

## The Love Of Christ

Love's Width, Length, Depth, and Height

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A major event before Jesus Christ's return, according to his own words, "Will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:21). You can be sure it has not happened yet.

Jesus continues, "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved [alive]; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Verse 22). It is a time of unparalleled horror. There will be destruction and war the like of which humanity has never experienced.

This event is a direct precursor to Christ's second coming. He lovingly returns at that moment in power and glory to save mankind from its own destruction.

Christ continues this frightening scenario in verse 29,

**Matthew 24:29** "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

So, what we have here is that a series of incredible events occurs in the heavens (this is explained in detail in Revelation 6:12-17). These extraordinary events will terrify people.

Luke records, "Men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken." It is at this point that we are told to, "Look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."

These are not mere meteors, comets, solar flares, or eclipses. They are cosmic disturbances never experienced in human history. Only then does the sign of the Son of Man—of Christ's return—appear.

You will remember that the disciples had asked for a sign of Christ's coming or appearance. Now the answer finally comes. Continuing on,

**Matthew 24:30** Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and

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then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

His coming will involve great events in the skies, followed by worldwide catastrophes and the appearance of Christ in glory as he returns.

Christ's Second Coming is celebrated on the Feast of Trumpets. It depicts Christ's intervention in world affairs to establish the kingdom of God on earth. It is both a solemn day and a time of rejoicing. And in both cases, the love of Christ is the underlying foundation of glory and excellence on this day.

On one hand, it pictures terrifying world events culminating in warfare that will threaten the extinction of all life on this planet, but the loving Christ will intervene to prevent the annihilation and ongoing suffering of human beings because of Satan's influence and people's sins.

On the other hand, it pictures a day of great rejoicing for those faithful firstfruits who have answered God's calling and voluntarily submitted themselves to the government of God.

The loving Christ will begin to set up and reward the firstfruits as kings and priests of the Kingdom of God.

Since we are in training to be a kingdom of priests, God warns us through Joel,

**Joel 2:1-11** Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord is coming, for it is at hand:

So the day of the Lord, here, is a process that takes time culminating in the return of Christ!

Let me describe the wide scope that this term, "the Day of the Lord," sometimes has. It is sometimes used by the prophets to refer to any specific period of time in which the God of Israel intervenes in human affairs to save and judge. In many cases the day was named after the group of human beings that was the target of God's intervention. We find references, for example, to the day of Midian and the day of Egypt.

Many times the day is named for what God was to do or what was to happen: "Day of trouble," "Day of rebuke," "Day of punishment," "Day of vengeance," "Day of doom," "Day of darkness," or "Day of the Lord's anger." Often when a prophet has already begun to describe a specific series of God's acts, he will continue his description with a reference to that day.

In some prophetic texts the day of the Lord refers to an event so cataclysmic that it ends an age of the world (as here in Joel 2). This usage passed over into the New Testament where the Day of the Lord refers to God's judging action when Christ returns at the end of the age.

**Joel 2:2-11** A day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. A people come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been; nor will there ever be any such after them, even for many successive generations. A fire devours before them, and behind them a flame burns; the land is like the Garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; surely nothing shall escape them. Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; and like swift steeds, so they run. With a noise like chariots over mountaintops they leap, like the noise of a flaming fire that devours the stubble, like a strong people set in battle array. Before them the people writhe in pain; all faces are drained of color. They run like mighty men, they climb the wall like men of war; every one marches in formation, and they do not break ranks. They do not push one another; every one marches in his own column. Though they lunge between the weapons, they are not cut down. They run to and fro in the city, they run on the wall; they climb into the houses, they enter at the windows like a thief. The earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble; the sun and moon grow dark, and the stars diminish their brightness. The Lord gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great; for strong is the One who executes His word. For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; who can endure it?

Then, we see Christ's act of love.

**Joel 2:12-14** "Now, therefore," says the Lord, "Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning." So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm. Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him—a grain

offering and a drink offering for the Lord your God?

In verse 13, the word, "gracious," expresses God's free love, whereby He shows Himself good to us; "merciful," expresses the tender longing of His love over our miseries; and, "great kindness," expresses God's tender love, as love.

First Joel says that God is slow to anger, or long-suffering. For a long time He endures the wickedness and rebellion of man, and waiting patiently for the conversion and repentance of sinners. Then he adds, that God is "abundant in kindness," having many resources and advantages of His tender love, whereby He can call them to repentance.

Lastly, Joel tells us that God may revoke His sentence of punishment when His conditions are met in verse 14. Up until Jesus Christ's return, God the Father and His Son are still lovingly offering forgiveness to the war ravage people still alive on earth who may be willing to repent.

Jesus said to His disciples in Matthew 24:12-13, that love will wax cold. But, "He that endures to the end, the same shall be saved." Therefore, for the wicked world love will be destroyed by hardened hearts, but for the faithful obedient believers, the love of Christ will dwell in our hearts and its glory will be known beyond human comprehension.

On the Feast of Trumpets we think of the return of Jesus Christ with His army of saints as a magnificent, conquering event. And that is a true assessment of the more visible aspect of the day.

However, we must not neglect to realize the internal glory of our Lord and Savior—Christ's attribute of love is a far more glorious and impressive attribute than anything visible. The apostle Paul's description of the love of Christ magnifies and manifests itself as similar to the width, length, depth and height of a great temple or building.

**Ephesians 3:14-21** For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him

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who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

According to the apostle Paul, now that the Ephesians have been rooted and grounded in love, they may be fully able to comprehend with all saints what is the width and length and depth and height; to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge. Here, in this section of his epistle, Paul is not dealing with our love to God, to Christ, and to the brethren, but rather with His love to us.

But before we examine the nature or the character of that knowledge we must consider the knowledge itself, and find out WHAT can be known about the love of God. So, here in Ephesians 3, Paul sets this before us in an extraordinary manner. The terminology used by Paul in and of itself suggests vastness. And there is no doubt that he chose to describe it in this four-dimensional manner in order to give that very impression.

It is interesting to speculate as to WHY he decided to do this. He probably still had in mind what he had been saying at the end of the second chapter, before he began on the digression in the first thirteen verses of this chapter. There he had been describing the Church as a holy temple in the Lord, as a great building that God uses as His dwelling place. That was probably still in mind. And as he thought about the vastness of the Church as an enormous temple, he saw it as a good way of describing the love of Christ to the brethren. It is similar to the width, length, depth and height of such a great building.

Paul was certainly concerned about bringing out the vastness of Christ's love. In doing so he almost contradicts himself by using a figure of speech, which is called an oxymoron. He prays that we may know the love of Christ that passes knowledge.

How can you know something that cannot be known? How can you define something, which is so great that it cannot be defined? What is the point of talking about measurements if it is immeasurable and eternal?

But, there is no contradiction here. What Paul is saying is that though this love of Christ is itself beyond all computation and comprehension, and can never be truly measured, nevertheless it is our responsibility to learn as much as we can about it, and to receive as much of it as we can possibly contain. So it is appropriate and necessary for us to look at this description, which Paul gives of the love of Christ.

We are about to look into something that is so glorious and endless that it will be the theme of the contemplation of all the saints, not only in this world, but also in the world to come. We will spend our eternity in awe of it. But it is our responsibility to begin trying to comprehend it here and now in this life.

Paul said, "That you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge." This word, "comprehend," is significant when compared with the English word, "apprehend." Both comprehend and apprehend stem from the Latin word, "prehendere," which means, "to grasp."

We say that a monkey has a "prehensile tail." That is, its tail is able to grasp a tree limb and hold on. Our word, comprehend, carries the idea of mentally grasping something, while apprehend suggests laying hold of it for yourself. In other words, it is possible to understand something but not really make it your own. Paul's concern is that we lay hold of the vast expanses of the love of God. He wants us to live in four dimensions.

When God gave the land to Abraham, in Genesis 13:17, He told him to "walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it." Abraham had to step out by faith and claim his inheritance. But we today have an inheritance in four dimensions—width, length, depth, and height. These four dimensions together make up God's attribute of love!

But there is a paradox here. Paul wants us to know personally the love of Christ, which passes knowledge. There are dimensions, but they cannot be measured.

"The love of Christ which passes knowledge" parallels "the unsearchable riches of Christ," mentioned in Ephesians 3:8. We are so rich in Christ that our riches cannot be calculated even with the most sophisticated computer.

No Christian ever has to worry about having inadequate spiritual resources to meet the demands of life. If he prays for spiritual strength and spiritual depth, he will be able to apprehend—get his hands on—all the resources of God's love and grace. Philippians 4:13 says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

And what is the result of all of this? It is said that nature abhors a vacuum. This explains why air or water will automatically flow into an empty place. The divine nature abhors a vacuum, too. God wants us to experience His fullness. Remember, Ephesians 3:19 says, "That you may be filled with all the fullness of God." This is made possible by means of the Holy Spirit, and the measure of our fullness is God Himself.

**Ephesians 4:11-16** And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

It is tragic when Christians use the wrong measurements in examining their own spiritual lives. We like to measure ourselves by the weakest Christians we know and then brag, "Well, I am better than they are." Paul tells us that the measure is Christ, and that we cannot brag about anything nor should we.

It has always been one of the characteristics of the most faithful saints that they have spent much time in meditating on the love of Christ to themselves and to all God's people. Nothing has given them greater joy. This is a characteristic of love at all levels; it delights in thinking not only of the object of its love, but also of the love it receives. Nothing therefore should give greater joy to all God's people than to meditate upon this love of Christ.

Our main defect as Christians is that we fail to realize Christ's love to us. How often have you thought about this? We spend time thinking about our activities and our problems, but the most important necessity in the Christian life is to know Christ's love to us and to meditate on it.

This has always been the spring and the source of the greatest activity that has ever been manifested in the long history of the Christian Church. So let us try to look at it in terms of the dimensions that Paul uses.

Paul's description of the love of Christ by using the terms: "width and length and depth and height" seems to come from the heart.

He is impressed with the greatness of Christ's love; and the 4 words are used to point out the "dimensions" of that love and are similar to what would be meant if he had said,

"that you may know how 'large' or how 'great' is that love."

Paul seems to want to express the strongest sense of the greatness of the love of Christ, and to emphatically show how much he desired for us to fully understand it.

The four dimensions that Paul presents as knowledge and insight into the vastness of Christ's love are not necessarily equated with it. Paul is telling us that the love of Christ, exemplified in his fairness to the Gentiles, is too large to be confined by any geometrical measurements.

### **Width**

Have you ever considered the width of this love? Or, the breadth, as the KJV translates it.

It is wide enough to reach the whole world and beyond.

The width of Christ's love seems to suggest His reaching out with Divine mercy to sinners who are far off from God. Isaiah records what God said about people who walk according to their own human reasoning.

**Isaiah 65:1-2** "I was sought by those who did not ask for Me; I was found by those who did not seek Me. I said, 'Here I am, here I am,' to a nation that was not called by My name. I have stretched out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, according to their own thoughts.

**Isaiah 45:22** "Look to Me, and be saved, All you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.

Christ's love is wide enough to reach the whole world. God invites people that He calls from all nations to renounce their idols and worship Him alone.

There are several other places in scripture where this particular dimension is put before us in a striking manner. In the book of Revelation,

**Revelation 5:9-10** And they sang a new song, saying, "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and

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nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth."

The book of Revelation seems to be particularly interested in the width of Christ's love, because it gives us the picture of the glorified saints and of the Son of God with His redeemed.

**Revelation 7:9** After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands.

One day, in the glory, we will see that perfectly. But in a discouraging time like this in the history of the Church, what can be more encouraging and more exhilarating than to think of this width of the love of the Jesus Christ?

As Christians we are only a handful of people in this world today, a mere small percentage. That thought sometimes tends to depress us and to discourage us. The antidote to this is to consider the width of Christ's love.

The ultimate cause of the failure of the Jews of the apostles' time was that they never grasped this particular dimension. They thought that salvation was only for the Jew. But those of them whose eyes were opened by the Spirit, including Paul himself, had once held this exclusive Jewish view. But the apostles had come to see that that narrow, naturalistic dimension was altogether wrong, and that in Christ there is no distinction of race or ethnicity. Colossians 3:11 tells us that, "There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised."

Nothing is more encouraging and invigorating than to recollect that even in these days of apostasy, there are in the world, in every country and on every continent—though differing in color, in culture, in background, and in almost everything—men and women meeting together regularly to worship God and to thank Him for His loving Son and His great salvation. In the glory we will all be amazed at this, as we realize what the love of God in Christ has accomplished in spite of sin and human nature and Satan.

We have a very tough time truly imagining the greatness of His plan of salvation and of its scope. In Luke's Gospel we are told that certain people came to Christ one day and asked the question found in Luke 13:23, "Lord, are there few who are saved?"

We do not know the precise answer to that question, but we do know that Scripture teaches that we will be astounded when we see all the redeemed gathered in the fullness of the Gentiles and the fullness of Israel—all Israel saved! And, the saved standing in the presence of their Redeemer.

It is not surprising that the apostle Paul prayed so earnestly that the Ephesian Christians might know this because this changes your entire outlook when you tend to feel depressed, when you are tempted to doubt whether there is any future for the Church seeing that we are only a handful of people. The answer is to look at the width of Christ's love, to look ahead, to look into the glory and see the final result of His finished work.

Once you begin to realize the width of His love your whole attitude must become positive and lifted up again, and you will realize that you are having the precious privilege of being one humble member in a mighty army, who will spend their eternity in the presence of the Lamb of God and enjoy the width of His love forever!

### **Length**

Now let us look at the length of His love. It is long enough to stretch from eternity to eternity. It seems that Paul specified these particular measurements in order to encourage the Ephesians, and us through them to work this out in our minds. To meditate upon the love of God in an abstract manner is not very beneficial. We have to work it out in detail as it has been revealed. The length conveys the endless character of the love of Christ.

According to the Scriptures, Christ has feeling and affection. We must derive our conceptions of Christ's love as it is revealed in God the Father's love, from the special revelation that He has given of Himself, and this declares His love as strongly as His existence.

**I John 4:7-10** Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

"God is love!" The Scriptures contain no equivalent statements with respect to other qualities of the divine nature. Love is the highest characteristic of God, the one attribute

in which all others harmoniously blend.

The love of God and Christ is more than kindness or benevolence. The love of Christ underlies all that He has done and is doing, although many facts exist that we cannot reconcile with His love on account of our limited understanding. The greatest revelation and most complete proof of divine love is redemption. God the Father's love and His Son's love is also everlasting! Have you ever considered the eternity of Christ's love towards you and towards all the saints?

The length of this love reaches from eternity to eternity.

**Jeremiah 31:3** The Lord has appeared of old to me, saying: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness I have drawn you.

It is hard to take comfort from former blessings when you are under present curses. But God assures us of the constancy of his love. God has loved us, not only with an ancient love to our ancestors, but with an everlasting love, a love that will never fail. However, the comforts of it may be suspended for a while.

It is an everlasting love; therefore He has extended, or drawn out, loving kindness to us also, as well as to our ancestors, or with loving kindness He has drawn us to myself as our God from all the idols we have rejected and turned away from. Nothing can separate us from that love. God's love is a continued loving kindness to us.

The dimension of length reminds us that this is a love that began in eternity. It was always there! Being practical is very important in life; but we must think things through first. A person who rushes into action without knowing anything about what he is about to do is seen to be foolish. Think of a man who desires to begin to play with atomic power without knowing something about it!

Before time, before the world and man were ever created, an agreement was entered into between God the Father and His Son. It was an agreement concerning the salvation of those who were to be saved by Jesus Christ.

Man's sin was foreseen, everything was known; and the Son, as the Representative of this new humanity, entered into a covenant with His Father that He would save them and redeem them. The Father covenanted with the Son to grant certain privileges and blessings to the people who were now given to the Son.

It is important to meditate on such things! When we do, we realize that the love of Christ to His own people began before time, way back in eternity. Christ's love to us did not suddenly come into being; it was there before the beginning of time. Therefore we read that we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.

**Ephesians 1:3-5** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.

This is absolutely staggering that Christ knew us in eternity. He knew every one of us who belong to Him. What a dignity it adds to human life, and to our existence in this world to know that He has set His heart upon us, that His affections rested upon us even in eternity! That is the beginning (if such a term is possible) of the length of His love towards us—before time!

But let us look at this dimension of length as it works out in life in this world. The love of Christ is from eternity to eternity. It began in eternity, and it continues in time. So we can always be sure that it will never change, that it will never vary, that it will always be the same. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever." And His love is always the same.

There are no interruptions in it. This "length" is an unbroken line. Whatever may happen, it goes on; it is not a variable, it is a constant. It does not suddenly cease and then start again. His love is unchanging. It is a line, a straight line, it is not variable. It is a love that never gives us up or lets us go; it is a love that never despairs of us.

One of the most perfect expressions of this element of dimension is found in Christ's own parable of the prodigal son. In spite of the fact that the younger son had been a fool and had gone to the far country, spurning the love that had been shown him in his home, and had wasted his substance on the extravagant and shameful pleasures of that far country, his father still loved him.

And so, his father was waiting for his return. And when he did, he showered blessings on him. This is the shadow of a picture of the love of Christ towards His own patient, long-suffering, bearing with us and never giving up on us.

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Nothing is more wonderful than to realize that, even when we in our folly turn our backs on God, and sin against Him, His love still remains. It is a love that follows us wherever we go; He will not abandon us. God said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

It is important that we meditate on this love and contemplate it! It is because we fail to do so that we tend to sometimes think that He has forgotten us or that He has left us. When troubles, problems, and trials come, and we meet difficulties and disappointments, we tend to ask, "Where is His love?" The answer is that it is always there. The fault is in us, that we cannot see it, and have not meditated on it, that we have not realized its eternal character, and have not grasped its dimension of length.

The Apostle Paul expresses this truth:

**Romans 8:38-39** For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Nothing can ever cause the love of God to change or to fail. If He has set His heart and His affection on you, nothing will ever be able to pluck you out of His hand; nothing will ever rob you of that love. Nothing!

This will continue even into eternity. It has started in eternity, it manifests itself in time, and it goes on again into eternity. This line is unbroken. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews states that Christ has an eternal priesthood:

**Hebrews 7:25-26** Therefore He [Christ] is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens.

He will save us "to the uttermost." Nothing will be left undone. Whatever may happen, His love for His own will continue until the plan of redemption has been completed. Jesus Christ is making intercession for us now.

He is not like the earthly priests of the Old Testament who went in and out of the Holiest of all. They lived and did their work, and then they died, and others had to take their

place. But Christ is always there and always will be. That gives us some idea of the length of His love.

### **Depth**

Now, let us look at the depth of His love. It is deep enough to rescue people from sin's degradation and even from the grip of Satan himself. As we look at each dimension we are tempted to say that it is the most wonderful of all, the truth being that that is true of each one!

As we consider the depth, we are wise to consider what the apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians, where he shows that the depth of Christ's love can be seen in two main respects: What He did, and what He suffered.

First, in what He did. The depth of this love is seen in raising sinners from condemnation.

**Philippians 2:5-11** Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

In eternity Christ was "in the form of God." He was God the Son in the bosom of the Father from all eternity. But Paul tells us that, "He thought it not robbery to be equal with God." This means that He recognized that He had to give up something very important to Him: His equality with God. But, He willingly humbled Himself. He divested Himself of those signs of His eternal glory. And, He came into this world of sin and shame in the likeness of man in the form of a man. This is entirely beyond understanding. As Paul says, it is, "The love of Christ which passes knowledge."

He deliberately did not hold on to what He had a right to hold on to, but rather humbled Himself, and took to himself human nature and came and lived as a man in this world.

Next, consider what He suffered at the hands of men—the misunderstanding, the

hatred, the malice, and the spite. Think of His suffering from weariness and hunger and thirst. Think of men laying cruel hands on Him, arresting Him and trying Him, mocking Him and jeering at Him, spitting in His most holy face.

Think of cruel men condemning Him to death and scourging Him. He was nailed to the tree and was in agony from the thirst He endured and the pain He suffered. What a terrible moment He had when our sins were laid on Him!

He even lost sight of the face of His Father for the one and only time, died, and was buried and laid in a grave. He, the Creator of everything, was dead in a grave. Why did He do all this?

The astounding answer is, because of His love for you and me, because He loved us. There we begin to see the depth of His love.

His love shows yet greater and deeper when we remember that there was nothing in us to call forth such love. "All we like sheep have gone astray." We all have "come short of the glory of God." In our natural state we all were sinful and hopeless creatures.

So that we may have some true conception of our actual state and condition, and the depth of His love, let us notice what Paul tells us about the condition of mankind until the grace of God in Christ laid hold of us.

**Romans 3:10-19** As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one. Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

It was for such people that Christ came, enduring the Cross and despising the shame.

Also, the Apostle John says,

**John 15:13-17** Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life

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for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. These things I command you, that you love one another.

He did all this for sinners, for His enemies, for those who were full of sin and who had nothing to commend them. That is the measure of the depth of His love. He came from heaven. He went down to the depths and rose again for such people. It is only as we meditate on these things and realize their truth that we begin to know something about His love.

### **Height**

This brings us to the height of His love. By this dimension Paul expresses God's ultimate and final purpose for us. Or, we may say that this is the way in which he describes the height to which God proposes to raise us. It is high enough to raise both Israelite and Gentile to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

**Ephesians 2:5-7** Even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

The height of this love consists in redeeming sinners and making them heirs of God, and bringing them finally to glory. There is even a sense of height in the crown we receive which will heighten our stature.

**II Timothy 4:7-8** I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Many people in “mainstream Christianity” tend to think of salvation only in terms of forgiveness, as if the love of Christ only purchases for them the forgiveness of their sins.

Anyone who stops at that is not realizing the height of the love of Christ.

**Romans 5:8-11** But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

Something of this height is seen in the fact that He died not only that we might be forgiven, but that we might be justified. He died not only that our sins might be blotted out, but that we might be saved. He died not merely to save us from punishment, but that we might be given eternal life.

But also, He died that we might be made children of God, sons of God, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. That is His purpose for us. All He did had that goal in mind. Furthermore, the height of His love causes the same Holy Spirit that is in Himself to dwell in us.

Christ's love to us is so great that He has actually joined us to Himself. We are united with Christ, He has made us part of Himself, of His own body.

**Philippians 3:20-21** For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

That is why we were "made alive with Him," and "raised with Him," and are "seated in the heavenly places" with Him. He purposes to redeem us entirely.

Christ's love toward us knows no bounds; His desire for us is for us to be with Him and to see that glory which He shares with the Father from all eternity. He is not fulfilled with only purchasing our forgiveness and delivering us from sin, Satan, and this world, Christ wants us to be there with Him in the glory and to spend our eternity there.

The Apostle John in his first epistle, describing this height, says,

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**I John 3:1-2** Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

A lover always desires that the object of his love may share all his privileges and blessings and enjoyments, and so Christ desires that we may enjoy something of His eternal glory. He will not be satisfied until, as Paul says in Ephesians 5,

**Ephesians 5:27** That He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

This is His purpose for the Church and for all whom He loves. We will be glorified in Him. There will be no fault, no blemish and no wrinkle. Our hearts and minds are learning "to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that [we] may be filled with all the fullness of God." We will be perfect and complete and filled with "all the fullness of God."

In view of that, we have tried feebly to catch a glimpse of the love of Christ. Christ has perfect love for God's church as a spotless united body and for its faithful members individually.

**Ephesians 3:17-19** That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Paul recognizes, of course, that he is attempting to measure the immeasurable and so paradoxically prays that the Ephesian Christians may come to know the love that is ultimately unknowable. It surpasses knowledge! It exceeds understanding! It is incomprehensible to the human mind! It originates and flows from a totally different realm where the normal faculties of rational fear are incapable of functioning.

**I John 4:18** There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because

fear involves torment.

The lack of fear in love does NOT rule out the presence and constructive effect of “the fear of the Lord,” which is “the beginning of knowledge.” Here, John speaks of fear of final judgment. But, he mentions in the preceding verse that love gives us boldness in the day of judgment.

**I John 4:17** Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.

God’s perfect love for His own faithful people casts out the fear of wrath and final judgment.

Love that is complete, or love that is allowed to exert its proper influence on the heart and mind delivers the mind from anxiety. When love exists in an absolutely perfect state, it is entirely free from all dread with regard to the future.

Even though the love of Christ surpasses human knowledge, if Christ dwells in you, you can know it, because you are empowered by the Holy Spirit. Being both the consequence and climax of Christ’s love our desire as Christians is to be filled up to the measure of the divine fullness.

One great cause of the present condition of the Church is that we do not know Christ’s love to us as we should. We spend our time with petty things and in fussy activities and discussions. Were we to be full of this love and of the knowledge of this love, we would be entirely transformed.

That is why the Apostle Paul prayed without ceasing that the Ephesian Christians might “with all saints comprehend what is the width and length and the depth and the height, and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge.”

God’s Feast of Trumpets is both a solemn day and a time of rejoicing. And, in both cases the love of Christ is the underlying foundation of glory and excellence.

On the one hand, it pictures terrifying world events culminating in warfare that will threaten the extinction of all life on this planet, but the loving Christ will intervene to prevent the annihilation and ongoing suffering of human beings because of Satan’s influence and people’s sins.

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On the other hand, it pictures a day of great rejoicing for those faithful firstfruits who have answered God's calling and voluntarily submitted themselves to the government of God. The loving Christ will begin to set up and reward the first-fruits as kings and priest of the Kingdom of God.

May God grant that we may know the love of Christ and grow in it and rejoice in it!