

A FATHER'S LOVE

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Anyone who's ever studied the Old Testament knows about David. In fact, anyone who's old enough to remember Gregory Peck and Susan Hayward has seen the movie about one of David's most famous "adventures" – his affair with Bathsheba that was a heady combination of lust and murder. The Old Testament paints a picture of King David as a powerful, often ruthless man, who took what he wanted and fought uncouth wars. But when it came to his children, David was as tender as a marshmallow and endlessly loving.

It seems to me that one of David's sons, Absalom, was much like his father in several ways: Absalom was ambitious, hot-headed, and always bent on revenge. After years of conflict with his father, the day came when Absalom decided to once and for all usurp David's throne and appoint himself king of Israel. David had no choice but to send his troops into battle, but his one request was that Absalom's life be spared: "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom." If he could have managed it, Absalom would have killed David. He had been destructive and disloyal in a hundred different ways. But still, David loved him and had mercy on him.

The day of the battle, Absalom was killed. When David heard this news, he mourned and wept. David didn't care that his troops had won the battle. He didn't acknowledge the brilliance of his generals, or the fact that his throne was again secure. He didn't rejoice with his people over their great victory. David went off by himself and cried, calling his son's name. Nothing mattered except his child.

If David, the famous sinner, felt such passionate and unconditional love for what must have been the most worthless son ever, what kind of love does God have for us? If you've ever loved a child who has broken your heart, you know that your love continues even if your child betrays you. Human love is profound and powerful. But God's love? God, who is perfect in wisdom, patience, compassion, understanding, mercy ... not weighed down by our human sin and weakness, as David was and as we all are ... what must God's love be like?

This is God's love for you. There's no condemnation, no distance, no anger; there's only a love so deep and faithful that God's grace and mercy fill our souls. Open your heart to this love, and say thank you.