**“Like as a Father” The Bible Echo 8, 2.**

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“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.” Psalm 103:13. {BEST January 15, 1893, par. 1}

This text is one of the most precious and comforting to be found in the Bible. It has encouragement alike for old and young. But expressive as the text is, it is doubtful if any ever grasp the fulness of its meaning. Most people doubtless think of a father’s love and pity for a good child, but that is not what is referred to. The Scriptures themselves afford us a striking example of fatherly pity, which should always be considered in connection with this verse. It is the case of the man who wrote the text. {BEST January 15, 1893, par. 2}

Absalom was a wayward son. Now much of this waywardness was due to his father’s indulgence, we need not now stop to inquire. The fact is that he was thoroughly selfish. There is no evidence to show that he had any real love for anything except himself. Yet his father loved him. When Absalom killed his brother Amnon, and fled, “David longed to go forth unto Absalom.” The soul of David was consumed with longing for his son. Finally Absalom was recalled from exile and received the kiss of forgiveness, and lived in the presence of his father. Surely he could not ask for more than this. But then it was that the hatefulness of his disposition began really to show itself. {BEST January 15, 1893, par. 3}

“And it came to pass after this, that Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him. And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him and said, Of what city art thou? And he said. Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel. And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right: but there as no man deputed of the king to hear thee. Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice. And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him and kissed him. And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment; so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.” 2 Samuel 15:1-6. {BEST January 15, 1893, par. 4}

David was a good and just king. He ruled in the fear of GOD. But Absalom would not give him an opportunity to redress the grievances of his people, for he would stop them before they could make their case known to the king. Then by his wicked lies he would steal their hearts away from the king, and fix them upon himself. After Absalom had pursued this course until he thought he could depend upon the people’s following him, he came to his father, and with a lying pretence of wishing to pay a vow to GOD, secured leave to go to Hebron. There he consummated his rebellion against his father. He sent spies all through the tribes of Israel saying, “As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron. And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gibeonite, David’s counsellor.... And the conspiracy was strong: for the people increased continually with Absalom.” 2 Samuel 15:12. {BEST January 15, 1893, par. 5}

Then the old king had to flee for his life from the face of his son. With a few who still clung to him, he left the city on foot. In David’s palace in Jerusalem, Absalom plotted to take away his life. “Moreover Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night; and I will come upon him while he is weary and weak handed, and I will make him afraid; and all the people that are with him shall flee: and I will smite the king only; and I will bring back all the people unto thee; the man whom thou seekest is as if all returned: so all the people shall be in peace. And the saying pleased Absalom well.” 2 Samuel 17:1-4. This advice so gladly received by Absalom shows his heartlessness. His only desire was to kill his father. The only reason why he did not act upon it was that he was led to believe that there was a more sure way of taking the life of the king. GOD defeated the counsel of Ahithophel. Then Absalom raised a great army and went out to take the life of his father, who had never showed him anything but love. {BEST January 15, 1893, par. 6}

So much for Absalom. But how did the king still feel toward his rebellious son? Listen to him as he stands by the gate as the people go out to meet the army of Absalom: “And the king commanded Joab and Abishai, and Ittai, saying, Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom. And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom.” Not a thought of revenge entered into the king’s heart. Only love for his wicked son was there. In spite of the king’s request, Absalom was slain. Very tenderly and delicately was the news broken to David. “And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber and wept; and as he went, thus he said. O my son Absalom, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, Absalom, my son, my son!” And “the king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, O my son Absalom. O Absalom my son, my son!” {BEST January 15, 1893, par. 7}

Stop a little, and think of such wonderful love after all that Absalom had done to him. And this was the man who wrote. “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.” Does not that text mean much more when we consider these circumstances? It is GOD Himself who gives us this illustration of his love for us; for his Spirit caused the story of David and Absalom to be recorded, and his Spirit inspired the words in the one hundred and third psalm. {BEST January 15, 1893, par. 8}

David’s love for Absalom could not save his life. How different the case with GOD! He is able to do all that is in his heart. His love was so great towards his rebellious children that He did actually give Himself. “God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners CHRIST died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” Romans 5:8-10. Such love as this is beyond human comprehension. It is that passes knowledge, and yet it may be known by all who will receive it. It does not exhaust itself in vain longings for its object, but it accomplishes definite results. It saves the soul from death, by saving it from its rebellion. It sheds itself abroad in the heart of the sinner, turning his rebellion inato love. “We love Him, because He first loved us.” And we can confidently trust this love: for since GOD bestowed it so freely upon us when we were rebels, what may we not expect when we have become friends through it? {BEST January 15, 1893, par. 9}

“What shall we then say to these things?” “For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in CHRIST JESUS our LORD.” {BEST January 15, 1893, par. 10}