

"SEEING THE FATHER'S HEART OF LOVE FOR US"

EXPRESSIONS OF A FATHER'S AND MOTHER'S LOVE FOR A CHILD

Think about it. When a father and mother look at and hold their newborn son or daughter, there is usually a deep feeling of love and "awe" that rises up from within. Everything about that child is PERFECT—his or her eyes, nose, ears, mouth, hands and feet—EVERYTHING. Even if you have not been a parent, these same feelings often rise up when you hold a newborn baby or child. I (Jerry) remember many years ago when we were living in another state and a friend's children were staying at our home. When I came home from work one day, the youngest boy (about 2 y/o) came to the door, and thinking I was his daddy, lifted his arms up to me to pick him up and hold him . . . which I did. The picture of that child with his arms extended remains deeply imbedded in my mind and heart.

EXPRESSIONS OF GOD THE FATHER'S LOVE FOR HIS CHILD

Now move from the scene we just described above—the love of a father and mother for their newborn son or daughter—and take a trip back over 2000 years ago to the scene in Bethlehem. Mary and Joseph are looking upon this newborn baby, and are later joined by Shepherds and the Magi, and many Angels. Yet, someone else was present in that scene—though we don't generally think about him in this context—someone who was looking upon that baby with such overwhelming love, acceptance and approval. It was the REAL father of this newborn—God the Father. You see, we often relate to the love of God the Father for Jesus as an adult, and the Scriptures speak of this—especially as Jesus fulfilled His calling from the Father. However, the love of the Father for the Son was complete and mature from the foundations of this world (Jn. 17:24). It was the same and unchanging from the manger to the cross and for eternity.

HOW THIS APPLIES TO US . . . THE FATHER LOVES US JUST AS HE LOVES HIS SON

That same love of the Father toward His Son in that manger is also for us (Jn. 17:23), and it is this type of love in which we can place our hope and trust. Jesus was the Father's gift to us, but we are also the Father's gift to Jesus (again, Jn. 17:23). Jesus wants us to be with him for all eternity—and that is the Father's desire. We typically speak of following in Jesus' footsteps to the Cross, which is something we must do, and we generally do this as adults when we surrender our hearts and our lives to Him. Yet, we must go to the manger as well and let the love of the Father meet us there. Though it may be difficult to understand, the work of Jesus also places us in that manger—co-heirs as a recipient of such love of the Father (Rom. 8:15-17; Gal. 4:6-7). So when you reflect on the Christ-child this Christmas, ask Him to show you that this love is also for you, and that God, the Father of Jesus, is also YOUR Father.

PRAYER

Please pray with me . . . Father, thank You for Your love for me—and that You love me just as You love Your Son, Jesus. Thank You that the love and affection that was in Your heart when You looked upon Jesus in that manger is the same love and affection when You look upon me—both at my birth and now. Help me to realize that

the love that You have for me has nothing to do with what I do—but everything to do with who I am. Father, I would never expect a baby to do anything to earn love, and You do not expect me to do anything to earn Your love. Help me to operate in Your Kingdom as a result of Your love for me—not as a means to obtain it. And Lord, help me to be honest with You about the pain in my heart that gets stirred up at this time of year. It is something that I know occurs with many of Your children due to losses, disappointments and hurts from the past. Father, I give those things to You and I ask that You would help me to be able to see and experience the wonder and the awe of Christmas and the Gift that You gave me—Your Son Jesus. Thank You, Father, that I am a gift as well. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

From the Father's Heart,

Jerry and Denise Basel