

**2 Thessalonians (11):
“Jesus Christ, Our Faithful Lord” (cont.)**

Let us turn in God’s holy Word to the third chapter of 2 Thessalonians. Last Lord’s Day we began to address verses 3 through 5, which is in the first paragraph of this final chapter of Paul’s epistle. The faithfulness of Jesus Christ is the major theme of the apostle in these few words. Let us read once again these words, 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5:

Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, ²and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith. ³But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. ⁴And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command. ⁵May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.

The Apostle Paul asked the church at Thessalonica to pray for him, that the Lord would bless the ministry of the Word of God. The reason that Paul was in need of prayer was due to evil men, who opposed him and his fellow servants of the Lord; they were ones who sought to discredit and marginalize their apostolic witness. These opposers of the gospel did not possess “the faith.” Paul characterized them as “unreasonable and wicked men.” But in contrast to these unfaithful men, Paul declared that “the Lord is faithful” (v. 3). It is to this blessed truth we gave our focus last Lord’s Day.

Paul then declared that the faithful Lord would also be faithful to them. Paul said that the faithful Lord would establish them and guard them from “the evil one.” Moreover, this faithful Lord will continue to enable these Christians to live in obedience to the Word of God, which had been taught to them through the apostles. Paul closed the opening paragraph of this last chapter by appealing to the Lord Himself that He would direct His people into “the love of God and into the patience of Christ” (3:5). It is to this verse that we will give our attention today.

We previously broke down this paragraph of 3:1-5 in the following manner:

1. The Lord will establish and guard you against the evil one. (3:3)
2. The Lord will enable His people to continue to obey His Word. (3:4)
3. The Lord will direct the hearts of His people to the love of God and the steadfastness of Christ. (3:5)

We addressed the first two of these last Lord’s Day. Let us address this third matter this morning.

III. The Lord will direct the hearts of His people to the love of God and the steadfastness of Christ. (3:5)

Paul wrote, “*May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.*” Paul expressed his desire that “the Lord”, here meaning the Lord Jesus, would direct their hearts to embrace and appreciate two matters. First, he desired that the Lord would direct their hearts “to the love of God.” Secondly, the apostle desired that the Lord would direct their hearts “to the steadfastness of Christ.”

Now the grammatical construction of each of these two phrases, “to the love of God” and “to the steadfastness of Christ”, can be interpreted in two different ways. With respect to the first phrase, it can either mean, “May the Lord direct your hearts to *the love that you have for God*”, or it may mean, “May the Lord direct your hearts to *the love that God has for you.*” **Leon Morris** explained the problem of interpreting this phrase precisely:

There is some difficulty in knowing exactly what the following expressions signify. An expression like “the love of God” might mean in Greek either God’s love for us or our love for God. Our first difficulty is that the logic of the prayer seems to require some meaning such as “The Lord lead to love God,” but in Paul’s writings “the love of God” always seems to mean God’s love for Man. Lightfoot is probably right in suggesting that “the Apostles availed themselves... of the vagueness or rather comprehensiveness of language, to express a great spiritual truth.” He goes on to suggest that the two senses are “combined and interwoven.” We may accept this, then the primary idea will be that of God’s love to us, but there will be also the secondary idea of our love to Him. Paul’s prayer then will be that the inner life of his friends be so concentrated on God’s love for them that this will evoke an answering love for Him.¹

With respect to the second phrase, it can mean “May the Lord direct your hearts to *the steadfastness that Christ demonstrated before you*”, or it may mean, “May the Lord direct your hearts into *the steadfastness that Christ gives to you.*” All four of these statements may be shown to be biblical, but which meaning Paul intended in this context may not be that easy to determine. Let us consider each of these four truths.

1. “May the Lord direct your hearts to *the love that you have for God*”
2. “May the Lord direct your hearts to *the love that God has for you.*”
3. “May the Lord direct your hearts to *the steadfastness that Christ demonstrated before you*”
4. “May the Lord direct your hearts into *the steadfastness that Christ gives to you.*”

A. First, let us consider that the Lord may impart to your hearts *love for God.*

It is essential that each of us love God richly and supremely. All that we are, all that we desire, all that we do with regard to our obedience to God is due to our love for Him. And the love that we have for God is the result of what God has produced in our hearts. God imparts a principle of love within the people whom He has purposed to save from their sins. With that love for God we have a desire to know Him, to serve Him, to be with Him, to please Him, to glorify Him, and to obey Him. We desire that He would be pleased with us, with our thoughts, our words, our attitudes, our actions, and our reactions. Because of this love that He has infused in us, His Word has become precious to us. And as we read and learn of His Word more fully and clearly, we both value and tremble at His Word and watch over ourselves as we attempt to order our lives in accordance with His Word that He has given us. We may say, therefore, as the apostle,

For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. (2 Cor. 5:14f)

Matthew Henry commented on 3:5:

He makes a short prayer for them (v. 5). It is a prayer for spiritual blessings. Two things of the greatest importance the apostle prays for:—1. That their hearts may be brought into the love of God, to be in love with God as the most excellent and amiable Being, the best of all beings; and this is not only most reasonable and necessary in order to our happiness, but is our happiness itself; it is a great part of the happiness of heaven itself, where this love shall be made perfect. We can never attain to this unless God by his grace direct our hearts aright, for our love is apt to go astray after other things.

¹ Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (William B. Eerdmans, 1959), pp. 249f.

Note, we sustain a great deal of damage by misplacing our affections; it is our sin and our misery that we place our affections upon wrong objects. If God directs our love aright upon himself, the rest of the affections will thereby be rectified.

Thomas Manton (1620-1677) gave two lengthy sermons on 2 Thessalonians 3:5.² He set forth the meaning of the text that Paul's prayer was that the Lord would enable these Christians to have greater love for God. He first addressed the need for God to impart this grace. He explained why it was needful for the unregenerate, those who are not born again. He then addressed why Christians, those who are born again, also need to be recipients of this grace of love from the Lord Jesus. Let us consider some of his points:

1. The need to have the Lord impart to the unregenerate (non-Christian) the grace of love for God.

Manton wrote of their need:

They cannot love God till the Lord direct and set their hearts straight. It is a hard thing to say (but we must not mince the matter), that in the carnal (unconverted) state we were all haters of God (Rom. 1:28). And it were well if this enmity and hatred were thoroughly got out of our hearts. How can this be? Nature tells us that he from whom we received being, and life, and all things, deserves our love. I answer--Though men may see some reason of love to God as he is our creator and preserver, but as he is a lawgiver and a judge, so we all hate him. Three reasons there are of that natural enmity that is in the hearts of men against God. I would have you consider them seriously, that we may feelingly bewail our own aversion to God.³

Manton then set forth these three reasons unconverted people hate the true God. These include the following:

[1] We hate God as unbelievers because of **our natural inclination to carnal things that possess our hearts.** We love the things of this world, which squeeze out any love for the true God who made this world. Our Lord Jesus declared to a religious, but unregenerate man, "that which is born of flesh is flesh" (John 3:6). "Having no principle to incline them to God, they wholly seek to please flesh."⁴ Because they are fallen men, they "are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:4). An unconverted man can do nothing to correct this preference of love for self and pleasure; rather, God must act. This is what God does in His sovereign work of regeneration. Through the new birth He sets the sinner on a course to desire and delight in God, moving him to prefer knowing God and pleasing Him above oneself. This sovereign work of God's grace in regeneration is sometimes referred to as God "circumcising the heart." God promised Israel that He would one day perform this spiritual surgery upon His people:

"And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live." (Deut. 30:6)

And so, Manton stated:

² Thomas Manton, *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton*, vol. 2 (Solid Ground Christian Books, 2008), pp. 235-256.

³ Ibid, p. 242.

⁴ Ibid.

“The heart must be circumcised before it can love God. Till God pare away the foreskin, and till this carnal love be mortified, there is no place for divine love to be raised and quickened in our hearts. We are entangled in the love of worldly things, and shall so remain till God bend the crooked stick the other way, and God set our hearts right to himself.”⁵

[2] We hate God as unbelievers because of *our preference for carnal liberty*. “We hate God as Lawgiver, who would bridle our lusts.” Because of God’s laws, we cannot enjoy our lusts with full freedom. God has given to each of us a conscience that will either accuse or excuse our thoughts, our words, our attitudes, and our actions. He originally imparted a conscience to every human being, which early on in life is consistent with His law. Even the unbelieving Gentiles had God’s laws upon their consciences in their unconverted state (cf. Rom. 2:14f). God’s law prevents our sinning without accompanying guilt. His law would constrain us, and we do not desire restraint, but the “freedom” to do what we please when we want to do it. We hate God as unbelievers because He says, “this far and no more.” As Paul wrote, “The natural mind is enmity to God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither can be” (Rom. 7:7). And so the mind of the unsaved hates the true God when He asserts His Lordship over Him. It may be said of every non-Christian, you were “enemies in your mind by evil works” (Col. 1:21). “We love sin, therefore we hate God, who forbids it, and makes it so penal and damnable to us.”⁶

[3] We hate God as unbelievers because of *the slavish fear we have of the true God*. We hate God because we are afraid of His judgment to which He will one day summon us. There is within every human being an innate sense of accountability before God, that there is a day of reckoning when we will answer to God for our sins. Just about every religion of the world addresses the problem of “sin” and man’s accountability before God for his sin. This is why the practice of sacrifice is found everywhere in the world, even in those places where Christianity has never been proclaimed. This is why most religions are driven by man’s fear of God, rather than love for God. It is a slavish fear that squeezes out the possibility of true love. When Adam sinned, he fled from God, for he no longer loved God, but was terrorized by him. “A condemning God... can never be loved by a guilty creature.”⁷

But not only do non-Christians need God to impart love for Him in their souls, God must also impart love for Him in the souls of true Christians. And so, let us consider...

2. The need to have the Lord impart to the regenerate (true Christian) the grace of love for God.

It was to the Christians in the church at Thessalonica that Paul declared, “May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God.” These Christians were behind no one in the number and degree of God’s blessings of grace upon them. Nevertheless, they were in great need for the Lord to enable them to love God more greatly than they did presently. Remember what Paul had written of their love for *one another* in 1 Thessalonians 4:9f?

But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another... But we urge you, brethren, that you *increase more and more*.

It may be said similarly of their love for God. We might say this: “But concerning your love for God you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love Him. But we urge you, brethren, that you *increase more and more*.”

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid, p. 243.

⁷ Ibid.

And so, why did the apostle pray that the Lord would direct the hearts of these Christians to love God? Manton proposed two main reasons. These include: [1] Because there are many defects in the love of the best (of us). [2] There needs much to be done about our love after it is planted in the soul. Let us consider these:

[1] The need to have the Lord impart to the regenerate (true Christian) the grace of love for God *because there are many defects in the love of the best* (of us).

There may be several ways to consider our deficiency in our love for God. *First, there is much that we encounter in our daily lives that would draw our hearts after them and away from our full devotion to our God.* Manton asked,

How much do we live to ourselves, and how little to God? How great a passion have we for earthly things, so that they can occupy and intercept the far greatest part of our lives? And then judge whether we had not need have the net kept up, and the tendency towards God, as our end and happiness?⁸

We have a natural inclination within us to give ourselves over to what is before us, what we see immediately before our eyes, what we know is immediately before us in order of duty or pleasure. It is an easy thing for these matters to squeeze out, first, our attention to the things of the lord, which is followed quickly by the dulling of our affection for our God.

It is the natural disease of man's heart to be loosed from God, and to be distracted in variety of worldly objects, which obtrude themselves upon our senses, offer themselves to us daily; therefore it is not enough for man once to resign him over his heart to God, as we do in conversion, when this love was first wrought in us, but we need often to beg that God would reclaim us from this ranging after carnal vanities, that he would direct and keep us straight and true to our end, that we may love him more, and at a better rate So, if you consider the nature of love; the thing is obvious and plain, unless the Lord maintain this love in us, and keep it up, what will become of us?⁹

A **second** way we may consider the need for the true Christian to have the Lord direct him in the love of God is *due to our proneness to slavish fears as we purpose to live daily before our Lord.* Some are plagued by their guilty conscience as they serve the Lord. They tend to shape their self-identity by their sin rather than their new life in Jesus Christ that God has freely given them. One of the great blessings of the new covenant in Jesus Christ is the ability to serve God with a clear conscience before God. The writer to the Hebrews wrote of this:

For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, ¹⁴how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Heb. 9:13)

Although we know that we are saved by God's grace, we will tend, nevertheless, to look to our works of the law as a basis or means for serving our Lord. The result is slavish fear that extinguished true love for God. The Apostle John wrote of this principle:

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. (1 John 4:15)

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

Sometimes this may be more of a problem in Reformed churches than in no-reformed churches. We emphasize greatly the use of the means of grace in our progress toward heaven. We show forth the Scriptural teaching that though we cannot be saved or sanctified by the law of God, the law of God is the standard and measure of our sanctification. Sometimes Christians can be so focused on the means to holiness rather than the grace of the Lord, that they are troubled by fears. They are motivated to live before the Lord and serve the Lord not out of love for who He is and what He has done and what He has promised us in Christ, but because we are fearful of what might result if we fail to do so. May the Lord deliver us all from slavish fear so that we will be moved by godly fear, a true devotion and desire to please God. Manton wrote:

Surely we should seek after such a spirit of love, that all we do for God may be done with great delight; that we may not serve him by compulsion, but by inclination; not as enjoined only, but as inclined; not as putting a force upon ourselves, but as delighting in our work.¹⁰

A **third** way we may consider the need for the true Christian to have the Lord direct him in the love of God is *due to our frequent preferring the profits and pleasures of the world before the service of God*. Esau is a signal example to us of what not to be. When the blessing of God in the future was measured by a bowl of pottage presently before him, he would forego the former for the latter.

¹⁴Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: ¹⁵ looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; ¹⁶*lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright*. ¹⁷For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears. (Heb. 12:14-17)

What a pitiful exchange Esau made, bartering away God's blessing for something that would be satisfying for a few hours. We do the same at many times and in the same ways. Again, wrote Manton:

The best of us show lothness to cut off the right hand, and to pluck out the right eye, or to do that signified by it. This shows a weakness of love; for where love is strong, there is a thorough inclination to God; we dare love nothing above him, or against him, or without him.¹¹

A **fourth** way we may consider the need for the true Christian to have the Lord produce in him love for God is *due to the failure to be fully obedient, and the tediousness we may find in our obedience*. When our love is keen, our service is delightful and not tedious. Let us have love for God like that which Jacob had for Rachael: "So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed only a few days to him because of the love he had for her" (Gen. 29:20). For the Christian who is thinking rightly and loving rightly, the Lord's commandments are not burdensome, but delightful (Cf. 1 John 5:3). Love for God will make duty delightful and fulfilling, not troubling and tiring.

A **fifth** way we may consider the need for the true Christian to have the Lord direct him in the love of God is *due to the many conflicts we have in our souls with carnal self-love, or our own foolish, hurtful lusts*. This, too, shows us that our love for God is not what it should be or could be if the Lord answered our prayer, that He direct our hearts to the love of God.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 244.

¹¹ Ibid.

Now, not only is there need to have the Lord impart to the regenerate (true Christian) the grace of love for God *because there are many defects in the love of the best* (of us), but there is...

[2] The need to have the Lord impart to the regenerate (true Christian) the grace of love for God *because there needs much to be done about our love after it is planted in the soul.*

First, we are in need of love for God to get rooted in us after He has planted it within us. Manton wrote:

Our first affection to God and heavenly things may hastily put forth itself, as the earthly blossoms of the spring do, but they are soon nipt; and those high tides of affections, which we find in our first acquaintance with religion (i.e. true biblical Christianity), afterward sink low enough. Love is more passionately expressed at first, partly by reason of the novelty of the things represented to us, and partly because of our great necessity, as men that are in a violent thirst take large droughts with pleasure; and because our love is not yet dispersed into the several channels of obedience, but wholly taken up with admirations of grace; but this may vanish and decay. Our business is to be “rooted and grounded in love” as the apostle saith (Eph. 3:17), to get a more solid, durable affection for God.¹²

Second, we are in need of love for God to be increased in us after He has planted it within us. Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, “*And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment*” (Phi. 1:9). The love that the Lord imparts to His people may be weak at first and ill-informed. The Lord must instruct His people in the right use of love in the service of others.

The Lord reveals to us through Paul that true love is to be informed *knowledge*. Love needs to be instructed by the Word of God. There are some things that we are to love. But there are many things that we are not to love. These need to be taught to us from the Word of God so that we may rightly distinguish them. This will only occur if blessed of God. This is why Paul continuously prayed for these Christians, that “*love may abound still more and more in knowledge*” (1:9).

But Paul also said that he prayed for them to increase in love in another manner. He wrote, “And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in *discernment*.” We must have wisdom on how to demonstrate love. Sometimes it is more loving not to give, but to withhold. Churches always have to deal with this problem. There are people who make the rounds to churches not “to pray” in them but “to prey” upon them. We will tend to err on the side of charity, but we do try and be discerning in the degree and manner in which we render assistance.

Third, we are in need of the love for God to be excited and kept in act and exercise.” What Manton meant by this is that if love is not manifested and kept at work, then carnal love will prevail. If and when our love for the Lord diminishes, our love for the world will increase. If love is not kept in a measure of fervency and set forth in right activity, our motivation will lesson to live for God and to strive toward the ends God desires of us. The Scriptures speak of “the labor of love” that should characterize Christians.

We see in all that we have considered, that we need to pray for ourselves and for others, “May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.”

But as we said earlier, our love *for* God is just one of two ways in which we may understand the expression, “May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God.” But it may be understood differently, in that it may be a prayer that requests...

B. “May the Lord direct your hearts to *the love that God has for you.*”

¹² Ibid, pp. 244f.

It is true what we have already affirmed that Christians are in need of having their love for God increased. But it is also true that Christians are in need of their perception of God's love for them to be increased. In fact there are some who very strongly assert that this latter view is what Paul intended. This is the view of **William Hendriksen**, a Reformed commentator of 2 Thessalonians. He wrote:

Both "of God" and "of Christ" are to be considered subjective genitives. Not "their love for God" but "God's love for them" is what is meant. That is regular Pauline usage. This is the "love of God which has been shed abroad in our hearts." It is "his own love toward us." It is "the love of God in Christ from which nothing shall be able to separate us." It is "his great love which he loved us."¹³

He wrote further,

When human *hearts* are *directed* to this love, obedience results; for this love is not only a divine attribute, or that plus favorable attitude toward believers, but also a divine, dynamic force within them. A principle of life in their innermost being.¹⁴

It is argued that the believer's knowledge of God's love for him becomes the motivating force in his life to live before God in a manner that will please God. Hendriksen wrote,

When the love which God has for the Thessalonians and which he is constantly showing to them becomes *the motivating force* in their lives and when the endurance exercised by Christ in the midst of a hostile world becomes their *example*, then they will do and will continue to do whatever God through his servants demands of them.¹⁵

Indeed Paul does make continual reference to the Christian's knowledge of the love of God that He has for His people. Consider these verses:

Romans 5:5. "Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

Romans 5:8. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Romans 8:39. "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

2 Corinthians 13:14. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen."

Ephesians 2:4f. "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)..."

God reveals quite clearly and quite frequently in His Word that He has a love for His people that is unique and special, a special love for them that He does not have for the world. We read that Christ loves

¹³ William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Thessalonians, the Pastorals, and Hebrews*, in New Testament Commentary (Baker Academic, 2007), p. 197.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

His church, and gave Himself for it. John 13:1 reads, “Then Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, *having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*”

Perhaps one of the best expressions of God’s love for His people is in **Romans 8:35-39**:

Who shall separate us from *the love of Christ*? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” ³⁷Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through *Him who loved us*. ³⁸For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from *the love of God* which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Here we see that there is a love of God that is found in Christ Jesus, a love that He has toward His people. God’s love for His people is an everlasting love. It is a redemptive love. It is a love that moves God to draw effectually and save His chosen people. God’s love for His people is of such a nature and to such a degree that He gives all for His own, even His own Son, so as to secure their everlasting well being. Because God loves His people, He saves them from sin and glorifies them before Him.

The love of God for His people is seen in the working of His Sovereign power to save His people. We often read Romans 8:28. It is a familiar verse. “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” But what Paul is emphasizing here is that God in His sovereignty controls all things for the benefit of His people. Because He loved them, He purposed to save them.

Our knowledge of the love of God that He has for us in Jesus Christ is foundational to an informed faith, a sound hope, and a fervent love for Him. May we pray that the Lord “direct our hearts to the love of God.”

Now, not only did Paul express his prayer that the Lord would direct their hearts “to the love of God”, but he also prayed that the Lord would direct their hearts “to the steadfastness of Christ.” What did Paul mean by this expression? Just as there were two possible meanings for the first phrase, “to the love of God”, so there is two possible meanings for the second phrase, “to the steadfastness of Christ.” Paul may have meant, “May the Lord direct your hearts to *the steadfastness that Christ demonstrated before you*”, or he may have intended to say, “May the Lord direct your hearts into *the steadfastness that Christ gives to you.*” Let us consider briefly each of these.

C. “May the Lord direct your hearts to *the steadfastness that Christ demonstrated before you.*”

The manner in which the Lord Jesus endured His sufferings instructs and inspires Christians in the manner that they are to face their trials. Paul had written to the church at Thessalonica of the trials that they may one day face. It would be fitting that he would ask the Lord to direct them into the steadfastness of Christ in order to prepare them for whatever they might encounter.

Peter wrote of the example of our Lord’s steadfastness. He also set forth our Lord as an example for Christians:

¹⁹For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. ²⁰For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. ²¹For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ²²“Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth”; ²³who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; ²⁴who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness-- by whose stripes you were healed. (1 Pet. 2:19-24)

But Paul may have rather intended to say...

D. “May the Lord direct your hearts into *“the steadfastness that Christ gives to you.”*”

If this is what Paul intended, then his meaning follows this line: The love of God into which the Lord directs us will lead us to experience “the steadfastness of Christ.” There will result stability or steadfastness, in our profession and our testimony. And although none of us can be what we fully desire to be, we long to be more fully obedient to Him than we have been formally. This is all due to the grace of God, to the work of the Holy Spirit, the steadfastness of Christ that He produces in His people. The idea also is that we are waiting steadfastly for the future return of our Savior, the Lord Jesus. As one wrote,

That a *patient waiting for Christ* may be joined with this love of God. There is no true love of God without faith in Jesus Christ. We must wait for Christ, which supposes our faith in him, that we believe he came once in flesh and will come again in glory: and we must expect this second coming of Christ, and be careful to get ready for it; there must be a patient waiting, enduring with courage and constancy all that we may meet with in the mean time: and we *have need of patience*, and need of divine grace to exercise Christian patience, the *patience of Christ* (as some read the word), patience for Christ’s sake and after Christ’s example.

May the Lord stir in each of us this great grace that we might love our Lord supremely and live before Him faithfully. And this we will do, if He permits.

May the LORD give strength to his people!
May the LORD bless his people with peace! (Psa. 29:11)
