

“God Started It with Love”
By Brother Parrish Lee
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What a glorious, awesome, wonderful, great time for none other than the Lord our God. Don't we serve—honestly, honestly, we don't got to beat around the bush—don't we really serve a great God? A real present help in a time of need? God knows how to minister. I served a God who was no God, so I know what I'm talking about. A God Who knows how to give you what you need, and knows how to be on time, on time. That's the God that we serve.

Giving honor to God, that same God, that wonderful God, that ever present help in time of need, that all-answering God. That great Spirit that charges the angels with folly, and says that the stars themselves are not pure in His sight. That God. Giving honor to Him, Who is our Maker, Creator, our God. Giving honor to our founding pastor and his family, for their labor and their work, our bishop and his family for their labor and work, for those who have come before us, here, Pastor Wilson and brother Kenneth and his family, for their labor. Giving honor to God for all of y'all, all of y'all who attend and say, “Lord, I've come to worship you and to receive from you what you would have for me, that we might all be benefitted in You. Amen.” Giving honor to all of y'all.

Our theme for the month has been simply, “It Starts with Love.” It starts with love, saints. It really came from a little excerpt that our bishop said to the group that was meeting with him, he said, “It starts with love.” That's been our theme for the month, and our Scripture theme for them month is:

John 13:35 *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

We'd like to start that same theme, that same message, that same thought, going to the book of Genesis, our Scripture thought for today:

Genesis 1:1-5 *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.*

If you could bow your heads with me for a moment. God, we thank You for the opportunity to come before You and Worship You this morning, Oh Great God. Oh, God, the only God, the only God, the righteous God. We thank You fro this opportunity to praise and worship Your Holy Name that You have revealed unto us, unto those who would accept it, Lord. We pray, Lord, as You have ministered to us in song, as we offer our praises and our sacrifices unto You that, as we come to the part of the message where we go into Your Word, that it would do exactly as You have said, in the Book of Isaiah, that it would not return unto You void, but that it would accomplish surely, that which You have sent it to do, that we might al be benefitted, that we might all be nourished. Lord, that we might all go forth to do more with a closer relationship, a more wondrous walk, to be able to shine unto others that light that You poured in our lives. We thank You for all these things, and everyone said, amen.

So, pretty quick, we have talked about how it starts with love. Our first message of the month, that's what it was titled, “It Starts with Love.” There were four subjects there: “Love From God,” “Love For God,” “Love For Yourself,” and “Loving Others.” That was our first message of the month, talking about it starts with love. Our second message, from Brother Chris Ulrich, he had talked about the stranger. To caption it, one of the Scriptures that he went to was in the Book of Matthew, chapter 25, and

he captioned it by saying, “When saw we thee a stranger...” (Mathew 25:38) When saw we thee, a stranger, Lord? and how the negative connotations about a stranger in this world would go against what the Lord had said, and to open up our hearts for those people that we might call strangers, because, really, stringers are just friends we haven’t met. Last week, of course, we had the message from our general pastor, who said it’s nothing but love. If I could share a little bit about what he said, he said if you have love one to another, then people will know that you are Christ’s disciples. If you don’t have love one to another, then people won’t know that you are Christ’s disciples. Now, this idea of loving one another is a very interesting thing, isn’t it? In the church, we can get to a place where we find fault with each other. But, if we love one another, we’re going to be able to work with each other in a way that shows the love of Christ. Just a brief recap of what has gotten us here to this point.

Genesis 1:1-5 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

We see here how God set things up from the very beginning. In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the Earth. I’ll tell you the truth: I know a lot of people say, “I want to get to the end of the story. You know, I want to see how everything ends up.” They want to get to Revelation, because that’s the heaviest book in the Bible. You know what? I would put the Book of Genesis up to Revelation. You get a good taste of what God was up to, and our little minds can’t handle the universe, come on, now... They send probes out to get a clue; they send machines out to send pictures back of what it might be. Satellites, Voyager, whatever, they keep sending things out there because they want to get a taste, a clue, and they keep getting surprised at what they find out. “Oh, it’s like that. We thought it was like this, but it turns out, it’s like that.” They keep getting surprised, because our little minds can’t fathom the creation that God has spread out throughout the universe. The solar system, the galaxy, whatever you want to call it, whatever we try to measure it like. We try to fit that into this six inches (gesturing to his head), maybe five-and-a-half, I don’t know, sometimes I’m not as smart as I was the other times. It says here that, “In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the Earth.” So, we see that, from the start, God created. God started this thing off. He started it off first with Heaven, and then the Earth. So first God started off the spiritual, and He followed it up with the natural. He doesn’t take a whole lot of time on Heaven, in this part, but, in verse 2, it says that the Earth was without form, and void, and darkness was on the face of the deep. The Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters, so we see that the earth, at the beginning, it was void, it was empty, it was without form, and it was dark. We would say that that’s undefined. The Earth didn’t have a good description about it. It was without form. They didn’t know what it was; we know what it is *now*. In the beginning, it didn’t have all of the things that it has now. we would go on to see in verse 3, God said, “Let there be light.” That must have been an awesome sight. Can you imagine how that must have been? That must have been an awesome sight. The universe, all created, and then God said, “Let there be light.” Can you imagine being one of the angels, and God’s starting this thing off? The angels had to go, “Wo-o-o-o-o-ow! You go, God! You are the man! Yeah, you, God. You, You, You.” In verse 4, we see that God saw the light that it was good and that God divided the light from the darkness. He saw the light, that it was good, and He put a division between the light and darkness, so that the two won’t dwell together. Either it’s going to be light, or it’s going to be dark. They don’t dwell together; there is *forever* a separation between light—yeah, I’m getting to a point, here, and, yes, the message is still “It Starts with Love.”—God put this separation, because the light is for—the light brings understanding, the light brings knowledge, the light brings wisdom. The darkness, the darkness is to rival the sun, the darkness is the great mystery. He divided the light from the darkness. He called the light day, and the darkness He called night. The evening and the morning were the first day. I’d really love to

get into this, but I only have a bout twenty-five more minutes. So, I have to cover a lot; so I have to skip through a lot of creation—I hope that’s okay. If we were to skip down to verse 26, in the beginning of that, we would see that all throughout that, God created these things. He created the Earth, and He put the light in there, and, can you imagine He put the clouds there, and the whole atmosphere, the stratosphere, the ozone layer, and all the layers that come to protect us. God put fowls in the air, and creeping things, and cattle, and sheep, and all that legged stuff He put on the ground, and then He put fish, all manner of fish in the sea. He put big fish; He put small fish. Fish with shells, and fish without. He populated the sea. Then God did something really special. God created something really special, it says down here in verse 26. He created something very special: He created man.

Genesis 1:26-27 *And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.*

I heard somebody say, “That just shows that there’s more than one God: There’s all the Gods there, because he said, ‘Let us create man in our image...’” Like God has a committee, and they’re all reaching the same decision at the same time. Yeah, you’ve got the Gods of the different continents, and the different understandings, because, after all, people say, “We all worship God in our own way,” and that’s only true to a point. If you really want to worship God, ask Him how. Ask Him bout the worship that He will receive. He will give us understanding; that is the God that we serve. He is able to do that. And He clears it up in verse 27: “So God created man in *His* own image...” In His image; in His likeness. He created all of us. It’s real special to know that only us does it say He created in His image. I want to get a little bit more, a little bit in tune with this (still talking about, “God Starting It with Love.”):

Genesis 2:7 *And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.*

So, in chapter 1 it says the He created, He created man, but, you move on to chapter 2, it says that He formed man. Now, there’s a little bit of difference between creating something and forming something. When you create something, you put some of the particles into place, and you create it, and there’s all kinds of ways to do it. You can create a car by building the machines and they’re doing it. He said, “Who made that?” well, Ford made that. “How did he do it?” well, he put all these machines together and they built the car. Somebody built a cake or a house, or, there’s all kinds of ways to create, and some things they create by accident. They do things and they thought it was going to turn out one way, and it turned out a different way; they created it. There are so many things that they’ve got now that they created something by accident. They were trying to think of a way to sweeten something without sugar, and they say they created it by accident—they didn’t even know it was there, but they “created it.” But the Bible says that the Lord *formed* man; now, when you say ‘formed’ you’re getting so much more personal about it. Formed means to fashion it, to take out time, to specifically want it a certain way. Talk to a sculptor, “No, no, no, I had to have it in my mind, and I had to know this thing, exactly how I wanted it to turn out. It took some time and then I had to make the grooves just right, and I had to build it up in certain parts just right. You say, ‘formed’ and you get the impression that the hands are used, and you had to get your sleeves rolled up, and you take some time with it, and it’s a whole different level of affection. A whole different level of care. A whole different level of attention. The Lord God formed man of the dust of the Earth, the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

So forming shows a personal type of affection, of care, of attention. He didn’t just form us any old way; He formed us in His image. So, just imagine this; imagine God doing that whole creation, and all the angels in attendance, watching, “Go, God, go!” There were clouds formed, and different levels of

atmosphere, and He formed the oceans, and the green grass and the shrubberies, and all of them are formed, and the creeping things, and the flying things, and the swimming things, and they were all formed, they were all created, and then God takes His time, and forms us. He forms them personally, and then He puts them in that creation. Can you imagine what that air must have smelled like? What that water must have tasted like? Wooh. The he took man, and He put him right there in the middle of it. In His image, to have dominion, to have power, to have authority, that he rules—we're not even the biggest animal around; Elephants are bigger than us; giraffes are bigger than us; horses are bigger than us—He could have given dominion to anybody, but He chose us in the middle of His creation. That is a Godly kind of love. He created all this, and then he gave it to us. Special. That is a Godly love You ever get a present from somebody? It means something different if they run out to the store, and they, you know, just picked something off the shelf, and they said, "I got to get them something, because it's December 24th, and all the stores are closed. Hey, wrap it up, send it in, you got something for Christmas." You might get something from somebody that you know they took out time for. You know that they looked all over; they wanted to get the right color, the right size. They wanted to know what would make you happy, what would make it intense. When they come, and they give you that gift, you only can say, "Wow! This is special. This is awesome. Wow!" This is what God did for us. So, God did all of this, and put us in the middle of this creation. Can you imagine how much love that must have taken?

Philippians 2:5-7 *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:*

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. So, according to this, we can have the mind of the Lord. According to the Scripture, we can have the mind of the Lord. Now that's not saying that you can run out and say, "You've got to do what I say, because I've got the mind of the Lord. Look, you've got to do what I tell you to do, because I've got the mind of the Lord. Listen to me. It's me, me, me, me. I've got the mind of the Lord. I've got the authority; I've got the power." No, no, no, let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, and, verse 7, made Himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant. Took upon Him the form of a servant. This mind, that we are to esteem to have, that is of the Lord, this same mind, the mind of Christ, we're not to make ourselves of no reputation, not to think of ourselves as any more special than anything or anybody else, but to have that form of a servant, that form of giving. You know, you can see that in the Scripture that we have here, that all men will know that we are His disciples by our love one to another. That form of a servant; one to another. The Bible doesn't say, one *for* another, it says, one *to* another. There's a difference, there's a difference. The word, 'for' would be a little easier to understand; I could have love for something, and nobody might not know it. It's a preposition; it doesn't denote, necessarily, an action. But 'to,' a love one *to* another, that is the root of the infinitive, it's the root of the verb, it's at the beginning of the action. To play, to think, to run, to jump, to fall... 'To' is the root of the infinitive; this denotes action. My love to you; my love to you; my love to you (gesturing towards different people in the congregation). What we find, is that love one *for* another, you kind of have to get up close to see it, but I can see your love *to* somebody from a distance. I can see your love going *to* somebody from afar. We can see His love to us from two thousand years ago, still pouring down, still pouring out to us.

Our next Scripture is going to be from First John, chapter 4—I kind of thought Arman was hitting the message up here, listening to him and Phil, as y'all were testifying... Good googly-moogly. For crying out, man, what are you going to do with God's people? They're trying to take the message away, and all the songs that they were singing, and they were singing, you know?

1 John 4:7 *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.*

Now, see, the world gets this part wrong. The world gets this part of it wrong. The world would have you say that love has got to be conditional, it's got to be measured, your love is kind of hard to come by. "You can't freely give that stuff up; that's yours, that's precious. Don't be giving away your love; it's yours. You've got to keep your love to yourself. Measure it out; only give out little parts at a time. That way, you keep it protected; you keep it safe." God turned that thing upside-down. God made it so that, instead of being all secure, and holed up, and measured, and conditional, God made it free. God made it so that it could be measured out to cover everything we've got going on, and everything we will do. I need a lot of love to cover the stuff that I've done. "It's yours." I need a lot of love to cover everywhere I've been, and, Lord, there's some secrets there that I ain't telling nobody. "It's yours." You know what? I need some love to help me with what I'm going through. "It's yours." So, the way the world would have it, they would have it all restricted and tight. The way the world would have it, they would have it all secured up, hard to get to, almost like a buried treasure you need the right map to find, searching and looking and Wooo! all this effort just to get some love!

1 Corinthians 13:4-5 *Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;*

Now, I used to get this wrong. When I first became a Christian, they would tell me that this is the love chapter. I read it, and I remember thinking, "I don't see love in here anywhere. It's talking about charity. You know the way charity is, that's the kind of thing that you give to under-privileged people. That's the kind of thing that you give away and you don't expect nothing back. That's something, but I really wouldn't call that love." That's because I hadn't come to the understanding, and I had that worldly love going on, not that Godly love.

1 Corinthians 13:6-8 *Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.*

Charity suffereth long, and is kind. Charity envieth not; vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up... Real, true, honest, Godly love. This is the love that came from God. This is the love that God sent. He didn't put all these conditions, "I'll love you, if..." or, "I'll love you when..." His love is pure. Suffers long... You know what? I could be a testimony—I could testify to this. I get the longsuffering of God when I have to plead for repentance, plead for mercy, plead for forgiveness, and BAM! Something about that blood of Jesus that can save you from a multitude of sins. Amen. Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil... Thinketh no evil. Learning how God saw it, and I used to see this love without being able to do this. It used to amaze me. I used to wonder where they got it from. I would wonder, "How do you get like that? I don't know if I want to be like that, but, you know?" I put conditions on myself because if you do the wrong thing with your love, you can get hurt. I wasn't looking to get hurt. But you walk into an understanding of God's love when you see something that is a covering, healing, comforting thing, and it never runs out. In verse number 8, Charity never fails. God love never lets us down.

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

Let us love one another for love is of God, it says in verse 7. Everyone that loves is born of God and knows God. He that loveth not, the Scripture says in verse 8, knoweth not God... If you have your Bibles, would you read that verse with me: He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love. What

an amazing discovery. What an amazing source. What a truth to be had for us all: God is love. Is love. Continues to be love. God is love, is still love, and will always be love. His love pours out from Calvary's mountain. I find it amazing that the love that He shared with us and the whole world back on Golgotha's hill. How that love is still amazing to be able to cover my faults, my sins, my shortcomings, and everything else I got going on. That kind of love is God's love.

Our next to the last verse:

Romans 12:9 *Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.*

Let love be without dissimulation. Dissimulation simply means feigning, or pretending, disguised. Let love be open, honest. Let love be sincere. Let love be without hypocrisy. Let love be without things that God didn't intend to be in there.

I've seen brothers and sisters, old and young, do things for somebody and get a hurtful, and sometimes a hateful response, when their best intents were to do something good. I've seen them get their feelings hurt. Their purist motives got trampled on. Now, see, their hearts would get broken to the place where, "I could never feel this way again. I don't want to suffer like this. The hurt is too much. I can't love like this any more." I've seen it happen. I've felt that way myself, sometimes, and I know I'm not alone in here. I know I'm not alone. When you give, but your hand gets slapped away, or what you esteem precious for somebody, but they turn their nose up at it, or discard it, not giving account for the time and the effort and the sacrifice that you give as a Christian. You give because of the love that God had poured into your heart and your life to give to someone else. I've seen it happen more than once. It would make you think, "Yeah, that's how I have to be like. I have to be like that; I can't afford to take that chance another time." There is a comfort in God's Word, it says:

Hebrews 6:10 *For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.*

God is not unrighteous—somebody else might not care a whole lot, but God is not unrighteous. Somebody else might forget the sacrifice and the offering that you did for him, or for someone else, but God is not unrighteous. Somebody else might not care, and what does it matter if the whole church doesn't see it or even know about it, because but God is not unrighteous to forget your work and your labor of love which you show, and that you minister to the saints. Every prayer you pray—"Nobody saw me on my knees!"—God saw it! That glass of water that I went to get somebody because they were thirsty, and they almost acted like they forgot about it, but God didn't forget. Being able to give somebody a hug, being able to visit somebody when they're a little shut-in, a little sick, and maybe they say, "Oh, I forgot all about it," but God has not forgotten your work and your labor of love. Everything you do, every offering, and every time you give in the name of love. According to the Scripture, God is not unrighteous to forget—it is stored up and we shall receive our just—the Bible says—our just recompense, a reward, because we minister to the saints, and do minister. Just a quick example here: A couple of weeks ago, I met a few people at McDonald's, and we were just sitting there talking, and I don't know how long we were talking, a couple of minutes, and it just dawned on me that they weren't eating anything. It just dawned on me that they weren't eating anything. You see, I'll be honest with you, in my natural state, I am surprisingly selfish. In my natural state, when it comes to food, my arms become a wall. In my natural state, it ain't about sharing. Once upon a time—I've got five brothers and five sisters. I've got five brothers and five sisters. Sometimes, when we were all together, living in one house at one time, there was one pot of food. I was the oldest, so I got served first. Actually, I got served second when my oldest brother was there; when he wasn't there I got served first. It would go around, and, usually, by the end, they wouldn't get a whole ton. If somebody else was hungry at the table, "Well, you know, if I give you some of mine, then there might not be enough for me, so shame on you. I'm sure that you can

live on less because you're not as big as me." Yeah! In my flesh. So, in my nature, in my character, in my persona, it's not about sharing. I'm getting better, God's been working on me non-stop for thirty years... So, here I am, at the table, with these people, these wonderful people, at a McDonald's, and we're talking, and it just dawned on me, it just dawned on me, "Hey, they're not eating anything. I wonder if they're hungry." So, I asked them, "Hey are y'all hungry? Y'all want something to eat?" and they both said, "Yes," just like that. Boom. "Oh, well, I've got a couple of dollars, so here." They went and they got it, and they ate. They never let that deter them from the path that they were on, and the path that they were on was a Spiritual path—I need to say that. It never deterred them that they were hungry. Chris, the message that you preached two weeks ago just seared my heart because you said, "I was hungered and you fed me not." When saw we thee an hungered? There I was at the table with two people. They were hungry, and I hadn't even thought about it. When saw we thee an hungered? right there. Right there is when I saw you, and I'm guilty. Lord, please deliver me from me. Please let me have a heart that I can see when you're hungry, that I can see when you need a visit. Let me have a heart where I will be able to get out and be Your servant, and I will minister to your people like You have called me to do. Call me as a man to do what You would have me to do. Lord, let that be my testimony. "You can't feed them everybody, you've got a limited amount of resources." That's true, I can't feed everybody, but, the truth of the matter is, I can do what God shows me to do. The truth of the matter is, I might not be able to buy you a steak, but maybe we can get something off the dollar menu. Lord, let me give; as much as I have received, let me freely give.

So, in closing: Saints, God is not unrighteous to forget your work and your labor of love which you show toward His name and that you minister to the saints, and do minister. Let's give the Lord a praise.

