

## **THE LOVE OF CHRIST IS FOUR-DIMENSIONAL**

**Today's Text: Eph. 3: 1-21**

### **Extracts:**

**Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. 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 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 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 of Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen [Eph. 3: 14-21].***

*When human beings use their two eyes to view an object, they convey to the brain no more than two dimensions (2D) of what they are focused on.<sup>1</sup> For example, whether you are viewing a TV programme or reading a newspaper, you tend to focus on two dimensions at a time- length and breadth or length and height or breadth and depth. But, recently, 3D technology was introduced to enhance the illusion of depth perception. It has been applied in filming movies, such as *Avatar* (2009), which grossed over \$1 billion in worldwide revenue within seventeen days of its release. 3D technology is gaining widespread use on television and other areas. However, it has had to introduce 3D glasses to help human eyes to dissect the additional dimension. In other words, 3D glasses provide the human brain a third eye that humans cannot have naturally!*

*In this week's Bible study, Paul has told us that the love of Christ is four-dimensional (i.e., 4D)-width, length, depth and height- and that it is beyond human knowledge. Yet, we are expected to be rooted and grounded in love to appreciate Christ's love for us. How can we operate at 4D when 3D is already so challenging? How can we get a glimpse of the love of Christ? What 4D glasses can we use to have a glimpse of Christ's love for us? Those and more are the issues that we shall examine in this week's very challenging study.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Technical information for this intro was obtained from the following sources: "What is 3D Technology?" <http://www.visionnw.com/>; "3D Technology Techniques," <http://www.visionnw.com/3d-technology-techniques.html> ; "3D Film" From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/3D\\_film](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/3D_film) ; and Luke Martin, "The Relationship Between 3D Technology and a Film's Success," <http://the-artifice.com/3d-technology-and-films-success/> ; Apr. 8, 2014

## 1. Background: Love beyond human understanding

A leading member of the Pharisees, a lawyer, once asked Jesus to tell him (and other listeners) what the great commandment is in the law. Jesus informed him that the first one is to love God with all your heart, soul and mind. The second is to love your neighbour as yourself. He added, “On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” [Matt. 22: 34-40]. What is the meaning of love so defined?

Preparatory to His departure from them, Jesus told His disciples, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, *as I have loved you*, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” [Jn 13: 34-35]. He added that *those who have His commandments and keep them are the ones that love Him. Those who love Him will be loved by His Father. He, Jesus, will love them and manifest Himself to them* [Jn 14: 21].

By that definition of love, many of us do not even love ourselves not to talk of loving God or others! Otherwise, why would we pollute ourselves with drug addiction and sexual promiscuity if we loved ourselves? Why would we steal other people’s property when such would show lack of love for God or neighbour? Why would we extend love only to people of the same blood, colour or creed but not to others, including our enemies? Therefore, *we need to examine love from God’s perspective to appreciate why we owe Him love in return. That is the significance of this week’s study.*

The word of God teaches us that *God is love and God is of love* [1 Jn 4: 7-8]. It is from Him that the whole family in heaven and on earth is named [Eph. 3: 15]. So, if Jesus Christ is His only begotten Son and He and His Father are one [Jn 10: 30], then *Jesus is also love and Jesus is of love*. No one has seen God at any time but Jesus who is in the bosom of the Father has declared Him [Jn 1: 18].

Therefore, *if you want to know the love of God, you must know the love of Christ*. Paul’s desire is for us, along with all the saints, to know the “width and length and depth and height” that is the love of Christ; yet, *the love of Christ passes knowledge* [Eph. 3: 17, 18]! *Is it because it is 4D whereas we only have 2D vision? What 4D glasses can we use to have a glimpse of such glorious love that we “may be able to comprehend with all the saints” the four dimensions of the love of Christ? Those are the issues that we shall attempt to address in this week’s study.*

For background, let us pay attention to the following points that Paul has made:

- a) *Christ’s love for us derives from His Father’s love for us*

God made man in His image and likeness. It was immediately demonstrated when Adam gave names to whatever God created and

“whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name” [Gen. 2: 19]. How many scientists today do you know that can match that feat? Yet, at the very first temptation, Adam and his wife, Eve, fell. Instead of repenting, they shifted blame to others- Adam to his wife and his wife to the serpent [Gen. 3: 1-13]. Since then, man died spiritually and could not come before the throne of God on his own effort or merit. That was where God’s love took over.

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, (to come in human form and die in the place of man); that “whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” [Jn 3: 16]. Jesus willingly accepted His Father’s plan. Therefore, His Father loves Him because He laid down His life that He might take it again” [Jn 10: 17-18]. *It follows that you understand and appreciate God’s love for you when you appreciate the supreme sacrifice that Jesus has made for your own salvation.*

b) *It takes the Holy Spirit to make Christ dwell in our hearts by faith*

No one can call Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit [1 Cor. 12: 3]. Before His Passion, Jesus told His disciples that, after His departure, He would send them the Spirit of truth who will guide them (and indeed all believers over time) into all truth. He will not speak on His own authority but He will glorify Jesus for He will take of what is Christ’s and declare it to us [Jn 16: 13-14]. That is why baptism by water and the Holy Spirit is the mark of being born-again [Jn 3: 3, 5; Acts 2: 41; Acts 19: 1-6].

Strengthened with might through the Holy Spirit that in-dwells believers, Christ then dwells in their hearts through faith, that they may be rooted and grounded in love [Eph. 3: 16-17]. In other words, *the Holy Spirit, working through faith provides believers with 4D glasses that enable them to have a glimpse of the love of Christ that is 4D!*

c) *Then we can comprehend the four dimensions of Christ’s love for us!*

When we (believers) accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are enabled with spiritual 4D glasses to see the four dimensions of Christ’s love [vv. 18-19]. We can see an unfathomable space stretching from creation to eternity and from heaven to the depths of the earth. Here are the glimpses of what the dimensions can represent:

- Width

Christ’s love covers all of humanity for in Him, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female, for all are one in Christ [Gal. 3: 28]. *That suggests that Christ’s love*

*accommodates all, irrespective of your family background, race or creed.* For example, how many of the thousands of people that He miraculously fed with a few loaves of bread even believed in or followed Him [**Jn 6: 22-26**]? How many leaders do you know that would take back a disciple that has betrayed him? Yet, Jesus prayed for Peter before his temptation [**Lk 22: 31-32**], forgave him his sin of denying his Master thrice and restored him as the head of His disciples [**Jn 21: 15-17**]. In the words of Jesus, “The one who comes to Me, I will by no means cast out” [**Jn 6: 37**]. That illustrates the depth of His love.

- Length

Jesus is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world [**Rev. 13: 8**]. While we were yet sinners, He died for us [**Rom. 5: 8**]. He is the same yesterday, today and forever [**Heb. 13: 8**]. *That suggests that His love is durable, resilient and reliable!* It is there for every age and every clime. Thus, on the eve of His Passion, He prayed for all believers when He said to His Father, “I do not pray for these [His disciples] alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word” [**Jn 17: 20**]. On the day of His ascension into heaven, He assured His disciples, “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” [**Matt. 28: 20**]. *Therefore, Christ’s love endures and endears.*

- Depth

Jesus gave up His divinity to take human form and to die in the place of sinners. In His own words, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” [**Jn 15: 13**]. *That suggests supreme sacrifice and humility.* He suffered; He was humiliated- all because He chose to humble Himself by taking human form that was lower than that of the angels [**Heb. 2: 7**]. The Lord is longsuffering when it comes to rescuing us from eternal damnation because He is not willing that anyone should perish but that all should come to repentance [**2 Pet. 3: 8**]. So, as in the Parable of the Lost Sheep, Jesus is ready to leave ninety-nine sheep in search of the only one that has strayed [**Lk 15: 1-7**]. That is a measure of the depth of His love for us sinners.

- Height

No one can take us to God the Father except “He who came from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven” [**Jn 3: 13**]. Therefore, when Satan, “the accuser of our brethren” [**Rev. 12:10**] brings charges against us [**Zech. 3: 1**], Jesus serves as our

Advocate with His Father [**1 Jn 2: 1**]. We may be guilty as charged but we are declared innocent by virtue of the blood of Jesus already shed for us on Mount Calvary! Jesus has gone ahead of us to prepare a mansion for each of us in His Father's house so that we can be where He is [**Jn 14: 1-3**! *Christ's love elevates*.

From the foregoing, we can have a glimpse of Christ's love for us. Imagine yourself sitting on a hard platform in your bare living room of lack and despair. Below is the basement of the unknown, your fears and self-doubt. Above is the ceiling of your limitations and impossibilities. You can only see the four confining walls of that living room, marking the area enclosed by its length and breath. But you cannot see beyond that because the depth (basement) and the height (ceiling) cover phenomena hidden from your myopic view. The only way to see everything is to walk by faith and not by sight [**2 Cor. 5: 7**] which, of course, you are incapable of doing for yourself without Jesus! But in the love of Christ, you will be able to see everything (height, depth, length and breadth) from that living room because you can do all things through Him that strengthens you [**Phil. 4: 13**]! Now you can see why the love of Christ is beyond human comprehension. You can see why Paul enthused about the love of Christ that can make us filled with all the fullness of God "who is able to do *exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think*" [**Eph. 3: 20**]. Can you then afford to turn down such a rare love gift from God?

## 2. Can you really avoid Christ's love for you?

It is quite easy to rationalize by saying that Christ is only for Christians or believers. The truth is that no matter whom or what you believe in, you cannot avoid Christ or His love for the following reasons:

### a) *He created the world and ALL in it*

God created the world and everything in it by His word [**Gen. 1: 3**]. When God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to *Our likeness*" [v. **26**], who was speaking? The Father and the Holy Spirit remain invisible. Therefore, the Speaker was the Word of God, and that Word was God and without Him was nothing made that was made [**Jn 1: 1-2**]. The Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us as Jesus [v. **14, 18**]. Therefore, whether you accept Jesus or not as your Lord and Saviour, He created you. It is He who allows the sun to shine on both the good and the bad [**Matt. 5: 45**].

### b) *He died for ALL*

Jesus has been called "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" [**Rev. 13: 8**]. When God cursed the serpent (Satan) in the Garden of Eden,

He said He would put enmity between him and the “Seed of the woman” who would bruise Satan’s head and the devil would bruise His heel [**Gen. 3: 15**]. To make tunics of skin to clothe Adam and his wife, the blood of an animal was shed [**v. 21**]. Speaking to His disciples after His resurrection, Jesus said, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you; *that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me*” [**Lk 24: 44**]. Therefore, just as the brazen serpent raised up in the wilderness by Moses [**Num. 21:9**] was a figure of Christ’s crucifixion [**Jn 3: 14**], so is the blood of the lamb shed in making tunics for Adam and Eve. Jesus is the Messiah for all generations- from Adam to the end of the age. He died for you whether you believe it or not!

c) *He will judge ALL*

In the words of Jesus, “The Father judges no one but has committed all judgment to the Son” [**Jn 5; 22**]. One of these days, Jesus will appear in the clouds with His angels. He will assemble all the peoples from all the nations of the earth and judge them according to their service [**Matt. 24: 29-31; 25: 31-46**]. Whether you believe in Him or not will not matter but ALL (alive or dead) will be subject to His authority on that day [**1 Thes. 4: 13-17**]!

Jesus has said, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you to do” [**Jn 15: 13-14**]. *God first loved you by giving His only begotten Son to die for your sins. The Son loved you by willingly going to the cross for you and to die in your place. Now, He has commanded you to love God with all your heart, soul and mind, and your neighbour as yourself. When you walk steady in obedience to the will of God, then you have the love of Christ. That is the heart of Paul’s message.*

### 3. Conclusion: Who can separate you from the love of Christ?

Having given your life to Christ, and now living by what He has commanded you on a daily basis, God’s everlasting love through His begotten Son, Jesus, is now yours. So, what is separating you from His love? Tribulation? Distress? Persecution? Famine? Height? Depth? Nothing because you are now more than conquerors through Him who loves you. Nothing can ever again separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord [**Rom. 8: 35-39**].

The love of Christ is indeed four-dimensional.