

1 John 3:19 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

[INDEX FOR ALL VERSES ON 1 JOHN](#)

- [1 John 3:1](#)
- [1 John 3:2](#)
- [1 John 3:3](#)
- [1 John 3:4](#)
- [1 John 3:5](#)
- [1 John 3:6](#)
- [1 John 3:7](#)
- [1 John 3:8](#)
- [1 John 3:9](#)
- [1 John 3:10](#)
- [1 John 3:11](#)
- [1 John 3:12](#)
- [1 John 3:13](#)
- [1 John 3:14](#)
- [1 John 3:15](#)
- [1 John 3:16](#)
- [1 John 3:17](#)
- [1 John 3:18](#)
- [1 John 3:19](#)
- [1 John 3:20](#)
- [1 John 3:21](#)
- [1 John 3:22](#)
- [1 John 3:23](#)
- [1 John 3:24](#)

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND HIS CHILDREN

Click chart to enlarge

Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission
Another Overview Chart - [1 John](#) - [Charles Swindoll](#)

| BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP | | BEHAVIOR OF FELLOWSHIP | |
|--|------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| Conditions of Fellowship | Cautions of Fellowship | Fellowship Characteristics | Fellowship Consequences |
| Meaning of Fellowship 1 Jn 1:1-2:27 | | Manifestations of Fellowship 1 Jn 2:28-5:21 | |
| Abiding in God's Light | | Abiding in God's Love | |
| Written in Ephesus | | | |
| circa 90 AD | | | |
| From Talk Thru the Bible | | | |

STUDY GUIDE

1 JOHN 3

What is this? On the photograph of the Observation Worksheet for this chapter you will find handwritten 5W/H questions (Who?

What? Where? When? Why? How?) on each verse to help you either personally study or lead a discussion on this chapter. The questions are generally very simple and are stated in such a way as to stimulate you to observe the text to discern the answer. As a reminder, given the truth that your ultimate Teacher is the Holy Spirit, begin your time with God with prayer such as Psalm 119:12+ "Blessed are You, O LORD; Teach me Your statutes." (you can vary it with similar prayers - Ps 119:18, 26, 33, 64, 66, 68, 108, 124, 135, 171, etc) The questions are generally highlighted in yellow and the answers in green. Some questions have no answers and are left to your observations and the illuminating/teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. Some qualifying thoughts - (1) Use "As is" - these are handwritten and will include mistakes I made, etc. (2) They may not be the best question for a given verse and my guess is that on some verses you will think of a far superior 5W/H question and/or many other questions.

Dr Howard Hendricks once gave an assignment to his seminary students to list as many observations as they could from Acts 1:8. He said "So far they've come up with more than 600 different ones! Imagine what fun you could have with 600 observations on this passage. Would you like to see Scripture with eyes like that?" (P. 63 [Living by the Book](#) - borrow) With practice you can! And needless to say, you will likely make many more observations and related questions than I recorded on the pages below and in fact I pray that the Spirit would indeed lead you to discover a veritable treasure chest of observations and questions! In Jesus' Name. Amen

Why am I doing this? **Mortimer Adler** among others helped me develop a questioning mindset as I read, seeking to read actively rather than passively. Over the years I have discovered that as I have practiced reading with a 5W/H questioning mindset, it has yielded more accurate interpretation and the good fruit of meditation. In other words, consciously interacting with the inspired Holy Word of God and the illuminating Holy Spirit has honed my ability to meditate on the Scripture, and my prayer is that this tool will have the same impact in your spiritual life. The benefits of meditation are literally priceless in regard to their value in this life and in the life to come (cf discipline yourself for godliness in 1Ti 4:8+.) For some of the benefits - see Joshua 1:8+ and Psalm 1:2-3+. It will take diligence and mental effort to develop an "inductive" ([especially an "observational"](#)), interrogative mindset as you read God's Word, but it bears repeating that the benefits in this life and the rewards in the next will make it more than worth the effort you invest! Dear Christian reader let me encourage you to strongly consider learning the skills of [inductive Bible study](#) and spending the rest of your life practicing them on the Scriptures and living them out in your daily walk with Christ.

Although Mortimer Adler's advice is from a secular perspective, his words are worth pondering...

Strictly, all reading is active. What we call passive is simply less active. Reading is better or worse according as it is more or less active. And one reader is better than another in proportion as he is capable of a greater range of activity in reading. (Adler's classic book [How to Read a Book is free online](#))

[John Piper](#) adds that "Insight or understanding is the product of intensive, headache-producing meditation on two or three verses and how they fit together. This kind of reflection and rumination is provoked by asking questions of the text. And you cannot do it if you hurry. Therefore, we must resist the deceptive urge to carve notches in our bibliographic gun. Take two hours to ask ten questions of Galatians 2:20+ and you will gain one hundred times the insight you would have attained by reading thirty pages of the New Testament or any other book. Slow down. Query. Ponder. Chew.... (John Dewey rightly said) "People only truly think when they are confronted with a problem. Without some kind of dilemma to stimulate thought, behavior becomes habitual rather than thoughtful."

"Asking questions is the key to understanding."

--Jonathan Edwards

That said, below are the [5W/H questions](#) for each verse in this chapter (click page to enlarge). This is not neatly typed but is handwritten and was used for leading a class discussion on this chapter, so you are welcome to use it in this "as is" condition...



1 John 3:19 We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him:

Greek - Kai en touto gnosometha (1PFMI) hoti ek tes aletheias esmen (1PPAI) kai emprosthen autou peisomen (1PFAI) ten kardian hemon .

KJV 1 John 3:19 And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

BGT 1 John 3:19 [Κα] ν το τ γνωσ μεθα τι κ τς ληθεας σμ ν, κα μπροσθεν α το πε σομεν τ ν καρδ αν μ ν,

NET 1 John 3:19 And by this we will know that we are of the truth and will convince our conscience in his

presence,

CSB 1 John 3:19 This is how we will know we belong to the truth and will convince our conscience in His presence,

ESV 1 John 3:19 By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him;

NIV 1 John 3:19 This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence

NLT 1 John 3:19 Our actions will show that we belong to the truth, so we will be confident when we stand before God.

NRS 1 John 3:19 And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him

NJB 1 John 3:19 This will be the proof that we belong to the truth, and it will convince us in his presence,

NAB 1 John 3:19 (Now) this is how we shall know that we belong to the truth and reassure our hearts before him

YLT 1 John 3:19 and in this we know that of the truth we are, and before Him we shall assure our hearts,

MIT 1 John 3:19 By doing this we shall know we have descended from truth, and before him we will assure our heart,

GWN 1 John 3:19 This is how we will know that we belong to the truth and how we will be reassured in his presence.

BBE 1 John 3:19 In this way we may be certain that we are true, and may give our heart comfort before him,

RSV 1 John 3:19 By this we shall know that we are of the truth, and reassure our hearts before him

NKJ 1 John 3:19 And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.

ASV 1 John 3:19 Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before him:

Wuest on 1Jn 3:19-20 - The sense of the whole passage is therefore, "In this we shall know experientially that out of the truth we are, and in His presence shall tranquilize our heart in whatever our heart condemns us, because God is greater than our hearts and knows all things." ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used by permission)

- **By this** - 1Jn 3:14 1:8 John 13:35 18:37
- **Will:** 1Jn 3:21 Isa 32:17 Heb 6:10,11 10:22
- **assure:** Gr. persuade, Ro 4:21 8:38 2Ti 1:12 Heb 11:13
- [1 John 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries.

Related Passages:

Philippians 1:6+ For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

2 Timothy 1:12+ For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.

1 John 3:14-18+ We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. 15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. 16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17 But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

BLESSED ASSURANCE

Charles Swindoll prefaces 1Jn 3:19-24 with these words - Right now, you may be wondering where you stand. None of us lives perfectly like Christ. None of us exhibits continual self-sacrificial love for our brothers and sisters in Christ. All of us have moments when we mistreat the brethren by our actions—neglecting them in time of need, lashing out at them with our words, failing to minister to them as fellow members of the body. We may not be shedding blood like Cain did to Abel, but we frequently find ourselves failing to love the brethren as Christ loved us. John knows that all of us are in this predicament, in which we know the good

we ought to do but we just fail to do it. This is why he includes the important words of encouragement in these verses. Genuine believers who waffle between Cain and Christ need to remember that they're not made righteous by their works, but by faith in the name of the Son of God. (See [Insights on 1, 2 & 3 John, Jude - Page 94](#))

We will know ([ginosko](#) - present tense) **by this that** ([hoti](#)) **we are of** ([ex](#) or [ek](#) - out of) **the truth** ([aletheia](#) - see [note below](#)), **and will assure** ([peitho](#) - future tense) **our heart** ([kardia](#) - see [note below](#)) **before** ([emprosthen](#)) **Him** - John gives a promise, a promise we partake of by partaking in the aforementioned practice of love with deeds, not just with words. **By this** (first phrase in the Greek text for emphasis) is a phrase which should prompt you to pause and ponder asking at least "By what?" There are always basically two choices, that the author is referring to forward or backward. There are commentaries which favor by this as referring to the preceding text (the approach I favor) while others favor reference to the text that follows. What is interesting is that those in the latter camp like [Kruise](#) make the statement that although by this points forward "*it does so in a way that carries forward the preceding discussion.*" So even this second interpretation is not ready to completely discount the preceding section. Now are you really confused? I like the simple explanation of the **Pulpit Commentary** which writes that **by this** "refers to what precedes; and the thought is similar to that in 1 John 3:14. By sincere and active love we shall come to know that we are children of the truth." "Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth. By this we shall know that we are of the truth." In short, it is by loving one another in deed and in truth that we can reassure our hearts before God.

*It is the mind's knowledge
by which the heart's doubts may be silenced.*
-- John Stott

We will know ([ginosko](#)) means that we (John includes himself in using **"we"**) will come to find out, learn or realize by experience. What experience? The experience described in the preceding passages, summed up in their demonstration of authentic love for the brethren ("let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth" = 1Jn 3:18). In fact this love for the brethren has been John's major focus in 1Jn 3:11-18 beginning with the words **"we should love one another"** (1Jn 3:11) We show our love by our actions! Do any of us accomplish this lofty Christ-like ideal to perfection? No answer needed is there? We can be sure we are of the truth if we practice agape love toward others, even if it is imperfect and intermittent. And thankfully God has enabled us to display this Christ-like love (laying down life for others love) because He has poured out the love of God "within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us." (Ro 5:5) We can't! He never said we could! But He can! And He always said He would! This selfless love is not "let go and let God" but "let go" of my self-reliance, my self-effort to produce supernatural love and fling myself in desperate dependence on the Spirit of grace Who indwells me and desire a "greater grace" to be manifest in and through me as He produces supernatural love through me, His willing vessel (and conduit so to speak). As Jesus said in Jn 15:5 "apart from Me, you can do (absolutely) nothing" including displaying My supernatural love to those who are often unlovely! Beloved, it is only when we come to the end of ourselves, that we come to the beginning of God! His ability! Our availability! His will be done! My willingness to do His will! It is a beautiful balance. Remember that God has "granted you everything necessary for life and godliness!" There is no exception clause to that "everything!" "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to the cross I cling!" "Here's my heart Lord, take and seal it, seal it for Thy courts above!"

KNOW IS A KEY WORD IN FIRST JOHN - 1 Jn. 2:3; 1 Jn. 2:4; 1 Jn. 2:5; 1 Jn. 2:11; 1 Jn. 2:13; 1 Jn. 2:14; 1 Jn. 2:18; 1 Jn. 2:20; 1 Jn. 2:21; 1 Jn. 2:29; 1 Jn. 3:1; 1 Jn. 3:2; 1 Jn. 3:5; 1 Jn. 3:14; 1 Jn. 3:15; 1 Jn. 3:16; 1 Jn. 3:19; 1 Jn. 3:24; 1 Jn. 4:2; 1 Jn. 4:6; 1 Jn. 4:8; 1 Jn. 4:13; 1 Jn. 4:16; 1 Jn. 5:2; 1 Jn. 5:13; 1 Jn. 5:15; 1 Jn. 5:18; 1 Jn. 5:19; 1 Jn. 5:20;

NET Note on **BY THIS** - By this refers to the righteous deeds mentioned at the end of 1Jn 3:18, the expressions of love. It is by doing these deeds that believers assure themselves that they belong to the truth, because the outward action reflects the inward reality of their relationship with God. Put another way, 'conduct is the clue to paternity.'

David Allen - The topic of this paragraph is confidence. Notice John's use of words like "know," "reassure," and "confidence." Confidence is based on the fact that we have believed in Jesus and are thus in the family of God and that, as obedient children in the family, we love others in the family. Since we are in the family and since we love others in the family, we can come to our Father with our prayer requests with confident assurance that he will hear us. (See [1-3 John: Fellowship in God's Family](#))

Glenn Barker helps understand the context - John began this section (2:29-4:6) by addressing the question How may we be confident and unashamed at Christ's coming? (cf. 2:28). The answer expressed in the phrases "continue in Jesus" and "doing what is right" (2:29; 3:7, 10) is tested by our love for our brothers. Now the author addresses the question of assurance—i.e., confidence before God. (See [The Expositor's Bible Commentary - Abridged Edition](#))

Bruce Barton adds that "John explained in this context that the basis for their assurance is the good works that they do. Believers can have their hearts at rest in God's presence by reminding themselves that God's love has been active in their lives as they have helped others. The one who loves in truth (3:18) knows that his or her behavior has its source in truth and has confidence before

God (3:21). If believers are demonstrating love by their actions, they will not constantly be wondering whether God will accept them—they “know” it and they can “rest” in that fact.” ([1, 2, & 3 John - Page 77](#))

There are some difficulties in interpretation of 1Jn 3:19-20, some of which are grammatical (which will not be discussed in detail) and more importantly others which are major interpretative issues. To summarize, some excellent expositors (John Calvin, Charles Simeon, Martyn Lloyd-Jones) “interpret these verses as a warning to those who do not conscientiously apply John’s admonition about love. They understand these verses to be aimed at those who love only with word or tongue, not in deed and truth (1Jn 3:18). So they say that if anyone is condemned by his conscience, how much more will he be condemned by God, Who knows all things. They do not see these as verses of *comfort to disturbed hearts*, but rather as verses to *disturb comfortable hearts*.” ([Steven Cole](#)) Most conservative expositors see these passages as intended by John to give his readers **assurance** that they were genuinely saved and that is the interpretative approach my comments will take.

I like [Hiebert's](#) introductory comments on 1Jn 3:19-24 - The practice of Christian love also has a beneficial impact on the one who loves. In these verses John sets forth different aspects of the assurance that will arise in the heart of the believer from his practice of love; it is the fruit of the Spirit. The practice of love will produce inner assurance of being in the truth (1Jn 3:19–20), give confidence that prayer will be answered (1Jn 3:21–22), and assure the believer of his intimate union with Christ (1Jn 3:23–24).

John MacArthur introduces this section - In contrast to the erroneous views of **Arminianism** and **Free Grace**, which either make assurance impossible to keep or provide the wrong criteria for sustaining it, John wrote this epistle so that those “who believe in the name of the Son of God, ... may know that [they] have eternal life” (1Jn 5:13). He wanted his readers to be certain of their salvation, possessing an assurance that was both legitimate and lasting. With that in mind, John concisely offers five familiar attitudes in 1Jn 3:19–24 that true believers will consistently manifest in their lives. By examining themselves (cf. 2Cor. 13:5), they can know for certain that they are saved, because their lives will be characterized by: gratitude for God’s grace, boldness in prayer, submission to God’s commands, faith in Jesus Christ, and appreciation for the indwelling Holy Spirit. (Read his longer discussion dealing with the erroneous views in his sermon entitled [Holy Affections](#))

John Stott - It is within the general context of the letter’s teaching on assurance that this paragraph (1Jn 3:19-20) about the condemning heart must be read. However firmly grounded the Christian’s assurance is, his heart may sometimes need reassurance....Love is the final objective test of our Christian profession, for true love, in the sense of self-sacrifice, is not natural to human beings in their fallen state. Its existence in anyone is evidence of new birth and of the indwelling Spirit (3:24; 4:12–13), and it shows itself ‘with actions’. (Borrow [The Letters of John page 148](#))

Sam Storms - Although this is a digression of sorts, it is vitally connected with the preceding argument. Till now John has not only sought to expose the false “professor” of faith but also to confirm and assure the genuine “*possessor*” of life. However, Christians, being human and thus prone to sin, experience doubt regarding their relationship with God. John here addresses this reality and how it affects our prayer lives. **Boice explains:** “To be sure, John has developed his argument concerning the basis for Christian assurance in a masterly way. But as a pastor he knows that in spite of all he has said there will still be some who feel condemned in their own eyes and who are therefore depressed by this and lack assurance. This self-condemnation can be due to a number of factors. It can be a matter of disposition; some people are just more introspective and melancholy than others. It may be a question of health; how a person feels inevitably affects how he thinks. It may be due to specific sin. It may be due to circumstances. But whatever the cause, the problem is a real one and is quite widespread. How is a believer to deal with such doubt? How can he overcome depression? John apparently recognized this problem as a real one in his time and therefore wisely interrupts his argument at this point to deal with it. How does a Christian deal with doubt? Although there are many causes for it, there is only one answer. It is: by knowledge. The Christian must simply take himself in hand and confront himself with what he knows to be true concerning God and God’s work in his life. In other words, faith (which is the opposite of doubt), being based on knowledge, must be fed by it. This is the point that John develops at the close of this third chapter” (quoted from [The Epistles of John Exegetical Commentary](#) page 120 - borrow) ([Sam Storms- First John 3:10b-24](#))

W Hall Harris in his exegetical commentary on First John writes that “it seems better to understand the phrase **by this** (en toutō) in 1Jn 3:19 as referring to the preceding context, and this makes perfectly good sense, because we have understood 1Jn 3:18 to conclude with a reference to the righteous deeds with which believers are to love one another, deeds which are produced by the truth. It is by doing these deeds, these expressions of love, that believers can assure themselves that they belong to the truth, because the outward action reflects the inward reality of their relationship with God. Put another way (once again), conduct is the clue to paternity.” ([Exegetical Commentary on 1 John 3:11-24](#))

John MacArthur - When believers **know** they have sincere love for one another, they can be certain that they are of the truth (the phrase literally reads, “out of the truth we exist”). (See [1-3 John Commentary - Page 143](#))

Warren Wiersbe - A believer's relationship with others affects his relationship with God. A man who is not right with his brother should go settle the matter before he offers his sacrifice on the altar (cf. Matt. 5:23–24). A Christian who practices love grows in his understanding of God's truth and enjoys a heart filled with confidence before God. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

John Stott sees **by this** as referring to the preceding section - Love is the final objective test of our Christian profession, for true love, in the sense of self-sacrifice, is not natural to human beings in their fallen state. Its existence in anyone is evidence of new birth and of the indwelling Spirit (1Jn 3:24; 1Jn 4:12–13), and it shows itself 'with actions'. '*There are actual things we can point to—not things we have professed or felt or imagined or intended, but things that we have done*' (Law). If we thus love **in truth**' (1Jn 3:18), we may indeed have full assurance in our hearts. '**The fruit of love is confidence**' (Westcott). (Borrow [The Letters of John page 148](#))

David Guzik gives an **Illustration** - When we see this love at work in our lives, we can know that we are of the truth - and this brings assurance to our hearts before God, that we are standing in Him. **Gayle Erwin** tells a wonderful story about a man he knew when he was a boy. The man's name was Jake, and he was the meanest, drunkest, man in town. He would come to church from time to time, but that was only to beat up the elders. One Wednesday night, Jake came to church - but not to beat anybody up. Remarkably, Jake gave his life to Jesus. He walked down the aisle of the little church and kneeled down at the altar. The next night there was another meeting at the church, and the pastor asked if anyone wanted to share what God was doing in their lives. Jake stood up, and said: "I have something to say. Last night when I came here, I hated you people." Heads nodded in agreement. "But something happened to me and I don't understand this, but tonight I love you." And even though he only had one tooth, he smiled really big. This is a wonderful assurance that we are born again. Assurance is essential - who wants to wait until it is too late to know if they are really saved or not?

Steven Cole - John's point is that self-sacrificing love (**Ed**: Discussed in the entire preceding section - 1Jn 3:11-18) is the mark of the Christian, whereas self-centered hatred is the mark of the world. Thus in 1Jn 3:19 John is saying, "When you are troubled by doubts and self-condemnation, don't focus on your failures. (After all, what Christian hasn't failed at times?) Rather, focus on the many times that God's love has flowed through you since you became a believer. Let these acts of self-sacrifice be your evidence that you are **of the truth**, and cease doubting. ([1 John 3:19-24 Blessed Assurance](#))

That **blessed assurance** would seem to be John's intent in 1Jn 3:19-20 is supported by his clear statement of purpose for writing this letter...

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that **purpose clause** you may know that you have eternal life. (1Jn 5:13+)

Warren Wiersbe observes that in 1John 3:19-24 "John names three wonderful blessings that will come to a believer who practices Christian love... **Assurance** (1Jn 3:19-20)... **Answered Prayer** (1Jn 3:21-22)... **Abiding** (1Jn 3:23-24). ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

David Smith has some helpful comments - The foregoing exhortation (**Ed**: 1Jn 3:11-18, especially 1Jn 3:17-18) may have awakened a misgiving in our minds: "**Am I loving as I ought?**" Our failures in duty and service rise up before us, and "our heart condemns us". So the Apostle furnishes a **grand reassurance**: The reassurance is two-fold: **(1)** The worst that is in us is known to God and still He cares for us and desires us. Our discovery has been an open secret to Him all along. **(2)** He "knows all things"—sees the deepest things, and these are the real things. This is the true test of a man: Is the deepest that is in him the best? Is he better than he seems? His failures lie on the surface: is there a desire for goodness deep down in his soul? Is he glad to escape from superficial judgments and be judged by God who "knows everything," Who sees "with larger other eyes than ours, to make allowance for us all"? ([1 John 3 Commentary - Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

Wuest adds that "David was a man after God's own heart because the general tenor of his life was habitually Godward. The Psalms give the real David." ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used by permission)

Spurgeon on **we will know** - You notice how the apostle constantly writes about knowing. Take your pencil, and underline the word "**know**" in John's Epistles, and you will be surprised to find how frequently he uses it. He is not one of those who suppose, or fancy, or imagine, or have formed a certain hypothesis; but he knows, and he tells us what he knows, in order that we also may know. Love hath a knowledge which is peculiarly her own, — a full assurance which none can take from her.

Steven Cole introduces this section - Every child has a basic need to feel assured of his parents' love. It should be obvious that if parents verbally or physically abuse a child, that child will not feel loved by his parents. Eventually, he will distance himself from them through withdrawal or rebellion. So even when a child disobeys and must be disciplined, it is important for parents to affirm their love for him. Assurance of love is essential for close relationships. **The same is true spiritually**. Even though the heavenly Father disciplines us for our good, that we might share His holiness, He does it out of love (Heb. 12:6, 10). He wants us, as His children, to

be assured of His great love for us. John begins chapter 3 by exclaiming (1Jn 3:1), "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are." God wants His children to feel His arms of love around them, even when they go through difficult trials. The enemy of our souls knows that we will not feel close to God if we doubt our standing before Him as beloved children. So he accuses us in an attempt to drive a wedge between us and God (Rev. 12:10; Zech. 3:1-4). In addition, at times our conscience condemns us as we compare ourselves with the holy standards of God's Word. We know that we should love others, but in our hearts, we struggle with anger or bitterness or hatred toward those who have wronged us. We know that we should pray for God to bless this difficult person with His salvation, but inwardly, we'd rather see him punished. When we have those thoughts, either our guilty conscience or the enemy comes in and says, "*A true Christian can't have thoughts like that! You're not even saved!*" John is in the second cycle of applying the three tests of authentic Christianity: (1) the moral test of obedience; (2) the relational test of love; and, (3) the doctrinal test of faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. During the first application of the tests, John paused after the second test to give a word of assurance about his confidence in his readers' spiritual condition (1Jn 2:12-14), as well as a warning about the danger of worldliness (1Jn 2:15-17). Here, in the second application of the tests, John follows the same pattern. He has repeated the first test of obedience (1Jn 2:28-3:10) and the second test of love (vying the truth (1Jn 4:1-6), he interjects this word about assurance. ([1 John 3:19-24 Blessed Assurance](#))

Cole goes on to add that "there are two very different approaches to these verses. Some commentators whom I highly respect—**John Calvin, Charles Simeon, and Martyn Lloyd-Jones** (Ed: Henry Alford)—interpret these verses as a warning to those who do not conscientiously apply John's admonition about love. They understand these verses to be aimed at those who love only with word or tongue, not in deed and truth (1Jn 3:18). So they say that if anyone is condemned by his conscience, how much more will he be condemned by God, who knows all things. They do not see these as verses of comfort to disturbed hearts, but rather as verses to disturb comfortable hearts. While I agree that we should never shrug off our shortcomings or ignore a guilty conscience, I think that to view these verses primarily as a warning is to misinterpret them. John begins this chapter with those wonderful words of assurance of the Father's great love for us as His children. In the section about love, he addresses his readers as "brethren" (3:13) and "little children" (3:18). In our text, he calls them "beloved" (3:21) to remind them that they are loved both by God and by the apostle. Also, in parallel with the first cycle of the tests, the interruption was for the purpose of encouraging those who may feel like they're falling short. So here, I believe that John's main purpose is to assure his little children of their standing before God, as well as to urge them to go on in faith, obedience, and love. On the subject of assurance of salvation, R. C. Sproul (Essential Truths of the Christian Faith [Tyndale], pp. 201-202) points out four possibilities. First, there are those who are unsaved and they know that they are unsaved. They don't make any claim of salvation. Second, there are people who are saved but do not know they are saved. They doubt their salvation, perhaps due to a troubled conscience. Third, there are people who are saved and know that they are saved. Fourth, there are those who are not saved but confidently believe that they are saved. They have false assurance. As I understand our text, John is mainly addressing the second group—those who are saved, but they're having doubts because of their awareness of falling short of God's commandments. John wants them to know the basis and the blessings of true assurance. ([Blessed Assurance 1John 3:19-24](#))

Criswell favors the interpretation that John is giving a message of comfort - Having exhorted the readers to genuine love (1Jn 3:18), the author states that love provides assurance before God. To those who feel inadequate about their Christian commitment, the author says that God is greater than the condemning heart. The believer's ultimate foundation of assurance is the character of God.

John MacArthur - John understood that at times true believers can struggle with their assurance. Some of his readers may have been so overwhelmed by the memory of their past sins and awareness of present ones that they found the thought of God's forgiveness nearly impossible to accept. Their overactive consciences, beleaguering them with their own shortcomings, perhaps made it difficult for them to have a settled confidence in their right standing before God. So John wrote to encourage those believers and enable them to accurately evaluate their own spiritual condition. In so doing, he sought to solidify their conviction, rightly inform their conscience, and strengthen their assurance with a true understanding of their transformation and its evidences. (See [1-3 John MacArthur New Testament Commentary - Page 143](#))

Dwight L. Moody once demonstrated the principle of How God works these things out in our lives like this: "Tell me," he said to his audience, "how can I get the air out of the glass I have in my hand?" One man said, "Suck it out with a pump." But the evangelist replied, "That would create a vacuum and shatter it." Finally after many suggestions, moody picked up a pitcher and quietly filled the glass with water. "There," he said, "all the air is now removed." He then explained that victory for the child of God does not come by working hard to eliminate sinful habits, but rather by allowing the Holy Spirit to take full possession.

WE ARE OF THE TRUTH

That we are of ([ex](#) or [ek](#) - out of, denotes origin or source of) **the truth** (aletheia) (literally - out of the truth) - What does John mean by **of the truth**? In simple terms he means that we are truly in heart what we say with our mouths. We are authentic Christians. We

are **born of** ([ex](#) or [ek](#)) **God** (1Jn 3:9+, 1Jn 4:7, 5:1, 4, 18). And because we are born of God, we now and forever possess eternal life in Christ Jesus.

[Marvin Vincent](#) on **of the truth** - that we are real disciples of, and belonging to, the truth, as it is in Jesus: begotten of God with the word of truth. Having herein the truth radically, we shall be sure not to love merely in word and tongue. (1 Jn 3:18).

[Hiebert](#) on **of the truth** - The verb "**know**" points to an acquired knowledge based on our experience. The resultant knowledge is that we are "of the truth" ([ek](#) tēs alētheias). The preposition rendered "**of**" ([ek](#), "out of") clearly marks the source of our spiritual being, namely, "**the truth**." Used with the definite article (tēs), the noun retains its full theological significance as denoting the truth of God as revealed in Christ and His gospel. The phrase "out of the truth" occurs in the Johannine writings only in John 18:37, 1 John 2:21, and here.

*By our loving others 'in truth,'
...we know that we are 'of the truth'*

Stott remarks, "**Truth** can only characterize the behavior of those whose very character originates in **the truth**, so that it is by our loving others '**in truth**,' that we know that we are 'of the truth.'" (Borrow [The Letters of John page 148](#))

ASSURED HEARTS

And will assure ([peitho](#) - future tense) **our heart** ([kardia](#)) **before** ([emprosthen](#)) **Him** - **Assure** ([peitho](#)) speaks of confidence ([parrhesia](#) - also in 1Jn 3:21, 4:17, 5:14) as described in 1Jn 2:28+, our confidence in that passage being a product of our abiding in Christ (by faith, enabled by the Spirit). The confidence is in our **heart** ([kardia](#)), our innermost being, our "control center" if you will, and as such should strengthen and encourage our walk of faith. The emphasis in the Greek is on **before Him** for the Greek literally reads "**before Him** (in His presence) we shall assure our hearts." **Before Him** ([emprosthen](#)), in His very presence, that is where we shall have confident assurance! This is **great news** and reminds me of Jude's great closing words -

"Now to Him Who is able (The omnipotent God! He is able!) to keep (guard) you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, [be] glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen." (Jude 1:24-25+)

[A T Robertson](#) on **will assure** ([peitho](#) - future tense) **our heart** ([kardia](#)) could be "either we shall persuade our heart or shall assure our heart, because God understands us."

[Marvin Vincent](#) on **will assure** - literally, "persuade," namely, so as to cease to condemn us; satisfy the questionings and doubts of our consciences as to whether we be accepted before God or not (compare Mt 28:14; Acts 12:20, "having made Blastus their friend," literally, "persuaded"). The "**heart**," as the seat of the feelings, is our inward judge; the conscience, as the witness, acts either as our *justifying advocate*, or our *condemning accuser*, before God even now. (**Ed**: And Satan or his minions can be at work here for in Rev 12:10+ he is called "the accuser of our brethren.")

John MacArthur - Believers enjoy an assurance based not only on what Scripture promises to those who believe (Ps. 4:3; Phil 1:6+; 2Ti 1:12+), but, on a practical level, based on the presence of a serving love for fellow believers (cf. 1Jn 3:13–18) and a desire to live in holiness (cf. 1Jn 3:4–12). These qualities, because they come from God, cannot exist in a person who is still unregenerate. (See [1-3 John Commentary - Page 144](#))

We... will assure (persuade) ([3982](#))([peitho](#)) in the future tense means will persuade, will pacify, will soothe the alarm of our heart. Notice that John includes himself ("**we... will**"). **Thayer** has "to tranquilize." In Mt. 28:14 [peitho](#) is used to mean "we will win him over." In this verse [peitho](#) is saying we will win over our heart. **Peitho** means to exhibit confidence and assurance in a situation that might otherwise cause dismay or fear.

[Hiebert](#) notes that [peitho](#) "can also mean "conciliate, pacify, set at rest," hence "assure." This is its meaning in Matthew 28:14 and offers a more natural meaning here. It is in precisely this area of Christian love for others that the sensitive Christian heart often feels its own inadequacy and needs assurance."

Heart ([2588](#))([kardia](#)) refers not to our physical heart but figuratively to the "control center" if you will of our being. It is the "center and source of the whole inner life, with its thinking, feeling, and volition." (**BDAG**) The New English Bible renders it "*conscience*" which is a legitimate translation given the context.

[Hiebert](#) adds that "Here the emphasis is on the **conscience** (cf. Acts 2:37; 7:54) as the center of man's moral nature. Although John never uses the Greek term *suneidēsis*, meaning "moral consciousness" or "conscience," it is generally agreed that he here implies it

under the term "heart," for it is the conscience that assures and condemns us. John noted that Christians deal with their troubled conscience "before Him" (εμπροσθεν αυτου) as the true judge of their inner character. Since this phrase is placed emphatically forward, Burdick observes that "John thereby emphasizes that the assurance is a justified assurance since it is experienced in the very presence of God."... Whatever the cause for our own heart's thus passing judgment upon us, the believer can take the matter before God for His judgment. Our conscience, troubled by the matter that it knows against us, can before God be quieted on the basis of the tests John here indicates."

David Allen - **ILLUSTRATION** - Cars have a number of digital warning lights. One warns that the emergency brake has been left on. Another reminds the driver that the engine is running hot. Another warns that the alternator is not charging the battery properly. God has given us a built-in warning signal called conscience. Just as the warning lights in your car have to be properly wired, so to speak, in order to function properly, so your conscience must be properly schooled in the truth of God's Word in order to function as God intended. But this is not at all. Even your conscience in good working order cannot force obedience! The driver may disregard the red lights of warning. If he does so, he may burn out the brakes, ruin the battery, or crack the motor block. Christians who disregard their conscience are headed for trouble. As a Christian, your conscience now functions according to a new standard. You now have a sharper sense of sin, and you now see wrong in what did not seem wrong before. This produces in us a great sense of responsibility. (See [1-3 John: Fellowship in God's Family](#))

Marvin Vincent on **before Him** - as in the sight of Him, the omniscient Searcher of hearts. Assurance is designed to be the ordinary experience and privilege of the believer.

Hiebert on **before Him** - The adverb rendered "**before**" (εμπροσθεν used as an improper preposition with the ablative) conveys the picture of the believer standing "**before Him**," before God, without any necessary distinction between the Father and the glorified Son. The expression was at times used of the individual standing before the judge; although the judgment scene need not be pressed here, the expression does convey the believer's sense of accountability to the one before whom he appears.

MacArthur on **before Him** - Even though believers stand before Him, in the awesome, intimidating presence of the absolutely holy God (Ex 15:11; 1Sa 2:2; Rev 15:4), they can have a calm, tranquil, confident heart and an affirming conscience (Acts 23:1; 24:16; 2Cor 1:12; 1Ti 1:5; 3:9; 2Ti 1:3). Being in the presence of God terrified even the noblest of saints. Moses "hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God" (Ex. 3:6). The prophets Isaiah (Isa. 6:1-5) and Ezekiel (Ezek 1:26-28) also felt great fear as they stood in the presence of holiness. After witnessing one of His miracles, the apostle Peter "fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, 'Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!' " (Lk 5:8). He and fellow apostles James and John were traumatized on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mt. 17:1-8), as was John when he saw the glorified Christ (Rev 1:12-18). (See [1-3 John Commentary - Page 144](#))

Sam Storms summarizes this last section (1Jn 3:19-24) - John begins by dealing with the "condemning heart," that is, the Christian experience of doubt, and offers two ways to overcome such doubt and find assurance with God (1Jn 3:19-20). In 1Jn 3:21-23 he deals with the result or effect that issues from having conquered the doubting heart, namely, a confident and fruitful prayer life. Finally, in 1Jn 3:24, he closes with a word concerning the mutual abiding between God and Christian and the role of the HS in granting assurance. The assurance of salvation may be obtained and the doubting heart pacified by reflecting on (a) our love for the brethren and (b) the omniscience of our heavenly Father - 1Jn 3:19-20. Look at these two grounds for assurance together. We often ask: "Am I really of the truth, i.e., saved?" The verdict we often pass on ourselves is, "I don't know!" **Robert Law** explains: "*We believed that we had passed from death into life (3:14); but to ourselves this has become almost or altogether doubtful. When conscience summons us to the tribunal within, it declares us guilty. We have failed in doing the 'righteousness' of the children of God (3:10), or our faith has faltered --- our vision of the Truth has become dim. The evidence of our union with Christ is obscured by the consciousness of inconsistencies which, regarded in themselves, compel us to question whether we are 'of the truth' or have been self-deceived*" ([Tests of Life - Online](#)). **I. Howard Marshall** ([borrow page 196](#)) writes: "It may happen that when a person engages in ... self-examination he is alarmed by the result. He considers his life and can only conclude that he falls short of the divine standard. He does not love his brothers as fully as he should. He cannot claim that freedom from sin of which John spoke earlier. How can he possibly belong to the truth when he feels that his actions belie it?" ([Sam Storms- First John 3:10b-24](#))

Hailey's Bible Handbook - Many Christians are discouraged because they do not feel sure that they are saved. Sometimes we hear it said that if we do not know that we are saved, it is a sign that we are not saved. But it is a mistake to identify assurance with salvation. A newborn babe scarcely knows it has been born, but it has. Assurance comes with growth. We believe it is possible for a Christian's faith to get stronger and stronger, until it reaches the full assurance of knowledge.

Daily Light on the Daily Path - We know that we have passed out of death into life.

"Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life."—Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

It is God who establishes us - with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in

our hearts as a guarantee.—By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him. . . . Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God.—We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

You were dead in the trespasses and sins. . . . [God] made us alive together with Christ.—He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.

1 John 3:14; John 5:24; 1 John 5:12; 2 Cor. 1:21–22; 1 John 3:19, 21; 1 John 5:19; Eph. 2:1, 5; Col. 1:13

Martyn Lloyd-Jones - WHAT IS PRAYER? [Walking with God Day by Day: 365 Daily Devotional Selections](#)

And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. 1 JOHN 3:19

What is prayer? Well, I cannot think of a better way of describing it than these two words that we have at the end of 1 John 3:19: “Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.” That is prayer; prayer is coming before Him. Now we are always in the presence of God—“in him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28)—and we are always under His eye. But prayer is something still more special. Prayer is having a special audience and going immediately and directly to Him—“before him.” Prayer is something in which we turn our back upon everything else, excluding everything else, while, for the time being, we find ourselves face to face with God alone. There is a sense in which one cannot expound it further; it is just that.

We have to realize that is exactly and precisely what we do when we pray. Obviously, therefore, in a sense the most vital thing in prayer is the realization that we are before Him. And you will find that the saints have always talked a great deal about this. That is the difficulty; thoughts will keep on obtruding themselves, and our imaginations will wander all over the world, and certain ideas and proposals and wants and needs will intrude. But all that must be dismissed, and we must just start by realizing that we are actually and literally in the presence of the living God. “Before him.”

Now, says John, this whole question of brotherly love is of importance because of that. It is when you come there, when you are before Him, that you begin to realize the importance of what you are doing with the rest of your life and with the rest of your time. It is when you come there that you begin to see the relevance of this.

We must just start by realizing that we are actually and literally in the presence of the living God.

Resources on Assurance of Salvation:

- [1 John 3:19-24 Blessed Assurance - sermon by Steven Cole](#)
- [Full Assurance - Sermon by C H Spurgeon](#)
- [Assurance of Salvation... How Can We Have Assurance? from Spurgeon gems website](#)
- [Heaven On Earth-A Serious Discourse Concerning a Well-Grounded Assurance-Thomas Brooks \(1667\)](#) (See also [Genuine assurance](#))
- [Assurance of Salvation from John Newtons Letters](#)
- [How can I have assurance of my salvation?](#)
- [How can a believer have assurance of salvation?](#)
- [What are some of the signs of genuine saving faith?](#)
- [If you doubt your salvation, does that mean you are not truly saved?](#)
- [What if I don't feel saved?](#)
- [Doubt vs. The Assurance of Salvation](#)
- [The Assurance of Conversion - Octavius Winslow](#)
- [Spurgeon's pastoral wisdom in dealing with a woman lacking assurance](#)
- [A Test of Assurance - How We Know Whether We Love God - Thomas Watson](#)
- [Assurance of Grace and Salvation - What It Is - William S Plumer](#)
- [The Assurance of Hope - John Angell James, 1859 Obedience to Christ Gives Assurance of the Truth of His Doctrines](#)
- [Archibald Alexander A Believer's Assurance- A Practical Guide to Victory over Doubt - John MacArthur](#)
- [Assurance - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#)
- [Assurance - Torrey's Topical Textbook](#)
- [Security of the Believer - Holman Bible Dictionary](#)
- [Assurance - Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible](#)
- [Assurance - Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament](#)
- [Assurance \(2\) - Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament](#)
- [Assurance - Puritan Richard Watson's Biblical & Theological Dictionary](#)
- [Assurance - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#)

**MARKS OF A TRUE CHRISTIAN:
THE BOOK OF 1 JOHN
by Jim Bomkamp**

1. Walks in the light - 1Jn 1:6
2. Has fellowship with other Christians who walk in the light - 1Jn 1:7
3. Believes he has a sin nature - 1Jn 1:8
4. Occasionally sins - 1Jn 1:10
5. Continually keeps His commandments - 1Jn 2:3, 3:24
6. Continually keeps His word - 1Jn 2:5
7. Walks in the same way Jesus walked - 1Jn 2:6
8. Does not hate his brother - 1Jn 2:9
9. Loves his brother - 1Jn 2:10, 3:10
10. Does not love the world (cosmos - the world in rebellion against God) - 1Jn 2:15
11. Does not love the things in the world - 1Jn 2:15
12. Does the will of God - 1Jn 2:17
13. Stays in the Body of Christ - 1Jn 2:19
14. Has an anointing and as a result understands the truth of the gospel - 1Jn 2:20-21
15. Believes that Jesus is the Christ (Jewish Messiah of scripture) - 1Jn 2:22, 5:1
16. Abides in Christ (as a branch in the vine: see John 15) - 1Jn 2:27-28
17. Continually practices righteousness - 1Jn 2:29, 3:10
18. Purifies himself just as He is pure - 1Jn 3:3
19. Does not continually practice sin - 1Jn 3:6, 5:18
20. Practices righteousness and is righteous, just as He is righteous - 1Jn 3:7
21. His seed abides in him and he cannot sin because he is born of God - 1Jn 3:9
22. Loves the brethren - 1Jn 3:14
23. Loves not only with word and tongue, but in deed and in truth - 1Jn 3:18-19
24. The abiding presence of the Holy Spirit gives assurance of salvation - 1Jn 3:24, 4:13
25. Confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh (the eternal Son of God/Messiah) - 1Jn 4:2
26. Has overcome the false prophets and teachers (and the spirit that animates them) - 1Jn 4:4
27. Listens to, receives, and believes in the sound teaching from the apostles (the Bible) - 1Jn 4:6
28. Loves (with agape love) - 1Jn 4:7,8
29. Confesses that Jesus is the Son of God - 1Jn 4:15
30. Abides in (agape) love - 1Jn 4:16
31. Loves (agape) because He first loved him - 1Jn 4:19
32. Loves the child born of the Father (either Jesus, other Christians, or all men) - 1Jn 5:1
33. Overcomes the world - 1Jn 5:4
34. Believes that Jesus is the Son of God - 1Jn 5:5

I will supply some tests by which we may try the reality of our religion.

In approaching this part of my subject, I ask every reader of this paper to deal fairly, honestly, and reasonably with his soul. Dismiss from your mind the common idea,—that of course all is right if you go to church or to chapel. Cast away such vain notions for ever. You must look further, higher, deeper than this, if you would find out the truth. Listen to me, and I will give you a few hints. Believe me, it is no light matter. It is your life.

(1) For one thing, if you would know whether your religion is real, try it by the place which it occupies in your inner man. It is not enough that it is in your head. You may know the truth, and assent to the truth, and believe the truth, and yet be wrong in God's sight.—It is not enough that it is on your lips. You may repeat the creed daily. You may say "Amen" to public prayer in church, and yet have nothing more than an outward religion.—It is not enough that it is in your feelings. You may weep under preaching one day, and be lifted to the third heaven by joyous excitement another day, and yet be dead to God.—Your religion, if it is real, and given by the Holy Ghost, must be in your heart. It must occupy the citadel. It must hold the reins. It must sway the affections. It must lead the will. It must direct the tastes. It must influence the choices and decisions. It must fill the deepest, lowest, inmost seat in your soul. Is this your religion? If not, you may well doubt whether it is "real" and true. ([Acts 8:21](#); [Rom. 10:10](#).)

(2) In the next place, if you would know whether your religion is real, try it by the feelings towards sin which it produces. The Christianity which is from the Holy Ghost will always have a very deep view of the sinfulness of sin. It will not merely regard sin as a blemish and misfortune, which makes men and women objects of pity and compassion. It will see in sin the abominable thing which God bates, the thing which makes man guilty and lost in his Maker's sight, the thing which deserves God's wrath and condemnation. It will look on sin as the cause of all sorrow and unhappiness, of strife and wars, of quarrels and contentions, of sickness and death,—the blight which has blighted God's fair creation, the cursed thing which makes the whole earth groan and travail in pain. Above all, it will see in sin the thing which will ruin us eternally, except we can find a ransom,—lead us captive, except we can get its chains broken,—and destroy our happiness, both here and hereafter, except we fight against it, even unto death. Is this your religion? Are these your feelings about sin? If not, you may well doubt whether your religion is "real."

(3) For another thing, if you would know whether your religion is real, try it by the feelings toward Christ which it produces. Nominal religion may believe that such a person as Christ existed, and was a great benefactor to mankind. It may show Him some external respect, attend His outward ordinances, and bow the head at His name. But it will go no further. Real religion will make a man glory in Christ, as the Redeemer, the Deliverer, the Priest, the Friend, without whom he would have no hope at all. It will produce confidence in Him, love towards Him, delight in Him, comfort in Him, as the mediator, the food, the light, the life, the peace of the soul. Is this your religion? Do you know anything of feelings like these toward Jesus Christ? If not, you may well doubt whether your religion is "real."

(4) For another thing, if you would know whether your religion is real, try it by the fruit it bears in your heart and life. The Christianity which is from above will always be known by its fruits. It will produce in the man who has it repentance, faith, hope, charity, humility, spirituality, kind temper, self-denial, unselfishness, forgivingness, temperance, truthfulness, brotherly-kindness, patience, forbearance. The degree in which these various graces appear may vary in different believers. The germ and seeds of them will be found in all who are the children of God. By their fruits they may be known. Is this your religion? If not, you may well doubt whether it is "real."

(5) In the last place, if you would know whether your religion is real, try it by your feelings and habits about means of grace. Prove it by the Sunday. Is that day a season of weariness and constraint, or a delight and a refreshment, and a sweet foretaste of the rest to come in heaven?—Prove it by the public means of grace. What are your feelings about public prayer and public praise, about the public preaching of God's Word, and the administration of the Lord's Supper? Are they things to which you give a cold assent, and tolerate them as proper and correct? Or, are they things in which you take pleasure, and without which you could not live happy?—Prove it, finally, by your feelings about private means of grace. Do you find it essential to your comfort to read the Bible regularly in private, and to speak to God in prayer? Or, do you find these practices irksome, and either slur them over, or neglect them altogether? These questions deserve your attention. If means of grace, whether public or private, are not as necessary to your soul as meat and drink are to your body, you may well doubt whether your religion is "real."

INTIMACY PRESENT THOUGH ABSENT

PSALM 16; PSALM 51; 139:7; 1 JOHN 3:19

Christ, humanity of; Empathy; Intimacy; Knowing God; Presence of God; Relationships

My husband, Edward, is devoted to hawks and especially to the golden eagles that are returning to our part of Georgia. Driving down the highway with him can be a test of nerves as he cranes over the steering wheel to peer at the wing feathers of a particularly large bird. Is it an eagle or just a turkey vulture? He has to know, even if it means weaving down the road for a while, or running off it

from time to time. My view is a bit different: “Keep your eyes on the road!” I yell at him. “Who cares what it is? I’ll buy you a bird book; I’ll even buy you a bird—just watch where you’re going.”

A couple of summers ago, we spent two months apart, and I thought I’d get a break from hawks. Instead I began to see them everywhere—looping through the air, spiraling in rising thermals, hunkered down in the tops of trees. Seeing them, really seeing them for the first time in my life, I understood that I was not seeing them with my own eyes but with Edward’s eyes. He was not there, so I was seeing them for him. He was absent—or was he? He was present in me.

Citation: Barbara Brown Taylor, *The Best Spiritual Writing*, edited by Phillip Zaleski (Harper, 1999), p. 262

Three Groups

Regarding salvation and assurance, there are three groups of people:

1. those who are secure but not sure;
2. those who are “sure” but not secure; and
3. those who are secure and sure.

Category one are conscientious believers in Christ who are saved but lack assurance. In category two are professing Christians who say, “Even though I’m living in sin, I’ll make it. After all, ‘once saved, always saved!’” The third group are born-again believers who enjoy a warm, secure relationship with Christ each day. The objective basis of our salvation is the finished work of God’s Son on the cross. The subjective basis for our assurance is our believing the truth about Christ (I John 2:2, 4; 2:15; 5:1), loving the brethren (I John 3:14, 18, 19, 4:7–8), and obeying Christ’s commandments (I John 2:3–5).

Adrian Rogers - A Good Conscience (See full sermon [Legacy of Love page 263](#))

Now, first of all, let’s look, if we can, at how we can have a good conscience when we love. Now, notice in verse 19: “And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things” (1 John 3:19). What causes your heart to condemn you? Lack of love. When you have malice in your heart—when you have hatred in your heart—you have a condemning heart. God has wired you that way. If you’re saved—if you’re born again—you cannot fail to love and have confidence.

Now, we’re talking about the word conscience. You say, “I don’t see the word conscience there.” Well, in the Bible, the word conscience and the word heart are often used interchangeably. When he says, “If our heart condemn us not” (1 John 3:21), he’s saying, “If our conscience does not condemn us.” Now, when you have love in your heart, you’re going to find a wonderful thing—that your conscience is going to be clear.

Now, your conscience is not an enemy; your conscience is a friend—is something unique put in you that God did not put into animals. Have you ever thought about it? Animals cannot blush, and animals can’t laugh. Man has a conscience. Now, that conscience ... A little boy said, when he was asked what conscience is, “That’s the part of us that feels bad when everything else feels good.” But, that’s not really true. It’s more than that. That may be the world’s frivolous definition of a conscience, but that conscience is that part of you that God has put in you. It is an ability to concentrate our actions and to make moral judgments. And, the Bible teaches that all of us should have a good conscience. Put these scriptures down—1 Timothy 1:19: “Holding faith, and a good conscience.” Put this one down—Acts chapter 24 and verse 16: Paul said—now, this is the Apostle Paul—it talks about his ambition: he said, “And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void [of] offence toward God, and toward men” (Acts 24:16).

Bill Gothard said that conscience—a good conscience—is this—an inner freedom of spirit and assurance from knowing that you have a transparency towards everyone, that no one is able to point a finger at you and accuse you of wrong toward him that you’ve never made right. Now, you can just take that definition by Bill Gothard and write the word love. Listen to it again—“that inner freedom of spirit and assurance from knowing that you have a transparency toward everyone, that no one—no one—is able to point a finger at you and accuse you of wrongs toward him that you’ve never made right.” There is absolutely no way that you can have a good conscience without love. When you love, you’ll make it right; and when you make it right, you have that transparency. Now friend, that’ll do you more good than a sleeping pill. If you don’t have assurance—if you’re doubting your salvation and you’ve given your heart to Jesus Christ—you’d better check up and see if perhaps there’s some bitterness in your heart, some sin in your life.

It is an acid that will destroy your assurance. Look at verses 19 and 20 again: “And hereby”—now, he’s talking ... “hereby” refers to “love”—“And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things” (1 John 3:19–20). Your heart will condemn you, and you will never—listen—never have a good conscience until you learn to love. When you love—when you love—I mean, truly love—when you’ve made it right—you’re going to have that sweet assurance. So, here’s the first legacy of love. And, he’s going to build one upon another. The first legacy of love is a good conscience.

