

The True Love
of God is this...

THE CHARACTER & MANIFESTATION
OF DIVINE LOVE – A PERSPECTIVE

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If you believe that Jesus is the Christ—that he is God's Son and your Savior—then you are a child of God. And all who love the Father love his children too. So you can find out how much you love God's children—your brothers and sisters in the Lord—by how much you love and obey God. Loving God means doing what he tells us to do, and really, that isn't hard at all..."

1 John 5:1-3 (Living Bible)

Part One:

GOD IS LOVE – ISN'T HE?

Defining words, understanding concepts and grappling with interpretations has become an even greater challenge in our post-truth era. Christian words, concepts, principles, and core themes are now subject to these various interpretations and more so than ever, by those not following Jesus Christ!

Terms like *inclusive*, *grace* and of course **love** are now subject to the ever-increasing flurry of 'meme-e-fication', and almost always by those who have are not in a saving, redeeming and restoring relationship with the Creator of all, the only omniscient and omnipotent ONE.

So, God is love, yes?

Of course, it/she/he is, that's an incontrovertible, unshakable given of the Christian lexicon, I know, because I hear it all the time – it is the great Christian mantra!

I have watched over many decades in Christian service, many in the Church who have either deliberately or by a passive cultural default, yielded to the flow of an unscrutinised evolution of 'christianese'. Instead of being ever transformed to conform with His image (Romans 8:29), and/or reflect it, some out of a growing Biblical illiteracy or to suit immediate cultural pressure or sway have commenced and/or continue the crafting God in their image, an effigy of the Divine – if not persona – then nature. I have no doubt in my journey that such moments have

also emerged, particularly as I have attempted to justify a disobedience, or simply being self-serving.

However, it is only in the last 10 years that I've seen this Biblical, divine 'love' be labelled, relabelled, defined and redefined in ways that have not only concerned me, but utterly contravened the very character of the Triune God. In my encounters in this space, it is what drives the re-defining/labelling that raises the concern. In nearly every setting for this redefinition, God's 'love' is cast, shaped, or moulded by choices and subsequent activities, behaviours and conduct of those whom people are in a *close* relationship with. In this very personal and intimately invested context the redefinition either ignores or worse, defies other Divine attributes or prescriptions of our Awesome multi-faceted and incredibly Wise God. All this is ostensibly done for the purposes of spinning 'love' into a flimsy fitting garment to cover the error, rebellion, brokenness or sin of 'loved' one; or more disturbingly an attempt to prevent a conflict, division or departure – but not from truth, life and best Kingdom practice, rather for utterly egocentric agendas.

So, what is this love, and of what is it constituted?

'God'; may be the logical exclamation! This tautological definition does not give us an investigative tool to spelunk this immensely deep cavern, but delve we must, if we are to know,

not only the Love of God, but the very [God of love](#) Himself.

As I have written in the book [Second Chance Solution](#), the idea/concept of love can have as many definitions and modes as there are unique individuals on the planet – potentially seven something billion! Yet this declared, highest virtue, cannot be abandoned to the capricious musings of feckless, finite and ever so easily manipulated masses; no, this love, this highest of virtues can only be understood, or at the very least examined through the lens of the [Author of it](#).

This divine love is *not* God, however the Creator, the Alpha and Omega, is love. It is the motivation, the mandate, the mode, even the very means of Gods engagement with His created, and why such omnibenevolence exists in the deistic arena.

No other 'god' concept, no other metaphysical construct, contrivance or concoction known to humanity, comes close to this Judeo-Christian narrative, particularly around this relational imperative.

In explaining to a university student, the concept to the Trinity, Dr Ravi Zacharias masterfully declared, Christianity is the only religion where love came before life. And he added, the only religious framework where communication came before life. The Trinitarian nature of the One True God explains how love and communication were in play before the universe began. This seminal source of relationship existed in which love, and



communication were integral parts, and it is this starting point that we can begin to uncover what this love may *be made of*.

This Trinity, this One God in three distinct persons, in one unified deity, is multifaceted and flawless in integrity, unity, perspective and perfection, and it is these aspects that also inform the nature of the God of Love!

The perfection of the Author, the Source of the universe, the One who was outside both time and space; the One who calls things into existence from nothing, reveals much more about this nature, this 'love'.

It is the Apostle John, referred to as the beloved (and arguably the youngest of Jesus' Disciples) who most consistently writes about this love and how it is not only experienced and engaged with, but responded to, in our lives.

We know we have joined Him in an intimate relationship because we live out His commands. If someone claims, "I am in an intimate relationship with Him," but this big talker does not live out His commands, then this individual is a liar and a stranger to the truth. But if someone responds to and obeys His word, then God's love has truly taken root and filled him. This is how we know we are in an intimate relationship with Him: anyone who says, "I live in intimacy with Him," should walk the path Jesus walked.

1 John 2:3-6 (The Voice)

For the [true] love of God is this: that we do His commands [keep His ordinances and are mindful of His precepts and teaching]. And these orders of His are not irksome (burdensome, oppressive, or grievous).

1 John 5:3 (Amplified Bible)

This *true love* is the supreme version of love as uniquely articulated in the Greek. This 'agapao' speaks of a higher, divine virtue in response. It is not just good will, and high esteem and benevolence, it sits in a moral preference. It transcends affections and emotions and moves into the realigning of activities, choices and behaviours with the divine moral nature – a reflection of the character and conduct of God. This intimacy producing love manifests best in our behavioural aligned and joyful compliance with El Elyon – El Hakkadosh, The Most High and Holy God's best practice – HIS Commandments.

Please keep this in the forefront of our reflections as we continue.

It is in Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians that sees both a segue to and melding with the attribute, the quality of God that transcends, but very much envelopes and informs this divine love.

And may the Lord make you to increase and excel and overflow in love for one another and for all people, just as we also do for you, so that He may strengthen and confirm and establish your hearts faultlessly pure and unblameable in holiness in the sight of our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah) with all His saints (the holy and glorified people of God)! Amen!

1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 (Amplified Bible)

It is the implementation of the love prescribed in the Johannine letters, and what that produces in and through us, that the nuanced Greek language unveils in this passage – **A faultlessly pure and unblameable sacredness.** (From *hagios* a setting apart, as unto likeness with the Lord)

In Jewish literature, indeed culture, if one is to emphasize the importance of an issue, draw the audience's attention to the

absolute necessity to grasp and embrace an understanding of a thing, then repetition is used.

In our current communication space various modes are engaged to create emphasis, bring attention too. In literature we may use bold or italicized text, underlining or even capital letters, but not so the divine text – the writers repeated.

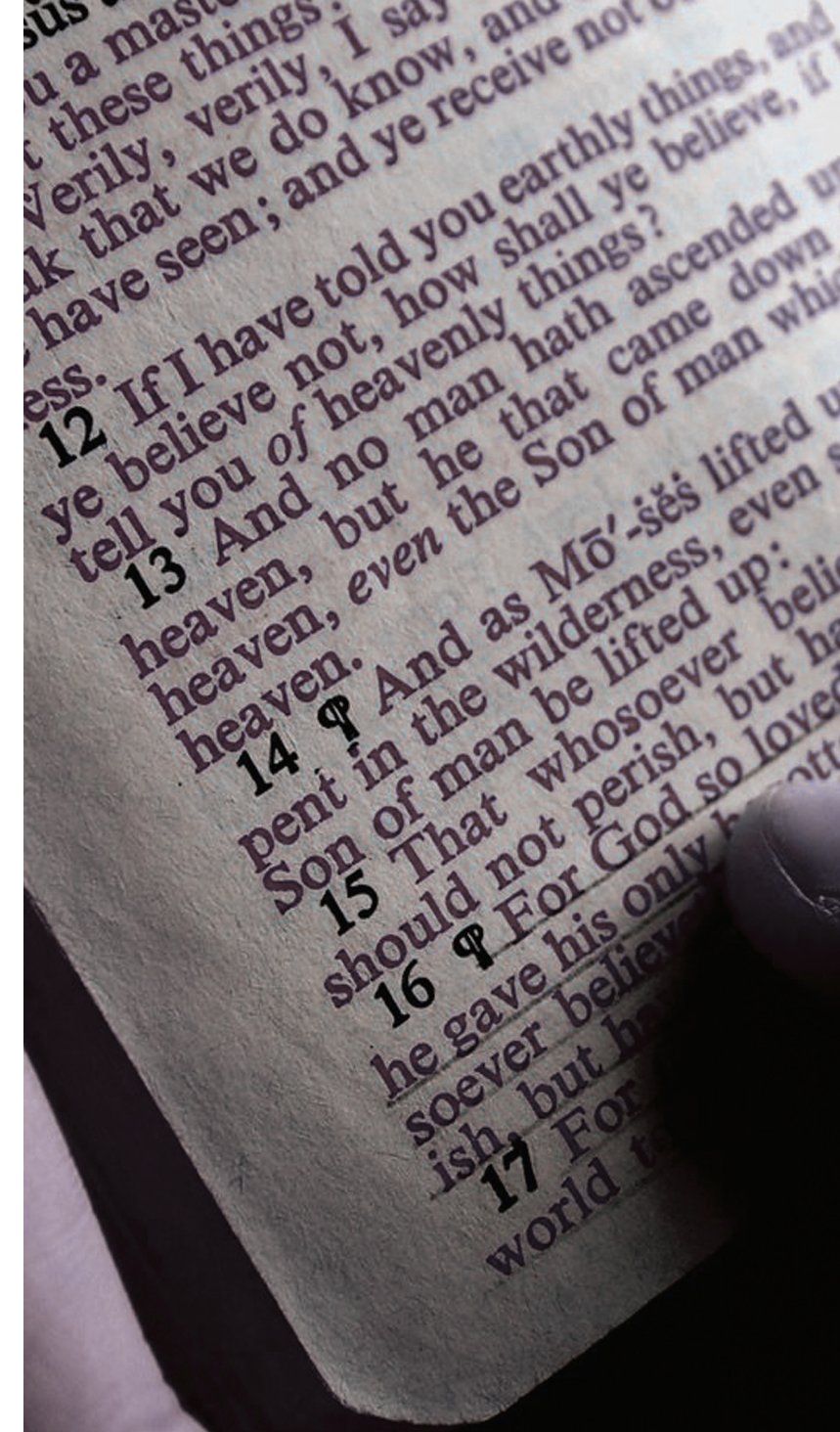
Jesus Christ, the Son of God, often used this mechanism to press imperatives to His audiences. '*Verily, Verily, I say unto you...*' was used by Jesus Christ 25 times in His recorded teachings. In essence it is saying truly, truly, or *with most absolute certainty*, I am communicating this extremely important matter.

Now, when the Second Person of the Godhead, the One who was the medium through which Father God created everything, (John 1: 3; Colossians 1:16) puts that emphasis on an issue, we are to be utterly assured that what was being said is imperative.

So, what would happen to our understanding, our perception if this Ultimate Being were to repeat something three times? Wouldn't – shouldn't – the answer in this context be a heart stopping, we must listen, understand and uncompromisingly embrace this?

The term, *holy* appears more than 600 times in scripture and has a consistent nuanced yet profound meaning of separateness, as in consecrated, set apart, utterly beyond the common – pure and perfect.

Twice in the divine text we see this word, this quality – virtue repeated thrice. In the Greek, this process has been titled, the [Trisagion](#).



In the Old Testament it is the Prophet Isaiah, the Prophet *caught up* in heavenly raptures, that records our first profound repeat.

Like some fiery choir, they would call back and forth continually. Holy, holy, holy is the Eternal, the Commander of heavenly armies! The earth is filled with His glorious presence!

Isaiah 6:3 (The Voice)

In the New Testament we find this incredible emphasis recorded by the Apostle John as he too is *caught up* into the heavenly realm,

These four living creatures, each of which had six wings and was covered with eyes—eyes on the outside and on the inside—did not cease chanting. All day and night they were singing. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God who is the All Powerful, who was, and who is, and who is coming.

Revelation 4:8 (The Voice)

Where am I going with this? As previously mentioned, repetition in the Jewish literary context is about the degree of intense emphasis on importance – it is to grasp for superlatives – a *transcendent imperative!*

It is only **Holiness**, this quality, this virtue, this aspect, this facet of the One True and Triune God that receives this vital attention, *not love!*

Yet, as we have clearly understood from our opening passages,
God IS Love!

So now, we have a noticeably clear understanding of the composition of this *love*, what that *love* is made of – it is HOLY.

It is in this context and this framework which the Divine love finds its perfect eternal expression and fruit. When holiness and all that it means, is excised from the manifestation, deployment and expression of love, it cannot be love as God intended.

Part Two:

GOD'S LOVE – ALWAYS ON OFFER – SO, HOW MUST WE ENGAGE?

Let me reiterate and with a modern trisagion format:

God is love, not 'love is god'!

As previously mentioned, before the universe existed, before time itself was, God is. To invoke the *Kalam principle*, basically it posits that, 'everything that has a beginning has a cause. The universe has a beginning, thus the universe has a cause. The God of creation did not have a beginning, thus did not have a cause.'

The Triune community of Three Persons – One Deity, existed in perfect union, harmony, and communion. Only the Judeo-Christian world view and theological framework has both love and family existing and in play before the universe was created – and from that source, that community – was spawned not merely the material, but Divinely infused humanity.

This meta-narrative 'ticks all the boxes' of both credibility and sustainability when it comes to understanding the human experience inexorable need for communion, community and family.

God created everything both in and through this love and wanted His created beings free in agency and capacity to in turn love, commune, collaborate and co-create with Him

in owning and husbanding this utterly unique Third Rock from the Sun.

What a staggering offering and privilege, but that is what an extended family was always supposed to be about – it is the Judeo-Christian God's design.

This Divine and complete love imparted in and to us **free agents**, enables all the wonderful potential for all us humans to engage fully in that community of love filled servanthood and all the mind-blowing potential that has. Alternatively, that same agency and capacity can be engaged to leave, ignore, or repel that love and its most profound context and operate as self-serving individuals – an antithesis to the original design.

Yet, regardless of our lesser responses this perfect and omnibenevolent love remains on offer and in play, but it now becomes how we engage (or do not engage) with it, that determines not only potential, but the very level of communion and intimacy we choose to participate in.

In the following verses we see both the extent and ever progressive call toward love that is on offer,

- Firstly, Gods love is on offer and available to all His creation. ([John 3:16](#))
- Secondly Gods love, this offering, must be accepted and received. ([John 14:20-21](#))

- Thirdly for full impact, influence and intimacy, Gods love must be abiding, and the relational response needed from us to abide in that love. ([John 15: 9-10](#))

In the Genesis account we see in Chapter 2, verse 16 and 17 – God's First, and at that point only, commandment is given. It is important to note that it was established not in a civic or judicial framework, but a **relational** one – and it was not a mere recommendation. It was, however, a protective and boundary setting **requirement**.

The **will** of humanity has not only been created but given a context in which to be exercised.

This is now the matrix in which free will can choose self-rule or trust perfect wisdom from the Only Perfectly Omniscient and Loving Parent.

"The Lord God gave the man this order: You are free to eat from any of the trees of the garden except the tree of knowledge of good and evil. From that tree you shall not eat; when you eat from it you shall die."

Genesis 2:16-17 (NASB)



It is important to note that this protective requirement – this boundary (prelude to a commandment) was given to Adam, as Eve had not yet been created.

The question then comes in the context of this free agency and its attending capacity is, whose responsibility was it to instruct Eve?

And before you leap into an anti-patriarchal diatribe, it is not about gender or hierarchy, but just as God with Adam, it is those who have the information and understanding to share it fully and empoweringly *with those who do not have it*. This is so they too can join in the collaboration of best-practice – including the serving, teaching, and giving one to the other.

Not using this 'knowledge' to control, manipulate or dominate the other.

It is vital to emphasize here, that this new special creation was made for relationship, not utility – to collaborate and co-create – not just comply and fulfill.

No longer was it simply about function, direction and activity, as perhaps with the Angelic hosts, but was about The Creator *'making man in*

their image' and bringing them into the special community and familial relational context that is perfectly modelled in The Trinity.

There was an active collaboration and responsibility sharing within this new relationship. Adam was given dominion over the earth, but to govern with God, not independent of Him.

He was called to name the animals and tend the garden. This was not 'for God', but with God – A new and wonderful connection and expanding divine community had begun.

Adams new partner was created from his rib (Gen 2 :22-23) and by his own declaration she was 'bone of his bone'. So, in this new relational setting, again I ask, whose responsibility was it to initially instruct Eve on the arena she has now come into?

A key point I want to make here is that one vital (and seminal) function that The Creators perfect love performs, and that is it ***instructs***. This instruction is not mere verbal directives rather pre and proscriptions delivered in a context of modelling a caring, protective, and

maturing relationship – just as Adam himself had received from Father God.

It *instructs* because it is always about seeking best practice for those in its orbit.

It seeks not only to protect, warn and prevent, but also to enhance, build, strengthen, enable, fortify, equip and mature, so that the object of love has every opportunity to experience the very best that the Creator has placed on offer.

To *deliberately* do less, is not to really love – well not love the Creators way.

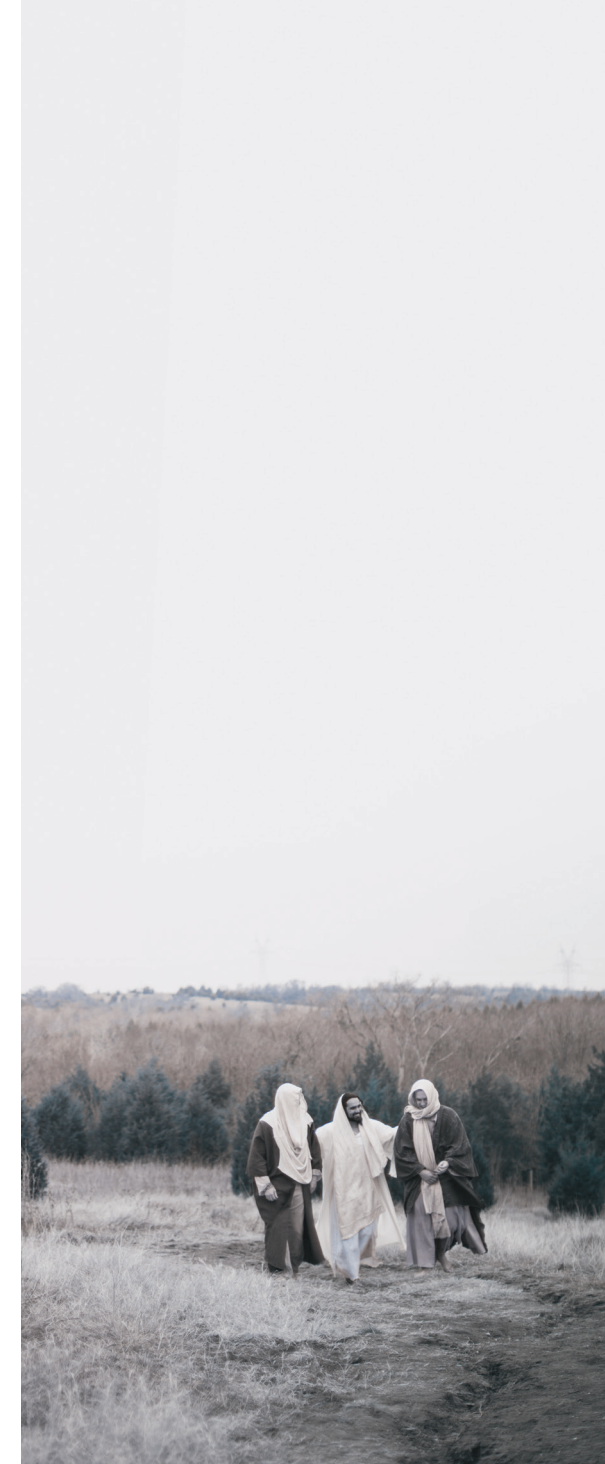
It is important to note that when the Second Person of the Trinity finalized His Incarnation, some of the very, very last words of love recorded in the Gospels were instructive and in a relational context, as reflected in Jesus entire life.

"Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, teaching to observe all I have commanded you, and understand, I will be with even to the end of the age."

Matthew 28:17-20

This final loving directive is again, about equipping, enabling, empowering, and building all in the orbit of love to experience and exercise best practice – God's Kingdom principles, in an utterly committed relational context. Notice this seemingly overwhelming commission did not say 'teach to observe *some*, or *most* of what I've commanded'. No, it is *all*. This is an imperative of God's love, it does not omit, ignore, or discard what may appear difficult or even austere.

It is here that I want to chime in with the Apostle Peter's magnificently inventoried elements of the divine goal of love developing maturity – an *instruction* of unequivocal clarity:



For this very reason, adding your diligence [to the divine promises], employ every effort in exercising your faith to develop virtue (excellence, resolution, Christian energy), and in [exercising] virtue [develop] knowledge (intelligence),

And in [exercising] knowledge [develop] self-control, and in [exercising] self-control [develop] steadfastness (patience, endurance), and in [exercising] steadfastness [develop] godliness (piety),

And in [exercising] godliness [develop] brotherly affection, and in [exercising] brotherly affection [develop] Christian love.

For as these qualities are yours and increasingly abound in you, they will keep [you] from being idle or unfruitful unto the [full personal] knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One). For whoever lacks these qualities is blind, [spiritually] short-sighted, seeing only what is near to him, and has become oblivious [to the fact] that he was cleansed from his old sins. Because of this, brethren, be all the more solicitous and eager to make sure (to ratify, to strengthen, to make steadfast) your calling and election; for if you do this, you will never stumble or fall. Thus, there will be richly and abundantly provided for you entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:5-11 (Amplified Bible, Classic Edition)

Of course, it had to be Peter who penned this Holy Ghost revealed counsel. These two Epistles of First and Second Peter make manifest a man who has been utterly transformed by the very things he is exhorting all who read to pursue. This is Father God speaking through not mere inspiration, but again prescriptive instruction that transcends the capricious emotions that so often dictate our responses and actions.

This clarity of this passage not only shows us how God's love is to be arrived at, but how it is understood, constructed, and complied, leaving no room for doubt as to how it must be engaged and expressed.

I have started here with verse 5, which opens with 'for this very reason...' What is the reason for the ensuing elements to be understood, embraced, exercised, and built upon? So, we may not merely escape moral decay, but more – become partakers of God's Divine Nature. This, again, is the ultimate expression and manifestation of components of the God *that is love* – a holistic, faith filled, complete, informed, morally excellent, enduring, and Holy love.

And to be sure to leave no doubt as to the imperative of this complete love, the Author declares that only this intentional maturing journey is what will keep you from being unfruitful in your **knowledge** of this God of **Love**.

This God of relationship – of family – insists that all those

declaring to be His children, disciples and ambassadors, not only understand but implement, model and share this with all they meet – not **for** God, but **in** Him. This, as God instructs through Peter, is what ensures those in the Divine redeeming orbit '*do not stumble because they are short-sighted and oblivious*' to Kingdom best-practice.

To reiterate, **Love instructs** – in all its modes – and our abiding in it ensures this always edifies in its perpetuity.

The God of the Bible, the Judeo-Christian Triune Divinity, is utterly inclusive in His focus and intent for His creation, particularly His highest creation – humanity. He has never wanted us to leave or reject Him, but since that fateful day in Eden, God has always had His invitation to return on offer. YHWH has used all means to reach out; Holy Spirit, nature, angels, His own special people – prophets, teachers, ambassadors – wisdom, counsel and of course, His very own Son. The invitation has always been unabashedly clear.

To all, and everyone – come as you are, come home – so we can again have the fellowship for which you were created.

However, we must also remember that this omnibenevolent Author of the universe, is also a God of perfection and purity – Holy.

This quality, this aspect of Holiness is unsurpassed in the multifaceted nature of the Divine.

As we have already read, Holiness is the only virtue, quality and facet of the Trinity that receives the [Trisagion](#) emphasis. In all of Scripture, only Holiness gets this supreme emphasis, an emphasis that flavours and shapes and permeates every other virtue, character, and the very nature of the Triune God.

As such He has never changed His position on the clear and perfect boundaries that make for best practice relationships and the fruit they produce. That which was impure, and imperfect could not stay in Eden (Paradise), as it would only detract and bring decay to that idyllic unspoiled space, and having access to the potential for unending longevity with sin that separates would mean relationship is permanently lost. Such was the concern of the reintroduction of the now self-governing humanity that a Cherubim guard was set over the gate back into Eden. (Gen 3:24)

Heaven, like Eden can have no impurities permitted, no blemish can be allowed, as perfection requires the complete absence of all such detractors – especially for the eternal context. Divine uninterrupted communion cannot exist with sin in play, and communion is what the Trinitarian God is all about.

Yet in all His perfection this Holy, yet utterly relational God, with a perfect Father's heart, calls and beckons to all and sundry – no matter your background, your heritage,



your conduct, family, brokenness or failings – to come to His great Wedding Feast ([Matthew 22:1-14](#)). This utterly and incomprehensively Pure and Perfect God, (*Yes, I am labouring these superlatives because the Western Church has largely lost this perspective*) commissions His agents to compel by begging in their invitation for all to come to this elite, and transcendent celebration.

However, we really need to fully understand this call and its intent. The call is to invite you back into *purity and devotional exclusivity*, not just a celebration. For it is the *surrender in this devotional exclusivity*, that will enable us to fully enter in and experience the perfection of love, joy, peace and purity that our self-governing could never ever achieve.

An invite that no one deserved, but one given with only **one requirement** – not a recommendation – **a command**; that the one responding to this free invite, has a willingness to leave all the wilful selfishness and pride behind; all the failed self-government, and instead surrender in repentance to the perfect Father as they enter in.

Of course, a mere moment of reflection brings the obvious reality that we are far from perfection and purity. And yes, unquestionably we are. We are filthy and have **nothing to wear** to this magnificent unparalleled occasion. (Isaiah 64:6)

Yet even still, we are earnestly invited!

As one who accepts this invitation, I'm saying, I want to be at this feast; I want to leave all and everything to come home to this relational Eden by repenting and making God my exclusive focus of worship. Then this inclusive, loving God, does not change the boundaries or lower the standard of access; no, none of that is done. Instead, what He does do is breathtaking.

At complete cost to Himself, He washes your life, your real life, completely clean in His cleansing and Redeeming Blood as you confess your need for the purity that only He can give. Then He dresses you in His best garments – even one He wore Himself (an incalculable privilege) the **Robe of Righteousness**, that enables you to again entrance in to the wedding feast – to then be fully conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29). Now you can experience again the 'best practice' that is His Divine perfection that makes you so utterly whole and completely rich.

We are back to the original intent of our creation, the intimacy with the Perfect G_d in relational and devotional exclusivity is complete and unfettered because nothing else in our orbit even warrants a first, let alone second glance. We are home. We are whole and we are abiding in His perfect transcendent LOVE!

Selah!

Shane Wesley Varcoe 2020



“The Resurrection Changes Everything!” Nik Ripkin

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