

Don't Forsake Me!

Sermon Text: Psalm 38

Study Texts: 2 Corinthians 7:8-12

Sermon Recap: The main idea of this week's sermon is this: Those who repent of their sins and look to the LORD for salvation will not be forsaken. Take time before your growth group to review the key points you noted from this week's sermon.

Sermon Connection: 2 Corinthians 7 brings us face-to-face with the very issue Psalm 38 highlights: godly repentance. In this text, Paul is reminding the Corinthian church that two types of sorrow exist: Godly sorrow, which is sorrow that comes from knowing that we have offended God, and worldly sorrow, which is nothing more than feeling bad about something. Godly sorrow, Paul notes, is a good thing because it motivates us toward repentance, something that worldly sorrow lacks. Although Paul takes no pleasure in the actual grief of the Corinthian church, he is ultimately grateful for their grief, because through the grief, they have been led to repentance. As we have been reminded from Psalm 38, those who repent of their sins and look to the LORD for salvation will not be forsaken.

Lesson Plan

Lesson Goal: To see that true repentance is born out of godly grief and is a mark of true conversion.

Lesson Points:

Point 1: The Purpose of Godly Grief (vv. 8-10)

Point 2: The Fruit of Godly Grief (vv. 11-12)

The Context: It is generally understood that Paul wrote 4 letters to the Corinthian church, of which we have 2 preserved in the Bible.¹ In 2 Corinthians 7, Paul makes mention of a previously written tearful and severe letter that caused him much grief over sending it, but it also caused the Corinthian church much grief over receiving it.

¹ Paul's first letter, although not preserved, is mentioned in 1 Cor. 5:9; the second letter is our 1 Corinthians; the third letter (also not preserved) is mentioned in 2 Cor. 2:3-4; 7:8; and the fourth letter is our 2 Corinthians.

The Corinthian church was in turmoil over some false teachings, and when Paul arrived to settle the controversy, the church actually rebelled against him, and Paul felt it better to suffer humiliation and leave rather than stay and fight. Through the power of the Holy Spirit working in the hearts of the Corinthian believers, along with Paul's severe letter, grief and repentance came.²

It is the grief of the Corinthian church that is our focus. Paul states that such grief, being godly, is good, for it produces godliness in God's people.

Point 1 - The Purpose of Godly Grief (vv. 8-10)

- In v. 8, Paul mentions a letter he had sent previously (often called the "tearful" or "severe" letter). What is the source of the regret Paul felt over sending it (v. 8)?
- Why does Paul note that his grief over the letter changed?
- Why is the Corinthians' grief from Paul's letter a good thing? How is this instructive for us?
- What does this teach the Church about the giving and receiving of discipline and correction?
- What does v. 10 show about the benefits of godly grief?
- Is Paul saying in v. 10, that by repenting over sin, we earn salvation? If not, what is he saying?

Point 2 - The Fruit of Godly Grief (vv. 11-12)

- Paul associates the Corinthians' repentance with spiritual maturity. What spiritual principle does this help us understand? See also Luke 6:43-45; 1 John 1:5-10.
- According to v. 11, the Corinthian believers have cleared themselves of this wrong committed against Paul and ultimately against God. What does it mean that they have cleared themselves?
- How does this instruct us in how to deal with godly grief, wrongdoing, and repentance in the Church? See also Psalm 38.
- What is the point of v. 12?

The Big Picture - Grieving over Godliness

Psalm teaches us that those who repent of their sins and look to the LORD for salvation will not be forsaken. Good, God-given grief over sin leads to the repentance of salvation. There are two primary forms of salvation grief that a Christian experiences. First, there is the initial gospel conviction that causes us to respond to the gospel for the first time, thereby receiving justification by faith. The ongoing salvation repentance is what Paul notes in 2 Cor. 7. For those in whom the gospel is real, in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, sin cannot occupy the

² See introductory notes in ESV Study Bible for a more thorough explanation.

primary role. By God's grace, a Christian cannot and will not persist in sin. Grief will come, and this grief will lead to repentance before the face of God.

Paul was not content to let the Corinthian church persist in blatant sin. In love, he wrote the severe and tearful letter, calling the Corinthians to account. His actions lay down a pattern for us in two ways. First, and primarily, we should always be aware of sin in our lives and asking God to bring us to repentance where needed. And second, Paul's willingness to confront the Corinthians' sin should encourage us to love our brothers and sisters more than we love our own comfort. Paul grieved over the godliness of the Corinthian believers, so much so that he was willing to risk his relationship with them. May our love of God and of one another cause us to grieve over godliness in the same way.

Application Questions

- Are there areas in my life where I need to repent of sin? If so, what are they?
- How am I trusting God's mercy through repentance?
- How am I leading and teaching my family—spouse, kids, in-laws, etc.—that God is honored and merciful through our repentance?
- Is our growth group a place of repentance?
- How can our growth group encourage repentance more?