

## **The Son of God**

By Roelf L. Ruffner

“As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father” (John 10:15-18).

There are many verses in God’s word, the Holy Bible, which should initiate a response from us. That is why it is the inspired, infallible, inerrant word of the living God (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). This response is more than just the wonder and amazement we feel at witnessing a beautiful sunset or the deep empathy we experience while hearing a story of self-sacrifice. Neither is it just the intellectual gratification at glimpsing the magnificence of God’s creation of the universe or the sense of completeness of God’s Scheme of Redemption. No, this passage and others go beyond all that. They demand a response from the hearer, an awakening to duty by the reader.

We must not forget the context of Jesus’ statement in John 10. The Lord had earlier in the day healed a man born blind (John 9); never before happening in human history. This miracle was denied by the hypocritical Jewish elders who demanded the man denounce Jesus as a Sabbath-breaker. After a bruising battle of logic with this illiterate man, the elders throw him out of the council chambers. Jesus finds the man, revealing to him who He is – the Son of God. Then all comes together for this man and he utters these words of obedient Biblical faith, “Lord, I believe. And He worshipped him” (John 9:38).

Surrounded by these venerable men of the Law, perhaps in the courtyard of the Temple, Jesus exposes them as the spiritually blind religious monsters they were. He then shows them by allegory how they are but religious thieves, robbers and hirelings disguised as shepherds of God’s sheep – Christ’s disciples. They had rejected the “shepherd” and “door” to the sheepfold – the Messiah. And they offered no protection for the sheep from the wolf at the door – Satan (1 Peter 5:8).

Then Jesus cracks the door to the spiritual world a bit and reveals to them and us the Father and the Son's divine plan for the Redemption of man. Jesus shows that the Father's plan for His sheep is that the Son is to voluntarily give His life for the sheep. Any good shepherd would do this. But God's plan was for "other sheep" to be included in that fold, not just Jesus' Jewish disciples but His future Gentile disciples. Most of the Gentiles had completely rejected God and the spiritual light provided them. "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened" (Rom.1:21). In spite of that utter rejection Jesus was to die for their sins as well and provide them the same way of salvation as the Jews – the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 10:34,35).

In spite of the wickedness of both Jew and Gentile, Jesus died for all that all might have that opportunity to be saved. All this Jesus did voluntarily (Verse 18). The Father did not make Him do this. He did it of His own free will. This shows us the magnificence of Jesus' love. It is a true definition of "agape" or Christian love. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16). "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). This love also manifests itself in the Father's love of Jesus (Verse 17); a remarkable statement of divine communion (John 10:30). Jesus' sacrifice was in loving obedience to God's plan (John 3:16). That plan of Redemption is all bound up in love. The Father loves me – the Son loves me and the Father – the Father loves the Son for obeying Him – and we love the Father and the Son by obeying the gospel (cf. Heb. 5:8,9).

But this unequalled, profound love demands something from me. If the Father loved me so much that He provided a way for me to be saved from my sins; what about me? If the Son loved the Father and me so much that He willingly offered Himself as the sacrifice for my sins; what about me?

My friends, profound gratitude for all this should produce not only obedience to God's Plan of Salvation but faithfulness, commitment and dedication to the Cause of Christ. Where is my gratitude? Where is your gratitude? Where is the gratitude of many Christians? "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).