

The Death Of A Son

By: Keith Keyser

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Romans 8:32

The well-known boxing promoter Bob Arum recently lost his son, John, in a climbing accident on Storm King Mountain in Washington state. Although his public persona normally exudes the bravado associated with the boxing world, Arum's feelings were poignantly revealed to the *New York Times* interviewer by this statement: "When you lose a child, I don't care what anybody tells you, you lose part of yourself...It does not get easier over time."ⁱ

His words express just a small portion of the tremendous sorrow of a parent losing a beloved child. Mr. Arum was close to his son. They shared a common profession as lawyers, and loved to fish and watch the New York Giants football team. Like his father, John was a driven person, passionate about certain causes such as environmentalism. In keeping with his love of nature, he was an ardent mountaineer, but this dangerous hobby led to his death. His father disliked this arduous form of recreation, always dreading the day when he would hear of a fall. The reporter continues the tale: "Shortly after John Arum's death, Bob Arum vented to his family, asked the questions everybody asks. How could he have done this? Put himself in that position? To which Richard told his father: 'Because he's just like you.'"ⁱⁱ The same drive that made him a success in professional life also impelled him to brave great dangers in following his interests.

Unsearchable Grace

In a small way, this tragic story is reminiscent of the depth of God the Father's love for mankind. As the verse above indicates, the sacrifice of the Son of God evidences the limitless largesse of Divine grace. His generosity is boundless, for it is expressed in the gift of something of ultimate value: the life of God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. As the nineteenth century preacher Horatius Bonar put it in a classic hymn: "The gift of gifts, all other gifts in one – blessed be God our God!"ⁱⁱⁱ It is in the death of the Son that one perceives the extent of the riches of His grace (Eph. 1:7.) God did not spare His own Son. Abraham was commanded to spare Isaac; David would have spared Absalom if he were able (Gen 22:12; 2 Sam. 18:5.) But the sovereign God did not spare His Son; instead, He chose to send Him to the agony of the cross. Likewise, the Son loved the world, and so He voluntarily went to this death to do His Father's will and save His fallen creatures. Whoever receives the Lord Jesus by faith is rescued from eternal judgment and perdition (Jn. 3:16.) They are given eternal life, and are made children and sons of God (Jn. 1:12; 5:24.)

Having been made joint-heirs with the One who inherits all things, believers are told that there is nothing good that God will withhold from them (Rom. 8:17, 32; Psa. 84:11.) The guarantee of this immense spiritual wealth is that He has already given His best: the Son of God Himself! Never has a father loved a Son as much as God the Father loves the Lord Jesus, whom Scripture calls “the Son of His love” (Col. 1:12-13, NKJV.) “How He set His love upon Thee – called Thee His beloved Son; Yet for us He did not spare Thee, By Thy death our life was won,” as a beautiful hymn says it.^{iv}

The Son Bringing Many Sons To Glory

Interestingly, the article about Bob Arum’s grief ends on the positive note of discussing his close friendship with the boxing sensation, Manny Pacquiao, and the similarities that he sees between this fighter and his son. As Bishop writes:

Perhaps it’s a stretch, but the more they spoke, the more Arum saw his son in the famous Filipino boxer, in Pacquiao’s increased dedication to public service, in his myriad dimensions, in the way boxing alone failed to define him. Pacquiao is not simply one of the two best boxers in the world. And John was never just a boxing promoter’s son. Pacquiao is dedicating the fight to John’s memory, and Arum sees a symmetry there. He does not expect to find closure here in Texas, or any time soon. But he does consider this — back at work, back with Pacquiao – a start.^v

In losing his son, one might say, he has gained someone with the same characteristics. On a far grander scale, the Father gave up His Son that He might gain many glorious sons and daughters who are destined to bear His image (Rom. 8:28-30.)

ⁱ Greg Bishop, “After losing a son, Arum takes a step back,” *New York Times*, Publ. 11/11/10; electronic ed.: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/12/sports/12arum.html?partner=rss&emc=rss> Accessed on 11/11/10.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Horatius Bonar, “Blessed be God our God.” See: <http://www.stempublishing.com/hymns/ss/89>

^{iv} Miss C.A. Wellesley, “Gathered in Thy name Lord Jesus,” See: <http://www.hymnal.net/hymn.php/nt/204>

^v Bishop, see ftnt. i.