

of the word. It is the prominent NT word for Christian love--agapao. "To all who have loved his appearing." Yet there is in it this element of longing, and the translators of the NIV felt that was an appropriate way to translate it here. Perhaps we could think of it as half-way between the two and involving both ideas. Those who have loved the return of Christ. Those who have longed for the return of Christ.

The same word is used in this same epistle of where he speaks about a man who has forsaken him. He says, Demas has left me having loved this present world. I think perhaps the word longing for would fit even better in speaking of Demas there, than here in speaking of Paul. But the two ideas are certainly in it--those who have longed for his appearing, and those who have loved his appearing. So God wants us to work and toil and struggle to serve Him effectively. He wants us to study His word and delve into it and learn exactly what He wants us to know and believe and to do. But He is most of all interested in our relationship to Him.

He is interested in our personal love for Christ. Thought I give my body to be burned, though I give every bit of effort you could and have not love, I am nothing, Paul said in 1 Cor. 13. God wants all these other things but above all He wants our love.

He wants us to love the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now there is no question about what this word "appearing" means in this context. I believe that every translation, at least every one I have looked into, makes it very clear. And every commentary I have looked into makes it very clear that he means those who have longed for and loved the thought of, the hope of, the coming back of the Lord Jesus ~~See~~ Christ in His personal, physical body to this earth.

As I said we are not sure 2 Timothy was the last epistle that Paul wrote. It may have been Titus. But it's interesting that in Titus, Paul strikes the same note. In Tit. 2:13 he says, "While we wait for the blessed hope, the glorious ~~appeain~~ appearing of our Great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." We wait for the glorious appearing of our great Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. There is a crown of righteousness for those who love this coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you love the return of Christ? Do you long for it? Can you look forward to this crown of righteousness which Paul says he is to get and not only he but all who long for, or love, His appearing. This is not a thought simply that had come to Paul in his last days as He approached the end of his race. We find that in the very first epistle Paul wrote, he stressed the same note. In 1 Thess. 4, we find he introduces v. 17 with a phrase that he used a number of times in his epistles when he wanted to introduce some particular thought he considered especially important that he wanted to drive home to the thoughts of his hearers. He said, We do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men who have no hope." Surely Paul is speaking here to all of us, for all of us have had the sorrow of losing loved ones. All of us have the