

“All the Law and the Prophets”

By Chris Ulrich

Sunday, April 19th, 2015

Bob Heirtzler, I'd like to ask you to come and lead us in prayer for the message.

Bob: God, I want to thank You for the blessings that You've poured out upon us, today, so far, Lord God. God, I pray that You continue to pour out Your blessings as we receive Your Word from Your servant, today, preaching Your message, Lord God. Anoint him, God; bless him, God. Help him to stay out of the way and let Your Spirit flow through him, Lord God. And, God, the congregation, let us receive the message that You have for us, today, whether rebuking, or correction, or encouragement, God. Whether a big building or a little one, whatever You have for us, today, God, let us keep what we learn today, and take it out of this building, today, and share with others, God. Once again, bless my brother, move upon him, God, in Thy name, in Jesus' name, I pray. God bless you. Amen.

Thank you. You may be seated. It's good to see everybody this morning, here on this spring morning.

I know that we've probably all heard the saying, “Expressions of love” at some point or another. It could be a ticket to a great event, it could be a banquet dinner, it could be a new car. It could be a wedding gift, it could be a birthday gift, or a trip to some far-off location. And those gifts can have immense value. But there are other expressions of love that we all recognize just the same. It could be a smile, it could be a hug, it could be anything. It could be just a kind word. These all also have value. I'm not trying to esteem one above another, or say, “Oh, this one's free, this one's not,” it has nothing to do with that. It has to do with, these are expressions of love. People understand that; people know the difference.

Our theme for the month is, “Love is the greatest gift of all.”

Our theme verse for the month is:

1 John 4:8 *He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.*

Very simple verse; pretty easy to remember. I know that, personally, one of my favorite manifestations of God's love is just God's creation. If we look around, and we see these four walls, and it's kind of a utility thing—I know this is a rented building, and we know where we're at. I appreciate whoever brings these flowers up; I think it's Kathy B. that brings these each week, and it's something that kind of brightens up the place a little bit. If you think outside these four walls, if you think—personally, I like a good road trip. Last week, Bob Heirtzler and I took a trip down to Starved Rock State Park, in Oglesby, Illinois. Kirk, Nubia, Jennifer, and myself were down there a few years back; it's just an enjoyable place to go. Just kind of get away, kind of get your thoughts together. We were at the coffee shop, the Bible study that we have on Wednesday night at the It's All Good coffee shop in Zion, and Aaron J. and I got to talking a little bit, and I hadn't known this, but they had taken quite the excursion out west about a month ago. Aaron, I've got to ask you to come up; I know you talked real briefly, but, the funny thing was, they all went and Aaron said, “Yeah, I did all the driving. All the way there and all the way back.” I'm sure that helped Arman and Virgie quite a bit, too! He shared a couple of things, and we talked about seeing God's creation, and seeing that manifestation of the beauty of God's creation.

Aaron: We went to Las Vegas, and Colorado Springs—it was a nice view there. There was a park there called the Garden of the Gods, right there in Colorado Springs. The view there was like—I took pictures there of the mountains, of the snow that's on top of the mountains. The pictures show how beautiful it is, the view is there. We spent four days there; from there we went to Las Vegas. We spent three days there, and then we left Vegas and we drove down to the Grand Canyon. The view there was amazing. The pictures that we got from there... Me and my dad actually went down to the cliff, trying to go all the way out the edge without trying to fall off. We could have fallen off, but we didn't; we're here. It was a beautiful view from there. From there we went to South Dakota to see Mount Rushmore. That was also beautiful, seeing the presidents up there. All this is based on how beautiful God's creation is; people take it for granted. People go out and see what man has done; you can't do that. All you see is God. If you can, take a road trip, and you'll be amazed at God's creation.

Thanks, Aaron; that was great to hear, great to talk about. I know, my brother and I, we took a trip out there a few years back, and it is an awesome creation. We give credit to God in all things. It is God's creation, and it's for our enjoyment. It's not something where, "Oh, it was some other way it got here," it was God! Jesus Christ; that is our Creator; that is how we got here. I know, about six months ago, actually—and I'm going to segue into my next section—I took a trip out to New York City, we had a job for Grainger. New York City Department of Sanitation. Very glamorous, beautiful place. Actually, it was just at the facility; it wasn't like I was at the garbage site or any of that stuff. Anyway, I grew up in Western Mass. and we have family in Long Island. I remember, after one of the work days, getting on the Long Island expressway and heading a little bit East just looking for a place to eat. I remember looking back, just briefly, and you could see how small New York City is, but, what was interesting is that there was actually this humongous cemetery that, it kind of looked like a panoramic view, and it just struck me. It's like, "I've seen this before!" It brought back, when I was young, when we were kids, we used to come and visit that family, and I'm talking probably thirty-five or forty years ago, and it was the first time that I've seen that sight in that long. I guess what really struck me about God's creation is that you have the life, and all the buildings, and the people, and you have the death. You have the representation of the timeliness of something that we have to know, "Okay, God's given us this time, He's given us the opportunity, He's given us a chance." The Bible talks about the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men. He doesn't make mistakes.

One of Jesse's sidebar points last week was about how you can see the love of God in the way that animals take care of their offspring. That wasn't one of the main points, but it was something that really caught my attention. Now I know that there are all sorts of animals in the wild and most aren't for pets, just, I'm sure that we know that. How many here have ever heard of therapy dogs? A number of people. They're usually used for specific purposes: returning veterans, nursing homes, and even hospitals. I personally am a dog lover, and I know not everybody is. I don't own a dog right now. We always had dogs growing up, but I suppose that even if you're not much of a dog lover, this is an example of God's love. I know that I've been over to some of your houses, and some people have dogs. The Gieblers, a few years back, no they've always had dogs. Igor is his name? What kind of dog is he? Siberian Huskie. So, I was over at their house, and this dog would come up and it's kind of like, "Hey! What's this one's name?" And Sonia would say, "Sebastian." I thought, "That's a great name for a dog!" I mean, I've never heard that in my life. I like that, and I appreciate that, but, again, this is a representation of God's love. You see those dogs that are used, again, back to the therapy dogs, they're used to help people. They're used to show God's love. Again, that's through God's creation.

I'm actually going to present my first point today in the form of a question and I'm actually going to give all my points today in like manner. Do we believe that God loves us? Or to make it a little more personal, do I believe that God loves me? I know that we've all probably heard this question before at

some point in our lives, but I don't want to diminish its relevance to our lives, though. I know who I'm speaking to, and I know that we are Christians, and we know that God loves us, but, you know what? when things don't go the way we'd like or the way we think they should, or we have sicknesses, or we have tragedies, when we lose our job, or we have a falling out with somebody, then it's not so easy. Does God love me then? The truth is, sometimes it feels like He doesn't, at that point. What do we do then?

I don't think there's any formula, or one size fits all answer remedy when we get to that place. A lot of what helps keep us going living this Christian life is knowing that, when we have these problems and hurt, that it is eventually going to pass. And we should have something to look forward to, but the truth is, maybe the circumstances surrounding you are not what you'd hoped they'd be, or maybe they've gotten worse. I mean, we're currently in what I would call a troubled economy; we look at the circumstances of the world around us and I'm not going to gloss over that or give you the old prosperity gospel speech. But I am going to share a promise of God that He does love us.

Revelation 21:1-7 *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And He said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son.*

We're not the judge, but Christ talked about judging righteous judgment. We're not here to condemn anybody, but we're not here to give you a false sense of security. We have to live our lives individually, and the hope is that everybody would make it. I'm going to say that there is reconciliation for us. I know, Al, I'm going to share this: I'm going to be going out his week to visit Tony Mattia's family, and many of you knew Tony—he passed away about a year ago; a very good friend that we knew for a long time. We talk about reconciliation. It's something that, it just always stood out, because it was something that we all needed. Parrish, you mentioned something a few months ago, maybe a few weeks ago, I don't know, but you said, "How many people believe God gives us a second chance? And a third chance? And a fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth?" I appreciate that, because, you know what? it's the kind of thing where it's like, the Bible says we've all sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), but we have forgiveness. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins (1 John 1:9). There's no time prolog—"I've gone five years," "I've gone nineteen months," "I've gone six days," "My mind was gone five..." I don't know, I mean, I don't know everybody's situation. I know that the Bible said, "Save yourself from this untoward generation," (Acts 2:40). It's a matter of looking at it like, "You know what? I've got to save myself from this untoward generation." I look at it like, I can't force anybody to live this life; I have to force myself to live this life. But I do look at it like, there's enough signs out there that it's proven, absolutely, without a shadow of a doubt that God is real, and God is love. You might be hearing this passage from Revelation for the first time, or you might be hearing it for the ten-thousandth time. I mean, it's not, well, you know, after a while, it might be easy to say, "I've read that; I've read that; I've read it," and you sort of feel like, "I'm sick of reading it." That seems to be the case, but, the truth is, we're still in flesh, and we still are going to feel that way at times, we have to be aware that we're going to feel that way at times; we have to fight through that. We have to—the Bible talks about, if you walk in the Spirit, then we're going to do the things of the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-25). If

we walk in the flesh, we're going to fulfil the lusts of the flesh. It's a matter of passing down those things, and deciding in your mind; deciding in your heart, soul, mind, and strength that we're going to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

But along the lines of believing that God loves us is us returning that love. It's not just a one-way street. Jesus said if we love Him to keep His commandments, and He talked about loving Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30). We also have to look at it like—I know this might be a crude way of putting it—but we also have to uphold our end of the bargain. He also said that we need to love Him with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. We also have to look at it like—I know this might be a little bit of a crude way of putting it but we have to uphold our part of the bargain. It's not just something where it's like, "I'll just receive God's love, and I'll just do whatever I want!" I'm going to get into that in a little bit.

My second point today is another question: Does my life reflect God's love? Are we expressing the love that God wants us to in the way we interact with other people? I'm not saying we have to sound the trumpet and announce our show of hospitality, or that it has to be some all-time great display of charity. I'm going to ask something—and I'm going to prime the well a little bit. I'm going to ask a question, and I'm going to ask for participation a little later on. I'm going to ask it this way, it's about what have you experienced in your life where you received something from someone else, an act of charity or hospitality. I'm just going to leave it there, and I'm going to—but we're going to revisit that. Some of these expressions, again, it might just be holding the door for someone, or paying a compliment. I also like what you shared last week, Jesse, that we can't ever forget that the source of all love is God. James 1:17 tells us that every good and perfect gift is from above from the Father of lights. It's a matter of looking at it like, every breath that everybody has every taken, every snowflake that has ever fallen, everything that's ever happened, it's all from Jesus Christ, our Creator; that is it.

Luke 10:25-37 *And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And He said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do likewise.*

It feels good to treat people well, and I believe that is God blessing us for reflecting His love. God gives us the ability and power to love. It also gives us a clear conscience and helps makes our journey here that much more enjoyable. When we examine this passage and know the history of the Samaritans and how they were basically outcasts from Israel it makes it that much more poignant to think that, you know, that expectation wasn't there for him, but he was the one that outdid them. Let's just say it plain, he exceeded the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, and the Bible talks about that. Christ said Himself, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you're not

going to enter in," (Matthew 5:20). What does that mean in this day and age? you can't just be religious; you can't just put on a good show. You can't be like, "I hate him," and then, "Oh, hey, how's it going?" Two-faced, they call it. That's the thing; you have to care for people. I mean, you really have to root for people. There's no doubt about it. What's that mean? wanting to see people do right in God's will. Wanting to see myself do right, obviously. We have to save ourselves; again, back to that verse. Our lives reflecting God's love is a big deal. It's not just, "Oh, I'll muddle through, and I'll act however I want to act; who cares? I'll respond when someone's nice to me, but..." That can't be the way that we have it. God's given us that power to be able to show that emotion, to be able to show that love, to be able to show that power. But what about when that love isn't received? What about when they don't return the smile, they don't return the handshake, they don't respond at all? Or we're taken advantage of, or we have to endure persecution? Or they might just downright despise us? The Bible says, "Marvel not, My brethren, if the world hate you," John 15:18-19). I don't like the sound of that; I don't think anybody here likes the sound of that, but it's a fact. Or, let me put it like this: If there's all this love from God flying around, how did the world end up like this? Well, not everybody's reflecting God's love, by a long shot. I mean, let's be clear: By even a long shot.

The third point today is posed as another question: Is God's love in my life stronger than the worst hate? That's not a pretty picture and it's not a pleasant thought. It's a fact, though. We live in a world that seems to be getting worse; the Bible says that iniquity shall abound, and the love of many shall wax cold (Matthew 24:12). Or, we get beaten down by society and the ways of this world, we start to lose track of what is good and pleasant. We start to forget what smiles and expressions of kindness and love, and start to build up shields around us, like, "I don't care what they say. I don't care what they think. It doesn't matter." Just kind of fence yourself off, and it's like... I've been there. That's not something that I'm happy to admit, but God has to break through and say, "Don't be like that." I'm not talking about being a pushover, or being somebody's doormat. That has nothing to do with it. How are we dealing with it? Do we avoid them, do we hit back, do we try to get even?

Romans 12:21 *Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Matthew 22:34-40 *But when the Pharisees had heard that He had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked Him a question, tempting Him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*

As I mentioned before, I'd like to add that God's love doesn't mean that we can do whatever we want or live however we want, do whatever we please, think that God's okay with it. The Bible talks about, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid," (Romans 6:1-2). And, it might not be one of the big wrongs, murder, adultery, you know, armed robbery, anything that's like, "Oh, that's going to make the news!" That has nothing to do with it. And I'm not going to start naming them all off, and then say, "Oh, well, I'm only going to name off the ones that I didn't do." That's not, I mean, we've got to come clean before God! That's what this is all about. The Bible talks, in the Old Testament, "Surely your sin will find you out," (Numbers 32:23). So, it's a matter of looking at it like, "I've got to come clean, and I've got to make sure I stay clean, and when I sin and fall short, get back up. A righteous man falls seven times and rises again," (Proverbs 24:16). But Christ said, "If ye love me, keep My commandments," (John 14:15). It also talks about, in 1 John 5:3, "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous." And I honestly believe, and this is just a little opinion on the side, and, you know, don't think this is Gospel truth; I'm just telling this to share

something: I think in a lot of ways the world views Christianity, is to make it appear harder than it really is, to be less enjoyable, and more restricting than it really is. I appreciate the Jorges' trip. I like to travel, and I like to do things like that. I mean, it's not like—these things are done in balance, it's not like we're just focused on just the "fun" of life. There's discipline, there's things that we have to get done, we have to get down to business—we've all heard that expression, "Get down to business with God." That doesn't mean there isn't sadness at times, and that doesn't mean we don't have rules. But the rewards of having being blessed by God are just infinite. Like you mentioned, Parrish, "How many think that God's done one good thing?" Two? Three? A hundred? A hundred-thousand? You know. Five-hundred million? A gazillion? That's thirty zeroes. If anybody know any higher number than that, you can get with me afterwards.

The title of the message today is, "All the Law and the Prophets." One thing I really like about what Jesus taught was just that simplicity. All the Law and the Prophets. All the commandments of God, all the Law, everything in the Old Testament, and I think somebody had done a study, and they said there were six-hundred and eleven or approximately... If you read through the Old Testament, in some parts, Leviticus especially, where it explains a lot of the duties of the priests. I mean, it's got like, "If you come into this house and it's got ringstrakes, and you've got to put this on it here..." I mean, it's on and on and on. How could you possible remember that, unless you inundate your life into that, which is what they did, which just speaks that much more to the anointing that God had on them, but also on us. But, if we look at it like, okay, love God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength; and love my neighbor as myself. On these two hang all the Law and the Prophets.

I'm going to ask, again, like I was asking for earlier: I thought about it this way, what's something nice you've done for somebody else, and that's, you know, obviously, there has to be, what they call, "Paying it forward," here has to be a starting point for that, but what I want to ask—and give it some thought; I'd like to ask for some responses—what has somebody done for you in your lifetime as an act of kindness. Maybe it wasn't a knock-it-out-of-the-park kind of thing; I'm not looking for the all-time greatest act of kindness. Maybe it was just something, you know what? Is Ed Kretzer here? No? Well, I'll talk about him, since he's not here. Let me share something real quick, just to kind of get it going here a little bit. I had left the company that I currently work for about eight years ago, took another job up in Milwaukee, and was let go a short time later; it was very unexpected. I remember, you know, it really kind of caught me off guard, but I remember talking to different people, and just telling them what happened. I remember the expression on Ed's face when I told him about it was just real concern. You know, really, sympathy, and friendship, and concern; and I appreciate that a lot because it was just—it didn't cost him anything—but it showed, you know what? he genuinely cared about that, and I appreciate that. So, I'm going to ask, what is something that somebody has done, and I'm going to ask you to raise your hand, and then stand and just share something that somebody's done for you, and it doesn't have to be something—it doesn't have to be somebody that's in this room. It could be a parent that's not here, it could be a sibling that's not here, or a friend from back home; but if it from somebody that's in here, that's fine, too.

Rebecca: I just want to share my husband, he's patient. I'm stubborn, but, whenever I'm upset about something, whatever it is, he'll have me sit down, and he'll listen, and have me go on and on, and, when I'm done, he'll just say, "I'm sorry." He don't ask any questions. Over the years, he has proven that the actual role model of what a good husband should be. Every day, I thank God that I have him in my life.

Donna: I have to say probably everyone in this room has had an act of kindness to me; the one specific person that stands out, very much, in my life, and has made many, many sacrifices, and I mean the kind of sacrifices where, when I'm going through something in my life, a lot of times, and I don't know

if anybody else has experienced this, I want to do it privately. I don't want to do it, necessarily, with a lot of people knowing what's going on; I want to handle my business on my own, take care of it, work it out with God... But there's a specific sister that, no matter how much I try to do things on my own, every single day, texted me, and her name is Sonia, Sonia Giebler texted me to say, "How are you?" "How is your step-mom?" "How is everything?" "Is there anything that we can do?" and, no matter how small the text was, it meant a lot.

Ashley: I would say the last couple of months have been a little difficult, having my son and everything. Just the support from the women in this ministry, from cooking meals, to sending cards, to just being there to listen to, you know, everything. It means a lot. The friendships that you receive here are genuine. They really do care about you. I'm like Donna, just shut the world down, I've got to go through this myself. They're always there. When you need someone to talk to, or... Like Abby: She always sends a card when you least expect it, and you're like, "Oh, wow! Somebody was thinking about me." Even if I'm not present in church, I'm still present in the hearts, and their minds, and their prayers. I really appreciate that.

We could never underestimate the God's love for us. I want to reiterate something Parrish shared on Easter, about why would Jesus allow Himself to suffer, and be beaten the way He was, and the answer is because of He loves us. Let that sink in for a minute, or two, or for a lifetime, so when Satan comes along and tries to accuse you of something you've done, or something you felt something else, or whatever the case might be, then you know that God's love is greater than you could ever possibly imagine. Yeah, I believe that.

I want to thank you all for your time. God bless.

