

**2 Thessalonians (10):  
“Jesus Christ, Our Faithful Lord”**

Let us begin by reading the first paragraph of this chapter, which we began to address last Lord’s Day. Here is 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, <sup>2</sup>and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith. <sup>3</sup>But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. <sup>4</sup>And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command. <sup>5</sup>May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.

The final chapter of this epistle begins with the Apostle Paul asking the church to pray for him, with particular attention to the ministry of the Word of God, to which he and his fellow servants had given themselves. The reason that Paul was in need of prayer was due to men who opposed them, who sought to discredit and marginalize their 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, thankfully, Paul declared that “the Lord is faithful” (v. 3). Paul emphasized this truth. He did so by placing the adjective, “faithful” as the first word in the clause. If we were to express it literally in English, we would read, “But faithful is the Lord.” Yes, Paul and his fellow gospel workers would face and withstand evil men, but their Lord would see them through their difficulties. Through the faithfulness of the Lord and the prayers of the saints, the Word of God would “run swiftly” and be honored.”

But upon Paul declaring the faithfulness of the Lord with view to his own ministry, he showed how the Lord would be faithful to these Christians to whom he was writing this epistle. Paul declared 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 that they had been taught 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).

We might summarize the major theme of verses 3 through 5 as the setting forth of “Jesus Christ, the Faithful Lord.” We may consider the themes we have identified through the following outline:

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)

Let us consider these matters that our Lord has set before us.

**I. The Lord will establish and guard you against the evil one. (3:3)**

**Verse 3** reads, “*But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one.*” The apostle had requested that the church at Thessalonica pray for him and his fellow servants that He would deliver them from “wicked and *evil men.*” Then the apostle spoke assuredly that their faithful Lord would establish and guard them against the *evil one*, in other words, the devil. Clearly the evil men who were opposed to the gospel and to the apostle, were men controlled and inspired by the evil one, the devil. It would do us well to consider this “evil one” who is opposed to the Lord and His people.

## A. The evil one

The Holy Scriptures set forth the devil as the archenemy of God and mankind. Although God is the Sovereign King of all His creation and the devil is under His authority, the devil is opposed to God and to His purposes in the world. In order for the Lord to bring His people to salvation, He would need to contend with the devil, defeat him, and deliver His people from the devil's control, from the devil's dominion, from the devil's influence. Thankfully, "*The Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one.*"

**John Murray**, the reformed theologian of the 20<sup>th</sup> century wrote of the devil and his influence.

Back of all that is visible and tangible in the sin of this world there are unseen spiritual powers. Satan is the god of this world, the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience. The arch-foe of the kingdom of God is not the visible powers arrayed against it; for behind these visible agents and manifestations of evil is the ingenuity, craft, malicious design, instigation and relentless activity of the devil and his ministers. It was this of which Paul was fully aware when he said, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritualities of wickedness in the heavenlies" (Eph. 6:12). Because we have given way to the impact of naturalistic presuppositions, and to anti-supernaturalistic and anti praeternaturalistic bias, we are far too liable to discard it in our construction and interpretation of the forces of iniquity. To the extent we do so, our thinking is not Christian.<sup>1</sup>

Actually there is no tendency of modern man to dismiss the idea of the devil. There is such a keen awareness of the nature and presence of evil in our fallen world that mankind continues to believe in the existence of the devil. The majority of people do believe in the devil as a malignant force that is the cause of much evil in the world. In 2001 Gallup did a formal study of public opinion about this matter.

More recently, Gallup asked Americans if the devil is something they believe in, something they're not sure about, or something they don't believe in. Sixty-eight percent said in a May 2001 poll that they believe in the devil, 20% said they don't, and 12% said they aren't sure. Majorities of Americans of every political inclination, region, educational level, and age group said they believe in the devil.<sup>2</sup>

The malignant nature of the devil and his malicious works may be seen in the names and descriptions given to him in the Holy Scriptures. He is called "**Abaddon**" and "**Appolyon**" in the Book of Revelation. Abaddon is the Hebrew word; Appolyon is the Greek word. Revelation 9:11 reads, "And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon." These names speak of him as "the destroyer."

The devil is referred to as **Beelzebub** in the Gospels, when the enemies of Jesus accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of the devil.

<sup>22</sup>Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. <sup>23</sup>And all the multitudes were amazed and said, "Could this be the Son of David?"

<sup>24</sup>Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, "This fellow does not cast out demons except by **Beelzebub**, the ruler of the demons."

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Reymond, **A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith** (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), p. 659.

<sup>2</sup> The Gallup website: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/7858/devil-demographic-details.aspx>

<sup>25</sup>But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. <sup>26</sup>If **Satan** casts out **Satan**, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? <sup>27</sup>And if I cast out demons by **Beelzebub**, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges.” (Matt. 12:22-27)

The Lord Jesus equated Beelzebub with satan.

Paul called the devil “**Belial**” in 2 Corinthians 6:15. He wrote,

<sup>14</sup>Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? <sup>15</sup>And what accord has Christ with **Belial**? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? <sup>16</sup>And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. (2 Cor. 6:14-16)

Belial means “worthlessness.” It describes the utter absence of any goodness or cause of benefit to others.

Besides his names, the nature of the devil is known by the manner in which the Bible portrays him. He is the “**accuser of the brethren**” (Rev. 12:10; cf. Job 1, 2). He was the “**serpent**” in the Garden of Eden who precipitated the fall of Adam and Eve into sin (Rev. 12:9). He is the “**angel of the abyss**”, which is the prison of foul demons (Rev. 9:11). Our Lord declared him to be “**the father of lies**” and a “**murder**” (John 8:44).

The Scriptures describe satan’s power by speaking of his great authority. He is the “**prince (ruler) of this world**” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). He is the “**prince of the power of the air**” (Eph. 2:2).

But perhaps the one area where he is most effective against the Lord’s people is that he is the “tempter.” He tempted Eve in the Garden. He tempted the Lord Jesus in the wilderness. He tempts you and me many times in our lives, perhaps daily. He is able to put people and situations before us that he knows will lead us into sin, in rebellion to our God.

We may consider the nature of temptation that the devil, the tempter, brings before us when we examine his dealings with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The devil came at Adam through Eve, tempting her so that through her he might tempt Adam. We may draw some lessons about the manner that the devil plays the tempter with us.

*First, the tempter will come to you when you do not suspect, and address the temptation in your weakest area.* For Adam, it was when he was absent (perhaps) through Eve to whom he would likely yield. **Thomas Watson** (17620-1686) wrote,

His subtlety in tempting was, that he set upon Eve first because he thought she was weakest; he knew he could more easily insinuate and wind himself into her by a temptation. An expert soldier, when about to storm or enter a castle, observes warily where there is a breach, or how he may enter with more facility; so did Satan the weaker vessel. He tempted Eve first, because he knew, if once he could prevail with her, she would easily draw her husband... Satan knew a temptation coming to Adam from his wife would be more prevailing, and would be less suspected. Oh bitter! Sometimes relations prove temptations. A wife may be a snare, when she dissuades her husband from doing his duty, or entices him to evil.<sup>3</sup>

*Second, temptation will come in a manner that leads you to doubt the essential nature of God as He has revealed himself in scripture.* You need to be discerning to recognize this when it comes. The serpent would have Eve question the nature of God that had been so clearly demonstrated to her in the creation. (1) The serpent would have Eve question God’s *goodness*, and thereby His love, kindness, and

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas Watson, **A Body of Divinity** (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1992), p. 139.

generosity, thinking that God would deny her something that was in actuality good. (2) Eve was to discount God being *righteous and just* in punishing her transgression if she did eat of the fruit. (3) Perhaps the serpent would have her doubt God's *sovereignty* in that He could bring about the consequences which had been declared to her. (4) Certainly he would have her doubt God's *right to rule* in restricting her behavior; how could God forbid this to her? (5) Eve was to doubt God's *wisdom* in withholding something that would make her wise. (6) She was to doubt His *immutability* in that she could eat of the forbidden fruit and yet God would change His mind about the consequences. If we have been grounded in our understanding of the nature of God, we should make effort to reinforce that understanding lest it erode and make us vulnerable when the tempter comes to us.

*Third, temptation will come in a manner which would lead you to elevate your reason above God's revelation when making decisions which affect your life.* This is the error of rationalism, which claims you are capable in and through the thinking process to come to truth about God and how He would have you live *apart from scripture*. We do not reject reason or logic, but we subordinate it to God's revelation of His will in Scripture.

*Fourth, temptation will come which suggests to you that you yourself must experience something to understand it, or to determine whether it is true, good, or right.* "How do I know unless I have tried it?" The temptation is for you to think that by experiencing something you will be better able to deal with it. I have known Christian parents who have thought it is an okay thing to be exposed to a measure of evil in thinking that will enable them to deal with life better. This is never the case. Being exposed to evil so as to incite imagination and defile the conscience is never good. It is not true that you are able to assess evil more completely and fully by having experienced it. It is always better to be pure, holy, and undefiled.

Related to this is the notion in these days that education is the answer to all societal ills. Ignorance is the greatest of evils. You must hear and know all perspectives, one must be aware of all experiences before you can make an "intelligent" judgment on matters. This underscores sex education philosophy. All sexual behavior, even deviant behavior, must be thoroughly discussed and graphically portrayed in order for children to be able to make decisions respecting these things in life. This fails to distinguish between innocence, which is good and should be preserved in children, for once it is lost, it is never regained, and ignorance, which must be replaced with truth.

Because the desire of knowledge is naturally in all, happiness is supposed to be placed in it; but Eve erred in not regulating the measure of her knowledge by the will of God. And we all daily suffer under the same disease, because we desire to know more than is right, and more than God allows; whereas the principle point of wisdom is a well-regulated sobriety in obedience to God.<sup>4</sup>

*Fifth, the tempter's design is to lead you to first desire, then grasp for that which is forbidden, thereby causing you to lose all that had been so freely given.* How many have lost all they have because they have coveted that which was unlawful. Soon Eve would have none of the fruit from any of the trees to which she had full access, because she would have that one fruit which was forbidden her. Many forfeit God's best because they choose to have what appears to be better.

One once said, "All of Satan's apples have worms." He will entice you with sin that he makes to look attractive and satisfying, but it is only to lead you into committing that sin so as to enslave you further to that sin and himself. He has a hatred for man, because man is the image of God whom he hates. He would destroy you, if he could, for he would destroy God, if he could. His hatred of God led to a hatred of man, and his hatred is seen in his ingenuity to make you fall.

When a man is determined on revenge, it is strange how cunning he is to find out opportunities to vent his spite. Let a man have enmity against another, and let that enmity thoroughly possess his soul, and pour venom, as it were, into his very blood, and he will become exceedingly crafty in the

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<sup>4</sup> Calvin, **Genesis**, p. 151.

means he uses to annoy and injure his adversary. Now, nobody can be more full of malice against man than Satan is, as he proveth every day; and that malice sharpeneth his inherent wisdom, so that he becometh exceeding subtle.<sup>5</sup>

One might think that Adam and Eve had little chance of withstanding this foe. But had they simply trusted God that He had dealt with them and instructed them rightly, and had they simply obeyed His Word, they would have been okay. The responsibility of their fall was fully upon them, and we have been suffering for their transgression ever since. However, it should be recognized, any one of us would not have acted differently than they.

The nature of the devil's temptation is to lead us to be self-serving. He would have us do our own will rather than the will of God. He would have us serve self rather than serve God. He is able to cause sinful people to be attracted to us, so that they would lead us away from God. Why is it that the adulteress hunts down a precious life, she is drawn to the man who would live for God? (Cf. Prov. 6:26). It is because the devil has made someone he desires to fall to be attractive to her. The devil is able to place in front of you that which he knows you desire but that God has forbidden to you. He can place a wedge of gold before Achan so that he will see it, knowing that he will covet it, and then steal it, to the ruin of himself, his family, and the defeat of Israel.

**Robert Reymond** described the works of the devil in this fallen world:

While he does not exercise totally free reign over men because of divinely imposed limitations and restraints (see Job 1:12; 2:6; Matt. 12:29; Rev. 20:2, 3), Satan is said nonetheless to rage against men (Rev. 12:12), to prowling around like roaring lion looking to devour the sons of men (1 Pet. 5:8), to work in the sons of disobedience (Eph. 2:2), to blind the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ (2 Cor. 4:4), to turn men away from God to serve him (1 Tim. 5:15), to take men captive to do his will (2 Tim. 2:26), to deceive the nations (Rev. 12:9; 20:3, 7), to sow tares in the field of the world (Matt. 13:25), to obstruct world missions (1 Thess. 2:18), to masquerade as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14), to make war against the saints ((Rev. 12:17), to throw Christians into prison (Rev. 2:10), to oppress with physical and mental illness (Acts 10:38), to lie and murder (John 8:44), and to hold (under God) the power of death (Heb. 2:14).<sup>6</sup>

The devil rules over the unsaved people of this world. They are subjects of his kingdom. They serve him best when they serve themselves most. When they choose not to deny themselves but to live for themselves, they serve the devil and his kingdom. And in the end he brings them to experience death, for he had the power of death. But thanks be to God that He has sent forth His Champion, the Lord Jesus Christ, to become one of us, even one with us, in order to “destroy the works of the devil.” We read in Hebrews 2:14ff,

<sup>14</sup>Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, <sup>15</sup>and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. (Heb. 2:14f)

Now in our text, 2 Thessalonians 3:3, we read that...

## **B. The Lord will “establish” His people against the evil one.**

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<sup>5</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, **The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit**, vol. 46 (Pasadena, Texas: Pilgrim Publications, 1977), pp. 613f.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, pp. 659f.

His people had been subjects of the kingdom of the devil. Paul had made them aware of the coming of the man of lawlessness, the antichrist, who would deceive people in order that they may follow him. They were citizens of the kingdom of satan. Paul had revealed that the Lord Himself would send a strong delusion that they would believe the lie of the antichrist, those who did not have love for the truth. But in contrast to them, the Lord is faithful to establish His people so that they will not be deceived, that they will not embrace the lie of the man of sin. He would see to it that they were firmly established in the faith. He would keep them unto Himself.

### C. The Lord will also “guard” His people against the evil one.

Again, we read in verse 3, “He will establish you and guard you against the evil one.” The Lord protects and preserves His people. The devil cannot get at the Lord’s people, for the Lord Himself is guarding their well-being. The Scriptures speaks of this protection and preservation elsewhere. Our Lord Jesus told the church at Philadelphia of His commitment to “keep” them.

<sup>10</sup>“Because you have kept My command to persevere, ***I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world***, to test those who dwell on the earth. <sup>11</sup>“Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.” (Rev 3:10f)

We read of the Lord’s ability to guard His people in the doxology of the Epistle of Jude:

<sup>24</sup>Now ***to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling***,  
And to present you faultless  
Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,  
<sup>25</sup>To God our Savior,  
Who alone is wise,  
Be glory and majesty,  
Dominion and power,  
Both now and forever. Amen. (Jud 24f)

We read of the Lord Jesus praying to His heavenly Father that He would keep His people. Our Lord Jesus prayed to His Father:

“And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. <sup>11</sup>Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. ***Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me***, that they may be one as We are. <sup>12</sup>While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. ***Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost*** except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. <sup>13</sup>But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves. <sup>14</sup>I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. <sup>15</sup>I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, ***but that You should keep them from the evil one.***” (John 17:10-15)

Both God the Father and His Son guard Christians, keeping them from “the evil one.” Indeed, “the Lord is faithful” and if you are in Christ, He will most certainly “guard you against the evil one.”

Not only will the Lord establish and guard His people against the devil, we next read that...

## II. The Lord will enable His people to continue to obey His Word. (3:4)

We read of Paul's assurance that the Lord would continue to perform a work of grace in their lives, leading them in the path of obedience. **Verse 4** reads, "***And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command.***"

Paul was confident that the Christians of this church were ordering their lives in obedience to apostolic instruction that he had given them. He was confident that they would continue to be obedient to whatever He commanded of them before the Lord. The reason for his confidence was in the Lord's ability and commitment to cause His people to be obedient to His Father's will.

Obedience is essential to obtaining salvation. God's grace enables His people to obey Him and His Word. We must understand the necessity of our obedience to the Lord if we are to be saved from our sin. The Holy Scriptures set forth the securing of our own salvation as requiring great attention and great effort on our part. We are called upon to believe the gospel. We are called upon to repent of sin. We are called upon to obey the Word of God in all matters. And so, the Scriptures tell us, "Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away."

There is great misunderstanding among evangelicals about the nature of the Christian life and what it entails. They understand rightly, generally speaking, that we are justified fully before God by His grace through faith alone, apart from works. This is the bedrock, the foundation of our faith. But they wrongly conclude, and they are commonly reinforced in the idea, that since we are justified through faith alone apart from works, that works are unnecessary with respect to salvation. This is great error. On the one hand to become a Christian is absolutely free, but on the other hand it will cost you everything you have. The gift of righteousness is freely and fully bestowed upon every sinner who truly believes upon Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, but that faith is demonstrated as true, as genuine, by the works of obedience to our Lord that we perform throughout life. This is so much the case that the Word of God warns us:

Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. <sup>8</sup>He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. <sup>9</sup>Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. <sup>10</sup>In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. (1 John 3:7-10)

If we profess we are Christians, but we insist that we will order our lives according to the dictates of our own will, according to our own sinful lusts, then we will die in our sins and be damned in our sins no matter what we claim to believe, no matter how sound our understanding of the gospel that we claim to embrace. In **Charles Spurgeon's** book entitled ***The Soul Winner***, he gave these words of counsel to soul winners:

Another proof of the conquest of a soul for Christ will be found in a *real change of life*. If the man does not live differently from what he did before, both at home and abroad, his repentance needs to be repented of; and his conversion is a fiction. Not only action and language, but spirit and temper must be changed. "But," says someone, "grace is often grafted on a crab-stock." I know it is; but what is the fruit of the grafting? The fruit will be like the graft, and not after the nature of the original stem. "But," says another, "I have an awful temper, and all of a sudden it overcomes me. My anger is soon over, and I feel very penitent. Though I cannot control myself; I am quite sure I am a Christian." Not so fast, my friend, or I may answer that I am quite as sure the other way. What is the use of your soon cooling if in two or three moments you scald all around you? If a man stabs me in a fury, it will not heal my wound to see him grieving over his madness. Hasty temper must be conquered, and the whole man must be renewed, or conversion will be questionable. We are not to hold up a modified holiness before our people, and say, You will be all right if you reach that standard. The Scripture says, "He that committeth sin is of the devil." Abiding under the power of any known sin is a mark of our being the servants of sin, for "his servants ye are to whom ye obey." Idle are the boasts of a man who harbours within himself the love of any transgression. He may feel

what he likes, and believe what he likes, he is still in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity while a single sin rules his heart and life. True regeneration implants a hatred of all evil; and where one sin is delighted in, the evidence is fatal to a sound hope. A man need not take a dozen poisons to destroy his life, one is quite sufficient. There must be a harmony between the life and the profession. A Christian professes to renounce sin and if he does not do so, his very name is an imposture. A drunken man came up to Rowland Hill, one day, and said, "I am one of your converts, Mr. Hill." "I daresay you are," replied that shrewd and sensible preacher; "but you are none of the Lord's, or you would not be drunk." To this practical test we must bring all our work...

There must also be a *willingness to obey the Lord in all His commandments*. It is a shameful thing for a man to profess discipleship and yet refuse to learn his Lord's will upon certain points, or even dare to decline obedience when that will is known. How can a man be a disciple of Christ when he openly lives in disobedience to Him?

If the professed convert distinctly and deliberately declares that he knows his Lord's will but does not mean to attend to it, you are not to pamper his presumption, but it is your duty to assure him that he is not saved. Has not the Lord said, "He that taketh not up his cross, and cometh after Me, cannot be My disciple"? Mistakes as to what the Lord's will may be are to be tenderly corrected, but anything like willful disobedience is fatal; to tolerate it would be treason to Him that sent us. Jesus must be received as King as well as Priest; and where there is any hesitancy about this, the foundation of godliness is not yet laid.

"Faith must obey her Maker's will  
As well as trust His grace  
A pardoning God is jealous still  
For His own holiness."

But even as we acknowledge that obedience to the Word of our Lord is required of us if we are to be saved, it does not lead us to believe that our works of righteousness are the ground of our salvation. No, our obedience to the Lord Jesus is the evidence of our saving faith in the Lord Jesus, through whom alone we receive salvation by His grace through faith.

But further, we know that any and all obedience that we render unto our Lord is due to the grace of God that the Lord Jesus imparts to us, giving us both the desire and the ability through the Holy Spirit, to follow Him in obedience.

Now when we speak of the obedience that the true Christian renders unto God, it is important to distinguish his gospel obedience from that of legal obedience of the self-deceived hypocrite. First, there is a holy, gospel obedience that characterizes every true Christian. **Isaiah 66:2** describes this gospel fear leading to obedience: The Lord said,

"But on this one will I look:  
On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit,  
And who trembles at My word."

There was a well-known Puritan, **Jeremiah Burroughs** (1599-1646), who wrote a book entitled *Gospel Fear*.<sup>7</sup> He based his treatise on the verse above, but he also gave great attention to **2 Kings 22:19**, which reads,

"because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they would become a desolation and a curse, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you," says the LORD.

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<sup>7</sup> Jeremiah Burroughs, *Gospel Fear* (Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1991, orig. 1647), pp. 166.

Burroughs wrote of legal fear of obedience to God which may characterize non-Christians. He then contrasted that legal fear with gospel fear, which produces true holy obedience before the Lord. He cited several instances in the Scriptures in which unregenerate men “obeyed” the Lord out of legal fear (men such as Herod), he then set forth what true gospel obedience born out of godly fear is like. In one section of his treatment, Burroughs cited 11 ways in which gospel obedience is seen in the true Christian, the one with the “trembling heart”, in that he regards the Word of God that governs his life. Here is a summary of those points to the question, “What is it to have a trembling heart?”

- (1) It sees God in it.
- (2) It sees the glory and majesty of God in it.
- (3) It sees the authority of God in it.
- (4) It sees God’s infinite justice in it.
- (5) It sees God’s infinite power in it.
- (6) It sees the luster of God’s holiness in it.
- (7) It sees glorious mysteries in it.
- (8) It sees efficacy and quickness in it.
- (9) It sees in it the basis for judgment for eternal destiny.
- (10) It sees in it the searcher of human hearts.
- (11) It sees in it that which will judge us at the last day.

The perception of these things in the soul of the one who truly trembles at His Word understands that this is all due to the grace of God working in his soul. This is suggested in the third and final statement of our passage in 2 Thessalonians 3:3-5.

### **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.*” All that we are, all that we desire, all that we do with regard to our obedience to Him is due to our love of God that He has produced in our hearts. Paul wrote of this in Romans 8:5 we read, “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*” (Rom. 5:5). 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, watching 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 this verse:

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. 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. 2. 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.

This love for 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.

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.

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

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