

## **BEFORE GOD LOVE MEANS OBEDIENCE!**

**Today's Text: Jn 14: 12- 31**

### **Extracts:**

*“If you love Me, keep My commandments. ...He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” ...Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, “Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?” Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me” [Jn 14: 15-24].*

*Gul Karacoban is a 25-year old teacher in Ercis, a town of 100,000 people in Eastern Turkey.<sup>1</sup> On Sunday, 23 October 2011, she went for lunch with two colleagues at a restaurant. Just then, an earthquake of the magnitude of 7.2 struck, killing at least 239 people that day. Her fiancé, air force Lieutenant Onur Ervasar, was 100 kilometres away at his base when he heard the news. He rushed to Ercis and found out from her friends and colleagues that Karacoban was at lunch when it happened. He found the restaurant in the dark and shouted her name. Voices responded from under the debris. With help, after 18 hours of digging, Karacoban was pulled out alive from under the debris and rushed to the hospital. Her delighted fiancé told reporters, “I don’t care if she is injured or not. I just want her to live.”*

*Karacoban’s fiancé did not care about his own safety. He saw the crisis from her perspective. It was all about her, not about him. Karacoban would surely want to be alive and that was all that mattered to her fiancé. That is the definition of love! It has little or nothing to do with infatuation or romantic expressions. It has to do with seeing things from the perspective of the object of your affection. That is why the opposite of love is selfishness! So, how does God see your love for Him? In this week’s Bible text, Jesus told His disciples that those who claim to love Him or His Father must keep His commandments. That means that from God’s perspective, love means obedience. Do you indeed love God? Let us find out from this week’s challenging study.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Story based on Umit Bektas, “Fiance’s love saves Turkish woman buried by quake, “<http://news.yahoo.com/fiances-love-saves-turkish-woman-buried-quake-112827176.html> ; Mon., 24 Oct. 2011

## 1. Background: Love is a relationship, not a feeling!

I have very well-known ideas about love which I have used repeatedly in writing and speeches, especially at wedding ceremonies. For example, you do not need love to make love; otherwise, prostitutes will be out of business. You do not need love to make babies; otherwise, animals will be barren! Love is about relationships, not feelings. Therefore, love is a serious matter. That is why our Lord, Jesus, has spent time on it in many of His discourses.

A lawyer once asked Him a question, testing Him, “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?” Jesus replied him, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” [Matt. 22: 35-40]. In this week’s Bible text, Jesus expounds to us the real meaning of the love of God. How can we love Him with all our heart, soul and mind? The answer is simple and clear: through total obedience, for whoever claims to love God must keep His commandments [Jn 14: 15, 21, 23]. On one occasion, Jesus asked His listeners, “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?” [Lk 6: 46]. Therefore, the love of God has little to do with how you worship Him but much more with how you obey Him for “to obey is better than sacrifice” [1 Sam. 15: 22]. Love is a relationship, not a feeling! Therefore, we all need to pay attention to how to love God and Jesus has laid it out as follows:

### a) *Components of the love of God*

If love of God means obedience, then ***you have obeyed only when you have heard and done what God requires you to do***. Jesus made that point in several places in today’s Bible text. “If you love Me, ***keep*** My commandments” [Jn 14: 15]. “***He who has*** My commandments ***and keeps*** them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father” [v. 21]. “If anyone loves Me, he will ***keep*** My word, and My Father will love him” [v. 23]. Therefore, ***it is not enough to hear the word; you must also keep it***.

To illustrate this point, Jesus once told the parable of a man with two sons. He asked the older one to go and work in his vineyard that day. He refused but later regretted his answer and went. The second son said to his father, “I go, sir,” but he did not go. Jesus asked His listeners which of those two sons truly obeyed his father. They told him it was the first son and He agreed with them [Matt. 21: 28-32]. Therefore, until you act, you have not obeyed. Unfortunately, we tend to equate the “good news” of the Gospel with only goodies. We only obey when there are promised blessings, not sacrifices. You can do better than that! After all, is it not the whole duty of man on earth to fear God and to keep His commandments [Eccl. 12: 13]?

b) *Reward for loving God*

God does not ask from you what He cannot reward because He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him [**Heb. 11: 6**]. For example, if you obey His word to pay your tithes and offerings, what He gives back to you is only limited by the size of the vessel you present to receive His blessings[**Mal. 3: 10**]! If you love God by hearing and keeping His word or commandments, here are some of the rewards Jesus has promised you:

- Answered Prayers

Jesus promised His followers, “Whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it” [**Jn 14: 13-14**]. That promise is meant only for those who love God, that is, those who obey Him. For example, when Herod the king seized Peter and put him in prison, hoping to kill him after the Passover, many believers gathered in the house of Mary the mother of John Mark “praying.” In response to their prayers, God sent an angel who set Peter free from jail [**Acts 12: 1-12**].

On the other hand, when the children of Israel faced sword, famine and pestilence, the prophet Jeremiah prayed for them, saying, “O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do it for Your name’s sake; for our backslidings are many. We have sinned against You.” God replied him, “Do not pray for their good. When they fast, I will not hear; and when they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I will not accept them. But I will consume them by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence” [**Jer. 14:1-12**]. Therefore, answered prayers are one assurance to you that you love God and He knows it!

- Indwelt by the Holy Spirit

Jesus added that if you love Him and keep His commandments, He will pray the Father who will give you another Helper, the Holy Spirit who will dwell with you and abide with you forever [**Jn 14: 13-17**]. Your body becomes the temple of the living God and you shall become His child and He will become your Father [**2 Cor. 6: 16-18**]. Even though you still walk in flesh, you no longer war according to the flesh. The weapons of your spiritual warfare now become mighty in God and you are now in a strong position to pull down strongholds and cast down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, thus now able to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ [**2 Cor. 10: 3-5**]. Is that not a wonderful privilege?

- Loved by the Father

Jesus said, “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him” [Jn 14: 21]. Remember that no one can come to Jesus unless it has been granted to him by His Father [Jn 6: 65]. Yet, no one has seen God at any time but Jesus who is in the bosom of the Father has declared Him [Jn 1: 18]. Is there any contradiction here? No, for as Jesus explained to Philip, one of the twelve apostles, he who has seen Jesus has seen the Father [Jn 14: 7-9]. God so loved you that He gave His only begotten Son to die for your sins [Jn 3: 16]. Once you accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour and He introduces you to His Father for adoption, His Father has reciprocally granted you the privilege to come to Jesus as His brother or sister! Wow!

- Friend of Jesus

God called Abraham “My friend” [Is. 41: 8]. God had imputed righteousness to Abraham because he believed, that is, he did all that God had commanded him [Gen. 15: 6]. In like manner, when you do all that Jesus has commanded you to do, you become His friend. Jesus told His disciples on one occasion, “You are My friends if you do whatever I command you” [Jn 15: 14].

As the friend of Jesus, He will never leave you orphans [Jn 14: 18]. He will stick closer to you than a brother [Prov. 18: 24]. He will never leave you nor forsake you [Heb. 13:5]. All that it takes is for you to keep His commandments.

- Gift of peace

Jesus also assured His listeners, “Peace I leave you. My peace I give you, not as the world gives do I give you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” [Jn 14: 27]. The world can only give you peace by conquest, not by conviction. That is why it is transient. But the peace of God surpasses human understanding [Phil. 4: 7]. His thoughts toward those who obey and fear Him are thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give them a future and a hope [Jer. 29: 11]. That also becomes your portion of God’s gift of peace when you obey Him.

We can conclude that, from God’s perspective, love means obedience. Straight and simple! Once you obey whatever He commands you to do, He will boast of you to Satan as He did of Job when He said, “Have you considered My servant Job, that there is *none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one*

*who fears God and shuns evil?” [Job 1: 8]. Can God speak of you like that right now?*

## 2. Where are you on the Love of God scale?

Where do you currently stand on God’s scale of love? Assess yourself!

### a) *Still stiff-necked?*

Some of us are still living in a fool’s paradise, pretending that God does not exist or that they have all the time in the world to play sinful games until they reach the point of evil-fatigue! In his Second Epistle to Timothy, Paul spoke of perilous men in perilous times that we now seem to be experiencing. It is a time when people become lovers of self, money and pleasures rather than lovers of God [2 Tim. 3: 1-7]. Hundreds of years earlier, God spoke to the prophet Jeremiah about such people, “I will bring on this city and on all her towns all the doom that I have pronounced against it, because they have stiffened their necks that they might not hear My words” [Jer. 19: 15].

If you find yourself in that situation, think again because you cannot repent after you are dead. Do not be deceived by the hedonistic ‘gospel’ of this age. You cannot have it your way with God. It is either His narrow road of obedience to salvation or an expressway of stiff-neckedness to hell [Matt. 7: 13-14].

### b) *Still a hypocrite?*

Some of us have made a public show of their faith in God by going regularly to church, paying their tithes and serving in all the key committees of their congregations. They even carry the high titles of their denominations as anointed men and women of God. However, when you scratch beyond the surface, their minds and hearts are as evil as hell. Such people are called hypocrites. They honour God with their lips but their hearts are far from Him, and their fear toward God is taught by the doctrines of men [Is. 29: 13].

Jesus always condemned the conduct of the Scribes and Pharisees who told others what to do and yet they did not do. They were fond of occupying the most prominent seats in the synagogues, and loved to be called by men, “Rabbi.” Therefore, He warned His disciples against such people who “outwardly appear righteous to men but inside ...are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness” [Matt. 23: 1-7, 27-28]. Do not be deceived for God cannot be mocked. As you sow, so you shall reap [Gal. 6: 7]. Sooner than later, your hypocrisy will bring you out and destroy your carefully cultivated public image. Come out of your closet. Come clean and let God

declare you righteous. That can only come if you openly confess your sins and return to the love of God in your heart and ways.

c) *Or finally there!*

Some of us have tried everything and failed. They have finally come to the realization that surrendering to the will of God is the best way to go. For example, after Jonah had bought a one-way ticket to the land that God never sent him to, he was brought to reality on a three-day submarine journey in the belly of a great fish that God had mercifully provided. After the fish had vomitted Jonah ashore in Israel, God said to him a second time, “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.” We are told, “So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord” [**Jon. 1: 1-3, 17; 3: 1-3**]. Certainly, you do not need that kind of hook to your jaw before you return to a love relationship with God!

God is merciful and will forgive you your sins whenever you confess them [**1 Jn 1: 7-9**]. But every sin of disobedience, forgiven or not confessed, leaves a permanent scare or a lingering damage [**2 Sam. 12: 1-14**]. Do you want to be permanently crippled spiritually before you turn around to love God? The choice is yours.

### **3. Conclusion: It’s time to act!**

God is patient because eternity does not run by the wrist watch! Nevertheless, He cannot wait for you forever because your days on earth are short. Everybody will not go to heaven. Yet, God does not want anyone to perish but that all should come to repentance [**2 Pet. 3:9**]. So, take advantage of His amnesty! Get into a full and perfect relationship with Him and His only begotten Son, Jesus the Christ. It is time for you to act.

With God, love means obedience. Anything else is unfruitful religion.