

## **“Breadth, Length, Height And Depth”**

*“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom every family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant unto you, according to the riches of his glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3:14-19).*

Paul’s desire for that Ephesians was that they should be strong to apprehend *“with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth ...”* Of what? The phrase is elliptical: the reader must supply what it was Paul wished these brethren to apprehend. Many are persuaded that it was the love of Christ. Paul was concerned that brethren appreciate this and the fact that the *“love of Christ”* follows the expression *“the breadth and length and height and depth”* is strong support for such a view.

Still, since the phrase *“the love of Christ”* is phrased *“and to know the love of Christ,”* it suggests that in addition to apprehending the *“breadth and length and height and depth,”* Paul wanted brethren to also know the love of Christ. It seems that two things are to be apprehended. If this is true, what was it Paul earnestly wished these brethren to know?

The words *“breadth, length, height, depth”* suggest dimensions and dimensions suggest a building. Paul has discussed a building, albeit a spirit one. He has extolled God’s mystery, hidden in his mind since the world’s foundation. That mystery, an eternal purpose of God, is the church. He has shown that Gentiles and Jews are built together a holy temple; builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit (2:21f). Then, as now, men did not appreciate the church and what God sought to accomplish in it. Then, as now, God’s plan for Jew and Gentiles to be one body because of the sacrifice of Christ was foolishness to the Gentiles, a stumbling block to the Jews (1 Cor. 1:21-23). If men had a greater appreciation for the church of God, they would not tamper with it; they would resist every temptation to fashion the church according to their own schemes. They would say, with Paul, unto *“him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations forever and ever, Amen” (3:21).*

Of course, to appreciate the church will lead each man to *“know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge” (3:19).* This *“love of Christ”* is not, as in other passages, our love for Christ; it is the love Christ has for us. Neither

rhyme nor reason accounts for the great love Christ manifested for man. He said, *"Greater love hath no man than this that than he lay down his life for his friends"* (Jn. 15:13). In his Roman letter Paul wrote, *"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die. Peradventure for the good man some one would even dare to die. But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, what we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"* (Rom. 5:7). And who dares forget the command of husbands to *"love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for it ..."* (Eph. 5:25). Paul sums his attitude up in declaring, *"I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I that live but Christ that liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me"* (Gal. 2:20). To know, to appreciate the love of Christ which passeth knowledge should ignite a kindred feelings for him. Did not John write, *"We love, because he first loved us"* (1 Jn. 4:19)? The poet has written, and we sing, *"To God be the glory, great things he has done, so loved he the world that he gave us his son!"*

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