

God's Love

Ephesians 3:14-19

How wide and long and high and deep is God's love?

Key Points:

- In v.14, Paul says again, "For this reason", which he explained in v.1, was "for the sake of you Gentiles". His aim is to bring the church together from chaos. He seeks to extend God's love to all, not just Jews. He believes this so passionately that he "kneels" - actually he prostrates himself, passionately entreating for this to happen. And the one he is entreating is the Father.
- This is not simply referring to a relationship but to the love that comes from fatherhood. In v.15, Paul builds on this family context by reminding us as Christians that we are part of a family, which includes saints in Heaven, believers on Earth and all who bear His name as Christians. We belong to a perfect loving family, brothers and sisters of Christ, loved by God.
- v.16 reminds us that since Christ came and lived and died and rose again amongst us, the veil of the temple had been torn apart and the God of the Old Testament who was unapproachable and to be feared had become a loving Father accessible to all. Furthermore, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit "out of His glorious riches to strengthen us".
- v.17 tells us that this strengthening of our "inner being" by the Spirit enables Christ to "dwell in our hearts through faith". Our inner being consists of three dimensions - our reason or wisdom to discern right from wrong, our conscience, and our free will to do what we are called to do. Dwelling is permanent. Once Christ dwells in our heart by our invitation He is there forever.
- Finally, we can answer the question, prompted by v.18! The clue we have is the Cross. God's love is as wide as Christ's arms spread to include everyone. It is as long as the depths Christ's blood descended to, even to those in Hell. It is as high as the Heavens and eternal life. It is as deep as the wood, which held the nails with which Christ absorbed the punishment for our sins.
- v.19 then provides us with the consequences of this answer. The response to "So what?" If God's love is that wide and long and high and deep, it does indeed "surpass knowledge, so that we may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God". We are truly Spirit-filled.

Questions:

1. What do you consider to be the main characteristics of love, and how are these revealed? What would be your ideal demonstration of the love of one person for another?
2. Why do you think many people these days consider love to be limited in its scope and duration, so that they are prepared to even consider finite marriage arrangements?
3. Do you feel that your faith has changed you permanently, and can you identify ways in which you have changed how you behave or deal with major challenges in your life?
4. Do you find "fatherhood" a helpful concept in understanding God's love? Is this unhelpful for example for children of single mothers who may be considering how Christ loves them?
5. Some people feel they are so far and wide away from Christ He cannot reach them, so limited that He is too high above them, so low in sin He cannot reach down to them, and so shallow they cannot match the depth of His love for them. How can we reach them with God's love?