

FOUR DIMENSIONS OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST

Ephesians 3:13-19

INTRODUCTION

- A. Verse 13 is Paul's words of encouragement. Paul was a prisoner in Rome and either surmised or heard that the brethren were discouraged to the point of giving up because of his present tribulation.
- B. Paul's persecution by the Jews was due to his preaching the Gospel to Gentiles – such as those in Ephesus (v. 8).
- C. Instead of their feeling guilty or being discouraged about his circumstances, they should count it to their glory that one is thus willing to suffer so that they might be benefitted.
- D. It should be noted that in verse 14 Paul goes back to where he left off at verse 1 to continue his greatest prayer for the Lord's church – a prayer based on a cross-centered unity of humanity – that Christ death demolished the God/man and Jew/Gentile barriers.
- E. Through the Gospel He is now creating in relation to Himself a single, multicultural human group, which is both the family the Father loves – 2:19; 3:6, 17-19 – and the temple in which He lives – 2:21-22; 1 CO 3:16.
- F. Paul's Prayer:
 - 1. His prayer concerns a unity that transcends spatial relations – v. 15.
 - 2. His prayer concerns the Christian's need for and avenue of strength – v. 16-19.
- G. Paul prays that these that are "being rooted and grounded in love" grasp the unbelievable dimensions of the love of the Christ.
- H. Paul wants them to keep their eyes on the prize by being strong to comprehend (used in the NT in these sense of mental grasp, as in seizing tight hold of or arrest, capture, appropriate, comprehend or perceive) it with a knowledge based on personal experience.
- I. To know the love of the Christ is patently impossible unless it is "with all the saints" – 1:1, 15, 18; 2:19; 3:8; 6:18 – for Christ dwells in the church.
- J. Even though alien sinners can "love" one another to a degree – which still merely reflects God's design in them, - this love on a human plane is only a foretaste of knowing the love of Jesus Christ "which passeth knowledge (RO 5:6-8; GA 2:20; 1 JN 4:7-13; cf. Job 11:5-9) as made available in the Gospel and appropriated in obedience by any good and honest heart.
- K. The added dimension is stated by Jesus in JN 15:12 – "even as I have loved you." Paul could never escape such love: "but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." PH 3:12; cf. 2 CO 5:21; EP 3:8a; 1 TI 1:12-17.
- L. The love of Christ is not one-sided – God's purpose in Christ is to make all people one new man. EP 2:11-22. He doesn't just love those who love him. MT 5:46-48.

DISCUSSION

- I. BREADTH – THE GOSPEL IS FOR ALL.
- II. DEPTH – HOWEVER DEEP SIN GOES, THAT DEEP GOES HIS LOVE.
- III. HEIGHT – IT LIFTS US TO GREAT HEIGHTS, AS HIGH AS HEAVEN ITSELF.
- IV. LENGTH – HE WENT TO GREAT LENGTHS IN ORDER TO SAVE US.

CONCLUSION

- A. Are we allowing our soul to be possessed completely by the Gospel of Christ, for our inward man to realize its complete spiritual purpose? Cf. CO 1:9-11; 2:9-10.
- B. Stephen was strong inwardly and there was a Christlikeness about him. You see him in love praying for his enemies and at the same time not doubting the love God had for him. Acts 7:54-60.