

A Message from Travis Dean
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There are many rewards to being a parent. I have been especially made aware of this when my daughter, Abigail, has graced me with an impromptu, "I love you, Daddy." Her words have left an impression for several reasons: (1) her tone of voice, so warm and sincere; (2) her sweet, contagious smile; and (3) her choice of timing. Sometimes it has come immediately following some form of reproof.

More recently her affectionate declaration has been lengthened. She now asserts, "I love you, Daddy, even when I'm naughty." There may be a couple reasons for this recent change in her choice of words. On occasion her mom and I have told her that we love her even when she's naughty. But perhaps a second influence has come from the song, "Jesus Loves Me", which we have enjoyed singing in our family. The verse of interest follows:

*Jesus loves me when I'm good, when I do the things I should;
Jesus loves me when I'm bad, even though it makes Him sad.*

It is a powerful truth that God loves us even when we're naughty. Paul speaks of the amazing uniqueness of God's love in Romans 5:6-8:

*For when we were without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly.
For scarcely for a righteous man will one die,
Yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.
But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners,
Christ died for us.*

How comforting and stabilizing to know that I am loved supremely by God when I deserve it the least! What God did for me in Christ's death on the cross had nothing to do with my good choices. In fact, it was in spite of my bad ones. Such a revelation of God's love is a rock solid foundation for our experience as Christians.

Is it also possible, though, that Abigail's alteration of this profound truth also rings of hope? Could it be that Abigail's heart still holds love for her daddy even when she disobeys? Jesus has said in John 14:15 that if we love Him, we will do what He says. But does that mean that the moment we disobey Him that we no longer love Him? Romans 5:5 declares that "the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us." Is the Holy Spirit quick to take this love out of our hearts when we choose to disobey? In Hosea 11:8 God calls out to His people, "How can I give you up? ...My heart churns within Me." He is loathe to leave us and slow to walk out on us!

Because of God's great love for me, I can know that He loves me when I deserve it the least. And I can also know that the love He has put in my heart, He will not quickly take away. He is not easily offended by my poor choices and behavior. He is a friend that sticks closer than a brother (Proverbs 18:24).

Scriptures taken from the New King James Version