

LOVE'S DIMENSIONS
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"FOR THIS CAUSE I BOW MY KNEES UNTO THE FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, OF 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 BY HIS SPIRIT IN THE INNER MAN; THAT CHRIST MAY DWELL IN YOURS HEARTS BY FAITH; THAT YE, BEING ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN LOVE, MAY BE ABLE TO COMPREHEND WITH ALL SAINTS WHAT IS THE BREADTH, AND LENGTH, AND DEPTH AND HEIGHT; AND TO KNOW THE LOVE OF CHRIST, WHICH PASSETH KNOWLEDGE, THAT YE MIGHT BE FILLED WITH ALL THE FULNESS OF GOD" Ephesians 3:14-19.

The above Scriptures are a beautiful expression of Divine love. As we note from verse seventeen, we must be "rooted and grounded in love," in order to comprehend it. Knowing the love of Christ which passes Knowledge informs us of revelations which come only by experience. They go beyond simple cogitations of the mind. We may tell a sinner that "God so loved the world," or God so loved him, "that He gave His only begotten Son"; but he does not know what that means until he has laid hold of such love and experienced it by accepting Jesus as his own personal Saviour. A pattern for gaining this experimental knowledge is herein set forth.

It is enlarged upon in Eph. 5:21-25..."Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church: and He is the Saviour of the Body. Therefore, as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it." The principle of submission is found three times in these verses before love is mentioned. It means that, without submitting unto God, we can never learn His love. If the sinner refuses to bow his knees and realize he is a sinner, God cannot express saving love to him. If Christians refuse to acknowledge the Headship of Christ and have their will broken, they will never come into this experimental knowledge for which Paul prayed.

The values of submission are also expressed by Peter, in 1 Peter 3:1-7. We find here that "Sara obeyed Abraham" and even called him "lord." Following such submission, the husband is instructed to give honor unto the wife. Even in the natural, the submissive wife gives the husband ample opportunity and incentive to express his love for her. Likewise, in the spiritual realm, our submission is God's opportunity. Contrariwise, there are times when we get into a place where God cannot express His love to us. He cannot Pour His love out upon us the way He wants to. This is expressed in the Song of Solomon 2:2, when Solomon says of the Shulamite, "As the lily among Thorns, so is my love among the daughters." Some are like thorns, and actually repel Christ. He cannot fully express His affection toward them. Such folk will never receive the full comprehension of the giant cube of love mentioned in our text. This cube corresponds beautifully with different phases of our experience. We cannot have just one experience with the love of God and know all there is to know about it.

First we know the "BREADTH" of love. It means "to spread out.' ' Webster defines it as meaning "spaciousness, extent, largeness or liberality." Thus, it shows prosperity. Numbers 24:6 which speaks of the future blessing or prosperity of Israel says, "As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river' s side, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters." David describes his experience in Psalm 18:19 ... "He brought me forth also into a large place; He delivered me, because He delighted in me."

The breadth, spaciousness, roominess and prosperity that God delights to give to us, are expressions of Divine love. When He pours out such blessings and wonders upon us, we know it as love. We can feel it. Everything is bright, shining and beautiful. This applies to both natural and spiritual requirements. In the natural, we feel the warm sunshine of such love when He gives us special blessings which go beyond the point of meeting our basic needs. Spiritually, we prosper in our knowledge of the Word of God. He kisses us "with the kisses of His mouth," and we love them. They are heartwarming and intoxicating. We know that He delights in us, and no one can tell us differently. When we have been Kissed with a divine revelation of truth, we cannot be dissuaded. Though Satan comes with his darts of error, doubt and fear we are able to stand steadfast, fully convinced of the Truth. This is spiritual prosperity, and it is not hard to realize that it is the love of God. It becomes a personal expression of God' s love to me. He kissed "Me with the kisses of His mouth."

The next phase of revealed love is "LENGTH." The dictionary describes it as "extent" or "duration." There is no limit nor duration to the love of God; but notice that His love can reach us only when we have gone the complete length of our own abilities and strength. Even after we are born again, we still have certain tendencies and drives within us that must come to nought before we can learn the spiritual ways of God. Paul cried, "When I am weak, then am I strong." Jesus said, "Without Me ye can do nothing." We can be very much aware of such truths; but, until we exhaust all our natural resources and learn to lean heavily upon the everlasting arms of Jesus, we do not really know the meaning of such "strange" statements.

Jacob is a good example of this truth. Here is a man who had a heart for the Lord. He loved God and God loved him as the Scripture declares.."Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" - Romans 9:13. Jacob, however, had to learn some very painful lessons. He is a man very easy to identify with, because he was so self-sufficient and able for everything he wanted to do. Genesis Thirty-two is an account of the events in his life just prior to his meeting with Esau. Prompted by fear of his brother, Jacob began trying to extricate himself from an impossible situation.

First, he divided his substance into two bands, hoping that if one were destroyed the other would be spared. This bit of strategy did not satisfy him, and he called out to the Lord ... reminding Him of His promises on the one hand, but declaring his own unworthiness on the other. In other words, he failed to take his exalted worthy place in Christ. Continuing to follow his own initiative, Jacob divided some of his possessions into three bands as a present to Esau. Still fear raged within his heart. Finally, a tired, perplexed, fearful man,

he sent his family away over the brook and he was left alone.

What a parallel of our own experience. When we have done everything that we can imagine to do and are still not satisfied that all is well, God isolates us to teach us some very unique lessons. This does not necessarily mean that we are alone physically, but rather that we are shut up to Him in our spirits. We become occupied with Him as though no one else were around. Even in this state of affairs, Jacob tried to prevail by his own power as "there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day" - Genesis 32:24. Again, we find ourselves reflected in Jacob. So often we would "twist God' s arm" if it were possible, trying to obtain a blessing from Him, wanting Him to bow to our own desires and ambitions. God wanted to bless Jacob, but first He must get him ready to receive. "And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob' s thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him" - Genesis 32:25.

Jacob had now run the length of all his resources. He had for many years been desirous of God' s best for him, but only now was he in a positron to obtain the best portion. And what a blessing God had for him! "And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed" - Genesis 32:27,28. This is so beautifully expressed, because here in his weakness Jacob' s name is changed. God also changes our spiritual name as we go on with Him. Jacob supplanting all this time ... taking someone else' s place now receives a name and place of his own. He is "Israel," a prince with God, for now he has "power WITH God and WITH men."

Some people think it is wonderful to have the power OF God, and that is glorious; but how much greater to have power WITH God. He hears us. He answers our cry. It means something to Him when we pray. Abraham was like that. Why did God tell him about His destructive plans for Sodom and Gomorrah? Did Abraham mourn, or pout, or cry? No! God knew His man. He knew this warrior of faith would intercede. Abraham had power with God and He Knew it. How did he get it though? By utter, absolute, uncontrolled weakness. He declared Himself to be nothing but "dust and ashes," appealing only to the mighty power of God' s grace ... Genesis 18:27-33. Though Sodom was destroyed, Abraham' s intercessory prayer was effectual, in that Lot was delivered.

The Apostle Paul discovered this same power as he said, "When I am weak, then am I strong" - II Cor. 12:10. "Not - "when I am weak, I will soon get strong; I have power with God." That does not mean that we can take control of God and persuade Him to do anything that we deem necessary. It means that we are in agreement with God. We pursue his ways, His purposes and His complete will in our lives. Notice, Too..."Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved" - Genesis 32:30. So it is that we come face to face with Him, whenever our force is gone. This is a genuine revelation of Christ. Surely Jacob never forgot that experience. Undoubtedly, it pained him when the thigh was put out of joint; and, as the Scripture declares, he ever walked with a limp.

So it is in our own lives. Some revelation of Truth may be painful for us at times, but we do not learn the lesson of weakness in one lesson and then forget it. The Children of

Israel made a remembrance of this, they refused to eat of "the sinew which shrank" - Gen. 32:32. Likewise, God bids us through various experiences which make lasting impressions upon us. We can never forget what Jesus means to us, when we are brought to the full length of our own power and he is able to engulf us in His glorious blanket of love.

The next facet of love is learned ... the "DEPTH" of our experience. Psalm Twenty-three portrays it. The entire Psalm hinges on the first statement, "The Lord is my Shepherd." If this relationship is not practical in our lives, the rest of the Psalm can mean very little to us. Again, submission is the key to this knowledge of the Shepherd's love. If we do not follow Him, He cannot lead us into the paths of victory outlined here.

The depth of experience is expressed in Psalm 23:4,5. Often verse four is applied only in times of deep sorrow when loved ones have been laid to rest. In reality, it is a verse that must be appropriated in practical daily experiences. Paul expressed it in this way as he said, "I die daily." Then he said, "I have fought with beasts at Ephesus." Again he shouts, "Bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." And, finally, "Delivered unto death for Jesus sake." The chief apostle was not speaking of the old man dying. He was talking about being in danger of physical death. Satan would have snuffed out his life over and over again if God had allowed it.

Job is another good example. Surely God was not uttering idle words when He said, "Satan, you cannot take his life." He knew what the enemy had in mind. The devil would have stopped God's purpose in Job by killing him, if God had not forbidden it. So it is that we walk through the valley of the shadow of death in our experience, when we commit our lives to the Lord. When we yield to Him, we are laying our lives on the line. Satan would like to snuff them out. Anyone, who purposes to yield his life to God, will experience satanic resistance.

The "beasts at Ephesus" did not begin and end with Paul. These same forces were responsible when men took up stones and tried to kill Jesus before He went to the Cross. Satan was trying to stop the very plan of redemption, but Jesus slipped out of their presence. God had a special time and a special way for the death of Jesus, and he had to preserve Him to accomplish His purposes. Today, the great Architect has definite purposes for our lives. We may not always yield to them, but God has a specific reason for our being here; and Satan will do his utmost to prevent a complete work in us. But notice our promises ... "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

Elisha the prophet conveyed this message to a fearful servant in II Kings Six. After Elisha prayed for him, this young man was able to see the fiery hedge of horses and chariots round about them. This is the assurance that God gives to us as we go on and realize that we are in protective custody. Satan can come no further than God will allow. The great Workman has a purpose in our lives, and He is able to complete it. When we get a revelation of that, we can say emphatically, "I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me."

Notice ... "Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." The rod of God's Word supplies needed correction, and the staff tells us that we can lean heavily upon the Word for

support. Consider, too, "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." If there is ever a time that we need a table, it is in the presence of the enemy.

Elijah, a man who was very zealous for the Lord and defied Baal, also walked in this valley of death. But, God was faithful to him too, as He literally prepared him a table. I Kings Nineteen informs us that the angel of the Lord woke him and said, "Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee." Elijah did as he was bidden, and it must have been good; for he went in the strength of that meat for forty days ... the number of testing. God can prepare a table in the presence of our enemies, too. He can supply meat that will last the full duration of the test and, according to our Psalm, He does more: "Thou anointest my head with oil (comfort); my cup runneth over (with joy)." In the face of certain destruction, we learn the love of God in a way that we have not known before. We can never learn such depth unless we go "through the valley of the shadow of death.' '

The final dimension in our cube of love is the "HEIGHT." Sometimes we express it as a mountaintop experience. It refers to the ecstatic joy we feel because of what God means to us. David experienced the thrill of that when God gave him the Davidic Covenant. The king had purposed to do something great for the Lord and build Him a house, but the Lord refused the offer. Instead, He declared very emphatically, that David would be the recipient of His choice blessings. This man was so overwhelmed that He went in "and sat before the Lord." He said, "Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto? And now, O Lord God, Thou art that God, and Thy words be true, and Thou hast promised this goodness unto Thy servant: Therefore now let it please Thee to bless the house of Thy servant, that it may continue for ever before Thee: for Thou, O Lord God, hast spoken it: and with Thy blessing let the house of Thy servant be blessed for ever" - II Samuel 7:18,28,29. David is not alone in his experience. God wants to establish His covenant with us, too. He longs to speak His provisions to our hearts in a very personal way. When we understand them, our response will be as David' s, realizing that we deserve nothing; but we will gladly embrace everything He holds out to us.

Keep in mind that God' s promises are to us as individuals. In other words I cannot go on the merit of someone else' s revelation of God' s covenant of grace. It must be made real to me personally. God must open up the grace message, and let me know that the provisions of Calvary have my name on them. He declares, "I have brought you into covenant relations with Me." To think that God would form a covenant with me that it would be binding ... is almost too much to comprehend. Like David, we would just sit before the Lord worshipping and adoring Him, asking ... "Who am I that Thou hast brought me hitherto?" The nations are as a drop of a bucket," and yet God has such respect for one individual who desires all the redemptive blessings of Calvary. He has chosen to make a covenant with him, and to bring him into His Divine purposes. We are important to God, and we need to see that importance. Thus we experience the height of Divine love which, like the rest of this cube, will render eternal benefits.

One day God is going to display a people who have appropriated all these facets of love. Revelation 3:9 declares, "Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I HAVE LOVED THEE." God loved the whole world so much that He gave His own Son for it; but His words here are to a very select company.

They have experienced His love in all of the ways which have been noted. They have known weakness, but Divine Love sustained them. They have encountered the depth of sorrow and death, but love was there. They rejoiced in prosperity because they felt the results of God' s love; and they were translated into a realm of ecstasy because love touched their hearts. This people is a people that knows what love is all about. God told the Ephesian assembly ... "Thou hast left thy first love" or "thy preeminent love." Today, we can know what such love is. As John says, "We love Him, BECAUSE He first loved us" - I John 4:19. As God reveals His love to us, we are able to reciprocate such affection and give Him first place in our lives. It is this love which makes us more than conquerors. "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" Romans 8:37. THE END