

The Romance of God (The Death of Fear and the Birth of Faith)

Revelation 19:1-10

#34 in our series “The Gospel According to Jesus: The Revelation”

September 23, 2018

Peter Hiatt

[The worship band plays “Set them free” by Sting]

That’s an interesting song choice; I wonder what it means?

“*For freedom Christ has set us free,*” wrote Paul to the Galatians (Gal. 5:1).

Prayer

Lord God, thank you that you are here with us. And now, through the power of your Spirit, and in the name of Jesus, we ask that you would help us to preach the Gospel. Amen.

Message

It’s been a year of preaching through the Revelation and today we arrive at a verse that finally tells us what it is that God wants—second person, singular aorist, imperative: simple command.

This may surprise some, but it’s not: “Store canned goods for the coming apocalypse”; it’s not: “Beware of Romanian dictators with a penchant for tattoos” or “Support the military industrial complex of the United States and Israel...”

The command is not the commands to the seven churches because those weren’t commands to the churches but to the seven angels, or spirits, of the seven churches...

What Jesus asks of the seven churches is that they’d listen to someone read the book: “Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear,” says Jesus (Rev. 1:3). It’s the first of seven beatitudes in the Revelation.

I looked up all the direct commands in the Revelation so far. There are a few specific commands to John like “*Write,*” “*Measure,*” “*Come up here.*” Last week, we read a command to “*Come out of her my people.*” But in sixteen of twenty-five times so far, John, and we, have been commanded to “*Look*” or “*Behold.*”

And now in Revelation 19:10 “***Worship God.***”

If you’ve been confused: This is the point. This is what God wants: worship—*proskuneo* in Greek. *Pros* is a prefix meaning toward...*Kuneo* means to kiss and is probably the source of the German word *kuss* and the English word *kiss*.

To worship is to kiss with all your heart mind, soul, and strength. God wants worship; He wants a kiss. The kiss may manifest in an infinite number of ways, but at the heart, it must always be *proskuneo*—a passionate kiss offered in freedom.

In January of 1978, I took Susan Coleman to see *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. It was our first date, and I planned to kiss her.



I was something of a beast, at the time; I didn't really know her, but I saw that she was *good for food and a delight to the eyes*—so I walked her to the door, said, “good night,” and planted a wet one right on those beautiful lips.

It was just like kissing a post. She was afraid; she didn't trust me; she didn't know me, and so her heart, mind, soul, and strength were divided. She kissed me with her lips, but her heart was far from me. If there were a rating system for all the kisses in the world that kiss would've been ranked in the bottom five, or maybe, ten percent of all kisses.

It was a terrible kiss. So, I pulled out a gun pointed it at her forehead, and said, “Kiss me or else!” Actually, I didn't do that because that's an almost entirely ineffectual way of obtaining high-quality kisses.

Three times, very clearly, Scripture claims, “*Every knee will bow and every tongue give praise.*” I've been told that, for most folks, that will happen at the point of a gun... or some other instrument of torment and fear. But you see that's an entirely ineffectual way to obtain quality kisses.

So how do you obtain high-quality kisses? Do you threaten? Do you pay?
Is that “the way”?

According to Scripture, there was one kiss or set of kisses, from a kisser, that probably rate just about best in all of history... And Jesus obtained those kisses; it might've even been on a first date... but probably the second.

In Luke chapter seven, Jesus dines at the house of a Pharisee when a harlot falls at His feet weeping, anointing His feet with perfume, tears, and kisses. When Simon the Pharisee expresses his disapproval, Jesus turns to him and says, *“You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in, she has not ceased to kiss my feet—that’s proskuneo—she has not ceased to kiss my feet. Therefore I tell you her sins, which were many, are forgiven (let go—gone. I don’t care about them anymore because I got what I wanted)—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little loves little.”*⁴

Do you think you’ve sinned much? Look around the room, if you think it would help. Do you think you’ve sinned much? If not... You must not believe that you’ve been forgiven much, and so you must be a lousy kisser . . . and definitely *not* a worshiper.

Well anyway, that’s how Jesus makes good kissers. And that’s what God wants—an entire world of non-stop *proskuneo*. And that’s what the Revelation is all about; it’s about how the Bride is made ready.

Immediately after Jesus tells the weeping, kissing, former harlot that her sins are forgiven in Luke chapter 7, we’re introduced to Mary Magdalene in chapter 8. Some say that she was married to Jesus. I doubt that’s true, and yet, of course, it *is* true . . . for we are all Mary. We’re Mary, but where the Harlot once stood, suddenly, the Bride of Christ appears.

Let’s read our text!

Revelation 19:1 *“After this...”*

After what? ...after the judgment of the great harlot.

As we saw last week, the great Harlot is a world ruler of this present darkness. She is an economy of *porneia*—which is the attempt to buy and sell love. She is a city... and in particular, Babylon, Rome, and Jerusalem. And ever since we took the good to make ourselves good, we’ve become pretty great harlots too.

In the last chapter, the Lord cries, “Come out of her my people.” And just like those that worship the beast, these people, participating in *porneia*, appear to be *all* the people who dwell on the earth.

19:1 *“After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven...”*

I think we’re supposed to wonder, where the hell did all these people come from? We just witnessed the annihilation of all people on the surface of the earth. And now this great multitude in heaven starts worshipping.

They sound like the multitude in Revelation 5, which was *“every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is within them.”*

19:1 *“After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven*

crying out, 'Hallelujah!'

This is the first time this word appears in the New Testament. This instance, and the three instances we're about to read are the only places in which this word appears in the New Testament at all. It's actually a Hebrew interjection that means "Praise Yahweh!" or in Greek, "Worship God!" (*to theo proskuneson*).ⁱⁱ If you count Hebrew interjections, this is an imperative command too. We are being told in Greek and Hebrew: "Worship God!"

Revelation 19:1-2

After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven crying out, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just..."

Notice that they're worshipping *not* because they've avoided God's Judgment; they're worshipping because they just *witnessed* God's Judgment. It's just; that means it's right.

It's just like the end of (Isaiah 66:23-24)—these verses used to scare me more than any others in all of the Bible; now they fill me with the most hope! In this chapter, all flesh worship the Lord, for all flesh walk out to the edge of the New Jerusalem and see their old flesh, their own corpses, burning in the valley of *Gehenna*.ⁱⁱⁱ They have been judged and delivered from themselves.

Revelation 19:1b -11

Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute (porne) who corrupted the earth with her immorality (porneia) and has avenged on her the blood of his servants."

That's the blood that's wine and wine that's blood.
That's the vengeance we bleed when we forgive our enemies.
That's the double vengeance we preached about last time.

Once more they cried out, "Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever [literally, "for ages and ages."]

"Smoke" can mean many things . . . Here it may just mean that evil is destroyed, but in chapter 8 it referred to the pleasing aroma of sacrifice (Rev. 8:4, Psalm 141:2). "*This is your spiritual worship,*" wrote Paul: "*This is your logical act of worship that you present yourself a living sacrifice.*"

You know? Sacrifice is utterly terrifying from the perspective of the earth or from the vantage point of the harlot; it's losing your life—your psyche. But from the standpoint of heaven or the heart of a Bride, it might be something entirely different: losing yourself and finding yourself, losing your life and finding your life, losing your fig leaves and finding your Husband—your Helper. Remember: Adam—humanity—couldn't find his Helper.

Well, *“This is Love,”* wrote John, *“not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”* (1 John 4:10 NIV)

Love is sacrifice. So . . .

From the standpoint of the harlot Love is inconceivable.

But from the standpoint of the Groom and Bride it a communion of self-sacrifice called Love may be all that matters.

Well, God is Love, who freely and constantly gives Himself for all.

And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, “Amen. Hallelujah!” And from the throne came a voice saying,

*“Praise our God, all you his servants,
you who fear him, small and great.”*

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,

*“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.
Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready;
it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”—
for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.*

This is a direct reference to Isaiah 61, which we read last week and which Jesus quotes in the synagogue in Luke 4. [Is. 61: 1-7] It starts with a reference to the cross, as the day of vengeance... and then it describes the double vengeance of God's Grace...

And then in verse 10 we read:

*I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God,
For he has clothed me with the garments of salvation;
He has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
As a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress,
And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
For as the earth brings forth its sprouts,
And as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up,
So the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise
To sprout up before all the nations,*

Rev. 19:8

“It was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.”

The harlot was also clothed in fine linen . . . so a harlot can look just like a bride. The harlot was clothed in fine linen . . . but it wasn't given to her; she paid for it, at least in her

own mind.¹

The fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints; the saints are us. A saint has been stripped of his or her ego and fig leaves, and clothed with the righteousness of Christ—or the righteousness that *is* Christ, her Husband.

And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those... There are seven beatitudes in the Revelation—this is the fourth. ...Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Just before He was crucified (Matt. 22:1-14) Jesus told a parable about a king who held a marriage supper for his son. He invited all he could find . . . He invited *all*, "*the bad and the good.*" All are called but one is chosen.

At the wedding banquet, the friend of the king has no wedding garment. The King chooses to throw this friend into outer darkness. I think that friend is His Son and our Lord, the Bridegroom. He had no wedding garment for it had been given to all of us His Bride:

- *He who knew no sin became sin that we might become the righteousness of God* (2 Cor. 5:21).
- *He is our righteousness*, writes Paul (1 Cor. 1:30).

Every good deed you do is the fruit of His Spirit: *Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Gentleness, Faith...* He clothes us with His robe of righteousness. We preached on that a couple of years ago and you can find the message on our website. "The Clothes Make the Man", (8-30-15). It's one of my favorites.^{iv}

Verses 9-10:

And he said to me, "These are the true words of God." Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus.

That's weird because this appears to be one of the seven bowl angels, who come from the temple in heaven, who are dressed just like Jesus and who remind us of the Seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth and to the seven churches. If the angel is not the Spirit of Jesus, it sure reminds us of the Spirit of Jesus—the Spirit of the Helper. That *is* the Helper.

The Holy Spirit is God, but nowhere are we told to worship the Holy Spirit... And yet over and over we're told to worship in, by, and through the Holy Spirit...

Jesus is our Husband and Helper, but in John 16 He promises to send another Helper—who dwelt with them and will be in them—the Spirit of Truth.

The Helper helps us recognize our Helper, who is the Truth and the Life.

¹ Do you suppose the Harlot is jealous? That's why we crucified Jesus.

The Helper is the Spirit of Jesus, who helps us trust our heavenly Father.

The Helper helps us worship . . . in Spirit and in Truth (John 3:23).

And now we come to a mystery beyond our comprehension, for it's the boundary of eternity and time, the boundary of God and us, the boundary of Jesus and the old Adam.

In 1 Cor. 6:16 Paul writes: *"Do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute (porne) becomes one body with her. But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him."*

Did you get that? When we commune in worship with God, our spirit is God's Spirit and God's Spirit is our spirit... and maybe the true us... no longer us, but Christ in us... I think that's faith, hope, and love in us... It all makes your head spin.

But whatever the case, we now know what God wants.

The angel says, "Worship God." And that's what God wants: a good kiss.

About thirty-eight years ago, October 30, 1982, I received a kiss that surely rates as one of the best in the history of the world. I had just dropped to my knees and said, "Susan, would you marry me?" She literally knocked me on my can with kisses.

Susan had never been a harlot, except in the way that we all are harlots, but before that night all of her kisses had been laced with fear.

In 1 Cor. 6 Paul writes that the person who participates in *porneia* wounds his or her own body, whereas, with other sins, we wound other bodies. See? With *porneia* we bind our body to another body that then becomes one body and then we tear that body apart, leaving a wound, and eventually a calloused and hard heart until God heals that heart with the double vengeance it gave. Grace.

If you spend much time in Scripture, you'll be surprised to find that God doesn't seem to have as much of a problem with the joining together, as He does with the tearing apart—after all, we will be, or are, all joined together in Him.^v "There is one body," wrote Paul.

Well anyway, before October 30, 1982, Susan worried about losing my love, as well as earning my love. So, her kisses were laced with fear. But once she believed my covenant promise to always love, there was no fear of losing my love and there was no more love to be earned, and therefore, no failure to be feared. The covenant meant that she could no longer pay for me, for me was free. And so, she kissed me in freedom... just because she wanted to . . . as she wished.

As we preached several months ago, in Jesus' day, a boy would propose to a girl by offering her a cup of wine, that represented the blood of a covenant. If she drank from the cup, she accepted the wedding proposal. When Jesus offered the cup to His disciples, He was proposing and setting them free...free from fear, so they could have faith in Love.

Don't forget that everything we've witnessed in Chapter 17, 18, and 19—the destruction of the harlot and the appearance of the bride—everything happens because, at the end of the sixth day and start of the Seventh, as the seventh bowl of wrath is poured out on the earth, Jesus cries, “It is done,” and gives Jerusalem a cup of blood that's wine and wine that's blood.

The harlot is destroyed and the bride suddenly appears because the woman was made to drink the cup of double vengeance, which is Grace.

The bride appears where the harlot was, and the Bride looks as the harlot did, but the Bride is entirely different:

The harlot dressed *herself* in gold, jewels, and pearls.
The bride is gold, jewels, and pearls.

The harlot was trying to make herself beautiful to get what she wanted.
The Bride *is* beautiful, for she knows that she is wanted by the Groom.^{vi}

The harlot glorified herself.
But the Bride glorifies her Groom, and is glorified.

The harlot was in bondage to herself.
But the Bride has lost herself.

For the harlot, love was a law: “the knowledge of good” to make herself good.
For the Bride Love is a Life: a communion of Life that is the Good.

The harlot was in control.
The Bride has surrendered control.

The harlot kissed for some other reason.
For the Bride . . . kisses *are* the reason.

The kisses of the Bride are free... ^{vii}

You might think the harlot is free, and the Bride is in bondage.
But the harlot has chosen a lie, and a lie is untruth, and untruth is non-being.
To choose a lie is to bind yourself in the deepest of prisons.^{viii}

The harlot chooses the lie and is in bondage to the father of lies.
The Bride is chosen by the Truth and is thus set free.

Remember we said in chapter 11: *If you had free will . . .*
You would never deliberate between choices,
Your will would be unrestrained by any law,
You would constantly will what you want and want what you will . . .

Everything would be “as you wish.”
You would be God, or the Spirit of God would be seated on the throne in the sanctuary of your soul—in a communion, a communion of Love.

Well... *IF* a bride wants to kiss her husband, the kisses are free.
And free kisses are the very best kisses.
And that is what God wants.
And that must be the reason for all the drama, the fencing, fighting, torture, revenge, giants, monsters, and miracles in the Book of the Revelation.
As well as the reason for all the fencing, fighting, torture, revenge, giants, monsters, chases, escapes, true love, and miracles in *your* life...

God is the author: He’s telling you the story, and that’s what He wants—*proskuneo*, free kisses... Kinda like this:

Clip #1 from *The Princess Bride*

Grandfather: *I brought you a special present.*
Kid: [excitedly] *What is it?*
Grandfather: *Open it up.*
Kid: [opening the gift] *A book?*
Grandfather: *That's right, when I was your age, television was called books; And this is a special book. It was the book my father used to read to me when I was sick and I used to read it to your father...and today, I'm gonna read it to you.*
Kid: [less interested] *Does it got any sports in it?*
Grandfather: *Are you kidding? Fencing, fighting, torture, revenge, giants, monsters, chases, escapes, true love, miracles.*

Kid: *It doesn't sound too bad. I'll try and stay awake.*
Grandfather: *Oh, well, thank you very much. That's very nice of you. Your vote of confidence is overwhelming. Oh..alright.. "The Princess Bride" by S.Morgan Stern, Chapter 1.[From here on, the Grandfather will be known as the Narrator]*
Narrator: *Buttercup was raised on a small farm in the country of Florin. Her favorite past-times were riding her horse and tormenting the farm boy that worked there. His name was Westley. But she never called him that. Isn't that a wonderful beginning?*
Kid: [with no enthusiasm] *Yeah.. It's really good.*
Narrator: *Nothing gave Buttercup as much pleasure as ordering Westley around.*
Buttercup: *Farmboy, varnish my horse's saddle. I want to see my face shining in it by morning.*
Westley: *As you wish.*
Narrator: *"As you wish" was all he ever said to her.*
Buttercup: [holding two empty pails] *Farmboy, fill these with water....please?*
Westley: *As you wish.*
Narrator: *That day she was amazed to discover that when he was saying, "As you wish," what he meant was, "I love you." [The scene changes to the couple passionately kissing at sunset.]*
Kid: [interrupting the story] *Hold it! Hold it! What is this? Are you trying to trick me? Where's the sports? Is this a kissing book?*
Grandfather: *Wait, just wait.*

The Revelation is a “kissing book...”

And now, I’m kinda banking on the fact that you’ve all seen *The Princess Bride*. It’s the classic fairy tale.

In his book *Orthodoxy*, G.K. Chesterton wrote: “The things I believed most then, the things I believe most now, are the things called fairy tales. They seem to me to be the entirely reasonable things... It is not earth that judges heaven, but heaven that judges earth.”

All week, I’ve been wrestling with another book: *Philosophical Fragments*, published in 1844 by Soren Kierkegaard. It’s a philosophical discourse in which he asks the question: “How could a mortal person, ever come to know the Truth—eternal Truth.”

And He wrestles with another age-old question posed by Socrates: “How we could seek the truth, if we never knew the truth... and if we knew the truth, why would we seek it?”

Kierkegaard twists it around and suggests that the Truth is seeking us, and has created, or does create, the condition or capacity within us to recognize truth when the Truth comes to visit.

I don’t think I understand Kierkegaard well, but fortunately, he tells a fairy tale in *Philosophical Fragments*.

He tells the story of a great and powerful king, who from a distance fell in love with a humble maiden, a farm girl... and then, earnestly desired that she would return his love... he earnestly desired her kisses—free kisses.

But suddenly this king is seized with a great problem and a tremendous sorrow. Kierkegaard writes: “Love is triumphant when it makes that which was unequal equal in Love.”

The king realizes that He and his beloved are unequal. If he elevates her to his position before he wins her love, he would never know, but even more, she would never know, if she loved him truly—if she loved him in freedom.

- If he forced her to marry him, it wouldn’t be free and wouldn’t be love.
- In fact, if he merely revealed himself as king, it wouldn’t be free and might not be love—not true love.
- If he revealed his riches and the glory of his kingdom, he wouldn’t know, and she wouldn’t know, if it was *him* she loved, or his *kingdom*.

She might love him for one of a million other reasons...but if you love someone for any reason, other than love, it’s not free and not true love; it’s harlotry. You can’t love for some other reason, for Love *is* the reason.

And so the king realized that he had but one choice and that was to surrender his

Kingdom, his wealth, and his power, for the sake of love...he must sacrifice all to love. No choice but to leave his castle and become a servant and even more a slave... in the hope that his wish, would become her wish, and he could receive her kisses in freedom.

The Truth is King and we are all imprisoned in lies...
And Kierkegaard refers to this descent of the King as the Miracle.

In the words of Saint Paul “...*though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, and being found in human form he humbled himself becoming obedient unto death even death on a cross*” (Phil. 2:6-8).

Jesus, King of Kings, became a farm boy like Westley in *The Princess Bride* and said, “*As you wish*” all the way to the point of death upon a cross. That’s the romance of God.

It was the harlot that nailed Jesus to that tree in the Garden.
It was you and me that took His life and claimed it as our own.
It was our wish. And it was the Romance of God to grant it.

But now I can’t just say, “Hey, y’all, that was the king on that cross,”... and then expect all of us harlots to simply choose to turn ourselves into the Bride. That was Kierkegaard’s point, and why the King humbled himself in the first place... so we would love Him in weakness, for who He is, and not for what He has—His Kingdom.

I can’t do that... And yet that’s just what we, the Church, have often done:
We’ve said, “Jesus is the king, and if you want his kingdom, just call him ‘Lord.’”
But Jesus said, “On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord Lord’... and I will say to them depart from me, I never knew you... (Matt 7:23).” The Truth does not know untruth—that is the harlot... Jesus knows His Bride.

See? We think we’re making converts, and perhaps we’re just making better harlots . . . harlots, who think they possess the king, but have no clue as to who He is. He is True Love.

You know, a harlot is a woman that’s paid to pretend she’s the Bride. So, if a harlot simply decides to be a bride, she’ll simply become a much better harlot—like the Pharisees. The Pharisees wanted the kingdom and so dressed themselves up like the Bride, but couldn’t recognize the King even when he hung on a tree in front of them.

“We cannot solve the problems we have created with the same thinking that created them,” wrote Albert Einstein.

We created the harlot with our desire to take the knowledge of the Good. And now we can’t fix ourselves by taking more knowledge and trying harder. To be a Bride is not the harlot’s desire; to be a giver is not the taker’s desire; to choose the truth is not the liar’s desire. You can’t just desire an entirely new desire. To love is not merely a human

desire; it's not our wish.

The harlot can't choose to become the bride because the harlot is the choice to control Love rather than surrender to Love. The harlot isn't free, because she's chosen evil and evil is an illusion. The harlot is not and the Bride is who I am.

It must be significant that the harlot doesn't choose to become the Bride... The harlot must be destroyed, so something new can be born in her place. Jesus said to Nicodemus, the Pharisee, "*You must be born again.*"

Do you see?

No one simply chooses to be born but maybe a New Self can be born of an old self.

Whatever the case, it's not your doing.

To His disciples, Jesus said, "*You didn't choose me, I chose you.*"

The harlot can't dress herself in her own good deeds, pretend to be the Bride, and so become the Bride. She must be stripped of her fig leaves and harlotry and someone else must give her the deeds with which to dress herself... and make herself ready for the King, His Kingdom, and the Great Banquet.

In Jesus' day, if a girl drank from the cup and accepted a boy's proposal, the boy would then leave to prepare a place for her . . . Meanwhile, she would make herself ready, light her lamp, and wait for him, for he would often come like a thief—at an unexpected hour—in order to take her to the wedding banquet where they would consummate their marriage as everyone celebrated their love and union for an entire week. It was the best party around!

Well, just the boy's departure, after the proposal, would prepare a place for the bride—a place in her own heart, called hope—hope that would be filled with faith and then with love—her bridegroom's love... I mean, she would become his sanctuary and he would become hers. He would create her choice with his choice, and then, nurture that choice with romance.

Well, Jesus' death and resurrection is the romance of God; He died once and for all—all people, in all of space and all of time.

So you see, the King is still coming to us in weakness.

God, the Author of this story, is arranging all things so you would see Him.

And Both have sent their Spirit so you would recognize Him when you see Him...

So you would freely wish, what God has always wished... and that's for a kiss freely offered to Him from you—*proskuneo*.

In John 12 Jesus says, "*When I am lifted up from the earth (and he was speaking of his death on the cross)... I will draw [helkuo, which is also translated romance]... I will romance all people to myself.*"

In John 6, Jesus had already told them, “*No one can come to me unless the Father draws [helkuo, romances] him.*”

See? It’s not only Jesus that romances you; the Father arranges all things that you would be romanced, and they both send their Spirit—the breath of God—that’s the miracle in us.

So, according to plan, in the fullness of time, at just the right moment, God in Christ Jesus lifted His head on the cross, cried, “*It is finished,*” and delivered up His Spirit.

I think that’s the same Spirit that made us humans in the first place

That’s the same Spirit that filled the temple on Pentecost.

And the same Spirit that whispers in the empty places of your soul, “Have hope.”

That’s the same Spirit that helps you to recognize your Helper.

God is your Helper—your Husband.

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all romancing you.

The Father has arranged all things:

...Even a tree, in the middle of a garden, in which you did as you wished.

...Even a choice to seize control and make yourself a beast and a harlot.

...Even the events, which threaten that control, like earthquakes, famines, heartbreaks, tribulation, troubles, monsters, and death.

Remember what God said to Hosea about his harlot bride?

Behold I will allure her, romance her,

I will bring her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her.

I will make the valley of trouble a door of hope...

And then you will call me, “my husband.” (Hosea 2:14-16)^x

The Father arranges all things...

And Jesus still comes to us in weakness...

He is Love.

He is the Truth.

He is the tender Word that speaks... We think it’s nothing, but it’s the King of Kings.

He is the Truth in every story... We think it’s weak, but it’s infinitely strong.

He is the Love that we encounter in people everyday...

We think it’s just a nice idea, but it’s the idea that holds all things together.

He is the beauty in every flower. He is the logic in every argument.

He is the rhythm in every song.

[Peter begins to sing.] “*The mere idea of you, the longing here for you, you’ll never know how slow the moments go till I’m near to you. I see your face in every flower. Your eyes in stars above. It’s just the thought of you the very thought of you my love.*”

The Father arranges all things; Jesus still comes to us in weakness, and it is the Spirit in our souls that causes us to hope . . . and then have faith, Faith in Love who is our

Husband. True Love is our Husband.

In the *Princess Bride*, Westley has no money so he leaves the farm to seek his fortune across the sea.

Westley says to Buttercup, "Here this now, I will always come for you."

"How can you be sure?" she asks.

"Because this is true love," he replies.

Westley is abducted by the Dread Pirate Roberts, who is said to never leave prisoners alive. When Buttercup hears the news, she sinks into despair and agrees to marry the evil Prince Humperdink. She is to receive an entire kingdom, but she doesn't love the king. And that would make her something of a harlot.

Just before she is to wed, she's abducted by some thieves, and then by the Dread Pirate Roberts. He wrecks her world, takes away all her control, and she thinks she will die.

She doesn't realize it's True Love, having come, to set her free.

She doesn't know it's Westley (Westley who inherited the position of head pirate, and immediately used his freedom to come find Buttercup).

She doesn't know it's Westley and Westley doesn't know if she still loves him.

She wishes to kill him, and then she wishes to die with him...

<p>[The Man in Black turns to see Humperdink's hunting party riding past on the hill above them.]</p> <p><u>Man in Black:</u> <i>He died well, that should please you. No bribe attempts or blubbing. He simply</i></p> <p><u>Buttercup:</u> <i>And you read to be for all heard. Buttercup was she please down the hill hit my memory. I</i></p> <p><u>Man in Black:</u> <i>As he bling down the hill, I guess you mean, "I will solve," he replied. And then he</i></p> <p><u>Buttercup:</u> <i>[she sobs] Oh, my sweet Westley, what have I done? [Buttercup only assumes down the hill</i></p> <p><i>after him, and should tumble down the entire length of the mountain side, what you really</i></p> <p><i>are.</i></p> <p><u>Westley:</u> <i>I told you I would come for you. Why didn't you wait for me?</i></p> <p><u>Buttercup:</u> <i>Well, you were dead!</i></p> <p><u>Man in Black:</u> <i>Death cannot stop true love. All it can do is delay it for a while.</i></p> <p><u>Buttercup:</u> <i>I will never doubt again. he was gone, did you get engaged to your prince that same</i></p> <p><u>Westley:</u> <i>There will never be a need. The couple kisses respect to the dead?</i></p> <p><u>Kid:</u> <i>Oh no! No, Please!</i></p> <p><u>Buttercup:</u> <i>[standing up, more indignant than before] You mocked me once, never do it again! I</i></p> <p><u>Grandpa:</u> <i>What's wrong?</i></p> <p><u>Kid:</u> <i>They're kissing again. Do we have to hear the kissing parts?</i></p> <p><u>Grandpa:</u> <i>Someday, you may not mind so much!</i></p>

Clip #2 from *The Princess Bride*

Well, the Evil Prince Humperdink captures them both.

He tells Buttercup, that now she must marry him.

That's Buttercup's nightmare, and so, she literally wakes from her nightmare and tells Humperdink she'd rather die.

Meanwhile, Humperdink kills Westley with infinite suffering in the pit of despair...

But it turns out that Westley is not all dead, but only mostly dead, and so a miracle brings him back to life... but he's incredibly weak. In weakness, Westley and his friends rescue Buttercup. And then . . . she gives him a kiss...

"Since the invention of the kiss there had been five kisses that were rated the most passionate, the most pure. This one left them all behind."

She wished, what Westley had always wished, and so the kiss was entirely free.

I'm saying that the Revelation is a "kissing book."

Your life is a kissing book, or at least, a kissing story:

God your Father is the Author of the story.

Jesus is the Bridegroom and you are the Bride.

Even now, the Spirit may be whispering in your heart: it's True.

It's all the Romance of God. The fencing, fighting, torture, revenge, giants, monsters, chases, escapes, true love, and miracles... are all because God is creating a brand new desire in you... The desire to love Him, the way He has always loved you: absolutely... and in perfect freedom.

Clip #3 from *The Princess Bride*

[The scene opens on a dark night with horse riding out a hall. Peter Falk, the grandfather is reading to his grandson.]

Grandfather: *They rode to freedom. And as dawn arose* [An image of pink clouds above a mountainous valley.]

Grandfather: *Westley and Buttercup knew they were safe. A wave of love swept over them.* [The scene changes to show Westley reaching for the Princess Buttercup to kiss.]

Grandfather: *And as they reached out to each other. . .* [The scene changes abruptly, just as they are about to kiss. The grandfather pauses.]

Grandson: *What? . . . What?*

Grandfather: *Nah, it's kissing again. You don't want to hear that.* (He waves dismissively.)

Grandson: *Well, I don't mind so much.*

Grandfather: *Okay. Since the invention of the kiss, there have been five kisses that were rated the most passionate, the most pure. This one left them all behind.*

[The scene changes to Westley and Buttercup kissing, and then back to the grandfather in his grandson's room.]

Grandfather: *The End.* (He closes the book and they smile at each other. He then raises his pointer finger) *Now, I think you ought to go to sleep.*

Grandson: *Okay.* (The grandson lies down and the grandfather stands to leave, picking up his hat and putting it on.)

Grandfather: *Okay.* (He starts putting on his coat) *Okay. Okay.* (He takes off his reading glasses and starts patting his pockets.) *Alright.* (He looks around, waves and turns to the door.) *Shalom.*

Grandson: *Grandpa?*

[The grandfather turns to look at his grandson.]

Grandson: *Maybe you could come over and read it again to me tomorrow.* [The grandfather's eyes smile]

Grandfather: *As you wish!*

Whenever I get to the end of a sermon, I'm always tempted to give us a list of things to do... things that a beloved Bride would do. But you see that's like giving advice to a harlot on how to become a better harlot. God doesn't want you to *act* like a Bride. He wants you to *be* His Bride. So... I'll just tell you the story; I'll just preach the Gospel.

Communion

He took bread and broke it saying, "*Take and eat, This is my body given to you.*"

He took the cup saying, *“This cup is my covenant, in my blood. Drink of it all of you.”* And so . . . may you come to the table, and then if you’d like to, feel free to worship. “As you wish.”

Benediction

Martin Luther famously said, “Love God and do as you please.”

That’s called worship, and that’s what God desires—free love. And so, whatever you do can be worship! All is to be worship, but the moment I say that something may lie to you; something may raise a question in your mind: “Well . . . how do you know? Maybe you’re a beast or a harlot.” And you see you kind of are. So, we worry and think maybe that was harlotry and not love or that was beastly and not really human of me—not like you. You might begin to judge yourself. Don’t judge yourself. You can’t separate yourself between the old man and the New Man.

If that fills you with fear, don’t fear because the next thing that happens in the Revelation is absolutely astounding. It used to be the scariest part for me in the whole book and now I think, maybe it’s the best. We’ll continue this series in a few weeks. But the next thing that happens is the King rides in on a white horse, and He’s called the Word. And the Word judges and separates; He redeems and does what we *cannot* do.

Love God, and do as you please.
In Jesus’ name, Amen.

ⁱ She was “forgiven much,” which means:

#1: She knew she sinned and had felt the pain of that sin... that’s like one dose of vengeance. And

#2: In that place of sin, she experienced the wonder of God’s grace... that’s God’s vengeance upon our sin.

“Where sin increased Grace abounded all the more”—that’s the double vengeance, we spoke of last time.

She was forgiven much and now she loved much.

She loved with all her heart, mind, soul, and strength.

ⁱⁱ I didn’t count this in my list of 2nd person aorist imperatives because it’s a Hebrew interjection, but it just amplifies my point: Suddenly, God is telling us just what He wants... and He’s doing so in Greek and in Hebrew.

ⁱⁱⁱ As we’ve preached on numerous occasions, they look at “the corpses of the me who have rebelled against me (the Lord).” Isaiah has just spent 66 chapters revealing that all men have rebelled against the Lord and all their deeds are as filthy rags, and furthermore the Messiah has numbered Himself with the “transgressors,” (the rebels—same word). He has taken our sin and given us His righteousness.

^{iv} Well no matter what you think of that, if you’re here in worship or simply reading this manuscript because you seek the Lord with just a mustard seed of faith, you’ve been invited.

“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him,” said Jesus. (John 6:44)

^v There is no giving or taking in marriage in Heaven, not because no one is married, but because all are married to Christ and one Body in Him.

vi

The harlot has knowledge of love and so tries to act loving in order to make a living.
The Bride is known by Love and so gives birth to life, which is more love.

The harlot is of this temporal world and is passing away.
The Bride descends from Heaven and is eternal.

^{vii} The kisses of the Bride are free, unless of course she doesn't trust the covenant... but if she believes the promise, all the kisses are free and she is free.

^{viii} "The classical Platonic-Aristotelian-Christian understanding of freedom is one in which the rational will of necessity, when set free from ignorance, wills the good end of its own nature; and perfect freedom is the power to achieve that end without hindrance. Thus God is perfectly free precisely because he cannot work evil, which is to say nothing can prevent him from realizing his nature as the infinite Good. Similarly, for Gregory of Nyssa or Gregory of Nazianzus, perfect freedom is liberation from the fetters of ignorance that constrain the rational will from seeing the Good as what it is.

For Augustine, the highest freedom is the perfection of human nature in a condition of *non posse peccare*. For Maximus, the natural will is free because it tends inexorably towards God, and the gnostic will is free precisely to the degree that it comes into harmony with the natural will. And so on. Since, after all, all employments of the will are teleological—necessarily intentionally directed towards an end, either clearly or obscurely known by the intellect—and since the Good is the final cause of all movements of the will, no choice of evil can be free in a meaningful sense. For evil is not an end, and so can be chosen under the delusion that it is in some sense a good in respect of the soul (even if, in moral terms, one is aware that one is choosing what is conventionally regarded as 'evil'); and no choice made in ignorance can be a free choice.

In simple terms, if a deranged man chooses to slash himself with a knife or set fire to himself, you would not be interfering with his 'freedom' by preventing him from doing so. You would be rescuing him from his slavery to madness. This is why the free-will defense of the idea of an eternal hell is essentially gibberish."

--David Bentley Hart

^{ix} It's in the wilderness and the trouble that we are forced to surrender control. It's there that we stop depending on ourselves and look for our Helper.