

BOUNDLESS LOVE

THOUGHTS FROM MAJOR STEPHEN COURT

1 JOHN 3:1 (PHILLIPS)

Consider the incredible love that the Father has shown us in allowing us to be called “children of God”—and that is not just what we are called, but what we are. Our heredity on the Godward side is no mere figure of speech—which explains why the world will no more recognise us than it recognised Christ.

God is love. We look up *agape*, the Greek word translated in 1 John 3:1 above as “love” and fill out the picture of this expansive concept: “Love, benevolence, goodwill, esteem, moral preference.” It can be an enlightening spiritual exercise to substitute alternate definitions into the text to see how they play, how they sound, how they reflect new aspects of God’s character and truth as applied to our lives. Here are few that you might want to breathe aloud:

“See how glorious a benevolence the Father has given us, that we should be called God’s children.”

(TPT with *benevolence* substituted for *love*)

“See what marvelous goodwill the Father has bestowed upon us--that we should be called God's children.”

(Weymouth with *goodwill* substituted for *love*)

“Consider the kind of extravagant esteem the Father has lavished on us—He calls us children of God!”

(VOICE with *esteem* substituted for *love*)

“‘Born of him!’ Think what a moral preference the Father has for us, in letting us be called ‘children of God!’”

(Moffatt with *moral preference* substituted for *love*)

STUPENDOUS.

And, not to get too deep and tangled in the weeds, but these renderings don’t quite do justice to the apostle John’s sweeping but subtle implication. The start of the verse, translated in the old versions as “Behold what manner of love,” comes from a word Strong’s Concordance defines as “of what country,” though normally cast as “of what manner.” But play our substitution game here: “Of what country is our Father’s love?” Implied answer? “It’s out of this world!” God’s love is out of this world!

Louise Mathieson, North Brisbane soldier and Australia Territorial Worship Arts Team member, panegyricizes divine benevolence, supernatural goodwill, astounding esteem, and mind-boggling moral preference in her song *Boundless Love*, rooted in 1 John 3:1, and growing upward and outward. The money clause that stamps Salvationist DNA on the song and enacts the titular adjective (“boundless”) is this: “It’s moving through our hearts to change the world.”

In other words, this enrapturing experience of God’s love makes us His children. But it isn’t just for us to enjoy. As Mathieson phrases it, “It’s moving through our hearts to change the world.” This boundless love, by definition, can’t be limited to us alone and for us alone! It expands and expands until it bursts out of our clay vessels, splashing out to our family members and friends and neighbours first, and then overflowing beyond (think Acts 1:8, “... Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”).

THIS SONG IS TESTIMONY, YES, TO A HOLINESS THAT WE IDEALLY ALL EXPERIENCE (“HIS SPIRIT HAS COME... AND FILLED OUR HEARTS”).

IT IS DECLARATION, TOO, OF DETERMINATION TO PARTNER WITH GOD IN SEEING HIS LOVE TRANSFORM PEOPLE ALL AROUND THE GLOBE.

AND, FINALLY, IT IS A PAEAN TO A LOVE THAT IS OUT OF THIS WORLD, LITERALLY A BOUNDLESS LOVE.