

**God has two valentines for you:
His Word and the Cross.
He gives you what you need.
You have one valentine to give God
what He wants: your heart!**

By Pastor Don Ginkel

During church one Sunday morning a pastor stood up and announced that a guest was going to speak. With that an elderly man stepped into the pulpit and told this story.

He said, "A father, his son, and a friend of his son were sailing off the Pacific coast when a fast approaching storm blocked any attempt to get back to shore. The waves were so high that even the father, who was an experienced sailor, could not keep the boat upright and the two boys were swept into the sea."

Now the old man paused for a moment and made eye contact with the two teenagers in the front pew who were, for the first time since the service began, looking somewhat interested in his story.

He continued, "Grabbing a rescue line, the father had to make the most painful decision of his life. To which boy would he throw the other end of the line? He had only seconds to make the decision. The father knew that his son was a Christian, and he also knew that his son's friend was not. The agony of this decision was worse than the torrent of waves around him."

"As the father yelled out to his son, 'I love you, son,' he threw the line to his son's friend. By the time he pulled the friend back to the capsized boat, his son had disappeared beneath the water. His body was never recovered."

By this time those two teenage boys were sitting straight up in the pew waiting the next words to come out of the old man's mouth. "The father," he continued, "knew his son would step into eternity and be with Jesus, but he could not bear the thought of his son's friend stepping into an eternity without Jesus. Therefore, he sacrificed his son. How great is the love of God that He should do the same for us."

With that the old man turned and sat down in his chair as silence filled the sanctuary. Within minutes everyone was ushered out, but the two teenagers were at the old man's side. "That was a nice story," one of the boys said politely, "but I don't think it was very realistic for a father to give up his son's life in hopes that the other boy would become a Christian." "Well, you've got a point there," the old man replied.

Then a big smile broadened his old face, and he once again looked at the boys and said, "It isn't very realistic, is it? But I'm sitting here in front of you this morning to tell you that 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 son's friend."

"I love you!" Profound words. Even more profound and inexhaustible is this: "**God is love.** This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. **This is love:** not that we loved God, but that **He loved us** and sent His Son **as an atoning sacrifice for our sins**" (1 John 4:8b-10).

Ask God how much He loves you. The answer is the Cross. Ask Jesus, "How much do You love me?" and He says, "I love you soooo much," and He stretched out His arms on the Cross and died. God has two valentines for you: His **Word** and the **Cross**. You have one valentine for God: your **heart**. Be sure to exchange valentines today.