

The Dominant Personality

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[0 : 00] You will know that since April, the beginning of April, I've been talking about the Holy Spirit. Next week, you're having a speaker who Lisa introduced to you.

There's one other thing I'd like to say about him that may not have occurred to you. That is that he is a sinner saved by grace. I just thought I'd add that as a footnote.

I love that verse that says, you know, that this is a true saying, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

And the trouble is, when you get into the ministry, you tend to think that that no longer applies. So I just thought I'd mention that, and I'm sure he won't be offended.

But the passage that we have today is, it's a very gluey passage. You just can't get in and out of it.

[1 : 17] Once you're in, you're stuck, and you can never get out. I mean, it's like walking through glue to try and work your way through this. Because everything is contingent upon everything else, and every statement it makes, it goes on and interweaves it with another statement.

And by the time you've finished even looking at a short section of this, Jesus talking to his disciples before his death, it's extremely difficult.

But it is also extremely rewarding. And so what I want to do is just give you a few things to stand on, and I hope that, in fact, it does sort of trap you in it, and that you have a hard time working your way out of it.

Part of the reason, I think, is that it's all fairly abstract. There's no pictures of women at wells or men who are blind or somebody having water being changed into wine.

None of those kind of narrative stories. It's a very kind of abstract thing. I think, and of course, in our society, we are an extremely, we talk in these terms all the time.

[2 : 29] And the difficulty is when we write it out, we write it so nobody will understand it. This, in fact, was written so you would understand. And so you can look at it and see what it says.

Just look at the text itself for the moment. Let me just remind you, because I really... You remember that this is fire, and this is wind, and this is communication.

I won't tell you what that is. Just think of it as communication. And that when we first looked at the pictures of the Holy Spirit, these three things were, in a sense, to characterize the work of the Holy Spirit.

That there was communication between people. Remember, they heard each other speak in a language that they understood. Good. And I think that one of the key things about the gospel of Jesus Christ is that you are meant to understand it.

You're not meant to not understand it. The key problem with people like me getting up here is that I'm so anxious to impress you with how much I know, that unless I demonstrate that I know way more than you do, then I fail.

[3 : 58] And the fact is, I know way less than you do. But we're both looking at the passage in the Bible, and we're all meant to understand it.

And it's likely that your understanding of it is important. So there is communication. There is wind, which is the demonstration of power, that we don't know where it comes from or where it goes to, but it's there.

And there's fire, which is purging and cleansing. So that these are the three characteristics. Then I talk to you about the story of the personal kind of communion and fellowship with the Holy Spirit that you get in that lovely story from Genesis about the servant of Abraham who went back to get a wife for Isaac.

And it's a beautiful picture of personal communion with God through prayer and worship and taking all the circumstances of your life and praying them through as they happen.

And then I talk to you about the, I think, I'm not sure what it was. It was the Genesis story, you know, the Spirit of God moving on the face of the waters, like the dove flying and bringing order into chaos.

[5 : 19] And that this is the function of the Holy Spirit. That's what the Holy Spirit does in our lives together. That's what the Holy Spirit does for us. That's what the Holy Spirit did in creation. That's what the Holy Spirit continues to do.

It's that kind of thing. Then I talked to you last week about who you is and who you ain't. And remember that I tried to show you that there is a wisdom which was hidden from before the foundation of the earth in God's purpose towards us in Christ, which was fulfilled by his death on the cross.

So that at the very point where man comes under the ultimate condemnation of God, God reveals his love and his forgiveness.

And coming into that point. So that this week what I want to talk to you about is this passage. And this is Jesus talking about himself and the Holy Spirit.

And he says this. Look at it there. If you love me, you will obey what I command. Now, just to spend a little time there.

[6 : 27] What that means, and I think it's very, very important, is that you obey because you love. You don't love because you obey.

And, of course, that's where marriage got into trouble. When I first started in the ministry, the prayer book said the wife had to say to love, honor, and obey.

And, of course, women revolted at that. And quite understandably so. But, you see, the interesting thing is that the New Testament doesn't tell you to obey until you have learned to love.

And love, obedience is simply an expression of love. It's not so that most people talk about mutual submission, and that's probably a better idea.

But it's interesting that if you love, then you obey. Now, there's a further point here, and this is how I mean it.

[7 : 33] Everything goes deeper and deeper and deeper. You could spend the whole time on this one verse. But the further point is that, and William Temple translates it this way, if you love me, you will observe what I command.

Now, what is meant by that is that, you see, Christian faith is extremely frustrating because everybody who is even slightly religious is consumed with the problem of, what do I do?

And if you can tell people what to do, they will do the most impossible things, and they will keep on doing them forever. And they think that that's what it's meant to be.

That's what it's meant to be. So if you can make a few little rules for people and say that's what you do if you're a Christian. And we judge what Christians are by what they do.

But this specifically does not say that. It says, if you love me, you will set up before you as a standard by which you believe the things which I command.

[8 : 58] So that you live in the light of things which Christ commanded. You don't live simply in obedience to rules and regulations.

And that's, you live out of a relationship. I mean, it's the same problem that you get in a home where the husband has to put out the garbage.

And the whole thing gets messed up because for a while he's happy to put out the garbage because he loves her. But then love grows cool and she knows that if he puts out the garbage, then he's doing what he ought to do.

And not, you know, in other words, instead of loving her and putting out the garbage, he's putting out the garbage to try and make it look like he still loves her. And you see, you get messed up.

Fortunately, the garbage goes out. But what lies behind it is something entirely different. And Jesus, in these words, is trying to tell you that.

[10 : 09] That in your relationship to me, it's love first and then obedience. It's observing what I put before you, living in the light of that, being what that suggests to you or what you observe of that, living in the light of it that is important.

I mean, it's very hard for people to get hold of this because, I mean, our religious obsession is to do things and then to look back over our life and see what we have done.

And let me tell you that one of the things that happens to you when you get to be as old as I am is you forget most of the things you've done and so you lie. to try and bolster your spirit.

But that wasn't what you were supposed to do in the first place. So Jesus says, if you love me, you will obey what I command. Now, I feel I fail to tell you that and I'm going to try and tell you again. But you already know and so you're going to be very impatient with me for telling you again what you already know. But the point is that you primarily live out of relationship to Jesus.

[11 : 47] You love him, you keep his commandments. And that's an expression of your response of love to the person of Jesus Christ.

Do you want to know something else about this verse that makes it fairly weighty? That almost the whole of the New Testament tells you to love God. And this tells you the words of Jesus, if you love me.

Now, how do you handle that? What does that mean? What does it mean when you are commanded to love God? And how does that relate to the sentence when Jesus says, love me? Is there a contradiction or is there a profound coming together of something there? And you're left to figure that out. So you can take that as an assignment.

If you love me, Jesus says, you will obey what I command. Now, it's very interesting. I got, I was reading the Jerusalem Bible.

[12 : 58] Now, I don't know why they do this. But in the Jerusalem Bible it says, if you love me and keep my commandments, I will ask the Father and he will send you a comforter.

Now, you may not think that's particularly significant, but I thought that was very profound indeed. Because this says, if you love me, you will obey what I command. And that says, if you love me and do what I command, then I will ask the Father and he will send you the Spirit.

And you see, it's that classical problem that goes right through the whole of the New Testament as to whether you do it in order that God will reward you for it or whether God does it for you whether or not you do it.

Do you follow me? It's a fascinating kind of thing. And that's why these words, you're caught, because, I mean, they're not irresponsible translators that translate it that way.

But how do you interpret it? How do you understand it? If you love me, you will obey what I command you. If you love me and obey what I command you, I will ask the Father.

[14 : 22] And so Jesus goes on to say in verse 16, I will ask the Father and he will give you another counselor. Now, when you get to this word counselor, you have, in a sense, the heart of, it's a funny word, which I'll put up here for you because you probably all know it, but it turns up in hymns sometimes, paraclete.

And one of the best reasons for translating a paraclete is that nobody knows what that means. And nobody really knows what this means either.

But they make a whole lot of attempts to come close by, as you know, they study other documents and they see other contemporary usages and they see other languages and they try and work out where this word came from and how it was used by John and what it means.

And so when you start to expand on it, then you get all sorts of things. You get, I will send you a counselor. If you go back to John Wycliffe, I will send you a comforter.

If you're talking to a lawyer, he will say, I will send you an advocate. Another says, I will send you a teacher. Another says, I will send you a policeman.

[15 : 49] Another says, I will send you a strengthener. Now, it's not your responsibility to choose between all these names. I think it's your responsibility to recognize that it probably means at least all those things and to try and put them all together as the work and ministry of that which Jesus will speak to the Father to send to you.

That he will teach you. That he will be a policeman in the sense that he will convict the world of sin. That he will be a policeman in the sense that he will bear witness through the disciples when they are on trial.

He is a comforter in that he is, and that means strengthener really, but that he brings strength. Remember, I've used that illustration before, but it's such a lovely one of the king here on his horse, which is here, and he has his lance, which is here, and his troops are lined up in front of him like this, and he's coming behind them with the spear to prod them into battle.

And this is an ancient tapestry somewhere in England, and the title of this picture is, The King Comforts His Troops. So that's, makes them strong, you know, gets them into the battle.

So it's a word with a lot of meaning to it. So that he is the teacher, he is the counselor, he is the comforter, he is the policeman, he does all these things.

[17 : 38] Now that's, and then you see, having told you that word, which is almost an unfathomable definition of, I mean, you can't get to the bottom of all that that word means, then do you see what he does the very next thing?

He says, he is the spirit of truth. truth. And, uh, now you see, he has, Jesus has, in these words, joined in with the whole world of philosophy, the whole of human knowledge, the whole of human experience, because truth is a kind of abstract noun which defines reality.

reality. And, uh, it's, uh, it's, uh, you know, that that's what the Holy Spirit does, that he brings you into an encounter with reality.

Now, you will find in the city in which you live that you can talk about truth and everybody will understand what you mean. But when you say truth ultimately leads you to the person of Jesus Christ, they will say, wait a minute.

But you see, it's because from John's perspective, you couldn't separate truth from the person of Jesus Christ. Our society knows how to separate them.

[19 : 15] Philosophers know how to separate them. We endlessly talk about reality. reality, which we call truth. And, uh, but we never, we never take the, uh, we never take that any further.

Uh, he, uh, and it's very important because what it seems to suggest is that the reason I believe in Jesus Christ is I believe he is the truth.

But what our culture wants us to say is Christians believe in Jesus Christ, whether he's the truth or not, you know, you're free to believe if you want because it's all relative.

But Christians are committed to the idea that the ultimate manifestation of the nature of reality is the God who was revealed himself in the person of Jesus Christ.

And that's where we get into trouble when you say that Christians are the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. the Holy Spirit is the spirit of truth.

[20 : 23] Listen to this statement just be, because it apparently was written by Coleridge and he said, he who begins, now listen to this carefully, by loving Christianity better than truth will proceed by loving his own sect or church better than Christianity.

and in the end, loving himself better than all. So you see what he's saying here is there is a kind of objective reality to the truth and that truth reveals itself in Jesus Christ.

And you can make the mistake, he says, of thinking that instead of truth being manifested in Jesus Christ, you get caught with in the problem of saying that truth is other than Jesus Christ.

It doesn't include. And the reason that we believe as Christians in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, that God became flesh and dwelt among us in the person of Jesus Christ, the reason we believe that God has spoken to us in Jesus Christ is we believe that he is the ultimate focus of truth. And that anybody who is interested in the truth will ultimately be led into a confrontation with Jesus Christ.

[22 : 04] God is a big statement I think and I don't know what you do with it or how you live with it but what our world has done with it is to suggest that there is truth and then there is religion and that there's no basic connection between them.

But Jesus is saying here that at the very heart of this is the truth which is revealed in Jesus Christ. So he says I will send you another counselor this counselor will be with you forever.

Jesus was here within the sort of paragraph as it were of time and space which was his life his incarnation into the world but this counselor will be with you forever and it says about him that the world cannot accept him because it neither sees him nor knows him but you know him or he lives with you and will be in you.

Now this is this what this means or what it seems to be telling us is that Jesus who is departing from them will leave his holy spirit with them see that and the grammarians and the people who who look at that when it says I will send you another counselor that there is me and then there is the other counselor but he says that's not you're you're misinterpreting it because when Jesus says I will send you another counselor he's saying along with me I will be present to you and this counselor will be present to you and I will be present to you through the ministry of this counselor so you're not separating them out now what what it what it goes on to say then is that

I will not that the world can't accept him I will not leave you as orphans I will come to you before long the world will not see me anymore but you will see me well I need to quit but but you see what how he gets you in the glue there he said if you love me you will keep my commandments and I will send you another comforter and he will be with you and the world cannot see him but you will see

him and he will be with you that's what it says doesn't it about the paraclete and then you see how he messes you up in the next line Jesus himself says I won't leave you I will come to you so he's not suggesting that there is going to be a separation and then if you read the story on you find not only does it say that Jesus that the Holy Spirit will come to be with us that

[25 : 21] Jesus says himself I will be with you but then if you carry on in this same chapter do you know what else it says it's the Father and I will come and make our dwelling place with you you see this is why we have to turn to the doctrine of Trinity because you can't get them apart you can't say that the Holy Spirit is with us but the Son is or the Father is with us but the Holy Spirit and you just can't do it you're you're stuck there and he and he leaves you in that position when he says on that day you will realize that I am in my father you are in me I am in you whosoever has my command and obeys them he is the one who loves me he who loves me will be loved by my father and I will love him and show myself to him and we will come and make our dwelling place with him so this is what I mean by the dominant personality that in the fellowship of people where we are all seeking to be dominant where an ideology tends to become dominant we are given by

Jesus the spirit of truth which says that he himself will be dominant among us dominant means is the word we use for Lord that he will be Lord and that what our business is as those who are believers is in relating to one another with difficult stubborn arrogant personalities that we are there is to be a dominant person and that is the person of Christ who has promised to come with us and to be with us and we are to submit to him and we are to love him and we are to obey him and to know his presence and that's what we're invited to in the fellowship of the kingdom fellowship of Christ's people let me pray father father we thank you for the unfathomable depths of your word we thank you for the amazing sort of teaching that Jesus gives his disciples about the person and presence of the holy spirit we thank you that in some way that confounds the all of human philosophy you describe yourself as coming in the holy spirit and that this is the spirit of truth our God give us huge minds and huge hearts and huge compassion and love for you and for the fact that you are to be lord in our lives you are to be the dominant one in our personal lives and in our lives together thank you for this in Jesus name amen