

## Tested - by Obedience

Isaiah 55<sup>1-9</sup>; Psalm 63<sup>1-9</sup>; 1 Corinthians 10<sup>1-13</sup>; Luke 13<sup>1-9</sup>

*Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake their way and the unrighteous their thoughts. Isaiah 55<sup>6-7</sup>*

Who likes doing what they are told?

At the heart of being tested by obedience is the struggle to accept that God is God and that we, as his people, need to do what we are told!

Along side that we struggle with comparing ourselves with other people so that, whilst we accept that we aren't perfect, there are always people worse than us than we can build our self confidence by comparing ourselves to 'bad' people.

As we take responsibility for our spiritual development during this Lent, there are three areas from our readings that we may need to be more obedient in:

### ✠ Obedient Thinking

We aren't told the group with whom Jesus is speaking in Luke's Gospel, but it rings true of the response of the occupying forces in 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine to any threat - they would not have distinguished between potential terrorists or honest worshippers coming to the Temple to worship and sacrifice. The image of the blood of worshippers mingled with the blood of the animals they sacrifice is a very powerful one and has certain resonance in our contemporary world.

What is at the art of the question was the suggestion that God may respond to specific sin with a specific punishment and that there are certain sins that are more worthy of God's immediate response than others.

Jesus response is effectively to say that our responsibility is to take our own **repentance** seriously while we can. The parable of the fig tree suggests that the opportunity to demonstrate spiritual growth may not be here for ever.

Obedient thinking accepts both God's verdict and God's grace.

### ✠ Obedient Living

The promise of God to his people is straightforward: **no testing has you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide**

**the way out so that you may be able to endure it.**

The point that Paul is making is that the Hebrew pilgrims all had the same opportunities - they were on the same pilgrimage **they were all baptised into Moses...; all ate the same spiritual food; all drank the same spiritual drink** but that some chose the path of disobedience. God responds to that choice made by the people.

The two real temptations were the same as face so many - of **idolatry** and of **sexual immorality**. The Devil knows that these two areas are where we are most likely to yield - of worshipping anything other than God and of giving in to our baser instincts.

Obedient living consists of saying yes to God and no to ourselves!

### ✠ Obedient Faith

It is Isaiah who invites us to risk faith - God extends credit to those who ask it: **you thank have no money, come buy and eat! Come buy wine and milk without money and without price.**

It was God who made David to great leader, despite David's efforts to destroy himself. It was because **the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel has glorified you.**

We began with Jesus refuting any link between punishment and specific sin and now we have to refute any specific link between positive actions and rewards. God takes the initiative here and says **my thoughts are not your thoughts** and then **for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways.**

Our obedience is tested in accepting faith as a gift rather than a right or something we have earned.

I am reminded of the story of the child who struggled out of their car seat and was standing up and the parent had to stop and the battle ensued until the child sat down and as they moved off defiantly stated, 'but I am standing up on the inside!'

Would that this were not true of so many Christians.