

LAVISH LOVE

"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" (NIV) 1Jo 3:1-2

Don't you love that word "lavished"! He has lavished his love on us by making us his children. How is love lavished on a child? With lots of hugs and smiles and kisses, words and attention. They feel secure, special, bonded, close, satisfied. They know their needs will be met. They feel safe and secure.

Is this how we feel as Father's child? Or is he (to us) an emotionally absent Father? Many are emotionally detached from their Abba. And it is because of all the closed doors in their heart - not a lack of love on his part. It does not make sense that we should be created with mind, will, imagination and emotions and Father does not touch our emotions.

We have been led to believe that we must not trust emotions in our life of faith. There is some truth in this. Our emotions fluctuate, and are not a true measurement of our faith. But this does not mean that we must not feel his love, or his joy over us, or our own responses of love and joy and peace. His love is tangible; I have known it like refreshing water, like the effect of sitting in a hot pool on a cold day (ahhhhhhhh!) like a soft billowy feathered eiderdown, as a deep sense of inner restfulness, as a deep delight that bubbles up with giggles or yahoos!

And he says to us *"You are my beloved child, in whom I delight."* In John 17:26 Jesus is praying that *"the love you (Father) have for me may be in them."* This delighted, tender love is the same love Jesus experienced. You see Father's love does not have variances or degrees. It is not that one day he loves us a lot, and another, not much. His love is constant, unvarying. This is what is meant by 'eternal' - not fluctuating or varying or dying away.

Perfect Love

1 Jn 4:18 *"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out/casts out fear."* Have you known this perfect (complete) love that drives out fear? I experienced that profoundly recently as a time of desolation was brought into the light and cleaned out and his perfect love drove out the fear of abandonment. I had been left at the hospital to have my tonsils out at about three years of age (as they did in those days) and it devastated me. But it was locked away. This 'orphan voice' was heard when I was alone, but I never knew it was such a deep pain until the Father brought it out recently and healed it.

Invite this perfect, unchanging, lavish love of Father to come and open the doors of your heart. He wants to be emotionally present for you, every day, every hour, so he is your delight, and you know you are his.

Do you recognise you have an orphan heart - and know you need Father's love? What now?

1. Own the walls that have been built up to protect your heart.

All of us have been hurt at some time by parents or authority figures. So we build walls to protect our vulnerable hearts. We adopt a persona - the joker - the tough one - the pleaser - the bookworm - the knowledgeable one - constantly busy - task orientated - mad about sport... Or we become uncooperative, questioning everything, resisting authority. We all have walls we hide behind. They are a natural defence mechanism. The trouble is they also shut our hearts off from the love of our Perfect Father - our Abba. We need to own this, admit it to him and ourselves.

2. Dismantle them with forgiveness and asking forgiveness.

Once owned, we can then dismantle them by firstly forgiving those who wounded us - often unintentionally. They were themselves wounded and broken people. They could not give us the perfect, unconditional love we were created to function with. We need to forgive them - release them from debt - tear up the IOUs. But then we need also to recognise that we also sinned, against them, by shutting off our hearts. It helps pull down the walls if we write a letter to our parents, admitting the ways we shut off our hearts and withheld love and honour and asking their forgiveness. Perhaps we cannot send it - they have passed on - so reading it

aloud will help us. But if they are still alive maybe one day it will be right to humble ourselves before them and speak about this. We can be assured the grace of our Father will help us do this, and it will soften the hearts of our parents towards us also.

3. Keep asking Father to wash and heal your heart.

Only the love of Father God can wash and heal our deep wounds of rejection or offense that caused our closed hearts. Keep inviting him to do this wonderful work until you know you are free.

4. Become 'as a little child'

- with humility, simplicity, and need. Jesus said a number of times that we are to become 'as little children'. You see the Father's love must come to our 'little child' heart. Our emotions never mature or grow up. The way we handle them does, but feelings feel the same as a child, adult or senior. So our little child heart needs to be open to our Heavenly Daddy, our Abba, our Papa... for it is not the accomplished adult who sits on Daddy's knee, but the little child, who knows they need love and affection, comforting and encouraging. When we come empty-handed, trusting and dependant, THEN he can 'Father' us and comfort us and pour in his tender love.

It is astounding when this happens. We feel safe and secure, we feel very special to him, we know we are precious and a joy to him. Anything we experience on earth like this with parents, grandparents or others is just a 'taste' of what we can experience with the perfect, lavish love of our perfect Daddy. This is what he created us for. Make that journey towards his completely satisfying love. Get others to help you. It can happen in a brief time as we set our heart to pull down the walls.

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