

## Identity Wars Study 7 – Heaven’s Lifeline

What do you think is the greatest thing a person can do to show they love their fellow man? Matt 5:39-41; 44

Romans 5:7 Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good.

Here the apostle Paul was alluding to a famous Greek story in which they try to explain the highest form of human love through the characters of Admetus and Alcestis. King Admetus was well loved throughout his kingdom because of his hospitality and justice. During those days the god Apollo was driven from Mt Olympus by his father Jupiter and told to lay aside his divinity and become a man and serve as a slave. King Admetus found him living as a poor beggar and took pity on him, gave him a job as a shepherd, and treated him as a son. 12 months later, Apollo had his divinity restored. He told Admetus that if he ever needed anything in the future to just ask and he would help him.

After some time Apollo returned to inform Admetus that Hades, the god of the underworld was coming to claim him. Apollo told Admetus that he had made a deal with Hades’ wife, Persephone, that if someone could be found who would die for Admetus, he wouldn’t have to die.

Admetus went to his parents and asked them if they would be willing to die for him? They replied that they loved him but their lives were more important to them, so they wouldn’t die for him. He searched the whole realm for a willing person to take his place but no one who was willing to die for him. Sure, they all loved and respected him – but to die? That was going too far.

Admetus, resigned to his fate, prepared to die. When his wife, Alcestis, saw and heard what was happening, she decided, with a heart full of love, that she would die for him. He was such a good king and his people needed him, so she would die in his place. After she was gone, the people of the kingdom cried for her when they heard of her great love for her husband.

When Alcestis appeared before Persephone, she took pity on her and rewarded her with another shot at life. Alcestis returned to life, and together with her husband lived to a ripe old age. When Death finally came, they were ready to go.

‘This’ the Greek philosophers exclaim, ‘is the greatest form of love that there is – that a man should lay down his life for his friends.’ Jesus used this example when He said, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for a friend.” John 15:13

This is true about human love, yet, divine love, the love of God, goes even deeper, wider, and further. For God’s love extends to both His friends and His enemies. The apostle Paul expresses it beautifully in Romans 5:7-10

John 3:16; Isaiah 53:3-5; This is divine love – agape love.  
The council of peace – Zechariah 6:13

What thoughts and feelings do you imagine were going through God’s heart at that time?  
Were there any risks involved in this plan? What were they?

What if people rejected His Son? What if they rejected His love? What would happen to them then?

Put yourself in God’s place. Could you give up your child for your enemies, hoping they would appreciate the effort, the pain and the sacrifice for them?

Three things that would happen to Jesus if He agreed to the plan to save man:

1. Becoming the substitute for humans, He would take on the consequences of their choices? What does that mean? – Isaiah 53
2. Humanity would reject Him, John 1:11;
  - He would suffer the total loss of identity Galatians 3:13; (feel separated from Father for first time) and it would appear His Father had abandoned Him at the cross. Matthew 27:46
3. This would lead to experiencing our worthlessness and hopelessness. He carried this to the grave. Christ felt what all sinners who reject God will feel in the end (when they are resurrected)

To allow yourself to go through this would be barely bearable, but to allow this to happen to your child is unthinkable. To have to sit back and watch your child suffer at the hands of those who you love, but who hate you, is the greatest love of all. Jesus expressed or revealed that love willingly to show us the depth of His Father's love for us. Incomprehensible!

Knowing all that He would pass through, the Son of God chose to become flesh and dwell amongst us. He did not agree to go through this reluctantly: "For the joy that was before Him, he endured the cross." Hebrews 12:2. He loved to do His Father's will: it was His meat and drink, His delight. It was what he lived for! John 4:32; Psalm 40:8

What kind of love is this? What kind of a God is this? What a Father! And what a Son! And what a brother! Greater love has no man ... ! Never has and never will!  
They are Totally worthy of praise. What do you think?

It is this reality that has become **our life support system**. The knowledge of this unflinching and undying love is what gives us hope to carry on.

- In Him, in His love, we live, and move, and have our being.
- He holds us in His everlasting arms of strength, He carries us near to His bosom so we can feel the power of His every heartbeat of love for us.
- He speaks words of assurance into our ears, softly and tenderly reminding us that he will not let us go.
- The journey may be a bumpy one as we travel through this world, till we arrive safely home, but we do not have to travel it alone. Matthew 28:20. John 16:33

Yes, in Him we live, and move, and have our being. Acts 17:28

While being carried, God wants us to learn the truth about Him.  
He wants to expose the errors and lies of His enemy that have kept us bound as slaves to worthlessness and hopelessness.

Only when we see the truth of the Father, as it is in Christ, can the chains of slavery be broken and removed.

- Only a moral compass of pure love can help us discern the true spiritual north where God's throne of love resides. The moral compass is God's Son.
- When Adam and Eve sinned they, in their own minds, had developed an understanding about God that was false. What was their view of God? How did they see Him as they waited in the garden?

The promise of Genesis 3:15 was to them the source of great hope and relief. In this promise they saw that they had not been abandoned; they saw that God had a plan to save them.

- What is this enmity that God put between us and Satan? Romans 5:15

God, through His grace, planted a seed of hatred of evil in our hearts, and He planted a seed of desire for goodness and truth.

- This would help us to see the difference between the two so we could choose which one we would rather live with.
- The fruits of both would become self evident, and we could then place our wills into the control of the one, Christ, or into the control of the other, Satan.
- Our destiny was now in our hands. Death was not the only option, as the Serpent had led Adam and Eve to believe.

Yes, our lives were now on life support, with the promise of eternal life, through and in Christ, as our great hope. Jeremiah 17:7; Titus 2:13

The ability to choose what is right is a gift which comes directly from God which He has placed within our hearts.

- Choosing right extends our present temporal life so we can have more time to learn about God.
- Choosing evil diminishes our quality and length of life and reduces the time we have to learn the truth about God.
- Why do you think Satan tempts us to sin? He wants to destroy us as quickly as possible, before we can learn about his lies, and the truth about God.

Revision questions:

1. What shows us that God was not caught off guard when Adam and Eve sinned?
2. Why is it that we don't die immediately when we sin? He gave Christ from the foundation of the world. (Revelation 13:8 – Did Adam kill Christ when he blamed Him for creating Eve? John 8:44)
3. We had chosen Satan as our new master, so what did God do for us to stop him having full control over us? – Put enmity in our hearts to evil.
4. What external gift and right has God ensured we still have? The right to choose.
5. What does all this tell us about God?
6. Does God ever give up on His children?

God has given us His Spirit to us so we might cry out Father, Father. It is up to us to receive that Spirit through Christ.