

Pray Toward Hope

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[0:00] One of the greatest obstacles that every Christian faces is despair and discouragement. And despair and discouragement takes on a couple of different forms.

! I think the one that we think of despair is a downcast look. The look of despair, of hopelessness. And where it's written all over that person's face and they're depressed, we would say. But despair also takes on another face that looks far different than that one.

And it takes on the look of worldliness. If we have no hope for the next world, what are we going to do?

We're going to live for this world as much as possible. And so we could be very, very busy doing all sorts of things, trying to fill up our heart, trying to fill up our time, trying to fight off boredom, trying to fight off that discouragement.

[1:08] And it doesn't look anything like a depressed person, but it is still a person that is in despair. Because they've lost hope in the life to come.

They've lost a purpose for living in this life. And so now their life is all about living for themselves. And so maybe where I want to begin today is just by asking you to examine yourself.

Are you in despair? Have you lost sight of what God is going to do? What is coming for us who are waiting in Christ Jesus?

What are glorifications going to be? What the new heavens and the new earth are going to be like? Have you lost that hope that motivates you to godliness in this life, that makes you say, I don't need this world because I have something better waiting for me?

Or maybe that despair looks like the depression that we talked about, where it's written all over your face, that you don't feel like this is ever going to end.

[2:18] Either way, people can talk about how, and people do talk about, and rightly so, about how short life is. But sometimes it doesn't feel very short, does it? It feels very long, like the end is never going to come.

And when you're in the thick of things, in the thick of sin, in the thick of discouragement, in the thick of not understanding even the trials that you're in, it can be very hard to seem like it's ever going to end.

It feels like you've been put on a treadmill, and someone has cranked up the incline all the way, and said, now just run as hard as you can, and when you're done, you'll be done. But there's no time, there's no miles, you just run.

And it would be very easy to get discouraged if you're in that situation. You don't know how much longer you have to go. Well, if you're discouraged with those things, if you're in that despair that we talked about, then Psalm 132 shows you what to do, shows us what we are to look at, and what are we to put our hope in.

So I would invite you to turn to Psalm 132. And this is, again, a song of ascent.

[3:33] And let's read the psalm then. Oh Lord, remember David and all the hardships he endured.

He swore an oath to the Lord and made a vow to the mighty one of Jacob. I will not enter my house or go to my bed. I will allow no sleep to my eyes, no slumber to my eyelids, till I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling for the mighty one of Jacob.

Jacob, we heard it in Ephrathah. We came upon it in the fields of Jaar. Let us go to his dwelling place. Let us worship at his footstool.

Arise, O Lord, and come to your resting place, you and the ark of your might. May your priests be clothed with righteousness. May your saints sing for joy.

For the sake of David, your servant, do not reject your anointed one. The Lord swore an oath to David, a sure oath that he will not revoke.

[4:35] One of your own descendants I will place on your throne. If your sons keep my covenant and the statutes I teach them, then their sons will sit on your throne forever and ever.

For the Lord has chosen Zion. He has desired it for his dwelling. This is my resting place forever and ever. Here I will sit in throne, for I have desired it.

I will bless her with abundant provisions. Her poor will I satisfy with food. I will clothe her priest with salvation, and her saints will ever sing for joy.

Here I will make a horn grow for David, and set up a lamp for my anointed one. I will clothe his enemies with shame, but the crown on his head will be resplendent.

Well, the very first thing that you notice about Psalm 132 is that it is much longer than all the other psalms of ascent. It's very long for a song of ascent.

[5:36] It's twice as long as the next longest one, and it's three times as long as all the psalms surrounding it. And so it's the Mount Everest of the songs of ascent.

Psalm 132, in a lot of ways, is the peak. It's the high point of the songs of ascent. And it's downhill from here. Another way to look at it is that Psalm 132 is the doorway to the end.

Remember how we talked about this so many months ago, that the song of ascent, these psalms, they move from far away to Jerusalem, and they move all the way until we are in the courts of the Lord.

We are praising God. It's a picture of the Christian life. We begin far away, and we end up in heaven. Well, Psalm 132 is somewhat of a doorway.

Something happens after Psalm 132. Now, you remember a couple months ago, we talked about Psalm 130, and he was talking about the difficulty of sin. That's the big reality in Psalm 130.

[6:43] If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? Psalm 130 is about sin. Psalm 131 is about unexplainable trials.

We don't know why we're suffering, and so the call is to trust God, to be still, to calm our hearts. But in Psalm 133 and Psalm 134, the picture is very different.

It's shalom. It's peace. It's reconciliation. It's worship. The pain, the grief, is all behind. It's all behind you.

And so Psalm 132 is this doorway to the end, and we have to go through it in order to reach that final blessing. In Psalm 133, it says, the last sentence is, for there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.

So how do we get to the end? How do we deal with the length of life when it seems so long? How do we deal with that discouragement that we feel, that the changing is so slow, my sin, my trials, they're just one after the other?

[7:55] Well, Psalm 132 shows us, we pray our way there. We pray our way to the end, and not only that, we pray for the end to come.

So not only are we praying for ourselves, but more importantly, we're praying, God, do something to change this. Because our salvation is not going to be final until every single last one of God's people are in God's kingdom, and the new heavens and the new earth are created.

Salvation is not complete when we die. Salvation is only finalized when everything is summed up in Jesus Christ. So what do we do? We pray our way to the end.

Now, this psalm is divided into three parts, two prayers, and then God's answer. Two prayers, and then God's answer.

So look at verse one. You see the very first prayer. Prayer. Oh Lord, remember David and all the hardships he endured. It's a prayer. He prays, remember David.

[9:02] Remember how he struggled. Remember his hardships. Now, you remember that. David had all those years before he became king. He had difficulty during his kingship. But the idea is, remember all those trials that David faced as he longed to bring the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem.

See, the highlight of David's reign was when he brought the Ark to Jerusalem. He put the presence of God amidst the people of God.

He brought God and his people together at the capital. And that was a glorious celebration. You could read about it several places in the Bible. And so that was the highlight of David's ministry, the highlight of David's reign.

Now, it's not at all stretching to say that the Bible says that this is a picture of Jesus Christ. And I think we need to make that change.

If this is going to apply to us, if we're going to understand how it applies to us, we have to realize that when it's talking about David and it's talking about Jerusalem, it's pointing forward to a greater reality.

[10:13] It's pointing forward to Jesus Christ. And so what was the greatest act of Jesus' life? What was his life and death and resurrection all about?

Wasn't it bringing God and man together? Reconciling that relationship. Didn't he die to reconcile sinful man to a holy God in order to bring God to men?

So in his body, there's a new and a living way that men can come to God. They can come into the presence of God. And so the greatest gift, or one of the greatest gifts, of his death and resurrection was the Holy Spirit, where he brought God into the hearts of men.

We talked about it this morning where he dwells now among his people. And it's more than just residence. The spirit is the sign of renewed fellowship, of renewed friendship.

And that's all pictured in the ark coming to Jerusalem. The presence of God coming in the midst of his people. And so through the Spirit's ministry and our reconciliation, we have to see, though, that it's the overflow.

[11:35] It's the result of Jesus' hardships. And so in the first verse, O Lord, remember David and all the hardships he endured. We want to say, Lord, for Jesus' sake, remember what Jesus endured.

And so just like David said, I'm not going to rest. I'm not going to rest until the Ark of the Covenant is in Jerusalem. I'm not going to give my eyes any sleep until God is right here among his people, right here in Zion.

So Jesus suffered and agonized. He lived his life in order to bring you and God together that you could worship him in his very presence.

Read Revelation. That is where this is going, where the temple of God is no longer there because God and the Lamb are its temple. Face-to-face worship.

That's what David wanted. That's what Jesus lived for. And so we say, remember Christ's hardships. Arise, O Lord, and come to your resting place.

[12:42] Come to your resting place. Come to us. Live among us. Let us worship you. Or verse 9, clothe us with righteousness. Make us sing for joy.

So we long for you. We need you. The world needs you. The created world needs you. The earth needs you.

All the kingdoms of the earth need you. And so come and live with us. Meet us. Dwell within us. Dwell here with us.

So Jesus suffered for this. And we pray, God, give him what he suffered for. Remember his hardships. Come to us and live within us.

So what do you do when you're fighting despair? What do you do when you're discouraged or you're just so tempted to fill up your life with worldly things?

[13:43] Well, Psalm 132 points us to the end. It points us to Jesus' suffering and it shows us that the things that we long for, the thing that our empty hearts want, is God with us.

And so what do you do? You pray, God, come and live here. Live in my heart more fully. Live in our church more fully. And then finally and greatly, come down and live on this earth with us.

Well, Psalm 132 says you need to pray for that. Well, that's the first prayer request. The second is found in verses 10 through 12. In verses 10 through 12, the psalmist reminds the Lord of an oath he swore to David that he would that he would give a king to rule on David's throne forever.

And you remember how it went. David said, I'll build you a house. And God said, no, I'll build you a house. And what's amazing in Jesus Christ, both things are fulfilled at once.

David, or Jesus, does bring God and man together. And God does give him a kingdom that will never end. And so in this prayer we pray, for Jesus' sake, rule over us through your Messiah.

[14:59] Rule over us through your Messiah, through your anointed one. And again, this points us to what we're starting to enjoy. This is the wonder of being a Christian.

That Jesus Christ is your king. You have already entered into the kingdom of God with Jesus as the king. And so we've already started to enjoy it. But it points us to what we will ultimately enjoy.

There is more to experience. Christ on his throne. Jesus Christ ruling with God and for God. And that's what we long for when the kingdoms of this earth will become the kingdom of Christ.

Isn't that what we want? We watch the news and I think we're better at griping about it and complaining about it than we are at turning our attention to Jesus Christ and the promise that he is going to replace these kingdoms.

That he has something better in store. That these things are not going to go on forever. We don't have to get in despair because of what's going on in the news and what's going on in the world and what's going on and what we hear on the radio and things like that because Christ is coming.

[16:14] He has already entered into our hearts. He has already set up his kingdom in our hearts in the church and one day he's going to establish his rule from shore to shore from sea to sea.

And so have we forgotten? Have we forgotten what's going to happen? Remember where we're going.

The kingdoms of this earth will in fact be the kingdoms of our God. Right now they're his kingdom by right. Jesus Christ died to inherit the nations.

He has them by, he owns them by right but on the day that he comes he will own them by fact. He will really, really reign and his will will be done. And then justice will roll down like a river and righteousness like a never failing stream.

They'll rule righteousness and justice replacing racism and oppression and injustice and corruption. His righteousness will replace all that.

[17:18] It will roll down from his throne to fill the whole earth and then the meek will inherit the earth. And then Jesus will say blessed are the poor for theirs is the kingdom.

of God. Psalm 132 teaches us to pray oh God come and live with us and it also teaches us to pray establish your kingdom.

Rule through your Messiah. Remember your promise. Remember your oath. You said you would do it. You said you wouldn't reject your Christ. You said you wouldn't you would build his kingdom.

So oh God may your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Well so what do we do when we're faced with that despair?

With that this we've come to terms with the emptiness of this world. Well we don't try to fill it up with worldly things. Instead we turn our eyes on Jesus. We turn our eyes on what God has promised for us.

[18:16] The oaths he made to David and to Jesus. And so we say remember Jesus. Remember his sufferings.

Remember your oath to him. So God doesn't want us to hold in all these sorrows. He doesn't want us to hold in to our hearts all this discouragement and the impatience.

He doesn't want us to keep that inside of us. He wants us to pray for the end to come. to speed his coming. Now look how the psalm ends and it's glorious.

So in despair we pray. Look at what he says in verse 13. For the Lord has chosen Zion.

He has desired it for his dwelling. And so when we pray oh God come and live with us come and dwell among us let us meet you in worship let us live in us when we pray what does God say?

[19:19] When we pray that what does God say? He says I have chosen you. I have desired you. This is where I want to live. So see the heart of God. As we pray his heart comes down to us and meets us.

I'm coming. I want you. I want to be with you. I have desired this. Then look at all the I wills of the next the rest of the verses.

Look at all the I wills. In verse 14 I will sit enthroned. We pray God rule and he says I will sit enthroned for I have desired it.

You want me to rule? I want to rule. I will rule. I will bless. I will clothe her priest with salvation. I will bless her with abundant provisions.

Her poor will I satisfy with food. Her saints will sing for joy. I will make a horn grow for David. I will clothe his enemies with shame but the crown of his head will be resplendent.

[20:16] How does God answer the prayers of his saints? He says I will. I will. I will. I will. So is the road long?

Do you feel like it's never going to get there? I'm on this treadmill and it's going around and around and it doesn't seem like heaven is getting any closer. Well look at what Jesus has done.

Look what Jesus has suffered for you. Look at what God has sworn and then look what the Lord says to chosen Zion. I will come. I will bless.

I will satisfy. I will clothe. I'm coming. My Christ is coming. And then all of your prayers will be answered. All of your hopes will be met.

All of your joys will come. Christ is coming and is bringing the kingdom of God. And he's bringing the heavenly temple to earth.

[21:16] Now that is the great promise. That is why we don't have to live a hopeless life. Because what God is going to do.

And I think even in this song there is hope for lost unclean sinners. So you're far from God.

God isn't near you. You don't worship him. You worship other things. He doesn't dwell in you.

You're strangers very far from him. You're a stranger to the one who made you.

That's no way you can't live that way. Apart from the very one who made you. And so look at your life. You're running from God. That's your misery.

And that's your sin. And that's why you can't sit alone. that's why you can't just sit there and not look at your cell phone.

[22:26] You can't sit there and not look on the Facebook or look on the next YouTube. You're always going. You're always searching. You're always looking for the next thing. Trying to fill that get rid of the boredom.

Find some hope. Find some satisfaction. Find a little bit of fun to make it through. The reason that you do that is because you're running away from God. You're running away from God.

You are that prodigal son. And as you run away, you're running away from your own happiness.

You're running away from the God who loves you and you owe your love to Him.

And on top of it all, you act like you're a God yourself. To live without God is to act like you can live as a God. And that's audacity.

What audacity to think that you can just live without your Maker. So what does the psalmist say to you?

[23:29] I think it says pray for Jesus sake. God, come and live with me. Come and live with me. Come and live in me.

for Jesus sake, come and reign over me. I'm tired of running. I'm tired of going my own way. I'm tired of sinning. I want rest. I need a king.

I need a Savior. I need a God. So what does God say to a sinner who prays those that way? For Jesus sake, come and have mercy on me.

Forgive me and come and dwell within me. God's heart is I will. I will and I will. You're lost because you won't turn to God. So stop running and turn toward him.

Cry out for help and he will save you. He will clothe you with righteousness. That's his promise.

That's the gospel promise to all who believe. He will forgive and give them the righteousness of Christ.

[24:35] But now the window is open now. the window is open now. It says he will clothe Christ's enemies in shame. He will clothe his enemies with shame.

So now is the day of salvation. Tomorrow is the day of shame. You see that? The fact is that God will clothe Christ's enemies with shame.

It's going to happen. It hasn't happened yet. So today is the day of salvation. Tomorrow is the day of shame. And so cry out. And when our hearts cry out, God meets us.

God blesses us. God hears our prayer. God says, I will. So are you discouraged? Well, turn to those, you don't have to turn there, but in your own time, turn to those last pages of our Bible.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, now the dwelling of God is with man, and he will live with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

[25:42] He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. And later it says, then I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. He who testifies to these things says, yes, I'm coming soon.

And so we say, amen. Come, Lord Jesus. Let's pray. Amen. Father, I pray that you would stretch the eyes of our mind and the eyes of our heart to understand and to grasp the plans that you have for us.

Father, forgive us for living so far under your promises, so far under the privileges that are ours, so far under our inheritance. I pray that you would increase our faith, that we might have such a vision

and such an ability to see Christ and his glory and all that is promised to us, that we would cast aside this world, that we would cast aside the pleasures of this world, that we would turn out of our boredom and out of our emptiness and out of our despair, out of our depression to you, Lord Jesus, to what you have promised, and give us faith that we might start to pray these big prayers of come and live here, come and reign over us, give us hearts that are looking and stretching out for those great realities that you have promised.

Teach us to pray, teach us to believe. I pray that you would bring any sinner here, bring them to the end of themselves, make them see, make them think, and understand how empty their way of life is, and to turn away from it and turn to a new and living way, even Jesus Christ.

[28:09] Pray that you would do that for their good, because you are a God of compassion, and do it for all of your people that we might praise you, for all that you do for sinners like us.

Thank you. Thank you for what you've taught us today. thank you for the hope that we have because of Christ's resurrection.

Thank you for this great calling that you have given the church to be worshipers of the living God. Pray that you would make Grace Fellowship Church a more hopeful, a more worshipful people. In Jesus' name, amen.