

A PANDEMIC OF DISOBEDIENCE?

In the beginning everything God had created was good. He created man and woman, put them in charge of his creation and gave them freewill. It would seem their first act was to disobey God's implicit instruction!

So, what is disobedience? It may be a definite decision to go against rules or instructions, as did Adam and Eve, or possibly just not following a set of guidelines or rules such as going faster than the speed limit. Disobedience might be an individual response, or a social or cultural trend adopted by many.

At our 'Walk through the bible' event last February we were reminded of a cycle of behaviour which recurred through the Bible. Disobedience followed by disaster, disaster followed by repentance and repentance followed by restoration. Then complacency sets in and disobedience begins again.

Individual disobedience can have consequences for the individual and for the community to which they belong. In the Bible we can read that Joshua's campaign to take Israel into the promised land ended abruptly due to the sin of one man, Achan. He kept for himself some of the spoils of war strictly forbidden by God. Only after he owned up or repented, did God allow Joshua's campaign further success. Sadly not a good result for Achan.

Later in the life of Israel they were ruled by a variety of kings. Some were good and followed God's ways but many followed other gods and unrighteous acts encouraging the nation to follow. This corporate disobedience led to national disaster. Israel was over-run and its people taken into captivity in Babylon. While in captivity the Israelites recognised their sin. The psalmist writes 'by the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept' and later in the same psalm 'How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land'. Their repentance was recognised by God and 70 years later the Israelites were released back to their land and Jerusalem and the temple were rebuilt. Restoration was complete.

Looking at the world today, I wonder how many cultures or societies are following ways guided by God's law as lived out by Jesus Christ. We can see dictators and oppression of personal freedoms, vast gaps between rich and poor, a blame culture that requires a scapegoat for any apparent failures or mistakes, a society that demands its rights and a society that has a very divergent view of gender issues. I am sure there are many other areas whereby God's rules are being misinterpreted or 'disobeyed'. Perhaps this then leads to our current disaster, a global pandemic, as

Jesus predicted “there will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places” (Luke 21 v 11). However, there is Light at the end of this tunnel. Perhaps repentance takes the form of a great outpouring of compassion, of loving our neighbour shown by many local community support groups. Perhaps by companies and countries working together to find answers to combat the new disease.

There might, at the end of all of this, be the hope of restoration, a hope for a re-assessment of the values of belonging to the human society. Perhaps the mantra ‘love your neighbour’ will become a global phenomenon when nations will trust nations and truly work for the good of mankind never mind the local neighbours. We can hope and pray for God’s kingdom to become a reality in life for all.

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