

John 10: 15-18; “I Have Power to Take It Up”, an Easter Sunday Sermon
delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on April 17th, 2022,
in the Morning Worship Service.

The main truth that is given to us here in these verses is the Father’s love for His Son. But as our Lord Jesus relates this wonderful truth, He does so using words which should convince us that He Himself is no mere man. I have power to lay my life down, and I have power to take it up. After hearing this, we must draw the conclusion that He is God made manifest in the flesh. For no mere man has the power to actually do all that Jesus asserts that He will do, here in these verses. Knowing that it was the Father’s Love which sent the Son into the world, to lay down His life for our sins, I want to give you 3 statements which will open up the truth of His Love in a greater way to you.

It is the power and glory of this love which is the basis of our whole salvation. 1st of all – There is an eternal, unchangeable, and knowing Love, which exists between the Father and the Son. (verse 15) 2nd – There is an infinitely great Love which the Father has for the Son because the Son laid down His life for the sheep. (verse 15b, 16, and 17, and 18a) And 3rd – There is an incomprehensively great Love which the Father has for us because the Lord Jesus took His life up again. (verse 18b)

I want to encourage your faith with this truth of the Father’s great love for His Son, because it was and is the reason that we are so greatly loved, even while we were yet sinners. And it is the reason why we are, even now, being transformed to be His saints. Behold, what manner of love the Father has given unto us, that we should be called the sons of God.

1st of all – There is an eternal, unchangeable, and knowing Love, which has always existed between the Father and the Son.

Verse 15 says – “As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.” Take notice, my beloved brethren, that according to these words the Father and the Son have always known each other in all the details of their thoughts, as Persons of the Divine Trinity. Our Lord Jesus, it says here, received a command from His Father. The way that our Lord words this shows that the Father’s command was always in their mind from all eternity. We should understand that there was, in eternity past, in the council of redemption, an eternal command came from the God the Father, the 1st Person of the Divine Trinity, to the God the Son, the 2nd Person of the Divine Trinity. This command anticipated Christ’s earthly ministry. It was a command of purpose.

It was not a command in the sense of subordinationism; that the Son was to become a lesser God than the Father, or that the Son in His Essence needed to place Himself under the Father’s explicit commands, as God. But rather, this command of the Father’s was a command flowing out of an eternally shared and reciprocal love between their Persons. It was that The Father who had begotten His Son would, in the fullness of time, send His Son to become a Man among men. And He would send Him, and He would give Him, out of this great love which He had to sum up all things in Him, rather than in man whom He would create for Himself.

Yes, He had a love for fallen elect sinners, but He had this love in relation to seeing them in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And so the Son would become Incarnate. And because the Father had commanded this; He agreed out of Love for His Father, that He would lay down His life for those chosen by the Father, in order that they would be saved. Jesus is saying here, that because the Father loved Him, the Son, with an eternal and unchanging love, that the salvation of sinners, and the making of them into saints, would all flow out of this love. It was out of this love that the

Son was begotten of the Father in eternity past. And therefore, the purpose of the begetting of the Son was the display of the Father's eternal and unchanging love for Him. It says in John chapter 1, verse 18, - "No one has seen God at any time." "The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. Yes, it is true that the Son declared the Father in His righteousness and His glory when He became Incarnate and lived His life before men. And we see this especially when He took up His earthly ministry and the apostles beheld His glory, glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

But let us always remember that when He came and did these things that He was also declaring the Father's love for Himself; the love which they had always shared together. In John 17: 22, Jesus said - "And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent me, and have loved them as You have loved Me." Ah, there it is, the love of the Father for the Son must be known to all men from Christ's own lips. And what is our Lord's greatest desire, then, as He gets ready to go to the cross?

John 17: 24 - "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world." "O righteous Father!" "The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me." "And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them." So the Father and the Son together purposed that the Son would become flesh and dwell among us. And the apostles beheld this glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father.

The Father had always loved the Son, and the Son had always loved the Father, with this unchangeable and knowing love. And the Father commanded the Son in eternity past to go into the world to show forth His love for undeserving sinners. Can God command God? Well, no, it is not possible, because as Persons of the Godhead, they are equals in their shared substance and essence. And, as Persons, they share all things in their Purpose and Perspective in everything concerning the creation of the world and the redemption of men. So the command in eternity past was anticipatory of what would take place in the Incarnation, in the actual human obedience of the Son to the Father, to serve Him, and to give His life as a ransom for many.

This command that was issued in eternity was obeyed by the Divine Son in His willingness to become a Man and to fulfill the Father's purpose to have a people for His own possession. The command was given by the Father out of His great love for His Son. And this commandment was entirely obeyed by the Lord Jesus when He willingly became Incarnate; that He might become, as the God-Man, the only Mediator between God and men. It was in this righteous and holy way that the Son would have the power to lay down His life, and that He would have power to take it up again.

2nd - There is an infinitely great Love which the Father has for the Son because the Son laid down His life for the sheep. (verses 15b, 16, and 17, and 18a)

"As the Father knows Me, even so I know 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 will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd." "Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again." "No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself." So building off of what I have said thus far, I hope that you can see that the object in view, in Jesus' coming into the world at the Father's command, was to lay down His life for the sheep; that is the lost sheep of the house of Israel, given to Him by the Father. But He also mentions "other sheep" which He has, which were not of this fold of the Jews. He would also come into the world in order

to save many among the Gentiles as well. Indeed, by His death, He would break down the barrier between Jew and Gentile, and make them into one flock, with Himself as the one Shepherd. The Father loves the Son for laying down His life to accomplish this great thing; laying the foundation of the New Testament Church. Christ had power to lay His life down for this and the Father loved Him for it.

We need to think about His laying down His life and what this means for a few minutes. The meaning of all of the Old Testament types and sacrifices were going to be fulfilled in our Lord's laying down His life for the sheep. And yet the antitype was going to be so much greater than the type. Jesus becoming a Man and a Mediator as the God-Man, made His High-Priestly ministry so much greater than Aaron's high priestly ministry. Aaron would offer the blood of rams and goats and lambs, but Jesus would actually become the sacrifice in the offering of Himself. No man would take His life from Him. He would willingly lay His life down for all those chosen by the Father, for all those who would believe in Him as their substitutionary atonement for sin.

In terms of God's justice being satisfied, He the Father, must look at His Son, and not at you. When the Father looks at the Son, He beholds everything which is most holy and righteous. When He looks at us, He sees much sin in us, in thought, word, and deed. God loves Christ His Son on account of His perfect purity and His holiness. He loves Him as He beholds His whole life as a righteous life. God the Father loves Christ because in His going to the cross, He made His soul an offering for sin. (Isaiah 53: 10) Christ offering Himself in the place of sinners, in God's sight, was a most holy offering.

Christ was perfectly innocent in His Person and in all His works. He was not only born without any taint of original sin in his being, as all of us have, but He freely gave Himself, He willingly bore the shame of His being seen by God and men as a transgressor when He was falsely tried, scourged, and crucified. He was condemned as a malefactor, as an evildoer, when actually He was perfectly righteous. The Father knew this, and this was why He loved Him. Christ took our place so that He might bear our sins for us, by means of His sufferings. And in doing so, He loved His Father's Law and His Justice more than any man has ever done. This was because He had a supreme regard for His Father God's Law; that it be honored and magnified, and fulfilled in every respect. This He did on our behalf. That is why the Father loved Him.

In the offering of an animal sacrifice there was no essential holiness or righteousness in those creatures. There was only innocence, and a fleshly spotlessness. But in Christ there was both an essential holiness and moral spotlessness. There was also a perfect righteousness which He worked out in His words and deeds, which God was greatly pleased with, in the highest sense. He loved His Son for accomplishing this, more than everything else. And because of what Christ accomplished, He could love us because of what Christ did on our behalf. What Christ offered in sacrifice to God was equivalent to what justice demanded of us for our sins. The sufferings of Christ were equivalent to the punishment that we deserve for having committed them.

The spiritual altar that He offered Himself upon was His Divine nature. It was the value of His being God, and His being willing to become a Man and die in our place. This is what makes His sacrifice to be infinitely holy. As Jonathan Edwards says – "The soul of Christ that was offered up, is personally united to the Eternal Word, the 2nd Person in the Trinity, who is an infinitely holy Person." "And 'tis that that gives this sacrifice an infinite value in the sight of God." The Divine Nature of Christ is that altar that sanctifies the gift, supposed to be typified by the altar in the tabernacle and temple: which altar had no real holiness, for what holiness can there be in stones or brass?" "Now this altar so sanctifies the gift, that it gives it an infinite holiness." (Works, Vol. 14, P. 450)

Jesus says in verse 18 – “No one takes My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself.” “I have power to lay it down....” You will remember that when Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane and Judas and the temple guard came to get Him, that He went out boldly to meet them, and asked them – Whom do you seek? And they fell to the ground backwards as though an invisible hand had pushed them. When they got up again, He asked them the same question again. He did not use that as an opportunity to escape, but as the opportunity to show everyone coming for Him, that He was very willing to go with them. He knew that He must suffer, and He must lay down His life, or none of us could have been saved. When He stood before Pilate, Pilate did not want to crucify Jesus. He didn’t see what Jesus’ fault was. When the chief priests and the officers started crying out – Crucify Him, crucify Him, they also said that Jesus ought to die, because He made Himself out to be the Son of God.

Pilate, being afraid of this, asked Jesus – Where are You from? But Jesus did not answer Him. And so he said to Jesus – Are You not speaking to me? Do you not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You? And Jesus said – You would have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin. Jesus was saying to Pilate that he could do nothing to bring about His death except what God had given him the power to do. Pilate wanted to release Jesus, but he was too afraid of being seen as the enemy of Caesar if he didn’t scourge and then crucify Jesus.

But beloved brethren, this was all a part of the Divine plan based upon the love of the Father for the Son, and their love for us as sinners, that He lay down His life for us sheep. Jesus could have escaped all of this if he had wanted not to die. But He says no one takes my life from me. I lay it down of Myself. So ultimately it was not the chief priests and Pilate or the Roman soldiers who took Jesus’ life from Him. He lay it down of Himself. He had power to lay it down, and so He did. He walked right into the trial, the scourging, and the crucifixion, not at all wanting to avoid it. This is why the Father loved Him.

And 3rd – There is an incomprehensively great Love which the Father has for us because the Lord Jesus took His life up again. (verse 18b)

We are speaking here of the pure and sinless human nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. For God cannot die. But Christ our Lord as a Man most truly died. And He lay in the tomb for 3 days and 3 nights. The Lord Jesus Christ as God in one of His two natures, could indeed raise Himself from the dead. And He did! He had power to lay His life down, and He had the power to take it up again. This was not simply authority given by His Father to do so. But He had this power in Himself in connection with the Father’s love and approval of all that He had done to purchase His elect people by His sufferings. The Father and the Son were of one mind and heart in this, all the way from eternity past, to when it was the right time to fulfill the prophecies.

Listen to the way that Peter preached about this in Acts chapter 3, after he and John had healed a lame man who had been lame from his mother’s womb. Verses 11-15 – “Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon’s, greatly amazed.” “So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this?” “Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?”

“The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go.” “But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of Life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.” So it was God the Father who raised Jesus from the dead, even as the Lord Jesus Himself raised Himself

from the dead. And the apostle Paul says in Romans chapter 1, verses 1-4 – “Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” The Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the dead, as they are all inseparably God in their Divine Essence. It was therefore marvelous that the Lord Jesus should say – I have power to lay my life down, and I have power to take it up again. This was something that the Lord Jesus knew that He could do. And the Father fully approved of it, and loved Him for it.

Let me say in closing that the Lord Jesus was completely Master over His life. He had the power to do and to accomplish all that the Father had purposed for Him to do. But He knew that it must be done out of a supreme love for the Father. And since He was God, He remembered the love that the Father had always had for Him from eternity past, and He therefore was sustained in all of His obedience on our behalf. Let us be refreshed and sustained in our Christian life and labors, knowing that that He took His life up again, He gives us this same resurrection power to live our Christian life by. Let us do so, remembering the love of the Father for the Son, and their love as Persons of the Godhead, for us.