to that point where the light begins to dawn isn't it amazing how the light changes things whether it's hunting or you think about somebody who's out keeping watch somebody who's in a war and they're in the pitch dark imagine how the senses are heightened as every sound every crack of a twig might be an enemy or somebody who's looking to

do them in then the first rays begin to finally filter through the trees everything changes everything changes and you know how it is you've been up all night with your kids and finally they quit doing their thing and the sun comes out and the kid finally falls asleep and everything changes whatever scenario you want to pick here what a wonderful thing when morning finally comes well the psalmist here paints this picture as someone who has felt the conviction of sin they have renewed their repentance and their relationship with

God and have found forgiveness they have renewed their faith and trust in God and his promises and his word at this point still waiting and yet now believing that God is worthy and that God will hear and answer prayer and that things will change maybe some of you are in that position I don't know we have a situation in your life that brings about a lot of despair and you feel like you're in that place where things are just kind of the same and you're waiting it can be a spiritually healthy time to renew your relationship your own relationship with God in the ways that we've you that would be keeping him from answering your prayers or from blessing your situation or moving you to a new lesson in your spiritual journey well then we get to verses 7 and 8 along with this forgiveness comes a holy fear and awe of

God we have a hope and a complete dependence upon God for redemption and by the time we get to 7 and 8 it has turned into a burning desire to encourage others with the same hope that you can tell the hope has come because you can't tell others really to hope in the Lord in this way until some measure of it has become operative in your own life and as I mentioned you can read through this verses 3 and 4 there's marking!

[41:40] Iniquities and forgiveness with God verses 5 and 6 there's the concept of waiting and then in verse 7 he's telling Israel to hope in the Lord there's really no specific answer except for a renewed relationship with God and yet that's enough that's enough for hope in God and for a completely different perspective and for removal of the despair renewed faith renewed forgiveness renewed relationship with God makes everything different and now he has this burning desire to encourage others verse 7 oh Israel hope in the Lord for with the Lord there is mercy sounds like a testimony to me sounds like personal experience to me and with him is abundant!

redemption this is something the psalmist has just lived he's just come through this hope has come to me now this hope can come to you people of God it starts with mercy and redemption from iniquities and it can be renewed and refreshed all throughout your Christian life and the ultimate hope that we have is eternity without sin and suffering eternity with God himself he is true his promises are true his word is true he is worthy of our faith and hope and even if you can't see the answer you can look back and see the history you can look into the word and see his character you know that he can be relied upon oh Israel hope in the Lord for with him is mercy and abundant redemption and you know believer tonight if the Lord has brought you to a fresh sense of forgiveness and a fresh sense of worship and a renewed sense of utter dependence upon God and a desire to encourage others with the same hope that is in you I think you're going to find that that has done a number on your discouragement on your despair you will certainly find it dissipating and if all of this were not enough I think we see here a glimpse of Jesus Christ himself here in this text a prophetic glimpse of the Messiah the one who is really going to enable everything that we've just discussed verse 8 and he the Lord shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities but that sounds an awful lot like the Lord Jesus Christ to me he will save his sins what an encouraging thing to think about the Lord Jesus Christ really I think fills this psalm he permeates this psalm because it's through our Lord Jesus Christ that we find forgiveness and we keep coming back and we find that the fountain is bigger still than our cesspool of remaining sin and despair and to whatever extent we sin and find discouragement we find that his forgiveness and his mercy is bigger still the Lord Jesus Christ will redeem Israel and I believe that that is an indication of the church his people will be redeemed from their sins now for those of you who don't know Christ tonight I want you to look at this psalm and ask yourself where else are you going to find a real answer to the real discouragements of life to the problem of sin you know that's really one of the biggest problems with false religions and with cults is that they don't have a way to completely and thoroughly deal with the issue of sin but in Christ we do and unbeliever as you sit here tonight I want you to see the mercy and the forgiveness that is found in Christ that is still available tonight I hope you feel a sense of verse three that if the

Lord should keep record of your iniquities you would have no ability to stand before him but there is forgiveness with God and you can become a worshiper of him tonight and lose a certain sense of

that despair that you cannot avoid when you're an enemy of God our lives as believers are certainly not going to be perfect and you've heard me address us quite quite specifically tonight in this issue but you know this isn't all there is either just having a renewed forgiveness in this life is a wonderful thing but that's not all there is when our redemption is complete we won't have these struggles anymore so believer hang on and don't just hang on but thrive in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ I don't know what you're facing this week what you're returning to tomorrow but there is hope there is hope in the Lord O

[46:58] Israel hope in the Lord for with the Lord there is mercy and with him is abundant! redemption and he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities let's pray our father God we want to bless you this evening for your grace for putting up with sinners like us and we pray father lord that you would give us tonight a renewed sense of grace lord you know who in this room especially needs to feel that we pray that you would bring them lord to an honest and thorough examination of their own walk with you and then having come to fresh repentance lord fill our hearts with hope help us to see once again the beauty and the glory of the

Lord Jesus Christ all that he has accomplished for us lord help us to see the wonderful truth that the same redemption that was there when we came to Christ is still there for us to come back to the same forgiveness lord we don't want to take advantage of that in a bad sense by despising your sacrifice lord give us hearts of thanks that we can come back and we can come back and we can come back again and we find forgiveness with you that you may be feared lord for those tonight those believers who have an unusual weight upon them we pray that you would help them to move from a state of despair to a state of hope even if the circumstances don't change may they find their hope in you and father for any unbelievers maybe some of our children we pray father that you would help them to see

Jesus Christ as the way the truth the only way to the father the only place to find forgiveness and true hope in the midst of a world that is lost and dying so help us Lord and encourage us with these things we pray Lord you know that sometimes as believers we look elsewhere for hope we look in the wrong places and expect to find hope and happiness and satisfaction Lord help us to first and foremost quickly and often come back to you as our primary source of all comfort and all hope we pray all of these things asking you for your grace and mercy and answering these prayers amen