Ineffable

Ineffable does not appear in the Bible, however there are many wonderful, ineffable truths that God has told of in His precious Word. The word literally means ‘incapable of being expressed in words’ or ‘indescribable’. There is another meaning attached to ‘ineffable’ which is also quite interesting to note. Orthodox Jews will not speak the name Jehovah [yhwh - Yahweh] because His name is ineffable—so infinitely divine and majestic that a Jew dare not speak it. This is a striking example of the Jewish traditions of which our blessed Lord Jesus Christ spoke (see Matt. 15 and Mark 7 for examples).

For Christians, the love of God is just one of such divine ineffable truths as we find in the Holy Scriptures. We read that God is love—yet that truth is so vast and rich that one who tried to fully describe that phrase would find it to be an ineffable truth. A similar verse is found in Eph. 3:19; “And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God”. Here again we have truth that is indescribable, though it is couched in human language.

A very beautiful hymn, written many years ago uses the word ‘ineffable’ in a sweet way: “Yet loving Thee, on whom His love Ineffable doth rest ….”. This expresses the thought of our being given, by the Holy Spirit, the ability as humans to love our Lord Jesus Christ on whom the Father’s love rests in a way that is indescribable—a divine love between Father and Son which human language is incapable of expressing in any way.

One other account in the Bible gives a striking illustration of ineffable—(1 Cor. 12:4)— “…he (the Apostle Paul) was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable things said which it is not allowed to man to utter” (JND trans.).