

Do Not Forsake Me, O Lord

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Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[0 : 00] Verse 9, 9 and 10, O Lord, all my longing is before you, my sighing is not hidden from you, my heart throbs, my strength fails me, and the light of my eyes, it also has gone from me.

This, you don't need for me to tell you, is a sad psalm. It's one of the penitential psalms, there are seven, this is a third of them, there's Psalm 6, Psalm 32, this Psalm 38, Psalm 51, Psalm 102, Psalm 143, and there's another one, that's your homework, I can't remember it just now, there's another of them.

And these particular psalms are what we would term, or at least part of them, very, very sad, they're almost what we would term a lament, there's a lament within these psalms.

And sometimes people would say, well, why on earth in the middle of the week, when people need a boost, do we come and start looking at a psalm like this? Now, we do, of course, by and large, in the middle of the week, our meetings tend to focus on something that does encourage us.

But what we've always got to remember is that our life is not just about the highs and the good things and the encouragements, but life can often be difficult, life is often sad.

[1 : 34] Maybe some of you in here tonight, you feel more sadness than joy. We all, everybody within the course of their life has their ups and their downs.

In the course of 24-hour day, we have day and we have night. Every year we have our summer and we have our winter. The tide ebbs and it flows.

And so it is in this world. We will have our ups and we'll have our downs. And a lot of life is made up of sorrow, of sighing, of sadness, of pain, of difficulties, of feeling crushed, of feeling overwhelmed. And that's what we meet in this psalm. And again, we've got to remember who the author is. He's a man who is noted for his praise, for his joy, for his passion.

If you were to think of David, you wouldn't automatically think of somebody who spent most of his life down in the dumps. He had his moments, and he had his tough moments, but his overriding, certainly from what we can see of him, and again from what the word shows us, is a man who was so full of the Lord, and a man who praised God like probably few others ever did in this world.

[2 : 56] But it is this man, David, who has penned this psalm. And that's why I find it encouraging for us to look at. Because David, as a man after God's own heart, is recognizing that this is life.

And it's only escapism to try and make out that this isn't life. And David has been laid low, and through his being laid low, he has come to discover a lot about himself.

And again, that is such a human experience. And I'm sure all of us, at one level or another, have come in one way or another, God will see to it in some way, that we come to a place where we have to stop, and where we come to discover a little more about ourselves.

Now, this psalm, again, could only be the psalm of a Christian. While many of the expressions that are given in here, say, for instance, my heart throbs, my strength fails me, and the light of my eyes, it has also gone from me, my friends and companions stand aloof from my plague, and my nearest kin stand far off.

That could be an experience for an unbeliever. There might be many people tonight, and they would say, you know this, see that, these words say, I can follow them, that's exactly where I am. Somebody who never comes to church, somebody who doesn't even believe in God, might be able to say something like that.

[4 : 30] But in the entirety of this psalm, it is only a believer that can speak in this way. Because as you notice, as you go through it, the words revealed to us, that the psalmist is aware that the chastening hand of God is upon him, that the Lord is disciplining.

And that's what he's saying, O Lord, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath. He is aware that he is being rebuked, and that he is being disciplined. But he's saying, don't do it,

Lord, in your anger and in your wrath.

I know that your discipline, it's going to be hard enough, doing it in love, but please don't do it in anger. Don't do it in wrath. So David is aware of this.

And he's so aware that his sin has really come to the fore. And he says that there's no soundness in my flesh.

And he says, there's no health in my bones because of my sin. My iniquities have gone over my head like a burden. They are too heavy for me. And David is aware, as he says in verse 9, O Lord, all my longing is before you.

[5 : 45] It's kind of like the same way as Peter said of Jesus, to Jesus, Lord, you know all things. And this is what the psalmist is saying here, O Lord, and the actual word that he uses here for the Lord, O Lord, is the word that you use for master.

The Lord who is my master. Very personal. But he's aware that he is under the hand of God. And he says, all my longing is before you.

It's literally before your face, in front of you. And David is aware that although things are tough, that he is, as it were, in front of God.

And that is encouraging to you and to me. Because when you're in front of somebody, it means that that person is seeing you. You are in their focus.

That their eyes are upon you. And that's what David is saying. Everything that's happening to me, all is, I'm here, Lord, right in front of you.

[6 : 51] You know everything about me. And he says, so, then he says, all my longing is before you. Everything, every desire, every fear, every hope, every agony, everything.

It's all there. You know it, everything. And of course, we see that, for David, this is such a difficult time because he's crying out before the Lord.

And when, I think it's one of the most difficult places that any Christian can be, is to be in the place where you've kind of lost sense of the Lord's help and the Lord's presence.

You have no sense of his comfort. You feel absolutely isolated. You feel just so alone and far away from God.

In fact, you wonder, was I ever with God? Was God ever mine? Now, you know tonight, this is such an encouragement to a Christian.

[7 : 57] Because if you went round tonight and asked a hundred people down in the streets, does it concern you whether God is your God or not?

A lot of people would say, it doesn't bother me in the slightest. Don't give it a thought. Not interested. Some people would say, well, it would be nice to think that. A lot of people would say, well, I don't know who God is.

I have no concept of who God is. I don't understand about God. But for the Christian, someone who has come to know God the Father through his Son, Jesus Christ, by the work of the Holy Spirit, to lose that sense of belonging, of that sense of identity, that sense of purpose, that sense of hope, all these things leaves you in the most miserable place in the world.

It's an awful place. And maybe some of you have gone through dark experiences like that. Or even if you haven't, you have met Christians who have been in the most terrible darkness.

And you know, it's the most fearful place to be. Now, the Lord won't leave you there. And he wasn't going to leave David there. And David is crying and he's groaning.

[9 : 18] Because that's really what we find here. Because he says, all my longing is before you. My sighing is not hidden from you. My sighing, or this could be even translated, my groaning, is not hidden from you.

Now, when a person groans, very often they're in pain. If you're really, really in agony with something, you're making groaning sounds because of the pain you're in.

And you know, if a person is in real pain and is groaning, sometimes they don't know what to do with themselves. Pain can put a person, can almost put a person crazy with the pain.

You don't know what to do with yourself. Pain is a fearful thing. And spiritual pain, likewise, is a fearful thing. And that's where David is just now.

It's like there's a, there's like a knife that's being screwed right around. It's like a blunt knife. And it's, it's being just screwed into, into his very heart. And so he's saying, my, my, my sighing, my, my groaning, my sighing, it's not hidden from you as well, Lord.

[10 : 30] And many a sigh has come from us along the way. And we sigh very often because of our sin.

And it's, again, it's one of the, one of the, the most difficult discoveries is when we come again to see our sin. And you know, a lot of the time as Christians, we can just go on day after day, week after week, and we're conscious we're sinners and we ask the Lord, Lord, forgive me my sin.

But sometimes we can feel reasonably comfortable about how we are. And we don't delve in too deep and everything is all, and then sometimes all of a sudden there's a stop.

And it's like God's spirit just as a wee bit of probing into our heart and begins to show us our self in a way that we haven't seen for a long time or even if ever.

And we become distraught over that. And there is not one single Christian who will be able to stand in the face of the Lord and say, Lord, you can bow right down in me.

[11 : 40] I can take it. No, we can't. When the Lord begins to work like that, we are like the way that David was there. And it's, as Isaiah said, woe is me for I am undone.

I'm beginning to unravel. That's exactly how we feel. That's how we are when the spotlight is shown upon us, shines in us. And we say to ourselves, I can't believe I have been living in this way.

I have been comfortable with my sin. I have been tolerant of my sin. I fully accept my sin. It hasn't been bothering me. But now, Lord, I'm seeing what I'm like.

And it's terrible. I can't believe, Lord, that I have talked in this way, that I have thought in this way, that I have acted in this way.

And sometimes you think, can I really be a Christian? And so, these are times that are difficult for us. But they are also times that are necessary.

[12 : 44] But, the Christian sighs. And we sigh, as David did, through this incredible discovery of my wounds stink and fester because of my foolishness.

I'm utterly bowed down and prostrated. All day I go about mourning. You know, the Bible tells us that that's really what we're like. Romans 8.

You remember how Romans 8 likens the groaning of the creation to a woman in labor, with labor pains, and longing for that, the delivery of it.

And saying that not only is the creation like that, but we're like that as well. That we also groan, waiting for the adoption. So that, that's what it says.

We know that the whole creation groans and has been groaning in pains of childbirth till now. Not only creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan, inwardly, as we wait eagerly for the adoption of sons, the redemption of our bodies.

[13 : 54] So as we journey through this world, there is often a sigh and we often say, you know, I'm longing for the day when I will be rid of all this corruption and all this sin.

Not that we're looking forward to death, but we're looking forward to the release of the kind of person that we are. We always want to be better than we are, don't we?

We're Christians, we've been saved, and thank the Lord for that. And he has taken us and he's taking us on a journey and he's at work conforming us to the image of Christ, but my, how we long for the day when we will really be like him and be with him forever.

No more groaning then, no more sighing, no more crying, no more tears, everlasting joy, inwardly, outwardly, everything. What a future awaits us.

But here we're facing this, but this sighing and crying on behalf of the psalmist isn't simply because of the pain he's in, but it's also for that deliverance, that wanting to be rid of all these things.

[15 : 07] And so he's saying, my heart throbs, my strength fails me, and the light of my eyes that also has gone from me. Again, you can translate that spiritually because God gives us a vision.

When we become Christians, he restores our vision. He gives us the vision that we should have had from the very beginning, where we see him. That's what God does.

When we become Christians, what God does, he switches on the light through his Holy Spirit to enable us to see him. And we begin to see him.

But it's through a glass darkly, as scripture says. And we want to see, we're seeing him, but there's a kind of blurring of the vision, isn't there? And you know this, I'm sure, if you could say, you know the one thing I want tonight is that somehow that someone could just turn clear clear the vision so that I could really, really, really see him.

Well, one day you will. We see him by faith, but sometimes it's just we want to see. And again, that's a great encouragement, the desire of the Christian to see.

[16:24] But you know, sometimes for the Christian, we lose the vision. We lose the sight. We can't see. You might come to the meeting tonight and you read the word. They're empty.

Words are empty. The preaching is empty. The prayers are empty. You have words, you sometimes pray, but you have no heart in it. You don't see the Lord. You don't see anything in it. These are tough times. To be a Christian and not getting or seeing anything, it's tough. But sometimes that's how it is. And so this psalm, you'd say to yourself at the end, oh, right, normally when David is going through a dark time, you say to yourself, oh, right, let's get to the end of this psalm.

Because normally as David is penning a psalm, you go through sometimes, Lord, from the depths and then by the end, oh, we're singing. You come to the end of this psalm, he's not singing. This great victory of faith, it's not there. In fact, verse 21, do not forsake me, oh, Lord. Oh, my God, be not far from me.

[17:33] Hurry up, he's saying, make haste to help me. Oh, Lord, my salvation. Well, we'll finish on that note, oh, Lord, my salvation. There's faith, there's faith.

But our great encouragement is this. David penned this lament. Go down two psalms. And David is off again.

Psalm 40. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord, and so on. And David is saying, you have multiplied, oh, Lord, my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts towards us.

None can compare with you. I will proclaim and tell of them, yet there more than can be told. You can hardly believe it's the same man. But this is David.

And that's why I'm saying we have our summers and we have our winters. We have them in our Christian life. And if tonight you are in Psalm 38, I assure you, you will still be singing the new song.

[18:41] And you'll be praising God for all his wonders to you. And you'll be telling people of all the great things that God has done for you. And that's why I say that it's important to sometimes we have to come aside and look at the darker Psalms, look at the laments, and to discover, yeah, that's where God's people go.

I'm not alone. It's one of the worst things to be going through a tough time and thinking that nobody else understands. And you're saying, I am all alone.

No, you're not. Not only is the Lord with you, you go through the scripture and your fine loads of God's people have walked exactly the same road as you're walking as well.

Let us pray. Lord, we pray that you'll now part us with your blessing, giving thanks for your word once again. Make it ever more precious to us. Lift up your people and may your salvation truly be known by us all.