

Title: I Lay it Down of Myself

Text: John 10: 17-18

Date: December 26, 2021

Place: SGBC, New Jersey

John 10: 14: I am the good shepherd, and know my *sheep*, and am known of mine. 15: As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep....

Each sinner God saves must be made perfect to be accepted of holy God. We must have perfect obedience to the Father to be accepted of God. It means we must have loved God and our neighbor perfectly. We must have no sin. How can this be for Christ's sheep?

Christ said, "*I lay down my life for the sheep.*"

John 10: 17: Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. 18: 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.

Proposition: Our Lord Jesus Christ declares that his death on the cross was voluntary, willing obedience to his Father's commandment—for which his Father loves him—he laid down his life and he took it up again—it was by his own will and power that he laid it down and that he arose from the dead.

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Divisions: 1) The Father's Commandment; 2) Christ's Obedience 3) The Father's Love

THE FATHER'S COMMANDMENT

John 10: 18:...This commandment have I received of my Father.

The commandment God gave to the Son in eternity was to become the GodMan—the Servant of God—to serve God as a Man, representing his brethren. The commandment was to love God and his brethren by laying down his life for his elect to declare the righteousness of God.

What is required? Christ summed up the requirement of God's law given at Sinai—this is what is required.

Mark 12: 30: thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment. 31: And the second *is* like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

Not one of us—by our own best effort—ever loved perfectly and none shall. That is why God sent his Son. Christ coming from heaven above to this earth declares that Christ alone is the righteousness God has provided by which his people are made perfect and accepted of God.

Only in the perfection of Christ's obedience and love is the perfection of God's righteousness manifest—it is only in the love of God manifest by Christ willful obedience unto the death of the cross in place of his sinful people that we are righteous and accepted of God.

1 John 4:9: In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

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

This commandment Christ received of his Father in eternity. It is the law of mediation between God and his people that was in his heart.

CHRIST'S OBEDIENCE

John 10: 18: 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.

We behold perfect righteous love in Christ's obedience.

It was willing obedience. The Lord Jesus Christ laid down his life voluntarily—"No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself." No man took Christ's life. They could not even touch him until the hour appointed. Christ laid down his life himself—it was his willful, uncoerced, loving obedience to his Father. In Christ alone do we behold the perfect will—the perfect love—the perfect obedience that God requires toward God and men—this is the love of the law.

Hebrews 10:5: Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: 6: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. 7: Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God....

Animals could not willfully die: they were not morally, lawfully, acting of their own will in obedience to God or in love. Christ *willingly* laid down his life for his people—in perfect love for God and his people—he willingly obeyed God—that is how all God's elect are made perfect. He had to love God and his brethren without any sin—in perfection—think of this:

Isaiah 53: 7: He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

Out of the heart the mouth speaks. Sinners smote him on the cheek, plucked out the hair of his beard, mocked him and spit upon him, nailed him to a cross and mocked him more. The sheep he was laying down his life for had the same hatred in our hearts by nature as those who smote him.

Yet, he opened not his mouth because he had not even a glimmer of sin *in his heart* toward those who smote him—not one sinful thought toward them. He loved God his Father with perfect love with no sin and he loved his brethren with no sin.

If we were smitten on the face—do you reckon we would sin? What if our neighbors house burned down—would you give him the keys to yours? What if their child were sentenced to life in prison—would we give our only son instead? Would there not be some thought in our heart, "I am glad it was not mine?"

Does God's law demand love that perfect? God's law demands perfect love—perfect love to God and perfect love to our neighbor. Christ is the only one who did it!

God only looked to Christ—Christ is the One Man—on behalf of all his people—fulfilling perfect willing obedience in perfect love to God and his neighbor—the fulfillment of the law of God. The shameful treatment from men was not even the weightiest part—he bore the shame of our sin and the wrath of God against it—it was a sorrowful, painful death like none shall ever be.

Lamentations 1:13: From above hath he sent fire into my bones, and it prevaieth against them: he hath spread a net for my feet, he hath turned me back: he hath made me desolate and faint all the day. 14: The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand: they are wreathed, and come up upon my neck: he hath made my strength to fall, the Lord hath delivered me into their hands, from whom I am not able to rise up."

Christ's obedience unto the death of the cross was a complete surrender of *self-will* to the will of his Father. It was Christ's will in perfect harmony with the will of his Father.

John 14: 30: Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. 31: But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.

Christ love in laying down his life is the perfect oneness of God's will with the will of Man. His is the perfect holy love that made holy God and his people one. In Christ our Head, in his righteous love, God accepts us as having loved God and our neighbor perfectly. And he put away our sin forever.

Hebrews 10: 10: By the which WILL we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once [for all]...14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

This is why Christ's ministers say, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal 6:14). This is why every believers in heaven and earth give him all the glory saying, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins" (1 Jn 4:10).

Christ laid down his life that he might take it again. He said, "*I lay down my life, that I might take it again. I have power [authority] to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.*"

No man ever gave up the ghost of his own authority; Christ is the only one. No man ever took up his lifeless body and gave it life again; Christ is the only one. This was to show he is not only Man but the Son of God with power. He is Lord of the dead and the living.

Romans 1: 3: Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; 4: And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

Romans 14:9: For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

This Man, Christ Jesus is God, Lord over all. Proof is he raised himself from the grave! Scripture says God the Father raised him. God the Holy Spirit raised him. But the fact he as the Son of God raised himself declares he is one with God the Father and God the Son. It declares the Man, Christ Jesus, is the Son of God with power.

THE FATHER'S LOVE

John 10: 17: Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life.

As God, God the Father and Son are one in love. But this speaks of him as the Mediator, Christ Jesus—the Head and representative of his people. He is the only one who can say that he of himself *merited* the love of the Father.

God is pleased with Christ Jesus—they are one in perfect love. He justified God—declaring him just and Justifier. He justified his people from our sins. His blood put away our sins forever. His blood blotted out the sins of his people so God remembers them no more. His blood redeemed us from sin, death and hell. His blood made us one with holy God, accepted in the Beloved! It pleased God. Christ satisfied God's holy justice when God bruised him in place of his people. Therein we see the love of God toward his people, in God's perfect love of Christ our Head.

Being pleased with his Son, the Father has given Christ everything! He pleased the Lord—made satisfaction to God's law—the pleasure of the LORD has prospered in the hand of his Son. He has seen the travail of his soul and is satisfied. By his knowledge his righteous servant has justified many because he willingly "hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors."

Philippians 2: 9: Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:...

John 3:35: The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.

John 17:2: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

Isaiah 53: 12: Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong;

Christ's yoke is light and easy to each one born of his Spirit because he simply commands us to believe on him—and to love one another. And through faith God imputes the righteousness of Christ to us—God declares we have loved God and our brethren with perfect righteous love. The Father's love and approval of Christ is his love and approval of his people—this is why Christ said,

John 10: 9: I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

Believe on the Lord Jesus—his obedience shall be imputed to you. This is the love of Christ for his people that constrains us—the power that makes us willing. When the Spirit of God turns us to behold Christ's love for his people—for each one in particular—this is the power of God that makes us willing to believe on him. This is power of his love by which he chastens us, humbles us, correct us, strengthen us, and keeps us walking by faith unto the end. This is how he increases love in our hearts for him and for one another. He makes us behold his love more and thus he grows us in love to him and one another more.

Amen!