



Greg Albrecht

God's Beloved Children

“R-E-S-P-E-C-T...

Find out What it Means to Me!”

by Laura Urista - page 5

Sacrifice: Two Perspectives

by Brad Jersak - page 7

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What marvelous love the Father has extended to us! Just look at it—we're called children of God! That's who we really are. —1 John 3:1 (MSG)

We are his children, his cherished treasures and his pearls of great price. In this world filled with shattered dreams, populated with the broken hearted and abandoned, these superlatives sound like a hopelessly naïve exaggeration, but *God is our own true love. We are his precious, priceless and beloved children.* Our own true love loves us with an everlasting, no-matter-what love. We are loved and accepted and embraced by God. Quite naturally, we want to please God. We want, as the cliché mothers often use as they encourage their children, to “make something of ourselves.”

Of course, children really want

relationship with our Heavenly Father.

The desire to please one's parents, the desire to be loved is one thing ... but when we assume that our positive behavior can influence God in such a way to cause him to love us more than he already does, we are in pursuit of God on another path other than the Jesus Way. For how indeed can our actions cause him to increase the *true love* he already has for us?

PLEASING OUR HEAVENLY FATHER

One of my favorite stories about how children want to please their parents is about a six-year-old boy who was so pleased with what he had accomplished, and he could not wait to tell his father.

As the story goes, the boy's father was working for a company who assigned him, along with several other

employees, to work 500 miles from home on a temporary assignment. The assignment was temporary—so

the employees didn't need to uproot and relocate their families. It just meant that these employees would need to leave every Sunday afternoon on a chartered plane and return after a week's work on Friday evening.

The setting for the story is back in the 1950s and 1960s—in small town America—where invariably the bread winner was a man and the wife and mother stayed at home raising the children. This routine of being away all week, the company promised, would only last six to eight weeks, and then all the employees could return home working at their home office—back to the healthier family routine of leaving their homes every morning, commuting to the local office and then returning to their homes and families every evening.

The man in this story was the father of two young sons—a four-year-old and a six-year-old. He talked over this temporary work assignment with his wife. They knew his absence from the home during the week would be hard on their two sons, but they agreed, as husband and wife and father and mother, to do their best to make this temporary arrangement work.

After their father was gone for two weeks the boys became afraid to sleep alone. Their father was not in the house, and they were afraid. To comfort her sons and probably to get a little sleep herself, the mother started to allow the boys to sleep with her.

The next weekend during her husband's two-day visit home,

“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” – 1 John 3:1

to please their parents—children think that positive reports about their performance will mean their parents will love them more than they already do. The same belief motivates and informs our suppositions about our



"So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir." -- Galatians 4:7

she and her husband were talking about the boys wanting to sleep in her bed with her, and they agreed that their two sons needed to face their fears. The mother and father decided to offer the boys a reward if they returned to sleeping all night in their own beds.

So, it was the next Friday evening the mother and her two sons were at the airport, with dozens of other wives and children, waiting for their husbands and fathers to come home from their week's work on their chartered airplane. This was many years ago at small town airports when friends and family could wait outside of a wire fence, and watch the propeller driven airplane slowly taxi up to the area where it would park.

When the plane arrived, the gate was opened for friends and family, and as each father walked down the movable stairs that had been wheeled up to the door of the aircraft, children and wives ran to meet them, greeting them with hugs and kisses.

Finally, when the six-year-old saw his father get off the plane he could hardly wait to tell his father the good news—he knew his father would be so happy and so proud, because during that week he and his brother conquered their fears of sleeping alone.

So, even though his father was still 20-30 feet away from them the boy yelled out to him, with scores of people able to hear, "Dad—good news! While you were gone this week Mom didn't sleep with anyone!"

As a man named Art Linkletter used to say, "kids say the darndest things."

CHILDREN OF GOD, FOLLOWERS OF JESUS

As God's children, in deep appreciation for the true love he has for us, we do want to please him. We want God to always love us. We feel that even though we have heard (and want to believe) he already loves us, perhaps we can make him love us more.

As we encounter the struggles of life, we are well served to remember our spiritual identity, by the grace of God. All that we are and everything that is of eternal value about us is a gift of God. We are loved by God. We are accepted by him. We are treasured and cherished by him. Above all, that's who we are. That's how we identify. Children of God. Followers of Jesus.

When we find ourselves enduring pain and grief, when we feel as if we are at the end of our rope, amid an overwhelming personal crisis of health or loss of job, in the middle of our deepest darkness we see light emerging—we feel the *true love* of God motioning to us with outstretched arms. We feel his love, his acceptance and his welcome. ***We are God's beloved children.***

Apart from God we live a life trying to accumulate and gain and earn the love of our family. We are continually trying to achieve, increase and acquire both physically and spiritually—and at the heart of all this working lies our desire for success, acceptance and love of those we want to love and accept us.

But God's *true love* and *amazing grace* means that we don't have, nor can we ever acquire, anything Father God wants that he does not already have. We cannot save enough money in our checking accounts, even over a lifetime of working,

so that we can write him a check to pay him off and reward him for his love.

The economy of our world works on a deposit and withdrawal basis—like a checking account. You cannot write a check unless and until you have deposited sufficient funds. But God’s grace says that you have an unlimited checking account—the deposit of God’s love, mercy and grace has already been made, because of and by Jesus.

You will never run out of God’s love. God will never return a check you have written because you have insufficient funds. Apart from God, our checking account is empty. We have no religious deposits because of our own work that the bank of heaven recognizes.

But in and through Jesus Christ, by the lavish riches of the grace of God, the bank of heaven overflows with the love, mercy and grace of God and we will forever have all the funds we ever need.

Who are we? We are the loved and cherished children, and by the grace of God, followers of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who is God? God is our own true love, and we are his beloved children.

PORTRAITS & POTTERY

Day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16) God is painting an ongoing portrait of us, we are his workmanship and handiwork (Ephesians 2:10). As we spiritually grow and mature in Christ, we are becoming God’s *piece de resistance* (French for “the best, and most important

and most exciting” aspect of a person or experience).


Changing the metaphor slightly, as we are on the potter’s wheel (Jeremiah 18:1-4; Romans 9:21; Isaiah 45:9, 64:8) and as the Master Potter forms and fashions it is difficult for us, the clay, to fully appreciate what he sees and to visualize the final product he will produce in and through us by his amazing grace and profound love.

One day when God completes your portrait—when you become what the Master Potter creates—you will have the eyes to see how true God’s love is. Then you will realize all the situations and difficulties and challenges and failures of your life were the raw materials he used to create you as his final product, his masterpiece, his beloved children.

One day, we will see that our flaws and failures do not cause him to stop loving us, for he can never stop loving us. ***He loves us because of who he is, not because of what we do or fail to do.***

- We are not the sum of the mistakes we’ve made.
- We are not the sordid and embarrassing moments that we hope no one ever finds out about.
- We are who God says we are—his children, followers of Jesus, the apple of Father God’s eye.
- God loves us not because of what we have accomplished and acquired—God loves us despite all that we have done. □

Greg Albrecht is President and Editor-in-Chief of CWR/PTM.



Yet you, Lord,
are our Father.
We are the clay,
you are the potter;
we are all the work
of your hand.

—Isaiah 64:8