

Angus Macdonald: 2 Corinthians 8:3

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Preacher: Guest Preacher

[0 : 0 0] Well, if we turn together to the chapter which we read in the second epistle to Apostle Paul to the Church of Corinth, we read chapter 7. Also on the sheet I mentioned 1 Corinthians chapter 8 verse 3, if any man love God the same as known of God, that's how it says in the authorised lesson, all my quotations will be from the authorised lesson. Well, the Apostle is writing to this church which he founded himself. The historian estimates about AD 52 on the second missionary journey to Corinth to Greece. When he left Athens he made for Corinth.

It's probably one of the wonders of the of the early church that a church should be planted in Corinth. But it's a reminder to us of the power of the Holy Spirit when it does convert a soul. Well, Corinth was known to be quite a city of much lawlessness and immorality. We tend to think that there are those who seem to be so immoral and so fallen in their nature that they are beyond redemption.

Which is in ascents denying the power of the Holy Spirit. For there are none righteous, no not one, for all of sin and come short of the glory of God as Romans chapter 3. And in the book of Acts chapter 18 when Paul went to Corinth, the Lord told him not to hold his peace in this city. For no one he says will be able to hurt you. For I have much people in this city. So wonderful promise for any preacher to go to a place and be told that you will be free from harm and I the Lord will be with you. And I also have many people in this city. A wonderful promise. And that's how the church was planted in Corinth. When this letter was written it is estimated to be 1854. About four years maybe 56 from Ephesus where

Paul spent three years he was 18 months at Corinth. Now this second epistle was written in order that he would sort of appease the situation because the first letter was written and there were problems. The church that was played with problems. All these problems are highlighted in two letters. Some say there was a third letter but we do not have any proof whatsoever. Nevertheless all these problems can exist in any church in any given age. But it is how we deal with the problem. That is always the problem in the church. That we cannot deal with problems the way it was dealt with as it set down in Holy Scripture.

And regardless of the problems of Corinth the marks of grace are still the same. The Gospel is not actually written for any particular age but for all ages. We might think in our age well our age is different. This is the age of technology and we've moved on. We progressed in all in so many things. We talk about the early church medieval years and these times of ignorance but now we've actually moved. Well we haven't moved that much because it's the same Gospel and the same marks of grace are required of us as much as it was required of them. Now I'd like to look at three marks of grace which you and I can ask ourselves do I fit into this pattern. We find in verse 9 until 11 speaks of Godly sorrow that work of repentant not to be repented off in this translation is not to be regretted. Godly sorrow. And then we see in the verse we read in verse 1st Corinthians 8 3 if any man love God the same as a known mark that word known by God and in verse 7 of number one here having these promises beloved let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh perfect in holiness in the fear of God. So we have Godly sorrow and we have love to God and we have holiness of soul. That was the mark that was required in the church at Corinth regardless of our problems and these same marks are still required of us. You see repentance into life as our

[6 : 58] Catholicism says it is not without faith and whether this faith is not without love and whether it's love it is not without holiness. So let's look at first of all at Godly sorrow. Well there can be no true religious life that is according to the marks of the New Testament church without Godly sorrow.

Without repentance when we speak of repentance the word originated first it's not actually a new vocabulary that was developed by the church it's an afterthought it's a second thought it is home of when the mind dwells on action that is done in the past something that has been done before and the mind thinks of that. Now our minds can be full of many things that causes us to regret and can cause remorse and can fill the mind with despair. All these things is common to every one of us. Things in the past when we reflect on the past that causes much sorrow and often pain because once a thing is done it remains done. As one put it when we pass through the stages of life and when we think of youth and we could say the sacredness of opportunity. Everything else can't come round twice and more like the seasons come round but youth we pass through once. And as

Osama says my sins and faults of youth do thou, O Lord, forget. They remain done friends and repentance reflects on what has been done. Godly sorrow, work of repentance. You see man's memory was once pure prior to his fall. But man has lost his purity. You could say that every one of us in here tonight is impure. Now I know that is sometimes an accusation that will not be taken lightly by some in our day and age. But we are impure people living in an impure world. And the conscience which has been

God's basin, the conscience highlights the impurities of our soul, reflects on the past. Now where the Lord's people are that is in the result of reflection on the past independence is Godly sorrow. Very important for us. That the sorrow of this world that says work of death. There are two different types of sorrow.

And it is Godly sorrow at work of grief. It is repentance unto life because you see Godly sorrow is towards God whereas the sorrow of this world turns on itself. There's no answer to it. But remorse and despair. And that terrible thing to be filled with remorse turn off of thing. How the psalmist put it, that they pains of hell is to cold of me. As if they gripped him. There was an iron grip of the pains of hell as he reflected on himself. It was actually crushing him. And that's what remorse does. It crushes. It stifles the very life out of the person. But you see Godly sorrow breaks. That's the difference between the two. One crushes where there is no escape. But the other breaks where there is and he's escaped. And he spoke to the church at Collins. He says, you sorrowed his history of repentance. And you were made sorry after a gauntly manner. He was so pleased with the result that he took his first letter seriously. And they had amended their ways. Because they were not dealing, they weren't actually discipline. Those who were falling into gross sin.

[13 : 11] Everything was was more or less acceptable in Collins. And that's what happens when a congregation drifts from the standard. And things become acceptable which were prior to that most unacceptable. So that inverse tenancies of sorrow of this work, that work of death. But you see where there's two gospel sorrow that leads to salvation. That's the difference between one and the other. It's a life-giving sorrow. And where there is repentance, there is often tears. It's not a bad thing to weep before God. If God convinces us that we have wronged him. It's a good thing. Because you see the bitter tears of repentance are sweetened by humility and by neatness. And by an awareness of God dealing with the soul. It's a wonderful grace, the grace of repentance. It's a word sadly which seems to have been lost in the vocabulary of the churches.

You just come and as long as you come you're alright. Well through repentance unto salvation is full of a humble melting spirit. That if a new creature emerges, there is a different person here that the Lord is dealing with. And it's not just repentance and sorrow for sin. It goes deeper than that friends. If we're just going to highlight the set acts of sin, the bad ones and maybe not for bad ones. And ask the Lord to forgive me for what I did here there and everywhere.

But you see it goes deeper than the act. It actually behind the act there is a perverse and renewed nature. That's the problem. Can I ever change its spots or an Ethiopian of colour? No more can a man change his nature. So this is the work of the spirit. And repentance goes to the heart of the problem. The puritans are a word for it. The sinfulness of sin. To be given a true insight of the true nature of sin. To recognise what sin really is. And as Dr. Lloyd Jones would say in his classic work on the Semen of the Mount, we will not begin to understand the doctrine of salvation until we understand the doctrine of sin. But what are we going to be saved from? A lot of most people around about us are as good as we are outside with regards to law-keeping. But there is a nature friend that has to be changed. There has to be a radical change. Because God has not dealt with us nor he wired us according to our inequities, according to his law. Because who could stand if those who'd smirk iniquity, oh Lord, who could stand? Who could stand before the the omnipotent eye of God that sets us into the very depths of our soul? So this is the gospel friend. It's the good news. It's wonderful news. It came to Corinth, comes to us. You see, repentance is not something that you can I sort of make. It's a gift of God. It is God himself that work is in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure. You might ask yourself, how can I repent?

How can I truly exercise God's sorrow? A sorrow that God will accept. Ask God. Ask him. Ask and thou shalt receive. Seek and you shall find. Knock, the door shall be open to you. If we consider the parable of the practical son, there you have a wonderful illustration of what repentance is. And the one who told us this parable spoke with such tenderness and such love. The Lord Jesus, the most beautiful part of the practical son, who left his father's house, told us, give me everything that belongs to me. I shall leave his house and do that he did.

He left his father's house. Now, when he realizes his desperate condition, the first thing we are told is he came to himself, certainly realized what he really was. That's what came into my life. Lord showed me my true self. This is what you are before me, not before your friends, but before me. So he came to himself and he realized what truly type of person he was.

[21 : 02] And he thought of the past, what he had left. And he wanted to retrace his steps and he said, I'll arise, he says, and go to my father. I'll go to where I left. And he made the effort. Now, till you make the effort, though remain as you are, you know there is a part in scripture there when we are told to take heaven by violence. Say just now you're desperate to, and you're in danger of your life and you know there is an opening there and there's a door like that, as if the door was shut. Would you not use violence to break through that door to escape the danger? The Lord reminds us to take heaven by violence as if we were doing, as we were gate crashing into heaven itself because it's my life that is at stake. And there we have this man with facing his step. He broke loose from his surroundings and the life that he lived. And he made his way to a much wronged father. He knew he had sinned because in his confession he says, I have sinned against heaven and against thee. What else could he say? He had nothing to plead other than that. I said I cannot give him before God and say, well I did this Lord, there are things in my life which I would really like you to take notice of, that it might become endable and you would deal more or less not harshly with me. But show kindness to me. No, no, calm as we are. As a prodigal. He came to a much wronged father as we come to a much wronged God.

So here we have a person who is humbled by his own sins. He comes with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And where Godly sorrow is, through Godly sorrow, there is a sense of unworthiness. I am not worthy, he says, to be called your son. We could say the same to God. I am unworthy, oh God, to be received into your holy place, to be seen as a son of your household. That is what accompanies Godly sorrow. There is a deep sense of revulsion against one's own sins and life.

You might think well not everyone is like that. Well we're talking about repentance. We're talking about a fallen nature. We're not talking about a nature that has made certain steps and that broken away and loosed itself from the fallenness and that has really made it halfway. It's either from darkness to light, from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God. So that repentance, true repentance brings a sense of unworthiness before a God that is holy in confession of sin. Because all sin, when you recognize the sinfulness of sin, is committed against a holy God as the psalmist says. So here we have confession and brokenness. In first John the apostle reminds us that we confess our sins. He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Now the word confess, we might think that confess is an act of a on earth part but the word confess actually means to agree with the conviction. Who convicts? Well the Lord says that when he shall come, that is the spirit, he shall convince the world of sin, righteousness and of judgment. When the spirit convicts you of sin and you confess that is you agreeing with the spirit, it's a wonderful thought friends, that the Lord who is to forgive you is the very Lord that is to convict you and in your confession you agree with God.

In repentance, in true repentance, the sinner agrees with God, yes Lord I am guilty. I'm guilty. I've got nothing to plead. Here I stand before you. My only please Lord have mercy upon my soul. That is Godly sorrow, that work of repentance not to be repented of or as we have read it here not to be regretted.

In the text we have in 1st Corinthians 8 3, if any man love God, the same is known of God. No one can truly repent without having awareness of God's love. It's a wonderful thing God's love John 3 16 for God so loved the world that he gave us only begotten Son that to whoever believe in him should not perish but have everlasting life. When the father saw him the prodigal coming back, he saw on the far away the prodigal is thinking up with his mind all the things he's going to say but the father saw him and ran to meet him and fell on his neck and kissed him. That friends is how the Lord receives all who truly repent. He falls on her neck and kisses us in his love. It's a wonderful wonderful thing to know that you are loved by God. For our text in 8 3 says that if anyone love God the same as known by God, known by God. So you see when we talk about true repentance affecting the soul, how much more can love, I'm sure everyone of us here at some time or another in our lives we fell in love with someone or we loved someone more than others and it affected us. But what of the love of God?

[29 : 15] Because when the prodigal returned and the father fell on his neck and kissed him. God's love is like a holy kiss. That's how the church where there is true brotherly love, we are actually required or commanded to greet each other with a holy kiss. That where brotherly love continues, Hebrews 13 1. There is no other name in scripture that unites the church together as the name Brethren. In Hebrews 3 1, where for it says holy Brethren, they are holy brethren set apart with God's love in their hearts. It's a wonderful thing to love but it's a more wonderful thing still to know that I am loved. You know the world is so full of hatred friends coming home to us every day the news media the carnage and the slaughter it's quite frightening. It's all lack of love for fellow man and to know the love of God the passive knowledge. The apostle in

Philippians 1 9 and this I pray that your love will abound more and more in knowledge and in all judgment that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Jesus Christ being filled with the fruits of righteousness. You see love is not something that is stagnant it's a growing grace it's not an idle grace it is full of life the love of God. He reminds us so often in scripture chosen in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before him in love in love. It is what makes the body the body of

Christ such a warm fellowship when the love is expressed one for another. It is what makes fellowship so pleasant and so sweet when God's people are full of his love. When there is a revival and the church is revived it is this grace that is given as it was in your life. It was a problem at Ephesus she says in Revelation that the love of many have walked cold. The apostle reminds us also in Timothy that there comes a day when the love of many shall walk cold. There's nothing worse than the coldness that one feels from someone. It penetrates your heart to feel a coldness. So here we have as well as repentance we have love.

Justice repentance is the work of God's grace so also it's love and the love of God is not just something that we can actually grasp. He reminds us in Romans 5.5 where the love of God has been pulled into your hearts by the Holy Spirit given unto you. Now if someone was to pour something into you surely you wouldn't remain unaffected. If someone was to plunge you into a bath of cold water would you not feel how wet you were? If someone is to plunge you into his love the love of God surely you couldn't remain unaffected. You would be aware of it. It's not it's not possible for anyone to be forced to love another.

You cannot force anyone to love someone else can you? And if someone told you oh I met so-and-so the other day and they told me how much you love them. They loved you. Well I was unaware of that. There is no return to love someone I have never met just because that person says so. But with this love as we have it in 1st Peter 1. Have he not sinned? Ye love. Though now he has not yet believing you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. One whom you have not sinned you love. Why? If any man of God the same as no one. This is a very word which is very an intimate word. God knows me. I know that God loves me not because someone else tells me or someone the new thing a new type of evangelism. God loves you.

[35 : 33] You're all right God loves you. Well I don't know really you tell me that. I haven't felt this love. I've never felt moved by that love. But you see the love of God poured into your heart and by the Holy Spirit moves you to love him in return. Not that we first loved God but that he loved us first. He is the initiator of this love. He moves to love me and you if you know the love of God in your own heart and you will express it and you will not be ashamed to own him or to mention him. And love gives cause to rejoice. We have a fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5. Whether it's love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and forbearance. These are the fruit of the Spirit.

Not just a fruit one here and one there but it's a cluster of one particular fruit on the one branch. The fruit in the singular of the Spirit. We experience God's love. When the Lord breaks my heart he doesn't crush it. He pulverizes the heart and fills it with his love. As he said to the church at Thessalonica, and I pray that the Lord directs your hearts into the love of God.

It's an incredible prayer. I said one was to lead you to the ocean of his love and you were plunged into the love of God. Who can understand that language? Well in a measure we have four tastes but one day friends we shall be swallowed up by his holy love. When we shall see him face to face. You see no one repents who is ignorant. No one can repent and love God and be ignorant of either repentance or his love. You cannot. I know that God works mysteriously. He can save the child in the womb and the child never see the light of day. Our confession of faith speaks of the Lord can work with those whose minds are not able to grasp. Who are not of what you might call a sane mind. He is our heavenly Father and he is able to work with those who cannot properly respond or understand. We'll leave it to God because God's love has been pulled into your hearts by the

Holy Spirit given unto you. So work with the Spirit without us having to make amends or anything. Our vessels are as empty vessels and he pulls it into the heart before we come to the next point.

It affects the fluids of the body. It doesn't take much for you and I to blush does it. In repentance if someone was to remind you of a past act the shame would color your face. What about God's love? That is the fluids of the body. The blood rushes to the cheeks.

[39 : 56] Where the love of God fills the soul it doesn't leave the body unaffected. The whole person is affected by God's love. Perhaps now everyone has experienced this. We should ask the Lord to affect every part of me with his holy love and then he exhorts us to holiness in 7.1 where for having these promises dearly beloved, dearly beloved, look at the language. Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Holiness. You may ask, what is holiness? It's a mark which comes where there is through repentance. Holiness for without holiness, no one shall see the Lord.

No one. Not even as we worship him. It'll be a dead worship. It'll just be words.

The letter but not the spirit. For God has not called us to impurity but he has called us into holiness and God directs your heart into the love of God. He reminds us in Thessalonians 3 that he may present us unblameably before him in love, in holiness and love. Chosen in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. To the end he may establish at heart unblameable in holiness before God at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his sins. These are all texts of scripture which reminds us of the state of the soul where there is true genuine condescension. That's the gospel. It reminds us in Hebrews 3, one we quoted, where for holy brethren partakers of his heavenly calling. Now to be a partaker of a heavenly calling is to be a partaker of a holy calling. He reminds us in Hebrews 6 a partaker of the

Holy Spirit. He reminds us in 12:10 that we are partaker of his holiness. In 12:14 Hebrews he reminds us to follow peace with all men and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. He reminds us in 2 Peter chapter 1 verse 4 having therefore these promises dearly beloved that we might be a partaker of his divine nature. All that is connected with the holiness of God and there is nothing that can fit a man for glory as does holiness. We might think that holiness is becoming a word which is obsolete, it's not required anymore but the church must rediscover this word, this one particular mark of grace which is so like God himself that without holiness no man shall see the Lord.

[44 : 28] Because it is written he says, when he says in 1 Peter, and be ye holy for I am holy, for it is written he says, and what is written cannot be erased, it remains written as is inscribed with an iron pen and nothing time cannot erase it or learning or knowledge it stands to the end of time. He reminds us to pursue holiness and to follow peace with all men which is not always possible. As much as liar then you he says live peaceably with all men and follow peace with all men but then he says without holiness no man he says shall see the Lord and that is what makes the church to differ from the world. The greatest distinction between the church and the world should be our holiness. Now there is a tendency to make the church more worldly in order that we may attract the world. Well the world will not be attracted to something that resembles itself because the world would rather have the pure world than an impure church. The distinction that should be seen in the church is that the world should see a place and a people which differ for if anything that the world needs it needs to escape from the world.

Where can it go friends? Unless the church of God offers it a refuge a place where it can escape to a place where they can come and recognize that God is.

There was a practice in the early church or not that in the early church itself but they called them a divils where a deacon would come and stand before the congregation. During the administration of the Lord's supper and he would speak to the congregation as they wave the cup and the bread holy things to holy men.

It's a narrow way friends as one could it there's only room for two a holy God and a holy soul straight as the wave and narrow as the gate. So there we are friends just a few thoughts to encourage us to make us set your own hearts and to remind us of the joy of the Lord. You know Christianity is a most joyful religion. It's a wonderful religion. It's a religion that plugs man from the burning like a brand. Just remain seated to short prayer.