

The Power of a Father's Love

To: All the Saints
In the Churches of God

Dear Friends,

Have you ever felt so beset by sin that you believed you were beyond God's forgiveness? Have your own personal flaws and weaknesses loomed so great in your life that it just seemed inconceivable that you could ever be a part of His eternal Family? I suspect that almost all of God's people have experienced the weight of their own shortcomings caving in on them. I know I have. There have been times in my life when I have felt so unworthy of God's love that I was convinced that a Great Moral Being such as He, couldn't possibly want to have anything to do with me. Add to that, I had the knowledge that a real devil is constantly reminding Him of every sin I commit and every blemish I have, and that it was pointless for God to carry a defect like me through life. According to Satan, the only thing God's people are good for is to be discarded like garbage. Sound familiar? Have you ever gone through the ordeal of assessing your own qualifications as a child of the True God and found yourself totally without value? If you have, then you, like me, have been looking at it all wrong.

If the scriptures tell us anything at all, it is that God's love, not our virtue, is what carries the day when it comes to those who will celebrate eternity with Him in His Kingdom. To be sure we must claim that destiny and strive diligently to be like Him. We must obey His law and strive to do His will. But in the end it is His righteousness and His walk in us that will bring about our magnificent future.

This now brings us to the question of the day. How committed is God to our ultimate success? How driven is He to convert the weak into the powerful, the plain into the exquisite, and the mortal into the infinite. Is it possible for God's people today to grasp, at least in part, the measure of God's love toward us? I am convinced that it is possible. Furthermore, I believe, that once in a great while, we get to witness wonderful acts of love and devotion offered up by parents to their children, and that these acts provide a glimpse into the Power of our heavenly Father's love toward us. The following is an example of just that.

Recently I read one of the most inspiring stories I have ever encountered. It is about a 67 year old father named Dick Hoyt and his 45 year old son Rick. These two extraordinary men are among the most inspiring athletes in the world today. What makes their story so remarkable is that Rick has cerebral palsy and has no control over his limbs. Now this would be enough to discourage most men from competing in great tests of stamina and endurance, but not "Team Hoyt." Over 200 times they have competed in Marathons with Dick pushing his disabled son 26.2 miles in a wheelchair.

Eight times he has not only pushed him 26.2 grueling miles, but prior to that has towed him 2.4 miles in a dinghy strapped to his back while swimming, after which he peddled him 112 miles in a seat on the handlebars of a bicycle. This challenge, which attracts the premier athletes in the world today, is appropriately called the "Iron Man Triathlon." But it doesn't end there. Dick has also pulled his son cross-country skiing, taken him on his back mountain climbing and once hauled him over 3,700 miles across the U.S.—on a bike!

Their story is a remarkable one and illustrates the power of a father's love. It began in 1962 when a tragic accident marked the beginning of Rick's life. During his birth his umbilical cord got tangled around his neck cutting off oxygen to the brain. The damage was so severe that doctors told Dick and his wife, Judy, that there was no hope for their son's development. Later, the news got worse. When Rick was eight months old, doctors told the Hoyts that they should consider placing him in an institution because "he would be a vegetable the rest of his life."

Fortunately, the Hoyts saw things differently. They were convinced that there was life in their little boy and they weren't going to be denied the joy of participating in it. Although others saw nothing but a blank stare in Rick, the Hoyts saw a child craving to explore his world. They noticed the way his eyes followed them around a room. This was no vegetable. This was a cognitive life. And more than that, he was their son. From this time on little Rick and the development of his full potential became Dick and Judy's cause. They were driven to give their precious son a life with meaning and hope.

When Rick was 11 they took him to the Engineering department at Tufts University and asked if there was anything they could do to help their boy communicate. "No way," they were told. "There's nothing going on in his brain." But once again, Dick wasn't buying it. "Tell him a joke," he countered. They did, and Rick laughed. As it turned out, there was a lot going on in his brain. Then, rigged up with a computer that allowed him to control the cursor by touching a switch with the side of his head, Rick was finally able to communicate. His first words? "Go Bruins!" Turns out Rick was a huge hockey fan. Now armed with the technology that would connect him to the outside world, Rick's life was about to change. This remarkable step was just the beginning of a wonderful journey he and his family would share.

A Defining Moment

When Rick was in high school his life was about to be transformed. At that time one of his classmates had been paralyzed in an accident and the school decided to organize a charity "five K" run for him. When Rick heard about the fundraiser he pecked out a message to his father, "Dad, I want to do that."

The problem was that Dick was in terrible shape. So the question he had to ask himself was "How can a guy who never ran more than a mile at a time, going to push his son five miles? Still, he tried. "Then it was me who was handicapped," Dick says. "I was sore for two weeks."

That experience changed Rick's life. "Dad," he typed, "when we were running, it felt like I wasn't disabled anymore!" That single sentence exploded into Dick's life. He now became obsessed with giving his son that feeling as often as he could. To do so he trained, and trained, and trained. He got into such hard-belly shape that he and Rick were ready to try the 1979 Boston Marathon.

However, they were prohibited from competing. "No way," Dick was told by a race official. The Hoyts weren't quite a "single runner", and they weren't quite a wheelchair competitor. For a few years Dick and Rick just joined the massive field and ran anyway. Then they found a way to get into the race officially: In 1983 they ran another marathon so fast they made the qualifying time for Boston the following year.



Then somebody said, "Hey, Dick, why not a triathlon?"

Now how's a guy who never learned to swim and hadn't ridden a bike since he was six years old going to haul his 110-pound kid through a triathlon? Still, Dick tried. Now they've done dozens of triathlons, including eight grueling 15-hour "Ironmans" in Hawaii.

Hey, Dick, why not see how you'd do on your own? "No way," he says. Dick does it purely for "the awesome feeling" he gets seeing his son with a cantaloupe smile as they run, swim and ride together.
A Final Thought on "Team Hoyt"

Had the Hoyts listened to the many voices appealing to them to walk away from their child, a wonderful story would never have been written. This "vegetable" now has a college degree and works in a major university's computer laboratory helping to develop a system, code named "Eagle Eyes," through which mechanical aids (like a powered wheelchair) can be controlled by a paralyzed person's eye-movements, when linked-up to a computer.



Rick Hoyt also has his own apartment, gives speeches all over the country with his father, and still competes in marathons almost every week. And through it all not once has he doubted his father's commitment to their work -- a man He once referred to as "the father of the century."
A Lesson for Us

The lesson from this story for God's people today should be pretty obvious. Our spiritual Father has every bit the commitment to our success as Dick Hoyt has to the triumphs of his son. And although Satan wants our Eternal Father to give up on us, this just isn't going to happen. God' love for us and His commitment to our ultimate victory over our weaknesses is unwavering. And he is prepared to carry us, peddle us, pull and/or push us every step of the way into His glorious Kingdom. His love just won't let Him give up. That LOVE is steadfast and resolute, and nothing can separate us from it. Perhaps the apostle Paul said it best.

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. (Rom. 8:38-39)

Think about that the next time you feel God has given up on you.

Respectfully,

Dennis Fischer

Blow the Trumpet