

SACRIFICE AT SEA

After a few of the usual Sunday evening hymns, a pastor slowly stood up, walked over to the pulpit and, before he gave his sermon, introduced a guest minister who was in the service. The pastor told the congregation that the guest minister was one of his dearest childhood friends, and that he wanted to give him a few moments to greet the church and share whatever he felt was appropriate. With that, an elderly man stepped up to the pulpit and began to tell a story: "A father, his son, and a friend of his son were sailing off the pacific coast," he began, "when a fast approaching storm blocked any attempt to get back to shore. The waves were so high, that even as an experienced sailor, the father could not keep the boat upright and the three were swept into the ocean as the boat capsized."



The old man hesitated for a moment, making eye contact with two teenagers who were listening intently for the first time since the service began. The aged minister continued with his story: "Grabbing a rescue line, the father had to make the most excruciating decision of his life—to which boy he would throw the other end of the life line. He had only seconds to decide. The father knew his son was a Christian, and that his son's friend was not. The agony of his decision could not be matched by the torrent of waves. As the father yelled out, 'I love you, son!' he threw out the lifeline to his son's friend. By the time the father had pulled the friend back to the capsized boat, his son had disappeared beneath the raging swells into the black of night. His body was never recovered."

By this time, the two teenagers were sitting up straight in the pew, anxiously awaiting the next words to come out of the old minister's mouth: "The father," he continued, "knew his son would step into eternity with Jesus and he could not bear the thought of his son's friend stepping into eternity without Jesus. Therefore, he sacrificed his son to save the son's friend. How great is the love of God that he should do the same for us. Our heavenly father sacrificed his only begotten son that we could be saved. I urge some of you to take hold of the life line he is throwing out to you now."

With that, the old man turned and sat back down in his chair. As silence filled the room, the pastor again walked slowly to the pulpit and delivered a brief sermon with an invitation at the end. However, no one responded to the appeal. After the service ended, the two teenagers were at the old man's side. "That was a nice story," stated one of the boys politely, "But I don't think it was very realistic for a father to give up his only son's life in hopes that the other boy would become a Christian."

"Well, you've got a point there," the old man replied, glancing down at his worn Bible. As a big smile broadened his narrow face, he once again looked up at the boys and said, "It sure isn't very realistic, is it? But I'm standing here today to tell you that story gives me a glimpse of what it must have been like for God to give up his son for me. You see—I was that father and your pastor is my son's friend."

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Picture source: www.imf.org/.../ft/fandd/1999/09/giannini.htm