

“A Message of Unity”
By Brother Parrish Lee
Sunday, October 5th, 2014

What kind of God is this that showers down blessings time after time? You know, it's easy to take Jesus for granted. Let me say that again: it's easy to take Jesus Christ, the Lord God Almighty, the maker of heaven and earth, He who speaks and the stars obey, it's easy to take that great God in heaven, Lord over the Angels, it is easy to take Him for granted. Truly, He has been good. Amen? I don't need a little good—this ain't part of the message—but I don't mean a little good, effective matter is, if you just think about it for just a second, how many of you know that God has truly been good to you? I mean, you don't even have to ask, or check in with somebody else, you know for a fact that God has been good, and is being, to you? Let's give him a praise. Let's just thank Him this morning. I thank God because I don't even know what season it is outside, today. I was gone for nine days in September; I think that's all the spring you guys had. I know there wasn't much of the summer, and I know winter went until June second or something. I think we're back to winter, or something. It's hard to tell: I don't know, I guess I'll have to watch my prayers.

One thing that we meant to do, but we forgot. We forgot to bring the baskets. Could we have one of the ushers bring up the baskets? Please bring up the baskets, those two baskets in the back. Bring them up, please. During our time of sanctification, we have two baskets, we set them in the back for us, and in one basket is things that we're praying for, seeking for, hoping for, and the other basket is things that we are thanking God for.

Things we're praying for during time of sanctification:

To be stronger spiritually.

Pray for my health, benefits and health.

Blessings:

Sharing with a friend

Knowing God to getting strong and walk with Him.

I'm blessed to have a good job. Thank God.

We had to face the problem with my mother and my dad. Terry, and Gloria, and I have been praying about it. Sunday, Jesse, Sonya, my mom, and I prayed about it. On Monday, when we had the meeting concerning the problem, the problem was solved, as if it wasn't really a problem at all. Praise the Lord for answering our prayers.

Before we put those away, this is our time of sanctification; we want to read these requests. If you all could see what I see, that is a *mighty* praying force out there. When we—let me tell you something, when Christians pray, and bow their knees, and go before Almighty God, I'm telling you, it will move mountains. When we offer up praises, let me tell you, it shuts the devil's mouth, and puts him on the run. So, while were having this time, Saints, if you have any requests, and let's face it, we all have some requests. If we're feeling wonderful, we can get a little greedy, we can get a little aggressive about this. I don't have the spiritual gifts that I know I *need* to have in God, and there's many things that I need to see her here, and I know that I'm not alone. We should fill these baskets up, bombard this whole area around us, and let people know that God's people must be praying, because something is happening. Amen?

Before I get to the message, I just wanted to say that, as the prayer said earlier, there are many that are out sick this morning. We do want to keep our brothers and sisters prayer that are sick. We have seen so many times where, you want to say, “Well, it really ain't that bad,” but prayer can make it

that much less bad. There's some people, like Brother Jason, He and his wife are visiting—they have a marriage in their family, one of their cousins, I believe. They're up attending to that. Brother Andy, I was looking up here, and I saw you strumming, and I remember when you picked up that the guitar. I remember. I was like, "Hmmm. I wonder what's going to become of that." I saw Sister Linda and Sonya over there, and I saw Brother Kirk and Malcolm over there, and I thought, "Man, it's a little skimpy up there! There's not a lot of people up there. We ought to have it filled, because we love singing the praises of God." While I was thinking that—I have, I have, I have to confess—while I was sitting there, in that little chair, thinking that, God brought to mind the servant of Elisha, when he turned to the prophet, and he said—no, this ain't part of the message, this is just something for us — when he turned to the prophet and he said, "Oh, there are so many more out there; what are we going to do, we're just a small number!" It was such a big task. The prophet turned to the Lord, and said, "Open his eyes, open his eyes, and let him see that the mountains the roundabout are filled with the Angels." Because, see, when God's people start praising, and lifting Him up, we have a lot of company. The Angels, yes they do join in, they join in on every song except the song the redemption. When we sing about what it's like to be saved, I'm going to fly away to be with Him, my God, my Savior, they don't join in that song. They are spectators; we are the ones that come through the blood of the Lamb. That's why that song is so precious. When you talk about, "I'm marked. I'm marked," I remember, I remember. When you talk about, "All the way, Lord,"—one of my favorite songs— just to know, I've got a guarantee, if I keep myself in the hand of God, I'm going to be there. I'm going to make it. It's going to be a guarantee that I'm going to open my eyes in the land of glory, and hear those words, those wonderful words, "Well done, My good and faithful servant." I'm looking forward to that; I'm looking forward to that. I'm not so crazy about that dying part. I don't know about all that. I'm not all that crazy about that, you know, that dirt on the ground, you know, whatever way you go, I ain't crazy about that. But I am crazy about being caught up! That part I'm really excited about! I'm excited about— you know, it describes it. It says that the heavens will be rolled away like a scroll, and it says he comes like lightning from the East to the West. You don't have time to think about, and he gathers up his beloved, ever to be with the Lord, it says. That ain't even the message; I'm sorry. You just start talking about how good God is to you; that's the message. You just start talking about how good it is just to be saved, and redeemed, washed in the blood of the Lamb, that is the message. Whatever else is going on, that is the message.

I said all of that to give honor to that same God who is the head of my life , and our lives here this morning. He who is our maker, our Creator, our Redeemer, our Savior. He who knows no defeat! He who we can put our trust in, and who never fails. I give honor to *that* God. Giving honor to all those who have been in this pulpit, or Christian Fellowship's pulpit, from our founding pastor, and the times when he would walk the street, he and his family, in seeing this ministry brought about. Giving honor to him on whose shoulder the ministry rides right now, Pastor Paine, our general pastor down in Virginia, he and his family. It was wonderful to see them, they were so excited, they're looking forward to coming back. He said he definitely wants to bring his wife and Sis; they're just bristling with excitement to come. They got called into and giving honor to all those that have labored, who have labored and been faithful to the call that God called them to, to stand in the gap, and to make up the hedge. Giving honor to all of you, who have said, "Lord, let it be. Let it be to feed my soul. I come to worship You, and You alone. Amen.

As we have talked, we have been talking about the Book of Ephesians. Last month, of course, we went through Ephesians chapters 1, 2, and 3 , and this month we're going to be going over chapters 4, 5, and 6 . Our Scripture theme for the month is from the book of second Chronicles:

2 Chronicles 7:16 *For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there forever: and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.*

"...mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually."

Ephesians 4:1-7

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, unselect that select is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

Could you bow your heads with me for just a moment? Lord, we do come before You so graciously, and sincerely, and we thank You, Lord. We don't even know how to thank You enough for all Your goodness, and all the wonderful things that You have done, that You are doing now, and that You will do for us in time to come. You are none other than God Himself, and we thank You for that. We thank you for our time of praise and worship, that we can come and bless your name, and none other than you, and your name alone. Truly you are that same God. Lord, we ask for a blessing on the going over of your Word at this time, God, that we might glean from it that which you would have for us today that it would be as it says in the book of Isaiah, that it would not return unto you void, but would surely accomplish that for which you said it. This we do, as we pray and claim, in Jesus name, and everyone said, amen.

So, we have gone through Ephesians, chapters 1, 2, and 3. We talked about how the message in Ephesians chapter 1 was to be comforted. The message in chapter 2 was about that grace, and the message in chapter 3, there was a highlight about that name and how he was able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. So much was setting the stage of what Apostle Paul was sharing with the people in Ephesus. We talked a little bit about the history and all. We talked a little bit about it being the second biggest city of Rome. We talked little bit about how there were certain things going on, and it was a beautiful time in men's Fellowship even yesterday, as we went even more into the background. For, truly, Ephesians was a message to the church, not just those who were in that part of the world, way back 2000 years ago, but it might have survived simply for us to be better Christians today.

Now we come to chapter 4, and we see here that Apostle Paul has message, specifically, of unity. A message of unity and this message is in stressing that, in this walk that we have, we are not to be alone. We are not to be alone; if you want to withdraw yourself, if you want to pull yourself off to the side, that is not what God has for us. Surely it says here, in verse number three, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." "There is one body," it says in verse number four, "and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;" so here we see that God has given each individual a calling. How marvelous. Nobody is left out. He's given everybody a calling. And he goes on he talks in verse number five, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." One Lord, that's who we follow, one faith, that's how we follow, one baptism, that's how we get into his favor. That is the purpose of being born again, that is being buried with Him, raised again to walk in newness of life with none other than the Lord Himself. "One Lord, one faith, one baptism, (6) One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." All directed to that one God, but, we are endeavoring to keep that unity of the Spirit. That unity of the Spirit. This had to be good news for those at Ephesus, because, you see, Christianity wasn't that old at the time. So, this excitement, and this new thing, "Hey, am I going to be alone doing this? Am I going to be like an island out, all by myself? What about the times that I'm alone and I'm wandering and I'm wondering about this whole thing?" Apostle Paul set this up to say, "you must endeavor to keep that unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace." Yes, you are individuals. Yes you are individuals. You are individuals, but you have that one Lord. You are individuals, but you have that one faith. Yes, you are individuals, but you have that one baptism that Mike and Mary so eloquently talked about earlier today. That one baptism, and, yes, down through the ages, down through history, that is one moment that stands in time, it is recorded in heaven. Yes, as it talks about in Ephesians chapter 3, "Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."

You know, some time ago, I learned something about this time of sanctification. Last year, it was really poignant, the first time we had done it, I really learned something. The first—we had 61 days then—the first 30 days, they went pretty good. The time of sanctification, he kind of lock yourself in, you get prayed up, you've got your accountability team, and you're working with each other, and things are going well for 30 days. But the next 31 days, it was like, "Wow!" Not so much. It was kind of like, well, I got a lot of interruptions. Things kept going wrong, and no matter what I tried to do, something else kept coming up. I went to pray-- I went to fast, "Oh, don't you know? We're having the big work party today, and they're making your favorite cake. They're making *your* favorite cake. The hummingbird cake, Parrish." Yeah, yeah, yeah. I wanted to read, and it seemed like the phone would ring, or I would get distracted and I couldn't get the focus in my mind. Something else would come up, things kept coming up. I asked the Lord, "You know, Lord, I am just trying to have my time of sanctification. Why is it that now I keep getting so interrupted? Why? Why? Why? I am just trying to get better for You, Lord." Tell you what, the Lord answered me pretty quickly. He said, "That's part of it. That is part of it. Every phone call, that's part of it. Every visit, that's part of it. Of *your* sanctification." "Oh, but God, I'm trying to press through in my mind, and I keep getting distracted!" "That's part of it. You being sanctified, is you pushing distractions out of the way." "Oh." Well, I learned me a lesson; it's not just about me. Well, praise God; praise God.

So, I was a little armed this time. This time you that other people are part of it. Okay, okay, okay, okay, okay, okay. Some of the first 30 days was—whew—uphill this time. God, I have accountability brothers that will hold your feet to the fire, as they send messages and words, "I will fast with you." I thank the brother that—I was trying to pray for, and I said, "I can't get my mind straight. I'm trying to find the right Scripture; I'm asking God, I haven't gotten the right answer yet. I wonder, what could it be?" Without me even asking him, he sent the message out, "Back to basics; seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Well, hallelujah. So, God uses our relationship; that whole unity of spirit, that whole bond of peace to help us in our Christian walk. How about that? Fellowship, brotherhood, sisterhood, prayer, God uses that to bring us together. And, so, as I was going through, I had another problem this time. You know, this time, it seems like people are *asking* for stuff, this time. You know, not just being there, they're actually asking for stuff. The Lord, again, answered, He said, "That's part of it." See, not only are people part of our sanctification, and that time, but many times, people are needing for that, they are waiting for the Christian to be the Christian on the scene. They're waiting for the Christian to show up in the family. They're waiting for the Christian to show up on the job. They're waiting for the Christian show up—and, surely, God has made us all a bunch of individuals. He has made us different, according to His wonderful grace and mercy and His purposes. He has made us all different for a reason; we're not a bunch of cookie-cutter Christian people, and neither were they in the time of Ephesus. They were old and young, they were short and tall, they were nice sized and they were slender, and I'm sure they had all kinds of different backgrounds, and God called them, so that He could use the things that He had put in their lives to all those around. God knew exactly what he was doing. He has given this to us, that we might encourage--sure, he gave it to those at Ephesus, but he's given it to us--that we might encourage our families, that we might be that light unto our coworkers. Check this out, we might be that light to someone that we might only meet once to let them know that truly there is a way to serve God. We might not want to know about the Encyclopedia of things that you have learned since you have been a Christian, they might just want to know about the saving power of that name. "Is He really true?" Amen. If not for that specific purpose, God has raised us up.

Ephesians 4:11-13 *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:*

Let's look at apostles; let's just start right there. The Bible says that He specifically gave some, He gave them apostles. If we were to look it up in a concordance, it means:

Apostles

1. a delegate, messenger, one sent forth with orders.
 - a. specifically applied to the twelve apostles of Christ
 - b. but, also to them who God called to start works.

To establish works in God; that's who He calls first. And from there, it goes on to say that He calls prophets, and prophets were:

Prophets

- e. an interpreter of oracles or of other hidden things

The mysteries. Those who listened to God, and share exactly what God says. The true prophets in the ministry of God. He sets up an order, or a structure, if you will. It says next that He called the evangelists.

Evangelist

the name given to the NT heralds of salvation through Christ who are not apostles

The evangelists are those who herald the salvation of the Lord. They herald—they go places, and they herald the salvation of the Lord. A lot of those places is with one another. They herald, "I'm here just to tell you: You know Jesus saves? You know He really loves you. I know you want me to listen to this dirty joke, but let me put my hand over your mouth and let you know, He loves you, anyway." I tell you what, you do that a time or two, things change. Things change. You live a Christian life, and you don't laugh at their dirty jokes, I tell you, all of the sudden, they get a little more reluctant about telling them in front of you. If you're not ashamed to be a Christian, and you're about to tell them, "Hey, you know what? I'm a Christian, if I walk away while you're telling jokes, because that's not what I do..." All of the sudden, wow! the conviction of the Lord takes over in their lives. Then, pretty soon, when somebody else wants to tell a joke, they'll be interrupting for you, "Hey, you know what? he doesn't like hearing that kind of stuff. Leave him alone. I said, Leave him alone!" I'm a witness.

Then it goes on to talk about pastors.

Pastors

1. a herdsman, esp. a shepherd
 - a. in the parable, he to whose care and control others have committed themselves, and whose precepts they follow
2. metaph.
 - a. the presiding officer, manager, director, of any assembly: so of Christ the Head of the church

Pastors are the herdsmen, or the shepherds, of the flock. Pastors give the care and the nurturing to the flock. The pastors. Then, of course, the teachers.

Teachers

1. in the NT one who teaches concerning the things of God, and the duties of man

When I first came—when somebody first shared that scripture with me, I thought, “Hey, I don’t fit in there. They rattled off five things in the church, and I ain’t none of them. Well, I guess I need to slip on in, and slip on out. I don’t really have a place; I don’t stand out.” That is a lie of the devil. I’m just going to tell it like it is. That is a lie of the devil. The Bible says that each of us is called with one hope of our calling. Specifically. Specifically. God didn’t make any mistakes when He made you. He knew who you were, what you were, what you were doing when he called you. And he’s calling us, yet. So, the Lord shows that He sets a certain structure over the flock, or over His ministry, and that is specifically for the needs to be met. He called them. But, those aren’t the only ones that he calls in the ministry, for truly the Spirit of the Lord—it says in the latter days, he will pour out His Spirit upon all flesh (Joel 2:28). We are all to be—yes—we are all to be recipients of that prize.

Ephesians 4:16 *From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*

From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every single part. When you look at the body of Christ, it is *huge*. We are but a limb, here. We are—I don’t even know how big of a branch we are, but I know that when John turned over and he looked, and the angel asked, “Who are these?” He said, “Thou knowest.” The angel said, “These are they which have come out of great tribulation,” and it says there was a number which was above every number. The angel said, “I will show you these, for they are the Lamb’s bride.” So, the bride of the Lamb is enormously huge, and each one of us—each one of us—makes up part of the bride of the Lamb. The key is that every one of us, every measure, every part, has a calling, has an unction of the Spirit, has a blessing in our life. Has, truly, a calling and a responsibility. Every one of us is measured out peace, and is measured out joy, and is measured out comfort, and it’s ours for the taking. It’s ours for the taking.

Ephesians 4:23-24 *And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*

Be renewed in the spirit of your mind. Now, I don’t know this for a fact—I’m not much of a gardener, or even a guy with plants—but, they tell me that a tree can feel it when we break off just one leaf. I don’t know that for a fact, but that’s what they tell people who work with that kind of stuff. I don’t know; I never heard a tree come back and talk about it. I don’t know; maybe it has some merit, you know? I know for a fact, Brother Jeff Lynch, he was a paramedic, and he said, “You know, when you lose a toe [a toe!], you have to learn how to walk all over again.” I said, “really?” and he said, “Yeah.” I’m a mechanic, and I know that when you lose a finger, you have to learn how to handle a hammer, again. I know if you get a scrape—if you get a good enough scrape, you might have to learn how to drive all over again. In other words, one part of the body affects the other parts of the body. So, each one of us has that part, and here he says, “...be renewed in the spirit of your mind...” Now this must have been a challenge, because I’m sure, back in the time of Ephesus, they were like, “Hey, look Paul, you know what? I don’t know how to do all this stuff—how are we supposed to do all that? I mean, you’re coming up with some pretty high and mighty stuff.” They could have taken that attitude, but they would have only gone back to chapter one, where he says, “Well, the first thing we’re going to use in that renewing of our mind, we’re going to use that grace that it talked about. Also, we’re talking about the spiritual blessings in heavenly places? we’re also going to be able to use that in the renewing of our mind. In Ephesians chapter one, verse number nineteen, there is a powerful Scripture here:

Ephesians 1:19 *And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward [the power of the Lord to us-ward—the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward] who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,*

Be renewed in your mind. “How? How?” Tap into that tremendous, exceeding, awesome, great power of God for everything that we need. Yes, for the renewing of our mind. “You mean to tell me that I have access? I can tap into that?” Absolutely! Absolutely! In fact, if we don’t we’re in error! It’s like not receiving a gift from your dad. “Dad, thanks, but no thanks.” He has made it so. So, the exceeding greatness of His power to us who believe. Power, power, wonder working power in the blood of the lamb. Yes, there is power, power, wonder working power in the precious blood of the Lamb.

Ephesians 4:26-27 *Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil.*

Ephesians 4:32 *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

“Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:” The first time I read this Scripture—honest confession is good for the soul—the first time I read this Scripture, I said, “There ain’t no way I’m ever going to be able to keep that one. I know how to stay angry day after day. Matter of fact, I can be glad about getting angry. I can make a challenge out of it; I can stay angry longer than anybody else. Anybody want to challenge me out?” Then the Word of God just comes over and, woo! “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:” and then, “Neither give place to the devil.” When we were at men’s fellowship, one of the brothers was talking about this Scripture in particular; he said, “‘Neither give place to the devil.’ It’s really been going on in his heart and his mind and you know...” and I was like, “Man, that guy has been looking at my notes. “Neither give place to the devil.” And He says it in a way to let us know that we have the power on that. That is a choice not to give power to the devil on this. Amen. Then, “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” So, the Lord was showing us that His ministry, His kingdom, is not an ‘I’ place. “I” this, “I” that, “I am,” “I will,” “I do,” “I can,” “I might,” “I won’t.” It’s not an “I” place. It’s a place full of “we’s” and “us’s” and “let,” and “please,” “Lord,” “help,” “bring,” “cure,” “heal,” “touch.” It’s a place where we, us and the Lord, It’s a place where we, us, tender-hearted, loving and forgiving one another. It’s a “we” place; an “us” place, because, when the Lord and sees, yes, He sees how we are as individuals, but also, how we are as individuals to each other. Because we all come together and we pick up that vibe. So, as one of my favorite sisters said, “Hey, I don’t want to abide by that; I want to do my own thing.” That would be a little crooked finger, wouldn’t it? God has called us that we might have that whole unity of the Spirit thing in that bond of peace. Why else would He take a little boy—I’m closing here—why else would He take a little boy, take his food, take his fishes and his loaves, take that little boy, and then spread that blessing out to five thousand people? Why else but that we would all be the recipient of the blessing? And why else would He raise one from the dead and then bring him to the feast, so that others might see him all around? Can you imagine the stories that he must have told? That had to be one person that actually believe in being raised from the dead. He brought him out that all could see, that all could be partakers of the same blessing. So, when the Lord pours out a blessing, it is for us to continue to pour out, so that others might be able to receive and partake of that blessing.

As we said, being able to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, that’s how it benefitted the Ephesians back in the first century, and that’s how it benefits the Christians here in the 21st-century. Amen? Give the Lord a praise.