

Jesus – The Greatest Act of Love !

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” John 15:13

The greatest act of love that mankind has ever known took place in Jerusalem almost 2,000 years ago when Jesus willingly went to the cross to pay for all of mankind’s sins. It is also the most misunderstood and taken for granted act of love the world has ever known. None of us can truly comprehend what was done at Calvary back then, even though we try to with our finite minds. The best way to try to understand what Jesus really did for all of us would be to repeat a story we once read by Dr. R. G. Lee, former long time pastor of a large church in Memphis, Tennessee. We hope that after reading this touching story, you will have a greater understanding and love for what the Lord did for us all.

A century ago in a backwater village deep in the mountains of Virginia, there was a community school consisting of a single room. Students of all grades attended the school, mostly the children of mining or logging families. The older boys, raised to survive the hard life of the mountains, were tough and mean-spirited. No teacher at the school had lasted more than two months—some only a few days—because these boys took great pride in their ability to run off every teacher daring or naïve enough to take the job.

After yet another teacher had left, a young man fresh out of teachers’ college applied for the job. The moment he walked into the office for an interview, the director took pity on him. He did not want this young, green teacher to face impossible odds and end his first teaching assignment in discouragement. “I frankly advise you not to take this job,” said the director. “You have no idea what you’ll be up against. We’ve never had a teacher last more than two months—not even the most experienced. You will likely take an awful beating because you are so young.” “I do appreciate the warning, sir,” replied the teacher, “but I need the job, and I’m willing to take the risk.” The director sighed deeply and hired him.

The next morning, the young teacher sat at his desk watching the students as they came into the classroom. Several of the boys gathered at the back before they took their seats. It was clear to the teacher that their leader was the biggest and obviously the oldest boy. Big Tom, they called him: the bully of the class. The boys were talking in low tones among themselves, looking often toward the teacher. Finally, Big Tom said – deliberately loud enough for the teacher to overhear—“I don’t need no help on this one. When I get done with him, he won’t dare set foot in this classroom again.”

When all the students were seated, the teacher rose and said, “Good morning. I’m Mr. Wilson, your new teacher. I can’t teach without order, and we can’t have order without rules. So I want you to help me make the rules. Tell me what rules you think we ought to have, and I will list them on the blackboard. “

The class had never been asked to participate in establishing order, and Big Tom didn’t know what to make of it. He decided to wait and see how it all came out before he put the screws on the new teacher. “No stealin’,” called out a student. Mr. Wilson wrote the rule on the board. “No bein’ late,” cried another. “No lyin’,” rang out a third voice.

The students began to get into the swing of things, and soon Mr. Wilson had ten rules on the board. “This looks like a good set of rules,” he said. “They are your own rules, so do all of you agree to them?” Sure, we agree to them, the class replied, snickering and looking slyly at one another. “Okay, continued Mr. Wilson, Rules can’t be enforced without penalties for breaking them. What penalty should we impose if a rule is broken?” Big Tom spoke up: “Whoever breaks a rule gets ten licks across his bare back.” Making a tough rule bolstered his contentious reputation.

Mr. Wilson thought the penalty was too severe. “Does everyone agree to this penalty?” he asked. No one dared counter Big Tom, and since the teacher had put the rule-making process into the students’ hands, he felt he had to let the penalty stand. “Very well. Ten licks it will be.” Big Tom’s involvement in the process made him feel big enough that he didn’t bother Mr. Wilson that day. Class resumed the next morning and went smoothly until the noon bell was about to ring. Big Tom’s voice boomed out, “Somebody stole my lunch!” Keep your seats, class,” said the teacher. “No one eats until we find out who stole Tom’s lunch.” He questioned each member of the class, one by one, and all denied committing the theft. But finally, a little ten-year-old boy wearing a worn-out coat wailed “I done it. It was me. I was so hungry I couldn’t help myself. I’m sorry!”

Mr. Wilson’s heart sank. “Jimmy, you know the rule. I have to give you ten licks across the back. Take off your coat.” “Oh, teacher, please!” Jimmy begged. Do whatever you got to do, but don’t make me take off my coat.” But the teacher was firm, and the boy slowly began to unbutton his coat as tears streamed down his cheeks. He was wearing no shirt. There was nothing on his thin upper body but the suspenders holding up his pants.

Mr. Wilson faced a hard dilemma. (He thought) *How can I possibly whip this poor child? But if I don’t, I will forever lose control of this class.* He stalled and asked, “Jimmy, why didn’t you wear a shirt today? It’s ‘cause Mom’s been real poor since Dad got killed in the mine. I only got one shirt. On washday Mom washes it, and I have to wear my

brother's coat. I'll get my shirt back tomorrow." It was all Mr. Wilson could do to make himself pick up the paddle. He turned Jimmy's scrawny back to him, lifted the paddle, and hesitated, working up the courage to administer the punishment.

Suddenly Big Tom jumped up and cried, "Don't do it, Mr. Wilson. I wanna take Jimmy's lickin' for him." He walked quickly to the front of the classroom, stripping off his shirt as he went.

The teacher nodded, handed Jimmy his coat, and stood Big Tom in his place. As he administered the strokes, he realized that every child in the room was crying—little Jimmy most of all. Suddenly the boy ran to Big Tom, threw his thin arms around his neck and clung to him.

"Oh Tom," Jimmy cried, "I'm so sorry I stole your lunch. I hate that I done this to you. But I want you to know that I'll love you till my dyin' day for taking the lickin I should've got." The hearts of those hardened boys were broken forever. Big Tom had become little Jimmy's saviour.

This story is a picture of what Jesus really did for us undeserving sinners. All of us have sinned, and we deserve the prescribed punishment, which in our case, is death (Romans 6:23). But as Pastor Gary Hedrick, of Messianic Perspectives, said on one of his daily radio broadcasts:

Justice – is when you get what you deserve.

Mercy – is when you don't get what you deserve.

Grace – is what you get when you don't deserve it because someone else paid the price.

And that's exactly what Jesus did when the Father sent His only begotten Son to die on an old rugged cross (John 3:16). And as we said before, that was the greatest act of love the world has ever known. He suffered, He died, He was buried, but three days later, He rose from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:3-4) – Hallelujah!

The Bible says in Matthew 22:37 "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*" And quite frankly, we are all guilty of not doing this, and quite frankly, the Lord, the creator of the universe, deserves this and much, much more.

This Study was written as an exhortation to give the Lord what He rightfully deserves and so seldomly gets. All of our praise, all of our worship, and all of our love (Psalm 150:6). And, whether we give it or not, the time is going to come when, "*at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*" (Philippians 2:10 – 11).

And, for those who are not saved yet, what a wonderful gift He has in store for you, if you are willing to take it. If you are willing to admit you are a sinner (Romans 3:23), and are willing to repent and turn from your sins (Acts 2:38), and are willing to ask Jesus to come into your heart (Ephesians 3:17), and receive Him as Lord and Saviour of your life (John 1:12), you will be Born Again (John 3:3). And the time to take advantage of that gift that Jesus paid for with His sinless, spotless, precious, Holy blood (1Peter 1:19) is rapidly running out. So do it today (2 Corinthians 6:2) while there is still time, because it is getting darker and darker with each passing day.

Amen

(All scripture references taken from the King James Bible)

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