

MY SON

It was Oklahoma in the 20's. John Griffith in his early twenties, newly married and full of optimism. He had also been blessed with a beautiful baby. But then in 1929 came the great stock market crash. With the economy shattered, John's dreams were devastated.

Oklahoma was ravaged by depression and despair. And so with his wife and little son, he headed East, making their way to the edge of the Mississippi River, and there he found a job tending one of the great railroad bridges that spanned the massive river.

Day after day, John would sit in a control room and direct the great gears of an immense bridge over the river. He would look out as barges and ships glided under his elevated bridge. Then, he would lower the massive structure mechanically, to let the trains cross. Then in 1937 a new hope was born in him. He looked forward to work together with his son (now 8) in intimate friendship. The first day of this new life brought fresh hope and purpose. Together they set off for the bridge. His son watched in amazement as he pressed down the lever that raised and lowered the huge bridge. He was so proud of his father controlling such a stupendous structure. Soon it was noon. John had just elevated the bridge for some ships to pass. Then with his son in hand, they headed off for lunch. They went down to an observation deck and watched the ships passing below. He told his son stories about the ships and their destinations. Then suddenly, he was startled back to reality by the shrieking whistle of a distant train. Looking at his watch in disbelief, he saw that the train was on time and the bridge was still raised and the Memphis Express was just minutes away! He suppressed his panic, not wanting to alarm his son. He calmly told him to stay put and quickly ran up to the control house. He checked that the river was clear of ships and then looked to make sure nothing was below.

As he looked down, he saw something horrifying. For below him in the massive gearbox that housed the colossal gears that moved the

gigantic bridge, was his beloved son, who had tried to follow his Dad, but had fallen off the catwalk. Even now, he was wedged between the teeth of two main cogs in the gearbox. Although still conscious, he could see that his son's leg had begun to bleed profusely. Immediately an even more horrifying thought flashed through his mind. For in that instant, he knew that lowering the bridge meant killing the apple of his eye, crushing him to death.

Desperately he tried to think of a solution. A plan emerged. He could climb down a rope from the catwalk and grab his son and then rush back and pull the control lever just in time for the oncoming train. But as soon as he had these thoughts, he realised the futility of his plan. There was not enough time. What could he do? In anguish he considered the oncoming train with its 400 passengers rushing closer towards the bridge and certain death if he did nothing. But this was his son, his only son, his pride and joy. In his mind he could see the tearstained face of the boy's mother. But if he saved him, he would be letting many others die.

In a moment he saw there was only one thing he could do. He knew he had to do it. So burying his face under his arm, he plunged down the lever. His son's cries were quickly drowned out by the sound of the bridge as it ground relentlessly into position. With only seconds to spare the Memphis Express roared out of the trees and across the mighty bridge. John Griffith lifted his tearstained face and looked into the windows of the passing train. A businessman was reading the newspaper. The conductor was looking at his watch. Ladies were sipping their afternoon tea in the dining cars. Others played cards. A small boy was eating ice-cream. Many passengers were either engaged in idle conversation or careless laughter. No one looked his way. No one even cast a glance at the giant gearbox where his son had suffered and died so that they could be saved.

In anguish he pounded the glass in the control room and cried out:
“What’s the matter with you people? Don’t you care? Don’t you

know I've sacrificed my son for you? What's wrong with you?"

No one answered, no one heard. Not one seemed to care.

Then soon the train was over the bridge and off into the distance.

This is a faint illustration of what God the Father did in sacrificing His Son, Jesus, for us, so that we would not die but have forgiveness and eternal life: **"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved"** (John 3:16,17). John Griffin was caught by surprise, but God in His great love and sovereign purpose, determined to sacrifice His Son so that we might live. It is the proof of God's amazing love for us, that He would be willing to sacrifice His Son for people who don't deserve it, who so often ignore Him, as they rush on in their busyness and pleasures. **"God proves (demonstrates) His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"** (Romans 5:8). **"You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you"** (1 Peter 1:18-20).

Moreover, the love of Jesus Christ the Son is shown in that He was not accidentally caught, but willingly gave up His life for the sins of mankind. **"My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes 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 command I have received from My Father"**

(John 10:17,18). One prophecy of Jesus says: **"Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Behold and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow, which has been brought on me, which the LORD has inflicted in the day of His fierce anger"** (Lamentations 1:12).