

Unimpressive? 9. Repentance

2 Corinthians 7:2-16

Sermon Notes:

This Sunday at Magdalen Road Church we reached the next section in Paul's letter to the Corinthians (7v2-16). The last five chapters have been a tangent (!), here Paul returns to his initial concern for the Corinthians and their potential rejection of him following the visit of Titus with Paul's 'difficult' letter (see back in chapter 2 especially).

At the start of the chapter Paul urges the Corinthians to make room for him in their hearts and then proceeds to give us two hopeful reasons that they will do so:

1. The comfort he receives from Titus (v5-7 and v13-16)

Remember the 'comfort' word is theologically loaded, picking up ideas from chapter 1 (eg v3-4). As Titus brings news from Corinth so in the midst of Paul's darkness we sense a glimpse of light. Paul's very joy (v7) is challengingly tied up with whether the Corinthians accept him and so the gospel of God. We considered the way in which we can easily keep people at arm's length and also the fact that we can be the source of God's comfort in the lives of others. This is both a challenge and an encouragement.

2. Repentance from his Letter (v8-13)

We noted that the heart of this section are two types of sorrow. There's a worldly sorrow that leads to death and a godly sorrow that leads to repentance and life. They could look very similar on the outside, the problem is what is going on within.

This is a vital distinction for us to grapple with. The worldly sorrow is foundationally self-centred - it's essentially about me. Perhaps it's a sorrow that comes from embarrassment of having been found out, or a kind of self-pity, or even a 'feeling sorry enough' that we prove to God we ought to be forgiven - or even a sorry because we think won't receive

blessings from God any more. All of these are essentially about us and are very natural and sadly probably very common.

These are contrasted with a godly sorrow that simply acknowledges the way in which our actions have hurt God and so result in repentance and change. Repentance is directional and means turning back to him. We said this concept was really important because all of the Christian life is about repentance. This is a once and forever thing but also a daily thing and received by grace as a gift. If all of the Christian life is about repentance, getting the right kind of repentance in place is vital.

Home Group Questions

Here are some questions to start your group off on these two big ideas:

1. How is Paul 'comforted' in these verses? How does this tie in with ideas from chapter 1?
2. What do they mean for us? Have you ever been comforted in this way? Have you ever comforted others in this way?
3. What is the difference between worldly sorrow and godly sorrow? Why does it matter?
4. What might a self-centred worldly sorrow look like?
5. What about a godly sorrow? How can we keep our sorrow 'godly' rather than 'worldly'?

Caring for One Another

Please read chapter 7

As we move towards others we will talk about good things, hard things and at times, sin.

- 1) Why is this difficult?
- 2) How can we grow in this?
 - Say something – the first words are the hardest
 - Use "we" more than "you"
 - Use questions more than exhortations
 - Be always turning towards God's lovely forgiveness