

What Manner of Love?

Untitled

What manner of love does our heavenly Father have for us?
Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us,
that we should be called the sons of God. Beloved, now are we the sons of God
and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall
appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. (1 John 3:1-2)

Untitled

Adoption! Filial love! The triune, covenantal God of filial love is our
Father for Christ's sake.

His love is the love of the Father for His only begotten and beloved Son in
and through the Holy Spirit. He has chosen to show and share that love with His
elect in and through His Son, Jesus Christ.

That is what He always aims at with His love — and achieves.

He tells us this is so in His Word.
For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be
conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many
brethren. (Romans 8:29)

...[the Father] has chosen us in him
before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame
before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by
Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.
(Ephesians 1:4-6)

When the fullness of the time was come, God sent
forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were
under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are
sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba,
Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an
heir of God through Christ. (Galatians 4:4-7)

Behold, what
manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the
sons of God... (1 John 3:1)

God intends to show us what it is like to be loved as his Son is loved! That
is the aim.

Adoption!
Adoption is that act of the free grace of God, in and for his
only Son, Jesus Christ, whereby all those that are justified are received into
the number of his children, have his name put upon them, the Spirit of his Son
given to them, are under his fatherly care and dispensations, admitted to all
the liberties of the sons of God, made heirs of all the promises, and
fellow-heirs with Christ in glory! (Larger Catechism Number 74)

Let's see if we can't illustrate something of what this means for you as a
believer.

A certain King - a great and Sovereign lover - who loved an only begotten son with all his heart, decided to show the surpassing goodness of this filial love outside his own family. So, in his wisdom he decided to bestow his love upon a miserable little urchin child off the streets outside his palace - an orphaned child of a notoriously wicked rebel.

Though the urchin was just like his father and followed in his footsteps, the King chose him out as the one upon whom he would bestow his fatherly love. So, he drew up all the legal papers for an adoption; he duly signed off on them all, and had them legally witnessed, lodged, and enacted by the judge. Why he chose that particular boy is a mystery.

He did it simply to show how gloriously free he is, and how amazingly merciful and free his love actually is.

So, the King adopted that undeserving little urchin from the streets to be his son - to share his love with him.

Then, amazingly, he sent forth his own dearly beloved and only begotten son to bring the urchin home. Because the son shared the father's love, he was willing, at the greatest possible personal cost and suffering, to pay all the urchin's debts, seek him out, cleanse him, clothe him in his own garments, and bring him home to meet his father, so that his little brother could experience, to the fullest degree possible for him, the joy the son himself had always enjoyed in the Father's presence.

What manner of love is this? It is the love of our heavenly Father. He has BESTOWED something utterly wonderful - love? Yes, but what sort of love! The Father's love for His Son! Such love as exists only between God the Father and His own beloved Son! This is shared with the urchin - through adoption! This is so merciful, so free, so abundant, so enriching, so profoundly good!

The urchin's life is transformed. No longer an orphan, he is now Son of the King. No longer son of Adam, call him "son of God!" No longer poor, he is joint heir of all things together with the only begotten Son! Safe at home in the Father's love, in all the privileges, liberties, ...blessings, pleasures and comforts that belong to His children! With a real beginning of love shed abroad in his heart, perfect peace, joy unspeakable and full of glory - and every tear wiped away! The Father and Son have even sent a Comforter to dwell with him to comfort him, assure him of his sonship, and show him how to live as becomes a son. Fellowship with the Father and with His Son is begun!

What a complex, unspeakable joy that former urchin must experience as he realizes what the King - his Father - has actually done for him. And what must he feel as he begins to taste the pure goodness of that love! Astonishment? Surely! Amazed, unspeakable joy, gratitude and adoration! Can it really be true?

How could one ever say thanks? Words don't even begin to come close. Gifts, deeds and tokens of gratitude and love? No, to give everything every moment, must surely sell it short! Divine love defies such things. How unseemly it would be to try, somehow, to pay the Father back; that would be like resisting His love's amazing freeness! It is way too free for that!

The more one understands this love's length and breadth and depth and height,

the more gratitude must grow and grow and grow....! How to say thanks? The Apostle Paul put it this way:
I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reason-able service. (Romans 12:1)

All one can do is devote himself — wholly — to love this amazing Lover. Gratitude compels the heart to live as becomes His son - to be like him, to love what he loves, do what he wants. He cannot but live for His smile, rejoicing in His approval! Delighting in doing what pleases the one he loves. Showing that he counts His love dearer to him than his very life itself! And certainly, never by returning to the streets and his former ways! Such love simply can not be ignored.

Would his life not be defined by those words: "What manner of love the Father has bestowed upon me, that I should be called a son of God!"

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