



Love, Obedience and the Holy Spirit

There were two next door neighbours. One neighbour goes away on holiday and asks the other neighbour to look after their house and garden. They go round to the house and do the garden, taking their dog with them. After a few minutes the dog comes running to the owners with a rabbit in its mouth. They catch the dog, retrieve the rabbit and find that it's dead and slightly chewed! They just can't believe it. They think 'Oh, no, what shall we do?' They brush the rabbit and get the hairdryer and try to do its hair and dry it and then put it back in its rabbit hutch. The neighbours who were on holiday return the day after and they ask their friends, 'did anything unusual happen in our garden while we were away?' The others reply, 'No, why do you ask?' 'Well, it's ever so strange but our rabbit died the day before we left for our holiday and we buried it...!'

Three friends die in a car crash, and go to an orientation meeting in heaven. During this orientation, they are all asked, 'When you are in your coffin and friends and family are mourning you, what would you like to hear them say about you?' The first man says, 'I would like to hear them say that I was a great doctor of my time and a great family man.' The second says, 'I would like to hear that I was a wonderful husband and school teacher who made a huge difference to the children of tomorrow.' The last replies, 'I would like to hear them say, "Look, he's moving!"'

What I want to do this morning is to look at John 14 verses 15 – 22.

There are three things that come out of this passage. These being:

- ✚ The Response to Love
- ✚ The Representative of Jesus
- ✚ The Result of Obedience

Let us remember the occasion when Jesus spoke these words. This is the last evening before his trial and crucifixion. Judas has hurried out to betray Jesus. Now Jesus speaks to his disciples. The NIV translation entitles this section, 'Jesus comforts His disciples'. Jesus knows what is facing him the next day. So now he encourages his disciples and starts to share with them.

At the beginning of this section he says:

"If you love me, you will obey what I command". John 14:15 NIV

Notice what it doesn't say. It doesn't say obey what I command you and I will love you. The problem for some of us is that when we were children, we learnt a different message from our parents. We were taught that if we were good and obeyed them, then they loved us; but if we were naughty and disobedient they didn't love us. In fact some parents may actually say to their children, 'mummy doesn't love you when you are a naughty boy'. Then we become Christians and come to church. It is so easy to bring this belief into our Christian lives. We believe that God will only love us if we are good. If we come to church, if we read



our Bibles, if we pray or if we give financially to our church, then God loves and accepts us. But if we neglect our Christian life, then God won't love us or accept us.

But right at the heart of the Christian message or Gospel, that is good news, is that:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him". John 3:16 - 17 NIV

It doesn't say when the world was being obedient to God, that he loved them. No sent his Son to save a sinful and disobedient world. Paul makes this clear when he writes:

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Rom 5:6 - 8 NIV

This puts the lie to all this earning of God's love. While we were still sinners, Christ dies for us. It also says Christ died for the ungodly.

God still loves us, even if we are not good. Even if we have been disobedient, he still loves us, with an unconditional love.

But, what Jesus is saying here is that if we love God then this should result in our obedience to him. Our faith in Christ, and our love for him, should result in changed lives.

James writing to the early church says:

What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. James 2:14 - 17 NIV

James is reinforcing this, if we love Jesus, if we say we have faith in him, and then our lives should show this. Notice that Jesus says, 'you will obey what I command'. In fact I only know of one commandment that Jesus actually gave his followers, when he said:

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:34 - 35 NIV



The church has been described as the only army that stabs itself in the back. So often in churches there is gossip and back biting. We can hurt each other so much with what we say, often behind each others backs.

Jesus says that we should love each other in such a deep way that people around us will know that we are different, because we love Jesus.

Let me give you an example of this. When we were first in Chelmsford, and our children were small our gas fire backed up. We didn't have any central heating then, and this gas fire in winter was our only form of heat downstairs. We didn't have enough money to buy a new gas fire. We asked in our church if any one knew where we could get a second hand gas fire. Some friends of ours in the church gave us the money to buy a brand new gas fire. Even though we now have central heating, I still look at the gas fire that we do occasionally use and I am reminded of the love shown by these Christian friends. That was their love of Jesus being shown in being obedient to Jesus in showing love, as given his new commandment to love each other.

So we have looked at the **Response to Love**, which is obedience to his commands. Now secondly let us look at the **Representative of Jesus**.

Jesus then says:

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever the Spirit of truth. John 14:16 - 17 NIV

Bibles vary in how they translate the word that in this translation is given as counsellor. The NT Greek word is **parakletos**. It has various meanings but one of the main ones is: **one who pleads another's cause**. That's why other translations will use the word advocate. But notice Jesus says the Father will give them another counsellor. So who was the first counsellor? No other than Jesus himself.

An advocate speaks on behalf of someone else. Jesus spoke on behalf of his heavenly Father. Jesus said he only taught what the Father showed him to teach; he only revealed what the Father revealed to him first. Remember, Jesus said to his disciples:

Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. John 14:9 NIV

So Jesus represented the Father to the disciples. When Jesus went back to the Father he would ask the Father to give the Holy Spirit, i.e. the counsellor or advocate, to them. The Holy Spirit would represent Jesus. He would make Jesus real to them; he would remind them of all that Jesus had said when he was with them. He makes this very clear later in this passage when he says:



“All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you”. John 14:25 - 26 NIV

We need to remember that at Pentecost the Father and Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit on the church for all time. We need the Holy Spirit as much as those early disciples did. For the Holy Spirit will make Jesus real to us. The Spirit will make the Bible come alive to us, as we read it. The Spirit will help us to pray to God, particularly when we don't know what to say. It is the Spirit that will produce **the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.** (Galatians 5:22)

We all need the Holy Spirit in our lives. I would also say that in these difficult times for many of us as churches, we need the Holy Spirit more than every before.

Some one once said, if we removed the Holy Spirit from our church would there be any difference. It is so easy for the leaders, the elders, the deacons or committees, what ever form of church government we have to keep on making decisions, with out the Spirit's guidance. Oh, how we need the Holy Spirit afresh. We should be crying out each of us individually and as churches, **'pour out your Holy Spirit on us, today'**.

Perhaps some of us are frightened of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps some of us haven't seen the need we have for the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Let me urge all of us individually and as a church to pray for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Remember the words of that old chorus, in fact number 308 in 'Rejoice & Sing' that says:

**Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.
Melt me! Mould me! Fill me! Use me!
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.**

So we have seen the **Response to Love** is obedience, and that the Holy Spirit the advocate or counsellor is the **Representative of Jesus**. Let us thirdly look at the **Result of Obedience**.

Notice that whilst Jesus doesn't say that God will love us if we are obedient, he does imply in that first verse that the result of our obedience is that Jesus will ask the Father to give us the Holy Spirit. Let's just remind ourselves of that verse again:

“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever the Spirit of truth”.

John 14: 15 – 17 NIV

So the result of our obedience is that the Jesus will ask the Father to give us the Holy Spirit. Whilst God's love for us does not depend on our obedience, being filled with the Spirit does.



Jesus said to his disciples, on one occasion:

“Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

Luke 11:12 - 13 NIV

This demands the obedience of actually asking if we are going to receive. And Jesus makes it clear that if we who are not perfect know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more will a gracious and loving God; give the Holy Spirit to those that ask.

I remember quite some years ago now, I prayed to God to give me the Holy Spirit, I even asked for a sign that he would do it. I asked that it would rain all next day from the moment I got up to the moment I went to bed. Every time I looked out the window next day it was raining. At times it wasn't much, but I could still see a few rain drops in the puddles. And when I finally was about to go to bed it was still raining. It shook me this sign that I had asked for being fulfilled. And sure enough a few days later God filled me with his Holy Spirit.

But it was the Victorian evangelist D.L. Moody who when asked why he prayed each day to be filled with the Holy Spirit, said because I leak. All of can so easily get spiritually dry. God doesn't seem very close and Jesus doesn't seem very real to us. It is then that we need to ask for a fresh outpouring of the Spirit upon us.

We need to remember that we need to be obedient to receive the Holy Spirit. If we are clearly disobedient to God, then I don't believe we will receive him. God will still love us, even if we are far from him in disobedience. But the condition of receiving the Holy Spirit is to show our love for Jesus by being obedient in the way we follow him. Are our lives reflecting our obedience to Jesus particularly his command to love each other in the church in the same way he loves us? For if we are not being obedient, I don't believe God will pour out his Spirit upon us.

Is that why the church today in this country doesn't seem to see much of the Spirit being poured out. Remember Jesus said that when the Spirit came upon him, the poor heard good news, those who were captivities or prisoners received freedom and the those who were blind received their sight.“

How the people around us need to hear good news. Many of them are bound up and are not really free, they need to hear the message of release and freedom. Many of them are totally blind to the truth about God and his love revealed in Jesus.

If we are going to be able to take this good news to them and see freedom and truth come to them we individually and as a church need to be obedient to God and to receive the Holy Spirit afresh and in a new way.



So we have seen today from this passage. The Response to Love which is obedience, the Representative of Jesus who is the Holy Spirit and that the Result of Obedience is that we can receive His Spirit. I pray that we will enter into these things today.