

John 10:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life,
that I might take it again.

Analysis

Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life—This stunning statement reveals the relational dynamics within the Trinity. The Father's love for the Son is grounded in (not caused by) the Son's voluntary self-sacrifice. The causal "because" (ὅτι/hoti) indicates the Father delights in the Son's obedient mission. This isn't merit-based love (the Father always loved the Son eternally) but the Father's special delight in the Son's redemptive work.

The phrase "lay down my life" (τίθημι τὴν ψυχὴν μου/tithēmi tēn psychēn mou) emphasizes voluntary sacrifice. The verb τίθημι (tithēmi) means to place, to set down deliberately—not to have life taken by force but to offer it freely. This distinguishes Christ's death from martyrdom; He isn't a victim but the sovereign orchestrator of His own sacrifice.

That I might take it again—The purpose clause (ἵνα πάλιν λάβω αὐτήν/hina palin labō autēn) reveals that death is not Christ's defeat but His strategy. Resurrection is the goal from the beginning. He lays down His life with the resurrection already in view. The Father loves this mission precisely because it demonstrates the Son's power, authority, and victorious conquest of death itself. The cross and resurrection are one unified redemptive act, not tragedy followed by reversal.

Historical Context

In ancient Roman crucifixion, victims died as utterly powerless, humiliated criminals. The notion that someone would voluntarily choose crucifixion with resurrection as the goal was incomprehensible. Yet Jesus speaks of His death as a deliberate strategy, not forced martyrdom. This challenges both Jewish expectations (Messiah as conquering king, not suffering servant) and Greco-Roman values (honor through power, not death).

The early church anchored assurance in this truth: Christ's death was voluntary and purposeful, not a tragic accident salvaged by resurrection. Hebrews 12:2 says Jesus "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross"—He saw past the suffering to the resurrection glory. Church fathers defended Christianity against accusations that Christ was a failed revolutionary by pointing to this passage: His death was the plan, not the problem.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does understanding Christ's death as voluntary (not forced) and purposeful (not tragic) deepen appreciation of His sacrifice?
2. What does it reveal about the Trinity that the Father loves the Son's willing obedience in redemptive mission?
3. How does knowing that resurrection was Christ's goal from the beginning change how we view the cross?

Interlinear Text

διὰ	τοῦτό	ὁ	πατήρ	με	ἀγαπᾷ	ὅτι	ἐγὼ	τίθημι
G1223	Therefore	G3588	my Father	me	doth	because	I	lay down
	G5124		G3962	G3165	G25	G3754	G1473	G5087
τὴν	ψυχὴν	μου	ἵνα	πάλιν	λάβω	αὐτήν		
G3588	life	my	that	again	I might take	it		
	G5590	G3450	G2443	G3825	G2983	G846		

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 2:9 (Parallel theme): But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

John 10:11 (Parallel theme): I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

John 10:18 (Parallel theme): No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

John 10:15 (Parallel theme): As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.

Isaiah 42:1 (Parallel theme): Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.