

## **God Said, "I Love You," With An Old Rugged Cross**

John 15:13; Rom. 5:8; Gal. 2:20; 1 John 3:16; John 3:16

For the past two and a half months I've been preaching on the amazing love of God—He loves you. He is the only God who loves sinners. False gods—the gods of human invention—hate sinners, but the God of the Bible loves sinners. Romans 5:8 clearly says, "*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*".

- John 15:13— *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*
- Galatians 2:20— *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*
- 1 John 3:16— *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us...*
- John 3:16— *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

All these verses proclaim the same message: **God wrote His love in red.** When you look at the cross you are looking into the heart of God. As Brother Craig Edwards wrote in his song, "*God Said, 'I Love You,' With An Old Rugged Cross.*"

### **I. The EXTRAVAGANCE of God's love. "God SO LOVED..."**

- ➡ People have all kinds ways of saying, "I love you." Some say "I love you" with flowers... a note... a greeting card... a look with the eyes... a kiss... an embrace... a soft touch... whispering "sweet nothings" in the ear... a box of chocolates... a romantic dinner.
- ➡ God didn't just say, "I love you." He said "I love you," with bruised flesh... bleeding wounds... excruciating pain... suffering abandonment... in bearing undeserved, vicious punishment.
- God said, "I love you," when He **laid aside His glory** to be made in the likeness of sinful flesh.

- God said, “I love you,” **with every drop of bloody sweat** in the Garden as He prayed, “*Not my will, but thine, be done.*”
- God said, “I love you,” each time the chief priests **spit** in His lovely face.
- God said, “I love you,” each time wicked men **smote** Him with their fists.
- God said, “I love you,” with **each stripe** of the cat-of-nine tails tearing into the flesh on His back.
- God said, “I love you,” when cruel soldiers **crowned Him** with thorns.
- God said, “I love you,” as they **beat on His head** with a reed.
- God said, “I love you,” with **each step He took** down the Via Delatorosa to Mount Calvary.
- God said, “I love you,” with **each hammer blow** upon the nails in His hands and feet.
- God said, “I love you,” with **each drop of blood** that fell from the wounds in His hands and feet.
- God said, “I love you,” as Jesus **prayed**, “*Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.*”
- God said, “I love you,” when He who knew no sin, became sin for us.
- God said, “I love you,” as Jesus suffered the eternal punishment of hell that you and I deserved.
- Amen! God said, “I love you,” with an old rugged cross!

➡ Absolutely incredible! Amazing Love! “***Greater love hath no man than this...***”

➡ No human mind can fully comprehend the love God displayed on Calvary. As Paul wrote in Ephesians 3:19, “*the love of Christ, which PASSETH KNOWLEDGE.*”

## II. **The EXPENSE of God’s love.** Love can be COSTLY.

- ➡ How much does God love you? He loved you enough to give His very best.

➡ The force behind the word “*gave*” is the idea to “give up.” God GAVE UP His Son FOR you! Paul said it this way—“***He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all***” (Rom. 8:32).

♪ “Was e’er a gift like the Savior given? No, not one! No, not one!”

ILLUS: Most of us are familiar with the short story: *The Gift of the Magi*. It’s about a poor young couple spending their first Christmas together. Neither have the money to buy gifts, so each one sells the only thing they have of value to buy something for the other.

She sells her beautiful long hair to buy him a chain for his pocket watch. He sells his watch to buy expensive combs to put in her beautiful, long hair.

Our willingness to sacrifice what is most precious to us is a practical, visible way to show our love for others.

Since love is demonstrated through sacrifice, and the giving of one’s life is the ultimate sacrifice, therefore, the giving up one’s life is **the ultimate expression of love**—“*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*”

During the 2008 college football season a player named Trevor Wikre played offensive line for Mesa State in Grand Junction, Colorado. About halfway through the season, Trevor was at practice one afternoon when his pinky finger got caught in a linebacker’s jersey on a sweep play. After the play, Trevor looked down at his finger. It was bent at a horrific angle, and the bone sticking out of the skin.

Most guys would head straight to the locker room and call their mommies, but not Trevor. He told his trainer, “Just tape it up. We’ve got practice to finish.” But the trainer finally convinced Trevor to go to the hospital. The doctors told him they’d need to insert pins to repair ligaments. The prognosis? Four months to heal and no football. His season was over.

“No way,” said Trevor. “This is my senior year. We’ve got to make this work.”

“But, we can’t,” the doctors said.

Trevor countered saying, “We can—We can cut it off.” So after signing consent forms, the doctors gave Trevor his wish and amputated the broken finger. He still missed one game because the stitches might rip. He was back on the field for the rest of the season.

**“Would you sacrifice a finger for a football game?”** Most would probably answer, “No way.” For most people football is just a game and not worth of sacrificing a body part.

But what if the stakes were higher? We’ve heard stories of soldiers who threw themselves on a grenade or jumped in front of machine-gun fire to save another soldier. We read of martyrs throughout history who sacrificed their very lives for the sake of others.

A pinky finger is one thing—a life is another matter. What kind of love does it take to make the ultimate sacrifice? *“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”*

### **III. The EXHIBITION of God’s love** (Romans 5:8).

**Sacrifice of Arland Williams:** A snowstorm was swirling through Washington, D.C. on January 13, 1982. At 4:10 that afternoon Air Florida Flight 90 plunged into the icy Potomac River. The Boeing 737 broke into pieces with only the tail section remaining intact.

Most passengers died on impact. But amazingly, six survivors bobbed to the surface and grasped the plane’s tail. Gasping for air, they felt themselves going instantly numb in the 34-degree water.

Despite several attempts, there was no way to reach the victims in the icy river 40 yards from shore. An airboat, harbor police boats, a fire department rescue boat could not plow through the ice that was jamming the channel.

A helicopter finally arrived 13 minutes later. A life ring was lowered to the river where a survivor grasped it and was lifted into the rescue chopper.

The ring was lowered again. A survivor grabbed it—but he handed it off to someone else. The helicopter lifted her to safety. The ring hit the water a third time. The same survivor grabbed it—and again gave it away.

Again, and again, and again, this same man gave the ring to another survivor. Finally, the ring landed in the water for the sixth and last time. But it was too late. The heroic man had slipped beneath the ice.

For days, no one knew his name. Then the city coroner found a clue. Of the 74 bodies pulled from the Potomac, only one victim's lungs were filled with water. The others were killed upon impact. The hero's name was Arland Williams, Jr. Those who knew Arland said he had a lifelong fear of the water.

➡ Arland Williams, Jr. gave his life for strangers. Jesus gave His life for sinners like you and me. He endured the punishment you and I deserved and died in our place. He was plunged not into an icy river, but into death and hell itself for you! For me! Can you imagine a greater love?

**SUMMATION: Ant and the Grasshopper:** A third grade teacher was teaching a lesson on creative writing. She read the story of the ant and the grasshopper:

An ant works hard all summer and stores up plenty of food for winter. But the grasshopper plays all summer and does no work.

Winter comes. The grasshopper begins to starve because he has no food. So he begs, "Please Mr. Ant, you have so much food. Please let me eat, too."

"Now, boys and girls, your assignment is to write the end of the story."

Most of the students said the ant shared his food, and both the ant and the grasshopper lived. A few children wrote, "No, Mr. Grasshopper. You should have worked in the summer. Now, I have just enough food for myself." So the ant lived and the grasshopper died.

But one boy ended the story differently. He wrote, "So the ant gave all of his food to the grasshopper—The grasshopper lived through the winter. But the ant died."

Then at the bottom of his paper he drew a picture of three crosses."

*“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”* How much does God love you? Enough to give His all that you might live.

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During World War II, Germany’s dictator Adolph Hitler’s plan to invade Britain was stopped by the defense of Britain’s Royal Air Force. The sacrifice of British pilots prompted Prime Minister Winston Churchill to say, “Never in the history of mankind have so many owed so much to so few.” When we think of the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary, we may say, “Never in the history of the mankind have so many owed so much to just One—The Lord Jesus Christ!”

Jesus Paid it All—All to Him I owe!

➡ God said, “I love you,” with an old rugged cross. With what will YOU say, “I love You, Jesus?”

HYMN: *“When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”*