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**SERMONS AND TRACTS OF JOHN GILL
GOD'S LOVE**

The Love of God, Considered

2 THESSALONIANS 3:5

by John Gill

(London: Wm. Hardcastle, 1814)

*Thou hast given a standard to them that fear thee;
that it may be displayed because of the truth
— Psalm 60:4*

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SERMON 10

THE LOVE OF GOD, CONSIDERED

~~SER~~ 2 THESSALONIANS 3:5

*And the Lord God direct your hearts into the Love of God,
and into the patient waiting for Christ.*

ONE principal part of the apostle's design in writing this epistle was to satisfy some persons in this church, who were shaken in mind, and troubled, as though *The day of Christ was at hand*. He assures them, therefore, in the second chapter, that it was not; for there were several things to be done previous thereunto: such as the removal of the Roman empire; the great apostasy that was to befall the churches; and the setting up the man of sin, the Papal Antichrist. He therefore exhorts them to steadfastness in the doctrines of the gospel; and wishes them a great many good things. In the beginning of this chapter, he desires them to pray for him, and the rest of the ministers of the gospel; hints what he would have them pray for, and the reason why. *Finally, brethren, pray for us; that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified; that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for all men have not faith.* And then, for their comfort, expresses his assurance of their final perseverance. *But the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and keep you from evil.* As also, his great confidence of their cheerful and universal obedience to the commands of God, saying, *And we have confidence in the Lord, touching you, that ye both do, and will do, the things which we command you.* In order to which, he puts up a prayer for them, in the words of the text. *The Lord direct your hearts, etc.* So that the words are a prayer of the apostle consisting of two petitions, namely, *That the Lord would direct their hearts into the Love of God.* And, that the same Lord would also *direct their hearts into the patient waiting for Christ.* It is the former of these that shall insist upon at this time. In order to explain which, I shall make the following enquiries,

I. What are we to understand by the Love of God.

II. What it is to have our hearts directed into it.

III. Who this Lord is, who is prayed unto to do this for us. And,

IV. What is the great usefulness of having our hearts so directed.

I. *What we are to understand by the Love of God.* This may be understood either actively or passively. Actively, of the love wherewith we love God. Or, passively, of the love wherewith we are loved by God. In other words, by it may be meant, either our love of God, or God's love to us; and seeing the words will admit of either sense, I shall consider them in both. And by the Love of God, may be meant, *our love to God*; concerning which, let the following things be observed.

1. That this is the sum and substance of the moral law; at least, it is the main and principal part thereof, as may easily be collected from our Lord's answer to the lawyer's question, in ^{<125>}Matthew 22:35, 40. The lawyer's question is, *Master, which is the great commandment in the law ?* Christ's answer is, *thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; this is the first and great commandment.* Love to God, urged under the gospel dispensation, is the same with that enjoined by the law of Moses. Christ and Moses agree in this, as appears from ^{<104>}Deuteronomy 4:4, 5.

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

This is no new commandment of the gospel; only it is renewed under the gospel dispensation, and pressed with stronger motives.

2. Let it also be observed, that every man by nature, is destitute of love to God: nay, there is not only a want of affection, but even an aversion to him; yea, an enmity against him. *For the carnal mind is enmity against God.* One part of the character given of the Heathens (^{<103>}Romans 1:30) who were left of God and given up to their own lusts, is that they were **θεοσυγεις**; which signifies, not only that they were hateful to God, but that they were *haters of God*. Likewise in the account the apostle gives of the degeneracy which shall be in the latter day, he says, (^{<104>}2 Timothy 3:4)

Men shall be lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God.

And this is not only the case of those persons now mentioned, but of all mankind even of God's elect themselves, while in a state of nature. For they, as well as others, are *enemies in their minds, by wicked works*. They live in a state of rebellion, and commit open acts of hostility against the God of heaven. *They stretch out their hands against God, and strengthen themselves against the Almighty*. They run upon him, even on his neck, *upon the thick bosses of his buckler*.

3. Let it be further observed, that love to God is a grace implanted in the heart, by the Spirit of God. This is one of the fruits of the Spirit; and is mentioned at the head of them, ^{<4872>}Galatians 5:22. *The fruit of the Spirit is love, &c.* It is, with other graces, wrought in the soul at regeneration. That grace of the Lord, which comes in with it, flows into the sinner's heart at conversion; is *exceeding abundant, with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus*. These two graces always go together; being implanted at one and the same time: by one and the same hand. And faith, particularly, works by love: and love is usually most warm, active, and vigorous, at first conversion. Insomuch, that the Lord takes special notice when it is left by us; according to ^{<4873>}Jeremiah 2:2.

Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth,
the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the
wilderness, in a land that was not sown.

Which leads me to observe,

4. The fervour of this love often abates; though the grace itself can never be lost. This frequently arises from the abounding of sin, both in ourselves and others. *Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold*, according to ^{<4874>}Matthew 24:12. Very often, also it arises from an immoderate pursuit after the things of this world. Hence the apostle, ^{<4875>}1 John 2:15, advises,

not to love the world, neither the things that are in the world: for,
says he, If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in
him.

That is, there is but little evidence of love to God, in that man's heart, whose affections are set upon the things of this world. These things, though they cannot destroy the grace, where it is once wrought; yet they strike a very great chill upon it. The grace of Love indeed, cannot be lost;

but then it may be left, as it was by the church at *Ephesus*, of whom the Lord complains, ~~4114~~ Revelation 2:4, saying,

Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

He does not say, because thou hast *lost* it ; the word signifying not *Amittere*, to lose; but *Remittere*, to remit, or abate, in the fervour of it. And this, all the people of God, more or less, sooner or later, experience to their great sorrow: especially in the day in which we live. Therefore,

5. There is great need to pray, with the apostle, that *the Lord would direct our hearts into this love*. That is, that he would work upon our hearts, and excite our love to God: stir and blow it up into a flame. This he does, by shewing us the vanity of all earthly enjoyments: what God is in himself, and what he is to his people. How worthy he is of their highest affection; and more especially, by *shedding abroad the love of God in our hearts*; than which nothing can more effectually do it.

For we love him, because he first loved us, ~~4119~~ 1 John 4:19.

A sense of this, invigorates our love, ravishes our souls, and obliges us to say with the Psalmist,

Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is none upon earth, that I desire besides thee. ~~4125~~ Psalm 73:25.

But I choose rather,

By the love of God here, to understand *God's love to us*; concerning the nature and glory of which, take the following hints.

1. As to the original of it, it is free and sovereign, Nothing out of God moved him to it. He did not set his love upon us, because of any loveliness in us; or because of any love in us to him. Not because of any loveliness in ourselves. For we were in no wise better than others, being *by nature the children of wrath*. Nor because of any love in us to him; for his love is prior to ours, as the cause is to the effect. And, indeed, he loved us, *before we had done either good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand*. No other reason can he given of God's loving his people, but his own **Εὐδοκία**; his Sovereign good will and pleasure. Nor ought any other to be sought for, he loves them because he will love them. And though, perhaps, this may not be allowed to be a sufficient reason, by your

men of reason; yet it is what the Holy Ghost thought fit to give us, and we should be satisfied with it, ^{<BIB>}Deuteronomy 7:7, 8.

The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people (for ye were the fewest of all people); but because the Lord loved you.

2. As to the objects of God's love, it is special and discriminating. He loves some, and not others. It is true, he has a general love and regard to all his creatures. He *is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works*. They all share in the bounties of his providence. He makes his sun to shine on the evil and on the good. He sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. But then, he has chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure. Hence he bestows peculiar blessings on those to whom he bears a peculiar love. David says, ^{<BIB>}Psalms 106:4,

Remember me with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people:

very plainly intimating, that it was special and discriminating; of a different nature from that which he bore to others. A full instance of this distinguishing love, we have in ^{<BIB>}Malachi 1:2, 3,

I have loved you, saith the Lord; yet ye say, wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, and hated Esau.

And, as I said before, no other reason can be given of this distinction, which God makes among the lost sons of Adam, but his own sovereign will; who *will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and will be gracious to whom he will be gracious*, let a wrangling world say what they please.

3. As to its commencement, it is from eternity. God has loved his people with an everlasting love; and therefore with loving-kindness he draws them to himself in time. Many are the instances which might be given, in proof of the antiquity of this love. His choosing them in Christ, before the foundation of the world, was an act of his love, for *Electio præsupponit dilectionem*. Election pre-supposes love. His entering into an everlasting covenant with his Son, on the account of those he chose; his setting him up as the Mediator of that Covenant, from everlasting; and his donation of grace to them, in him, before the world began; are so many demonstrations of his early love to them. As also, his putting their persons into the hands

of Christ, and so making them his care and charge. Because *he loved the people* (^{<HR18>}Deuteronomy 33:5), *all his saints are in his hand*. Now, can it ever be imagined, that there should be a choice of persons; a covenant of grace, so well formed and stored; a promise of life granted; and security given both for person and grace, and yet no love all this while? No, these things prove his love, and this love does not commence with ours; nor, indeed, with time; but bears date from eternity.

4. As to the duration of it, it is to eternity; for it reaches from one eternity to another. *Having loved his own, which were in the world, he loved them unto the end*. He loves them to the end of time, and will love them throughout the endless ages of eternity; for he rests in his love towards them, and from it there can be no separation.

For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the Love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. ^{<HR38>}Romans 8:38, 39.

5. As to the degree of it, it is unparalleled. It appears very great in the conversion of a poor sinner. Hence, says the apostle, ^{<HR14>}Ephesians 2:4, 5,

God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.

But in sending his Son to die for sinners, it appears yet greater.

Scarcely for a righteous man (says the apostle, ^{<HR17>}Romans 5:7, 8) will one die; but God commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

There is in those words a very beautiful gradation. The apostle seems to allude to the distribution of the Jewish people;^{fi} among whom were three sorts of persons. One sort they called *Righteous persons*, very strict observers of the letter of the law; but did no more than just what they were obliged to do by the law. There was another sort called, *Good men*. These were very generous and liberal to the poor, and towards defraying all the expenses of the temple service, in which they exceeded the strict demands of the law. But then there was a third sort, called *Wicked men*; the profligate and abandoned part of the people, given up to their own lusts,

and the very refuse of mankind. Now it is as if the apostle should say, scarcely for one of these *righteous persons* will one die, who will do no more than just what he is obliged to; yet, peradventure, for one of these *good men*, who were so generous (and, consequently, had the affections of the people) some would even dare to die. But who will die for those *wicked, profligate, and abandoned wretches*? Not one; but *God commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet SINNERS, Christ died for us*. Matchless, unparalleled grace!

6. As to the nature and quality of it, it is unchangeable. It is as invariable as his own nature; nay, it is his nature: *for God is love.* (^{<6146>}1 John 4:16) The blessings of his grace are irreversible, because they proceed from him, who is *the Father of lights, with whom there is nor variableness, nor shadow of turning*. Hence also it is, that our salvation does not stand upon a precarious foundation; which it would do, if his love to *us* changed, as ours to him does. But he is the Lord, who changes not; therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed. God sometimes changes the dispensations of his providences towards his people; but never changes his love. He sometimes hides, and he sometimes chides; but at all times he loves. When he hides his face from his people, for a moment; he still,

with everlasting kindness will have mercy on them. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee.
(^{<2548>}Isaiah 54:8, 10)

Love makes alterations in the condition of God's people; but those alterations make no change in God's love. Love made a strange alteration in the state of the apostle Paul; who, of a persecuting, blaspheming, and injurious *Saul*, was made, not only a believer in Christ, but a preacher of the everlasting gospel. But this wonderful change in him, produced none in God, nor in his love. But if things be so, you'll say, "Then God loves his people with the same love, before conversion, as after." And where is the great hurt of saying so? For once, I will assert, he does; and a very few considerations will bring you to an acknowledgment of it. Let us a little consider, the instances of God's love, before and after conversion, and compare them together; from whence we may be able to conclude which exceeds. I might take notice of God's love in choosing them in Christ; in making a covenant of grace with him, on their account; and in putting both

their persons and their grace into his hands which are all great instances of love, before conversion. But I shall only observe to you three great gifts of Gods love to his people before conversion; which, I think, can never be equaled by any instance after conversion. And they are these,

1. God's gift of himself to them: for God has, in his everlasting covenant (and this long before conversion) made over himself unto his people. The tenure of which runs thus, *I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*
2. The great gift of his Son to them, and for them; in which he has shewn the exceeding greatness of his love towards them. *Herein is love*, says the apostle, *not that we loved God:* (so far from it, that we were enemies to him; for it was, while *we were yet sinners*, that Christ died for us)

But that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (<BIB>1 John 4:10; <BIB>John 3:16; <BIB>Romans 5:6, 8, 10)

3. The great gift of the Spirit, who is sent into the hearts of God's people, previous to conversion, in order to effect that great work; namely, to *convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.* And now, having observed these things, I am ready to ask, Can any *greater* instance of God's love to his people, after conversion, be produced? If the heavenly glory itself should be mentioned, with all the joys of that delightful state; I deny it to be a greater instance of God's love, than the gift of himself, or that of his Son, of that of his Spirit. And, indeed, all that God does in time, or will do to eternity, is only telling his people, how much he loved them from everlasting; all is but, as it were, a comment upon that ancient love of his. If, then, no greater instance of love can be produced, after conversion, than was before, we need neither to be afraid, nor ashamed to say, That God loves his people with the same love before conversion, as he does after.

This doctrine, I am sensible, is not easily digested; and therefore, many distinctions are formed, in order to lay it aside. Some distinguish God's love into *Antecedent* and *Consequent*; a distinction without any foundation in the word of God; and is, indeed, in itself a mere jargon of words, which convey no proper ideas of God's love: but such as are derogatory to the glory of his being and perfections, and serve only to introduce confusion and distress in the minds of men.

There is another distinction of God's love, which I have observed pretty much obtain among persons, though as groundless as the former. It is this,

God loves his people before conversion, with a love of benevolence, or goodwill. He wishes them well; but he does not love them with a love of complacency, till after conversion. But purely the Lord Jesus Christ loved his people, with a love of complacency, before conversion; for, it is said, from

the beginning, or ever the earth was, his delights were with the sons of men. (~~1083~~ Proverbs 8:23-31)

The Hebrew word translated *delights*, is not only in the plural number, but its radical letters are doubled; which, according to the usage of that language, always increases the signification of the word: so that it is expressive of *the exceeding greatness* of Christ's delight and complacency, which he took in his people. Nay, he seems to have taken a pleasure in the fore-views of the very places where he knew his elect should dwell: for it is said, that he was *rejoicing in the habitable parts of his earth*. And now, why God the Father should not love them with the same love the Son did, I cannot see. God's love is invariably the same, as his nature and essence are. It does indeed appear more in some acts of God than in others and is more clearly manifest at one time than another; but in itself it is always the same. All the difference between God's love before, and after conversion, lies in the *manifestation* of it. It is manifested at, and after conversion; and that sometimes more, and sometimes less; but was not at all manifested before. But the change is in us, and not in God's love.

But if this doctrine be true, you will say, God must love his people in their sins. Well, and where is the hurt of saying he does? It would have been miserable, to all intents and purposes, with you and me, had he not done so. When he saw us wallowing in our blood, in all the impurity of our nature, with our numerous sins and transgressions attending us; had not then his time, been a time of love, had he not then spread his skirt over us, and manifested his covenant grace to us, we had never been his. Perhaps it may be replied, according to this notion, God takes pleasure in the sins of his people, but where is the reason so to conclude? What, can no distinction be made between God's taking delight in the *persons* of his elect, and his taking delight in their *sins*? The distinction is allowed after conversion; that God loves the persons of his people, though he hates their sins. And why may not the same distinction be allowed before, as after conversion? We know that God is of purer eyes than to behold evil, or look upon iniquity: that he takes no pleasure in sin, neither shall evil dwell

with him, but hates all the workers of iniquity. We abhor and detest all notions to the contrary; yet firmly believe the unchangeableness of God's love to his people. It may be asked, how is it possible that a person should be a child of wrath, and an object of love, at one and the same time? For the elect of God are by nature children of wrath even as others: how then at the same time can they be the objects of Love? I answer, how was Jesus Christ the object of his Father's Love and wrath, at one and the same time? Why it was as he bore two different characters, and stood in two different relations to his Father; viz. That of a *Son*, and that of a *surety*. As he was the Son of God, he was always the object of his love and delight; but as he was the sinner's surety, he was the object of his wrath and displeasure. Hence it is said,

thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wrath with thine
anointed, (~~1988~~ Psalm 89:38)

with thy Messiah, or Christ. But yet even when he poured forth his wrath upon him to the uttermost, on account of the sins of his people; when he ordered Justice to draw the sword, and sheath it in him, his love towards him was not in the least abated. Thus also the elect of God, considered in different views, may be truly said to be the children of wrath, and yet objects of love at one and the same time. Considered in Adam, and under a covenant of works, they were *children of wrath*; exposed to the curses of God's righteous law, and liable to the wrath of God. But as considered in Christ, and under the covenant of grace, they always were, and ever will be the objects of God's love.

Nor has this doctrine any tendency to encourage licentiousness; or to discourage the performance of good works; or to prejudice true humiliation for sin; but all the reverse. The consideration of this, that God loved me, before I loved him; nay, when I was an enemy to him; that his thoughts were running out on my salvation, when I had no thoughts of him, or concern for myself; lays me under ten thousand times greater obligations to serve, fear, and glorify him, than a supposition that he began to love me, when I began to love him, or because I did so, can possibly do. This may be a full answer to those who ask where is the usefulness of this doctrine?

7. If we inquire into the excellency of God's love, it is preferable to all creature enjoyments; *thy loving kindness is better than life*. And if so, it must be better than all the comforts and pleasures of life. The streams of

this river of God's love, *make glad the city of God*. A sense of it makes the believer cheerful under all his trials, and fixes his confidence in God.

How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.

<B47> Psalm 34:7.

But I proceed,

II. To enquire what it is, to have our hearts directed into this Love. And,

1. To have our hearts directed into the love of God, is to be led into it, as it were, by *a straight line*; for so the word **κατευθυ ναμ**, here used, properly signifies. Now it is the work of the Spirit of God, to lead souls into the love of God, directly, at once, in a straight line; and not in a round about way, as some persons are led, being directed by false guides; who tell them, they must go through the valley of humiliation, and up the hill of obedience, before they can get into the love of God. But the Spirit of God; leads the soul directly into it, independent of all its obedience and humiliation for sin: which love, when directed into, will set persons in the road of obedience, and put them upon humiliation for sin, in another way and manner.

2. To have our hearts directed into the love of God, is to be led into it further and further; so as to be *able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth* of it. This work is progressive, and may very well be represented by Ezekiel's waters; which were first up to the ankles, then to the knees, and then to the loins; but after that, they were waters to swim in, a river that. could not be passed over, <B70> Ezekiel 47:3-5.

3. To have our hearts directed into the love of God, is to be led into it, so as to know our own particular interest in it. Thus the apostle Paul knew that God loved him in particular, and was persuaded that nothing should be able to separate him from it, <B88> Romans 8:38, 39.

4. To have our hearts directed into the love of God, is so to be led into it, as to have our hearts affected with it; and influenced by it. A man may have notions of God's love in his head, who never felt the power of it upon his heart: and I am afraid that some persons are more solicitous to have their heads filled with notions about it, than to have their hearts and lives influenced by it. But our apostle does not pray, that the Lord would direct their *heads* but their *hearts*, into the love of God. ***I now proceed,***

III. To enquire who is meant by the Lord here; who is prayed unto to do this for the saints. The word **κυριος**, here used, is commonly in the New Testament applied to Jesus Christ; though the Holy Spirit is also sometimes signified thereby, as in **<4087>**2 Corinthians 3:17.

Now the Lord is that Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

And, I am of opinion, that by the *Lord*, in our text, we are to understand the Holy Spirit; for he is very manifestly distinguished from God the Father, into whose *love*, and from Jesus Christ, into whose *patient waiting for*, the hearts of the saints are to be directed. So that we have here a proof of the doctrine of a Trinity of Persons. Besides, we are furnished from hence, with more arguments than one, in favour of the Divinity of the Holy Ghost; who is not only called *the Lord*, which is expressive of dominion: but is also said to *direct the heart*; which none but God can do. For *the king's heart*, and so every man's heart, is *in the hands of the Lord*, and in his only;

as the rivers of waters, he turneth it whithersoever he will:
(**<3203>**Proverbs 21:1)

and especially, he must be God, that can direct the heart *into the love of God*; which is one of *the deep things of God*, which the Spirit of God only can search into, and reveal to us. Besides, prayer is here directed to him; which is so considerable a part of divine worship, that it is sometimes put for the whole of it, as in **<5013>**Romans 10:13, and therefore would never be offered up to the Spirit, was he not the true God. Now it is the work of the Spirit, to direct souls into the love of God. He not only takes of the things of Christ (his person, blood, and righteousness) and shews them to us, and our interest in them; but he takes also of the things of the Father, and particularly *his love*, he sheds it abroad in our hearts, and directs our hearts into it; and, in so doing, acts the part of a Comforter to us. ***I now come,***

IV. To enquire into the usefulness of having our hearts directed into the love of God. And,

1. It is very useful to increase our love to God. Never was love to God, to Christ, to his gospel, people, ways, and ordinances, more cold than it is now. Great need there is to have it revived and increased; and nothing can more effectually do it, than this, to have our *hearts directed into the Love*

of God. It was this, which, being let down into our hearts, first produced our love to God; and which only can animate and excite it, when it is grown cold. According to the perception we have of God's love to us, does our love to him rise.

Her sins, which were many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, same loveth little, ~~<100>~~ Luke 7:4.

2. It is very useful to promote our love to one another. There is a very visible decay of brotherly love among the saints, in this day; as is manifest from those discords, divisions, contentions, and backbitings, which every where abound in churches. Now nothing is more likely to retrieve our love to one another, than to have our hearts directed into the love of God. The primitive saints having a large effusion of the Spirit upon them, and a large sense of the love of God to them, were full of affection to each other. Insomuch that they had no need to be stirred up; for they were taught of God to love one another. Nay, even in *Tertullian's* time, so strong and vehement was their love to each other, that the very Heathens could not but take notice of them, as they walked about the streets, and say, *Vide, ut se invicem diligent.*^{f2} See, how they love one another! No greater incentive to this duty is there than the love of God and of Christ. Hence the apostle John, after having discoursed of the love of God in sending his Son to die for sinners, thus argues, *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another:* well knowing, that nothing could more vehemently provoke unto it.

3. It is very useful to enlarge our obedience to God. And indeed, it seems to be with this view, that the apostle puts up this petition here. In the preceding verse he expresses his confidence in these Thessalonians, that they both did, and would do, the things that were commanded them: and in order to that, he prays, that *the Lord would direct their hearts into the love of God;* knowing, that nothing would more enlarge their hearts, to run with cheerfulness in the ways of God's commandments. 'Tis this which constrains souls to live to the glory of God; and makes even those that were slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Never was there more need of having our hearts directed into the love of God than now; when there is such a neglect of duty among professors; not only in their closets and families, but also in the church of God.

4. It is very useful to enable us to mourn for sin aright. We have great reason to be humbled before God, and to mourn both for our own sins, and

for the sins of others. But we never mourn more, nor better, than when impressed with a sense of God's love. It is this which throws our humiliation for sin into a proper channel. Our sorrow for it never rises higher; nor are our shame for it, and detestation of it more increased, than when we are made sensible of God's pacifying love towards us. See ^{<446>}Ezekiel 14:61-63. It was a look of love from Christ that sent Peter out of the hall to weep bitterly, after he had so shamefully denied his Lord; and it was a discovery of Christ's love to the poor woman, which fetched those floods of tears from her eyes, and which put her upon washing Christ's feet therewith, and wiping them with the hairs of her head.

5. It is very useful to enable us to bear the cross of Christ cheerfully; and perhaps that may be the reason why this other clause is added, *And unto the patient waiting for Christ*. This may intend, either a patient waiting for Christ's second Advent, and is what our version seems to regard; or a patient bearing the cross for the sake of Christ. The words in the original, will admit of either sense. It is the saints' duty to bear all reproaches and trials, patiently, for the sake of Christ; and that, in imitation of him who has left them an example. And great need they have to *consider him, who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself; lest they be weary, and faint in their minds*. And not only a consideration of Christ's person, but a sense of God's love is very requisite to support them under adverse dispensations of providence; which when they have, they glory in tribulations;

knowing, that tribulation worketh patience, and patience
experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed;
because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy
Ghost, which is given unto us. (^{<447>}Romans 5:3-5)

Wherefore the apostle maybe thought to pray, that their hearts might be directed into the love of God, in order that they might patiently bear all things for the sake of Christ. Thus having considered the nature of God's love, and shewn you what it is to be directed into it, I shall close all with those hearty petitions of the apostle in the two last verses of the preceding chapter...

Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father,
which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and
good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in
every good word and work.

FOOTNOTES:

^{ft1} Vid. Goodwin's Moses and Aaron, lib. 1. c. 9.

^{ft2} Tertull. Apolog. c. 39.