



The Grapevine
Travels and News
from Transitional Conference Leader George O'Reilly
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pastorgeorgeoreilly@gmail.com

The need for radical self-honesty

During a pastors' event with teaching by Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove the topic of truth was raised. A paraphrase of his response might run something like this: "A deep need exists in the church today for radical self-honesty. So often in the church today when we speak to one another what we say is not exactly lies, but often something other than the truth."

While pondering this thought, I recalled these words from John 8: 31-32 (NJB): "To the Jews who believed in him Jesus said: If you make my word your home you will indeed be my disciples; you will come to know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

In a quite remarkable response even these "believing" Jews displayed resistance to any notion that they need to be set free by the "Truth of Jesus." From their point of view, being the descendants of Abraham, they expressed surprise that they needed any "setting free." They had the right pedigree, knew the law, and were slaves to no one.

This response seems to demonstrate a particular kind of failure in "truth telling" — a profound self-absorption which thwarts a perceptive self-honesty.

For the listeners in Jesus' time this failure in self-honesty seems tied to an outward focus rather than an inward one. And as Jesus declares that his truth will set them free, his focus is on the inner slavery of sin.

I wonder how often we too lapse into such an outward focus related to any self-assessment. Our problems are "out there," in "our surroundings," from "our circumstances," and so on. The truth of Jesus which can penetrate to our inner person and release us from slavery to sin is primarily about ourselves and our relationship to our Master.

Obviously becoming new creatures in Christ by the work of the Spirit at our initial embrace of Jesus as our Savior and Lord is the first great work of this exodus from slavery. But in our daily discipleship, could we also tend to lapse into only looking outward for the truth?

Perhaps we at times slip back into the slavery of sin by simple self-absorption and a failure in self-honesty. In thinking about the quote above, which intuitively strikes me as accurate, I wonder if our first failure in speaking the truth to one another isn't first of all a failure in speaking the truth to ourselves — a profound failure in self-honesty which might well leave us enslaved to the sin of self-deception.

For me these thoughts provoke a desire, when I feel bound in some way, to turn first of all inward and ask myself, just how willing am I to speak "radical self-honesty" about who I am in that bondage.

May we all experience deeply the radical freedom of the truth of Jesus each and every day!

