

TALK 7 – Randall Lawton

2 Corinthians 7:1-16

Introductory Principle: Temple and the Worship of God

- Saved from sin, saved to worship God.
- ‘One holy, catholic and apostolic church’ (Nicene Creed)

1. The “Apostolic” Necessity of the Church

1.1 Genuine faith is always tied to love of the apostles (real people!)

- ‘make room for us...you are in our hearts to live and die together’... ‘you are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections’ (vv2-3; 6:11-13).
- Titus’ news: they passed the test! They accepted and refreshed the apostolic delegate (vv6-7,13). Submission to authority is a sure sign of genuine faith.
- This is pastoral ministry; real flesh and blood relating!

1.2 Genuine faith is always tied to obedience to the apostles (real authority!)

- ‘his affection for you is even greater as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling’ (v15).
- The apostles set the delineation markers for the church. *Some prideful behaviours with duplicity are not permissible in the corporate fellowship of church* (6: 14; see 1 Cor 5-6 esp. 5:11): sexual immorality, idolatry, adultery, active and passive homosexuality, thieving, greed, drunkenness, revellers, swindlers, disunifiers and gossipers (1 Cor 6:9-10; 2 Cor 12:20-21; Titus 3:10-11).
- Today’s individualism and the rejection of authority are destroying the church. Individualism is in fact the result of “humanistic group think” that the only cultural authority today is the self. This is often generated by a sense of being victimised, the result of being counted in “an oppressed minority group”.

2. The Church as a Sanctified and Sanctifying Community: “Holy...church”

2.1 The Church as a Holy Temple Delineates it from the World System:

- The church is God’s holy temple, his family (6:16-18; 1 Cor 3:16-17). ‘I am the Lord who sanctifies you’ (Lev 20:8; 1 Cor 6:11; 1:30; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:2), thus ‘let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit bringing holiness to completion in the fear of the Lord’ (7:1).
- The matter of holiness has to do with church order and the gathering for divine service, the worship of God. The church is instructed by our holy Father so that we may approach him in a fitting way, in a way that honours him as God and brings him glory.

2.2 Proud and Notorious Sin must be Judged

- Sinners are indeed received by God through faith (grace), but to let in the demonic and false worship (6:15-16), to celebrate and normalise associated immoral behaviour, is to put the church under God's judgment (1 Cor 5; 6:9-10; 3:16-17; 10:6-11; 11:31-32). 'If we judge ourselves truly, we would not be judged' (1 Cor 11:31 cf., 6:1-3).
- The church is to execute justice but only within its ranks, not in the world (1 Cor 5:12). The pain of discipline is never easy for godly leaders (v8 cf., 2:1-4). Pastorally, God's glory along with repentance and salvation are always the goal (vv1,10; 1 Cor 5:5; 11:32). Ultimately, all outcomes are in God's hands (2 Cor 1:24; 13:5).
- Compare with the today's justice movements of neo-Marxist identity groups, where brutal justice is the end point, not suffering love (see 1 Cor 6:7-8)!

3. Repentance is Required, not Remorse.

3.1 Grace is Holy Grace

- Grace should not be understood as being gratuitous: the willy-nilly dispensing of favour no matter what. Those outside of faith all are under wrath (John 3:36; Rom 1:18-32).
- In the church, the law and 'rod' of fatherly discipline is to drive people back to grace, for salvation or renewal (2 Cor 2:15; 2:1-Gal 3:24; 1 Cor 4:14-21).
- The question for us today is: do we see the apostolic boundary markers and follow their principles of discipline? Do we discipline our children in our homes?

3.2 True Repentance is not Remorse

- Repentance is the ability to change from hostility of mind towards God (see Rom 8:7; Col 1:21) to being humble and obedient. It is a gift of God (Rom 2:4; Acts 3:26; 5:21; 26:17-20; Ezek 36:26) and we are empowered in the gift itself to reciprocate it. We must willingly and freely repent under discipline: 'godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret' (v10). One of the tests of faith, whether we are actually in the faith, is genuine repentance. A person of good conscience under the word of God will respond.
- Remorse is when we are sad at being "found out", but there is no real change of heart, change of mind. That person does not return to the love of others and the worship of God.