

The Blessings of Really Getting Right!

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[0 : 00] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfreda, Georgia. This is the next message in our series in the book of 2 Corinthians, entitled, We Faint Not.

We are covered by His grace, and He is so kind to us. What a wonderful thing it is to be a born-again Christian, to know you're going to heaven when you die. Take your Bible, if you would, and open it to 2 Corinthians chapter 7.

And probably one of the most exciting things a man could ever do with his life is to be involved as a pastor and to be allowed to lead a group of people. And probably one of the most painful things a guy could ever do is be a pastor because oftentimes he sees things in the lives of church people, and he ends up preaching things that hurt people and aggravate them.

The Apostle Paul had gone to Corinth, and he'd gotten that church started, and he loved those people very much, and he taught them the gospel, and he taught them grace. He taught them what Jesus did for them on the cross at Calvary.

He left the church, and after he left the church, the church fell into all kinds of problems. He got a letter from somebody at the house of Chloe, and they said, man, you wouldn't believe how the church is fighting and fussing. They divided it up into factions.

[1 : 11] They've got people bragging about being on Peter's side, and others about Apollos, and some about Paul. Then you've got this really spiritual group saying they belong to Jesus. Then he found out they were fighting and fussing and judging among themselves, and he found out there was this guy in the church that was sleeping with his daddy's wife.

He wasn't even married to her. It was his daddy's wife. It was his stepmother, and he wasn't married to her. He had no relationship. He had no right to be with her. Not even lost people would live like that, and the church was like bragging about the grace they had, and they were a tolerant church, and they were putting up with that and allowing that to go on, and Paul heard about that, and then Paul heard about them using the spiritual gifts, and there was charismatic chaos going on big time down in Corinth, and so Paul writes a letter, and that letter is a harsh letter.

He sits down, and it even says, as I wrote the letter, man, tears are streaming down my face, and he's saying, I am not believing what's going on in your church. I am not believing the stuff that's happening. This is ridiculous.

I've heard about it. It's wrong. This is wrong. This is wrong. In fact, as he gets to 1 Corinthians chapter 5, he said, I'm not believing you people haven't taken a stand about this. Next time y'all get together, I'm there in spirit.

Judge that guy. Turn him over to Satan. He says, you guys have been handling the gifts wrong, and he says there's a better way, and he writes the love chapter. They were doubting the resurrection. I mean, the church allowed Judaizers to come in and bring legalism in.

[2 : 37] I mean, everything you can imagine is going wrong. Paul is torn all to pieces because any true pastor is deeply in love with his people. He loves them. He thinks about them.

He carries their burdens on his heart. Paul talked about the daily care of the churches that came on him. Paul loved these people, and they were in trouble. He wrote them a letter. It appears he may have even written them a letter that's not included in the scriptures.

He sent Titus down there and said, Titus, go down there and see if you can't straighten them out and bring me word that they're getting their lives right. And so Paul's really hurt.

There's all kinds of trouble going on. He's dealt with enemies attacking him. The people are going to the church. These Judaizers are going in there, and they're talking bad about Paul, and people have got an attitude about Paul, and now Paul stands over here, and he's hurt, and there's a division between them.

He was once their loving pastor. They loved him, and he loved them, and he still loves them, but they're kind of against him. And Titus comes back with some really good news, and he talks about their getting right.

[3 : 40] And I don't know if you realize it, but revival comes when we repent of what we know isn't right and what isn't pleasing to God. I don't know if you've ever been in those refreshing times when God's people really said, God, I'm going to quit playing, and God, I'm really going to get right with you, and God, I'm really going to live for you.

And the things you've been dealing with me about and the things that every week I say, I know that ain't right. I know that's not pleasing to God, and next week I'll fix it. A lot of us live that way, saying, I'm going to get really right.

I'm really going to surrender. I'm really going to give my life, just not this week. And then there comes that time when all of a sudden God's people break, and they say, not my will, but thine.

They humble themselves before God. They get their heart right. They get their spirit right. Great things happen in their lives, and that's what's going on in chapter 7. So Paul writes, he's writing in chapter 7, and this time he's going to talk to them like a pastor who's deeply in love with them.

Before I get into the verses, and we're going to look at these verses and cover them, just let me tell you that I do love you, and I am concerned about you, and I pray for you, and I pray for things that go on in your life, and I hurt.

[4 : 46] And when I see you doing things that aren't pleasing to the Lord, my heart breaks for you, and I don't want you to suffer the consequences of stepping outside of God's will. When I preach the Bible to you, and it sometimes seems like there's no sensitivity, no sensitiveness, no willingness to respond, my heart breaks.

This chapter ought to be an exciting chapter for us because we're going to see Paul so excited. He is so excited that things have started to change in Corinth. I remember in Arequipa, I returned to Arequipa after my first term.

We'd come back to the States. Been going a year, and the preachers in the churches just really messed up. I mean, it was big time problems. I got back, and I found out about them stealing, lying, committing adultery.

I found out preachers, pastors, leaders, and I got back, and when I got off the airplane, the oldest missionary in town there, he was a real old man, about my age now, but I was in my 30s, and he saw me at the airport, and he said, he said, I have never seen a missionary or turned to the field with so many problems.

You have got problems. With everything that you did here, you got problems. Now, I remember going into the church, and I found out everything was going on as best I could. I talked to the guys. I investigated, and finally, I had to take some action.

[6 : 01] I had to say to them, you pastors are going to have to resign. You're going to have to step down. You've lost the right to be in a position of leadership. Man, the church had secret meetings about me, and they talked about who was I to come in there and tell them.

The preacher said things about me. One of the men who just came in to see me this week, he came in, one of his pictures, he's 81 years old. He wanted his picture made with me. He told people, he said, the pastor has no idea that young people will be young people, and young people will sow wild oats, and that's the way they are, and the pastor's young people.

He ought to have a, he ought to understand what's going on. Buddy, I felt so alone. I mean, nobody liked me. Seemed like the people in the States didn't like me. The Pruvian people didn't like me. I have a slight taste of what Paul must have been feeling.

And so now Paul writes in this chapter, watch what he says. The first thing he says is, receive us. Write that down there. In verse 2, circle it, receive us. Paul says, receive me.

Accept me back. Let's get back together. Let's be reconciled. Look at verse 2. He said, receive us. We have wronged no man. We have corrupted no man. We have defrauded no man.

[7 : 07] Paul says, I want close fellowship with you. I love you guys. I have been a man of integrity. I haven't taken advantage of you. They might have accused me.

The legalists might have accused me. And the guys messed up in sin might have been mad at me, but I haven't done anything wrong. And I love you. It hurts. It desperately hurts that you would believe anything bad about me.

Paul says, he knew that they might be mad or hurt about what he said to them, but he had to say it. Do you understand what's going on in verse 1? The apostle Paul's like, please church, receive me.

Please church, accept me. Please church, I didn't do wrong. They've accused me. The second thing, look at verse 3. Paul said, I never wanted to hurt you.

I never wanted to hurt you. I never would walk away from you. Look at verse 3. I speak not this to condemn you, for I have said before that you are in our hearts to die and live with.

[8 : 06] Paul said, let me explain something to you. I might have scolded you. I might have fussed at you. And I might have written you a harsh letter. And I might have told you to get your life right with God. But can I just go ahead and tell you, I never wanted to leave you.

I never wanted you to leave. I never wanted there to be a division. I want you to receive me. I want you to know I loved you. I loved you. I loved you to live with you. I loved you to die with you.

Great is my boldness of speech toward you. Great is my glorying of you. And I am now filled with comfort. Paul said, I never wrote you guys to condemn you. I never wrote you guys to fuss at you.

Well, young people, sometimes a youth pastor will talk to you and he'll say, get this right. And sometimes you'll get so mad at him because he's saying things to you that need to be said. But you get mad.

And you get hurt because you don't like it. But I can promise you his heart is, I love you. I love you. I want to live with you. I want to die with you. I care about you and I would never hurt you.

[9 : 02] By the way, your parents are doing the same thing with you. They love you and they care. Paul never wanted to be separated. Paul wanted to live and die with him. All the hurt that came with being their pastor and leader was worth it in Paul's opinion.

And now we get to the good stuff. In verse 5, Titus shows up and he's writing about it and tells the story about Titus coming and bringing good news. Look at what Paul said in verse 5.

If you recall back in the beginning of the book, Paul said, I couldn't find Titus. I was looking for him and it was a lot harder to get together back then. It wasn't like you could say, hey, we'll meet at 1202 at the corner of Broad and Main.

You couldn't say that because number one, you didn't know what time 1202 was. And if you've been separated for a long time, trains didn't arrive on time, didn't have trains, boats didn't arrive on time, things didn't work out like they were and Paul was all upset.

He had sent Titus down to see the Corinthians and he doesn't know what's going on. And look what he says in verse 5. For when we were coming to Macedonia, our flesh had no rest. Man, I couldn't rest. I couldn't sleep.

[10 : 07] We were troubled on every side. All I, everything was going wrong. People were attacking me. Nasty letters are being written to me. People are after me. And without were fighting and I was scared to death on the inside.

Within were fears. Nevertheless, God that comforted those that are cast down comforted us by the coming of Titus. Old Titus showed up. It wasn't just the fact that he came to see me in verse 7, but he came and told me what had happened with you and how he was comforted in you.

And he told me about how you had an earnest desire and how you were mourning, how you were sorry and how you had a fervent mind toward me and I rejoiced the more.

I know I made you sorry with the letter I wrote and I'm not sorry I wrote the letter though I was sorry. It hurt me to write the letter and I perceived that the same epistle that made you sorry for a season helped you get your life right with God.

I'm glad I wrote you. Paul had been very worried. As a pastor, he wanted them to know, he wanted to know that they were really saved and that they were really enjoying the Christian life and they were really living out who they are.

[11 : 15] Titus arrived after that visit. He told Paul, everything's okay. And Paul is so blessed. In verse 7, you ought to underline, he said, I heard about your earnest desire, your mourning, and your fervent mind.

Man, they did love God. They were sorry when they saw their mistake. They loved Paul and they wanted to listen to him. The letter Paul had written had caused them to see their mistake and get right. He was glad they got it right and he admits it right and the letter hurt him.

He sure was glad. Just let me stop and say to you, I just spoke with a missionary yesterday and he told the story. I asked him about a man in his church and the man now has AIDS and that missionary's heart.

I've known this man. I know the man who has AIDS and I know the man that messed up and I know this missionary who has loved him as his pastor and has corrected him and he said yesterday, he said, I love him and I care about him and I believe you.

Every time he told me he got right and maybe now he's only getting right because he's got AIDS and he's down to 110 pounds and I don't know how long he'll live and he said, but I believed him every time he said he got right and he hurts.

[12 : 23] He hurts for his people and Paul's like, man, I hurt for you but I am so glad you got right. Would you take me back?

Would you love me again? Would you understand that I cared about you and that's why I preached? You see, Bible preaching is not Joel Osteen preaching. It's not happy, making you feel good, smiley, smiley stuff all day long.

It's what's the word of God say. It's saying, hey, you can't sleep with your daddy's wife. It's saying, you can't follow those legalist teachers that came down and told you a bunch of junk. It's that you can't be divided amongst yourselves in fighting all the time.

It's that you're going to have to separate yourself from sin and Paul said, I told you that and in verse nine, he starts to explain that there's two kinds of repentance and I don't have time to read all those verses again to you, but I want you to look at verse nine.

I want you to underline a couple of things in verse nine. See, there's true repentance and there's false repentance. In verse nine, he says, I rejoice that you were, not that you were made sorry. I'm not glad you got sorry, but that you sorrowed to repentance.

[13 : 30] Underline, you sorrowed to repentance. repentance for you were made sorry after a godly manner that you might receive damage by us and nothing. You see, he says, you had a godly sorry.

You know, when a cop stops you for speeding, you get really sorry, but it's not really that godly sorry. It's that pocketbook. Sorry. Say amen. I mean, in your mind, you're like, well, honestly, if you'd have caught me every time you ought to caught me, I'd be bankrupt right now and I'm lucky.

I got away with a number of times I did and as soon as you're out of sight, I plan on speeding again. Some of you, some of you would even be so good as to wait 24 hours before you sped again. Say amen. That's not a godly sorrow.

That's not a godly sorrow. That's a worldly sorrow. Paul said, I don't want you being sorry. You know, sometimes my daddy said, my daddy be like, are you sorry for what you did? And I said, yes, sir, I'm sorry. He said, no, you're not.

He said, you're only sorry you're about to get a whipping. I was in my mind thinking, you're right about that. I am very sorry. You're about to tan my behind, but I ain't that sorry I did wrong. And Paul said, I am so glad not that you got sorry, but that you had a godly sorrow, a sorrow to repentance.

[14 : 41] In verse 10, he said, godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, but the sorrow of the world works death. In verse 11, he said, it was a godly sort of sorrow.

There are two kinds of repentance. And boy, have I preached and watched that happen in so many lives. There are two kinds of repentance. One's a godly sort and the other's a sorrow of the world.

You know, if a guy, if a guy, uh, hears that he's doing wrong or gets caught doing wrong, everybody's sorry when that happens. Most of the time, it's not a godly sorrow.

We have two kinds of examples of that in the Bible and their names are Peter and Judas. Could you just think just a second with me? Both of them are involved in the time and the death of Christ around the crucifixion.

And if you would read with me in Matthew chapter 26, verse 75, the apostle Peter has just denied Jesus three times. He has been so bold and so audacious as to say, all these other apostles probably won't stand with you.

[15 : 45] They'll all deny you. They're not to be trusted, but I am. He has been so bold as to take a sword with him and to chop off the ear of old Malchus, chop off Malchus' ear.

He's been bold, but when he got asked by a woman, he denied it and he lied and he cursed. And all of a sudden, Jesus cuts his eyes at him and sees him as he walks past him.

And the Bible says about it in Matthew 26, 75, and Peter remembered the word of the Lord which said unto him before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out and he wept bitterly.

He's sorry. He's sorry. But you know what's going to happen, don't you? He's really sorry. It's a godly sorrow. He will go out and he will weep bitterly, but in about 50 days, in about 50 days, a little over 50 days, the apostle Peter will still be standing strong by Jesus, be stronger than he's ever been, still leading the church and preach on the day of Pentecost.

It was, I did wrong. I figured out I did wrong and I am so sorry and I want to get my life right. I want to serve God and God used him. Judas is the other kind of sorry. He was sorry too.

[16 : 52] If you look at, if you would, in Matthew chapter 27, verses 3 through 5, the Bible says, Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself and brought again the 30 pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders saying, I have sinned and that I have betrayed the innocent blood.

And they said, what is that to us? See thou to it. See thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed and went and hanged himself.

You see, they were both sorry. One sorrowed to repentance and said, God, forgive me. The other sorrowed and went out and killed himself. Maybe got drunk, maybe used drugs, maybe went off into a lifestyle of rebellion, maybe denied God in every way, but did not, they were sorry, but not sorry to repentance.

Not sorry enough to say, I was wrong. It was not a godly sorrow. And I would ask you, have you repented of your sin?

Have you truly realized, I do not want to live a selfish life, a life for myself? I do not believe that I am able to get me to heaven, that I am able to please God.

[18 : 11] Have you come to a point in your life when you realize I failed God and I need help and I know it's not in me and you're to the point of giving up and saying, God, I need help. That's what true salvation is.

Repentance is realizing that sin has separated you from God and it's not that you quit sinning. It's not that you quit smoking, cussing, drinking, dancing, and going with it to do. It's that you say, man, I don't want this junk anymore.

I want Jesus. Did you do that? So I say, I'm sorry. And we go and we drowned our sorrow in another drinking round or pornography round or drug round or wild living and sex and junk, but we don't really mean business.

Which sorrow have you experienced? The sorrow like Judas or the sorrow like Peter? A godly sorrow. You are only saved if you have truly repented. Remember that now is the day and time of salvation.

See to it that you really are not just sorry for your sin, but sorry enough to turn from your sin to the Savior. Christians also need to repent of things in their daily lives.

[19 : 20] I'd just like to stop and say this. I repented when I was a child. When I was only seven years old, almost to turn eight, I repented. I was born again. I repented just over 50 years ago, 51 years ago.

But I'll just say this to you. That was one time. But you know, I've had to repent a lot of times because there are times when I've stepped out and began to live a willful, self-fulfilling, egotistical life when I wanted to do things my way as a Christian.

I was born again. By the way, I didn't go out in sex and I didn't go out in drugs. I would be at church and doing all the right stuff. But man, I was not right with God. I was not right with God. I knew, I know how to play the game.

I know how to look like a Christian and talk like a Christian and act like a Christian and not really be living who I am. And by the way, let me just say to you that repentance is for Christians too. In 2 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 21, Paul said, Christians somehow make excuses for sin and to continue living in it.

In Revelation 2 and 3, he calls on four of the seven churches to repent. There were things that ought to get right. True repentance shows up in some definite characteristics that are listed in this chapter.

- [20 : 43] It said in verse 7, their earnest desire, their mourning, their fervent mind toward me. In verse 11, he said, for behold this selfsame thing that you sought after a godly sort.
- What carefulness it wrought in you. You were worried about it. You were concerned about it. It bothered you. Yea, what clearing. Man, I got to get right. I got to get right. I got to get this out of me.
- Yea, what indignation. I am not believing I did this. I hate what I did. What fear. Oh God, I don't want to ever do this again. What vehement desire. What zeal. What revenge.
- I got to get right. I got to make it right. In all things, you have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter. They wanted to serve God.
- They were careful, super concerned about what had happened. They had great desire. They wanted to do right. Before I give you the last two things out of the chapter, can I just say this?
- [21 : 40] Some of us almost think, well, I got saved when I was seven, May the 6th, 1962, and I got my life right with God right there, and that's it. But that's not it. That's not it.
- You are saved. You'll never lose your salvation. But it is so easy to get so cold. It is so easy to let your walk with God get cold. It is so easy to let sin creep into your life.
- It is so easy. All the sins that took place in 1 Corinthians can easily happen in our lives. It's so easy for sin to mess us up. In this very morning, some of you would be sitting there and you'd have to say, I know I'm not where I ought to be.
- I know that there are things that have crept in my life. I know that I've allowed myself to be cold. I know I've allowed myself to be lukewarm. I know I've allowed myself to pull away from the Lord.
- Paul writes that at 1 Corinthians church, the church in Corinth, and he says, Guys, get it right. And he's so excited. But when they got it right, man, they were boiling excited about it.
- [22 : 39] They were fervent. They were zealous. They were careful. They were like, Man, we really want to serve God. Revival seems to have struck that town and that church.
- In verse 13, Paul is comforted, and the church is comforted. Verse 13, Therefore, we were comforted in your comfort, yea, and exceeding to the more joy we, for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you.
- Man, Titus got there. He was worried, and he was scared, that y'all were going to be mad, and you were going to still be hanging on to your sin, and following that legalist that you were following, fighting about all your gifts, and defending the guy who's sleeping with his daddy's wife.
- But Titus got there, and he was like, Man, Paul, you're not going to believe it. They're excited about Jesus. They've seen what they did wrong, and they've turned from it. Paul, they're doing right. Paul said in verse 14, I have boasted anything to him of you.
- He said, Man, I bragged to him about you, and I'm not embarrassed. I'm not ashamed. Everything I said was true, even our boasting. Paul was so excited to know that the church had realized their sin and gotten it right.
- [23 : 46] He was glad to know they still loved him. They had sinned and not disciplining sin, and also being divided over personalities, following legalistic stuff, destroying other brothers. But now they've gotten it right, and Paul is so proud, and so happy, and so comforted.
- And what comforts him most is, they figured it out, and they're comforted. And he ends the chapter with this right here. I believe in you. I love you, and I believe in you.
- Look at verse 15. And his inward affection is more abundant towards you, whilst he remembered the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him. I rejoice, therefore, that I have confidence in you in all things.

What Paul is so excited. He's so excited about the way they treated Titus. He's so excited about the way they got their lives right. He is so excited that it seems like they love him again. Paul is so excited, and Paul says, I believe in you.

And could I say this to you? I believe in you. I believe in you. But I must be honest. I've seen some of you grow coal. I've seen some of you lose the zeal.

[24 : 52] I've seen some of you draw back on the Lord. I'm not mad at you. I wouldn't hurt you. But the truth is, we need an old-fashioned repentant time of saying, man, I am going to be who I was made to be.

I was saved by the grace of God. I'm a born-again creation, a creature, newborn, new creature. Old things pass away. Behold, all things become new. It's not an excuse for sin.

It's a reason to serve the Lord, and it's a reasonable service. You used to be so much more on fire. The Holy Spirit's dealt with your heart today, and I believe in you.

I challenge you to let Paul say about you, let the pastor say about you, I am blessed with these people. Man, look at how they want to serve God.

Look at how their heart is. It's been affecting your marriage. It's been affecting your relationship with your children. It's been affecting a lot of things in your life, and you know that it's not me talking to you, because down in the deep heart of your life, the Holy Spirit's saying, this message was for you.

[26 : 04] 2 Corinthians chapter 7, Austin might be preaching it, but it's the Holy Spirit saying, this is for you. Would you humble yourself? Would you say, man, God, I am back where I used to be.

I'm back and going forward like never before. It's going to be real and passionate with me. I'm going to renew my love for Jesus. I'm going to step up and say it's real with me.

Please don't get satisfied. Please don't accept dead, passionate-less Christianity.

Please don't let the fire go out of your love for Jesus. I believe in you. I believe you will do what God's calling you to do. I challenge you to do that right now.

Father in heaven, I love you, and I thank you for the chance to share your word, and I pray that your name would be glorified and magnified. And I pray, God, that you'd deal with hearts this morning, that lives would be changed, and people would be drawn to you.

[27 : 05] I pray, God, for those that might not know you as their Savior, that they would get saved this day. And I pray for Christians, Lord, that might have grown cold, and allowed sin to creep in, and allowed sin to take advantage of them.

I pray, God, you'd help them today, to throw themselves on the altar, and tell you they love you again. I know you're not angry with them. I know you're not mad at them. But God, they don't have the comfort they had.

They don't have the peace they had. They know things aren't where they ought to be. And Holy Spirit, I know you're dealing with hearts. Encourage them to trust you, and to seek you, and to repent, and to come back to you.

Show your power, and I'll give you great honor, and great glory for all that you do. You have been listening to Austin Gardner, pastor of Vision Baptist Church.

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