

# For the Love of God

## “What Does True Love Mean?”

### I. SCRIPTURE

Mark 9:7 – “And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, ‘**This is my beloved Son; listen to Him**’.”

### II. WHAT DOES TRUE LOVE MEAN?

Tomorrow, much of the world will celebrate Valentine’s Day. According to Dictionary.com, Valentine’s Day is defined as “February 14, observed in honor of St Valentine as a day for the exchange of valentines and other tokens of affection”.<sup>1</sup> The St Valentine who inspired the holiday may have been two different men. Officially recognized by the Roman Catholic Church, St Valentine is known to be a real person who died around A.D. 270. However, his true identity was questioned as early as AD 496 by Pope Gelasius I, who referred to *the martyr* and his acts as “being known only to God.” One account from the 1400s describes Valentine as a temple priest *who was beheaded* near Rome by the emperor Claudius II *for helping Christian couples wed*. A different account claims Valentine was the Bishop of Terni, also *martyred* by Claudius II on the outskirts of Rome. Because of the similarities of these accounts, it’s thought they may refer to the same person.<sup>2</sup>

I wonder why is it that we have chosen a *martyr* to symbolize our love for our each other? Our wives, our husbands, our girlfriends, our boyfriends, our daughters (these for sure in my case) or sons, our crushes, our friends and classmates, our brothers and sisters in the church, or whomever? To express our love for others, we chose a saint who was supposedly “beheaded for helping Christian couples get married”! I’m going to tell you, that when I told my wife Hydie, or my daughters Rica, Lilli, Sheena, or Jackie lately that “I love you”, I was not thinking that I was meaning to say: “I love you and I am meaning, dear, that I am willing to die for you”.

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<sup>1</sup>. “Valentine’s Day”. Dictionary.com. Accessed February 13, 2021. <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/valentine-s-day>

<sup>2</sup>. Hanes, Elizabeth. “Six Surprising Facts about St. Valentine”. History Stories. History. Feb 14, 2013; updated Feb 11, 2021. Accessed February 13, 2021. <https://www.history.com/news/6-surprising-facts-about-st-valentine>

**You know, this is a perfect time, I think, for me to share a little story with you. It's about my eldest daughter, Jackie, who by the way, together with her husband Geoff, has made me and Hydie very proud by giving us our very first grandchild: a grandson. Anyway, there have been many guys who have been infatuated with her over the years. Hydie and I remember one such guy, who Jackie actually liked and who had even proposed to her. I'll tell you right off hand, we did not appreciate this guy, and absolutely felt that he would be a poor match for her for marriage. When Hydie or I would go and visit with her, we'd notice certain things that indicated to me that he was not husband material. Remember now, that the marriage vows usually include something like "I promise that I will love and cherish you, in sickness and in health, till death us do part". If that's the case, we wondered why Jackie was always having to deal with problems like cleaning and repairing her car when it broke down, or why this guy didn't show up on time for family dinners that where he was supposed to prove to us that he was "marriage" material for her. I remember later, that I had a private breakfast meeting with Jackie's older sister, my step daughter, whom Jackie respects immensely, together with her husband. My intention was to get her sister and brother-in-law's support to talk her out of an engagement with this guy. Part of my appeal to both of them, after giving them a list of all the examples that I had witnessed where this guy was not showing a true, selfless love toward her while... while he instead should be really going all out to prove his worth to her. I remember using the analogy that instead of being so selfish, as evidenced by his relationship so far, that if he loved her as he says, then he should be doing everything to prove his love for her, including to even be willing to take a bullet for her, if necessary. I'll always remember my stepson's response when he responded to me with his wife sitting right beside him: "Rich, I'm not sure that I could even do that for my wife because I think that would really hurt [me] a lot."**

**This question of whether true love really means "being willing to hurt for someone", or whether it really means "till death do us part", particularly our own death, that I went to the dictionary to really see if that's what love is all about. And sure enough, in addition to about twenty (20) other definitions for love, there was this one:**

**Love is an "unselfish loyal and benevolent concern for the good of another: such as the fatherly concern of God for humankind"; and a "brotherly concern for**

others”.<sup>3</sup> And so, as Christians, we need to look no further than God’s word. [A good time to show today’s bulletin image.]



### III. FOR YAH [God] SO LOVED THE WORLD ...

When we think about what it means that “God loves us”, we usually think about what is probably the most famous bible verse in the world, that **“YAH [God] so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”**.<sup>4</sup> Don’t we? When we reflect on this text, we are usually thinking something like, “Oh yeah... that’s really cool! God so loved me, that He sent Jesus to die for me... and that all I really need to do is “believe” in Jesus... that way, I won’t have to die... but even if I do, then I will have everlasting life”. “Oh wow!” Right? But when we reflect on this verse, we seldom think about the part that says, **“YAH [God] so loved the world that He gave His only Son”**<sup>5</sup> and what that part really means. Am I right? Let’s think about this part of the verse for a

<sup>3</sup>. “Love.” Merriam-Webster Dictionary. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/love>.

<sup>4</sup>. John 3:16 NKJV.

<sup>5</sup>. John 3:16 ESV.

minute, the part that says that “YAH [God] so loved ... that He gave...” That “He gave His *only Son*” for you. What does that really look like to you, when you think about it? Or maybe, that is *if* you even think about it much?

First of all, I want you to realize that our Father YAH [God], Who so loved us... is the same Father YAH [God] that was the biological father of YAHUSHA [Jesus]. For we are told that YAHUSHA [Jesus] was His only *begotten* son, aren't we? And I am here today to inform you that *our* Father YAH [God], who is not a absent dad to us, was also not an absent dad to His own *beloved, begotten son YAHUSHA [Jesus]*. And how do I know that? I know this to be a fact, for when I read His word, I read these passages, and I realize that He has always had His eye on His son, our Savior, and loved Him deeply:

Back in through His Old Testament prophets, YAHUAH [God] is projecting His love for His son YAHUSHA [Jesus], when He says:

“YAHUAH [God] has said... ‘You are my Son; this day have I begotten you’ (Psalm 2:7).” I am so proud of You Son, and what you are going to accomplish, that I say now to You: “ask of Me, and I shall give you the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; you will dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” (Psalm 2:8-9)

And again...

“Behold! My Servant [Son] whom I uphold, My Elect [Chosen] One in whom My soul delights! I have put My RUACH [Spirit] upon Him”; I am so proud of Him for “He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street.” He will be “a bruised reed [but] He will not break, and smoking [burning] flax [but] He will not quench [extinguish]; [But] He will bring forth justice for truth. He will not fail nor be discouraged, till He has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands will wait for His law.” (Isaiah 42:1-4) Yes, YAH [God] is saying, “I am so very proud of my Son, for what He will endure and do for Me... and for You”.

And even in His New Testament word and testimony, YAHUAH [God] is still showing His love and pride toward His only Son YAHUSHA [Jesus] ...

... for during the transfiguration that is recorded both in Matthew and in Mark, He even decides to brings in His son’s disciples – Peter, James, and John – so He can tell even them, that...

“while [Peter] was still speaking [gibberish, nonsense], a bright cloud overshadowed [Peter, James, and John], and behold, [the] voice out of the cloud [of His Father] said, ‘**This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!**’” (Matthew 17:5) and again, “and a cloud overshadowed [Peter, James, and John], and [the] voice [of YAHUSHA (Jesus’ Dad)] came out of the cloud, [saying to them] ‘**this is my beloved Son; listen to Him**’.”

Even at His Son’s YAHUSHA [Jesus]’s baptism, His Father YAHUAH [God] testifies before all, “**This is my Yachiyd [My Beloved Boy, My Beloved Son], in Whom I am well pleased**”<sup>6</sup> and at that time the Holy RUACH [Spirit] is then seen descending upon His Boy, no other than the only Son of YAHUAH [God], like a dove and alighting on Him.<sup>7</sup>

And as both David and Isaiah would prophesy, YAHUAH [God], even in His love and pride for YAHUSHA [Jesus], would allow His one and only Son to be “**a bruised reed Who would not break, and smoking [burning] flax Who would not quench**”.

Yes, dear sisters and brothers, our almighty Father, Who was first the Father of His only Boy YAHUSHA [Jesus]... He would “**so loved [you and me] that He [would] give His only begotten Son, [of Whom He was so proud, and Whom He loved so much] that [if you and I would] believe in Him [we] should not perish but have everlasting life**”. In fact, YAHUAH [God]’S love was so deep for you and me, that He would allow His son to anguish in the Garden of Gethsemane, and He would refuse His Boy YAHUSHA [Jesus]’s request for help, after He expressed when He pleaded with these same disciples – Peter, James, and John – that “**my soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. [Please] stay here and watch [with Me]**”<sup>8</sup>... He would afterward turn to His Dad to plead: “**Abba [Daddy], Father, all things are possible for You. [Please] take this cup away from Me... nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.**”<sup>9</sup>

As so, because He loved you so much, YAHUAH [God] allowed His boy YAHUSHA [Jesus] to experience the worst kind of suffering, torture and death, including the death of the cross, perhaps the most cruel, vindictive, torturous death anyone at any time in history could have ever experienced.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>. Matt. 3:17.

<sup>7</sup>. Matt. 3:16.

<sup>8</sup>. Matt. 13:34.

<sup>9</sup>. Matt 13:36.

<sup>10</sup>. Wellman, Jack. “Roman Crucifixion Methods: What Did Jesus Endure”. What Christians Want to Know: Topics to Equip, Encourage & Energize. Accessed February 13, 2021. <https://www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com/roman-ancrucifixion-methods-what-did-jesus-endure>.

And so today... now... after you consider what it means that your Father **“YAH [God] so loved [you] that He gave His only [Boy]”** for you, what are you to think?

And so today... now... after you consider what it means that your Brother and your Savior YAHUSHA [Jesus] so love you that He was willing to suffer, be tortured, and endure death, the cruel, vindictive, torturous death of the cross for you, what are you to do?

The answer to these questions is given by the Apostle John, the same author who wrote down YAHUSHA [Jesus]’s John 3:16 words... the answer is given by the same beloved disciple John who was ear and eyewitness to YAHUAH [God]’s own words, when He expressed His love and pride for His Son... Yes, John writes in his book another John 3:16 passage, in 1 John 3:16 he writes that by the Father’s love for us, **“by this we know love, that YAHUSHA [Jesus] laid down his life for us, and [SO] we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers (and sisters)”**.

#### IV. A FAMILY DEATH – THE DEATH OF GARY, MY AETHIST BROTHER-IN-LAW

Early this morning, at 5:21 am, as I was preparing today’s message, my sister Judie sent me a text. It said **“Hi. Gary passed Thursday Evening.”**

Both my sister and brother-in-law were professed atheists. You know, Hydie and I, and even our church has had prayer for them, asking for them to be led into salvation before an awful moment like what happened Thursday evening would eventually happen. And you know, now that I have had the chance to consider that whether I loved him... whether I love my sister... whether I love you... or others outside of my immediate family, whether I truly love you or not. I can say now with a right heart, that I do. Even if I it would hurt, as my stepson said, to take a bullet for you, I would be willing. And yes, even if it meant that I should lay down my life for you as my brother or sister, as my heart is breaking for my sister because of the loss of Gary, I would... *if* it meant that the act, as the act of YAHUSHA [Jesus] meant in dying for you, that you would be **“saved”** by it.

#### V. CONCLUSION

And now as St Valentine’s comes and goes, before you say **“I love you”** someone, then please consider the words that YAHUAH [God] Himself spoke to us through Peter, James, and John:

**“This is my beloved Son; listen to Him!”**

And if we want to show our love back to our Father YAHUAH [the LORD], then let's shut up... not be babbling or talking nonsense like Peter at YAHUSH [Jesus], but let's "listen" to YAHUSHA [Jesus]'s words now, that He is saying to you and me, as written down by His beloved apostle John for us:

**"As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. These things I command you, that you love one another."** (John 15:9-17)

And so I will be praying for each of you today, and as St Valentine's Day approaches, that you will learn to love others, as our Father and our Brother has loved us. And "now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. To the only wise YAH [God] our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." (Jude 24-25)