

Created in the image of God? Who me?

H. Graham Wilson, Jr.

Ever had someone tell you, “You look just like your father!” Or, “The older you get the more you look like your dad!” Your very close relatives and friends may at times relate, “You sure act like, talk like, and walk like your dad. Physical characteristics of son and father are at times similar, but why the fuss? They’re natural, aren’t they?”

The greater importance lies in the similitude of the spiritual realm. This kind of likeness is not natural, but supernatural. The regenerated person calls God his Father, because he is a child of God. The real issue, then, is how much of my Father’s image do people notice in me, because I’m a child of God, who is my Father. The account of God’s dealings with mankind is first recorded in the book of Genesis, in Eden. Believers should observe some principles of fatherhood as they appear in the beginning chapter of Genesis and put them to use. There are three principles noted and they are worth consideration.

First, God fed Adam (Gen. 2:15-17). Do you know of any self-respecting “Pop” that wouldn’t feed his child (Matt. 7:9-11)? Don’t we assume that Dad will always bring home the “chicken and fries” for the children’s delight? As elementary as it appears, the revelation of the Father feeding His “son” Adam really has profound implications.

One cannot minister to a person’s soul if they neglect the basic needs of their body (James 2:15-16). Since humans need food to survive, those who seek to minister as our heavenly Father will ensure that basic physical needs are met first before spiritual hunger is satisfied. This may sound “humanistic” (sure, man doesn’t live by bread alone, Matt. 4:4), but I assure you that the person who does not know where his next meal is coming from isn’t going to say “Amen” to a plump “believer” who will not share his “beans, bacon, tacos and tortillas”. Comprende?!

Ever see that “derelict” on the corner, you know the one with the sign that reads, “Will work for food.” What’s your first impulse, Christian? Do you reach in your shirt and pull out a “tract” feeling very spiritual or slap the hip and lift out a “Lincoln”? We can look just as much like our Father in heaven out on the street as we can in a seminary classroom or in teaching a Sunday school class. All the recipients will be fed, one physically, the others spiritually, and both actions mimic God our Father.

Secondly, God knew Adam. Adam’s relationship with God was such that the Father understood and anticipated all of Adam’s needs (Gen. 2:18). The Father enjoyed intimate fellowship with the Son and the Spirit in the eternal state before He created time, the Universe, and creatures to populate the earth. He knew full well the importance of a loving relationship with man. He also recognized that all His creation could not intimately meet Adam’s needs. So God the Father created Eve from Adam. We too can look just like our Father when we grow to know our wife and children so intimately that we recognize what their emotional and physical needs are and provide them.

Thirdly, the Father loved Adam. When the goodness of God our Father is exercised towards His rational creatures, it assumes the higher character of love, and this love may be distinguished according to the objects of which it terminates, He loves His rational creatures for His own sake. He does not even withdraw His love completely from the sinner in his present sinful state, though the latter’s sin is an abomination to Him, for He recognizes even in the sinner His image (John 3:16; Matt. 5:44-45).

At the same time He loves believers with a special love, since He contemplates them as His spiritual children in Christ. God revealed His love to Adam after he had rebelled against God’s

initial love (Rom. 5:10; cf. Rom. 3:24-25). God had truly loved Adam when He met his physical and emotional needs (the fruit of the tree and Eve), but He loved Adam even more magnanimously when He met his spiritual needs for forgiveness, a provision of atonement (Gen 3:21).

Here's the story. God instructs Adam not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil or He'll "zap" him. Eve and the serpent "rap" about it and the next thing you know Eve is slurping on the forbidden fruit! Adam happens along and takes a bite and all of a sudden they both realize they are naked and that's not decent. We've become too familiar with this story that we fail to see that when God comes along He not only disciplines them, but He also blesses them! We assume God was obligated to maintain fellowship but the truth is He didn't have to continue with those "crazy kids" of His. He would have been within His rights to have wiped the little ingrates right off the planet.

But God's love is unconditional. No matter how wrong we are God continues to love us...in spite of ourselves (Rom. 8:38-39). We too can look just like our Father in heaven when we grow to love those who don't appreciate us, even those who despise us!

Every believer should strive to be "Fatherly". It's been stated that we are most like the person we spend the most time with. The more time I spend with my Father praying, studying His word, and meditating on His word the more I'll mimic Him. As one looks into the "mirror of the Word" the reflection of oneself isn't too flattering. Yet the more time one spends before that "mirror", studying it, the more one will see the "reflection" gradually conform to the ideal image, the image of God our Father. For He does all things well, He's our "Daddy", and we love Him!