

August 9, 2026

Hope When You Don't Feel It

Psalm 42:1–11; Matthew 14:22–33

Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me?

Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. (Psalm 42:11)

“You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?” (Matthew 14: 31)

There are moments in life when hope feels like it has slipped through your fingers. You know what Scripture says. You know what God has done in the past. You know what you're supposed to believe. But your soul says, “I can't feel any of it.”

Psalm 42 and Matthew 14 speak directly into that experience. They show us that **hope is not a feeling you wait for—hope is a truth you cling to when feelings fail.**

When Your Soul Is Downcast (Psalm 42)

Psalm 42 is not a triumphant psalm. It is a psalm written from the heart.

“As the deer pants for streams of water...”

This is not a peaceful nature scene. This is desperation. This is someone spiritually dehydrated.

The psalmist says:

- “My tears have been my food day and night.”
- “Why are you cast down, O my soul?”
- “All Your waves and breakers have swept over me.”

This is not a man who has lost his theology. This is a man who has lost his *feeling* of God's nearness. He remembers better days—days of worship, joy, and community. But memory alone cannot lift him. And yet, in the middle of his despair, he does something holy: He **preaches to himself**. “Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him.” He doesn't wait for hope to return. He **commands** his soul to remember the God who has not changed.

Hope begins when you speak truth to yourself louder than the darkness speaks despair.

When Obedience Leads Into Storms (Matthew 14). The Gospel of Matthew tells us that Jesus instructed the disciples to get into the boat, and they encountered a storm because they obeyed Him. While some storms arise from disobedience, others come as a result of discipleship. The disciples row for hours, struggling against the wind. They do everything right, yet everything feels wrong. Hope is not always the reward for obedience; sometimes, it leads you directly into (wind) challenging circumstances. However, Jesus comes to them “in the fourth watch of the night”—between 3 and 6 AM. This is the darkest and most hopeless part of the night, the time when one might stop expecting rescue.

Hope often arrives later than you want but earlier than you think.

When Fear Drowns Out Faith. The disciples see Jesus walking on the water and cry out, “It’s a ghost!” Fear distorts reality. Jesus speaks one sentence that changes everything: “Take courage. It is I. Do not be afraid.” Hope is not the absence of fear; hope is recognizing who is with you in the storm.

Peter steps out of the boat and begins to walk on water—until he shifts his focus to the wind. The wind was always present, the waves were always there, and the danger was always real. What changed was his focus.

Hope is not the absence of threats; hope is the presence of Christ in your line of sight. Peter sinks not because he doubts Jesus’ power, but because he doubts Jesus’ nearness.

Hope is not “Jesus will fix everything immediately.”

Hope is “Jesus is closer than the waves that scare me.”

Even when you are sinking, Jesus is always there to reach out to you. When Peter began to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!” Scripture tells us that Jesus immediately reached out His hand. Not eventually, not after a lecture, and not once Peter had everything figured out—He did it immediately. Our hope is not based on how tightly we hold on to Jesus; rather, it rests in His unwavering grip on us.

Psalm 42 ends with determination, not resolution. Matthew 14 ends with worship, not explanation. Both passages teach us this: You don’t climb out of despair; you get carried out.

The Gospel When You Don’t Feel Hope.

Recognize that Hope, when you don’t feel it, is not a feeling—it is a Person. Hope is the God who walks on waves. Hope is the Savior who reaches fast. Hope is the Shepherd who speaks to storms. Hope is the Lord who holds you when your faith cannot. Hope is not the light at the end of the tunnel. Hope is the God who walks with you *in* the tunnel.

So, when you don’t feel hope:

- **Name your condition honestly.**
- **Preach truth to your soul.**
- **Look for Jesus in the fourth watch.**
- **Trust His grip more than your own.**

Hope when you don’t feel it is still hope—because Jesus is still there. And if He is there, the darkness cannot win.