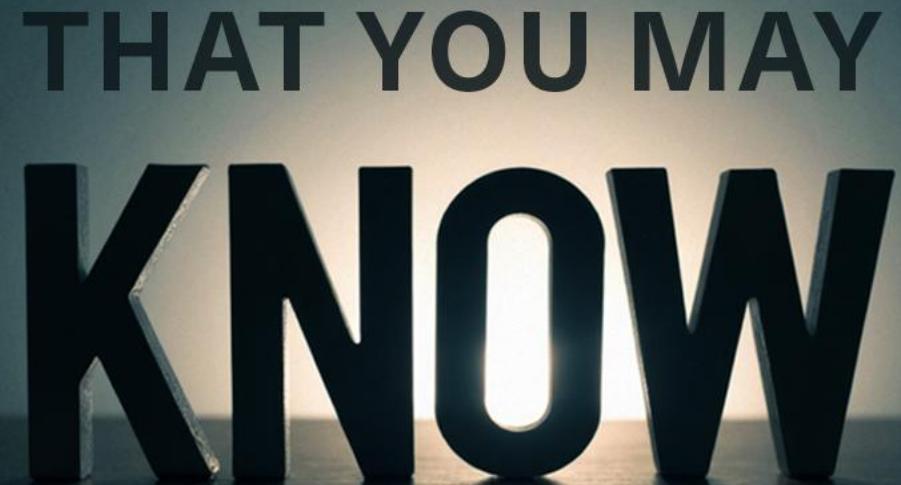


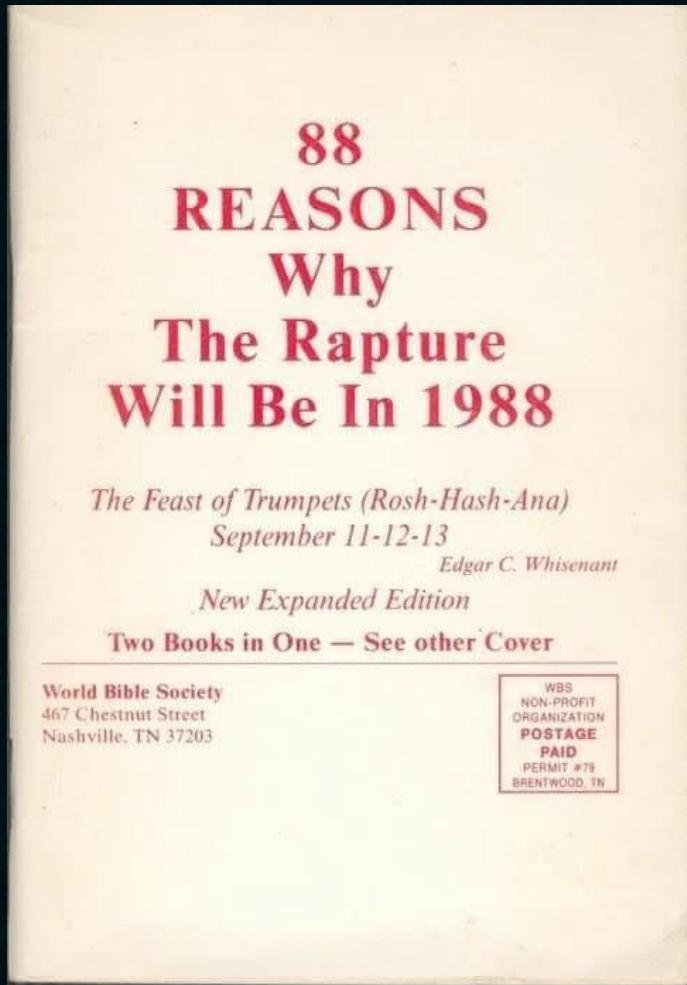
THAT YOU MAY
KNOW



A STUDY OF FIRST JOHN

“Assurance and
the Anticipation
of Glory”

1 John 2:28–3:3



- In 1988, Edgar C. Whisenant published his book, *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988*.
- Whisenant claimed he had uncovered thousands of clues in the Bible that indicated the rapture would occur between September 11 and 13, 1988.
- Over 4.5 million copies of *88 Reasons* were distributed across the United States.
- When his prediction failed to materialize, Whisenant made several “corrected” predictions in the years that followed—all of which ended in scorn and ridicule.

“[The second coming of Christ] is mentioned 318 times in the 260 chapters of the New Testament. It is mentioned in every one of the New Testament books, with the exception of Galatians . . . and the very short books such as 2 and 3 John and Philemon.”

—James Boice, *The Epistles of John*, 96

“Scripture teems with prophetic material. . . . All nine authors of the NT mention Christ’s second coming. Next to the subject of faith/salvation, the theme of Christ’s second coming is most prominent in the NT. . . . Of the approximately 333 specific Bible prophecies dealing with Christ’s two advents, one-third deal with His first coming and two-thirds deal with His second coming.”

—Richard Mayhue, “Why Study Prophecy?,” 14

PURPOSE OF 1 JOHN

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

—1 John 5:13

REVIEW

- 1 John 1:1–4 – “Assurance and the Historicity of Christ”

 *Do you believe that the biblical testimony about Jesus Christ is true?*

- 1 John 1:5–10 – “Assurance and the Confession of Sin”

 *Are you deeply aware of your sin and do you acknowledge it to God?*

- 1 John 2:1–2 – “Assurance and the Sufficiency of Christ”

 *Do you believe that the sacrifice of Christ is sufficient for your sin?*

- 1 John 2:3–6 – “Assurance and the Obedience of God’s Commands”
 - *Are you zealous to obey God’s revealed will for your life?*
- 1 John 2:7–11 – “Assurance and the Love of One’s Brother”
 - *Do you give yourself sacrificially for the benefit of other believers?*
- 1 John 2:12–17 – “Assurance and the Hatred of Evil”
 - *Do you loathe the things that are contrary to God and His ways?*
- 1 John 2:18–27 – “Assurance and the Persistence in Truth”
 - *Do you hunger for and persist in the truth of God’s Word?*

“Assurance and the Anticipation of Glory” – 1 John 2:28–3:3

“Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him. See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and *such* we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

I. The Pathway to Assurance

1 John 2:28–29

“Abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence.”



“Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming” (2:28).

- John already exhorted his readers to recognize that the next stage of God’s redemptive plan was *imminent*.
 - “**Imminence**” – “The condition of something that could happen at any time or is about to happen. When applied to the second coming, the term means that Christ could return at any time” (MacArthur & Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 931).
 - **1 John 2:18** – “Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.”

“Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming” (2:28).

- “Now” – having just emphasized the need for vigilance in this “last hour” (2:18–27), John turns his attention to the future and explains the role that a robust anticipation of the future is to play in the believer’s life.
- “Little children” – expresses John’s pastoral care for those to whom he writes, as well as his confidence in their spiritual state.
- “Abide in Him” – “remain united to Christ”; a frequent concept in John’s writings (24x in 1 John [e.g., 2:6]; 41x in John’s Gospel); describes *a relationship of continual and intentional dependency and communion.*

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.”

—John 15:4–5



“Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming” (2:28).

- **“So that when He appears”** – introduces the *purpose* for abiding in Christ; the verb “appear” is used by John to refer to the advents of Christ—either the first (1:2; 3:5, 8) or, as here, the second (2:28; 3:2).
- **“We may have confidence”** – basic idea: “boldness in speech”; describes *boldness to pray* (3:21; 5:14), and *boldness to speak in the day of judgment* (2:28; 4:17); John includes himself (“we”).
- **“And not shrink away in shame”** – basic idea: “to experience shame”; the opposite of “confidence,” it describes the feeling of *disgrace*.
- **“At His coming”** – a synonym for “appearance”; see 1 Thess 3:13; 4:15.

“[John] is not warning about losing one’s salvation or being declared unregenerate by Christ at his appearing. Rather, he is describing the emotional response a believer will have when brought before Christ at his appearing. Every believer, including John, will have one of two responses to Jesus when they stand in his presence for the first time: the believer will be comfortable in his presence or will be looking for somewhere to hide in humiliation.”

—Gary Derickson, *1, 2, & 3 John*, 271

BOLDNESS

SHAME



Men of the Word

“John believed that our prophetic hope exerts a practical impact upon present Christian living.”

—D. Edmond Hiebert, *Epistles of John*, 126

“If you know that **He is righteous**, you know that everyone also who **practices righteousness** is **born of Him**” (2:29).

- Having drawn a connection between one’s hope for the future and one’s life in the present (2:28), John now draws an association between one’s life in the present and one’s past (2:29).
- “**He is righteous**” – John refers here to the character of God the Father; everything that He says or does corresponds with perfect justice.
- “**Practices righteousness**” – one who characteristically engages in speech and actions that are consistent with God’s character.
- “**Born of Him**” – spiritual birth/regeneration; see John 1:12–13; 3:3–8; 1 John 3:9; an axiom: children look like and reflect the character of their biological—or in this case, spiritual—father.

II. The Reason for Assurance

1 John 3:1

“See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us.”



“See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are” (3:1a).

- “See” – “take note”; “take time to contemplate and let it sink in”; an exclamation more than a command.
- “How great a love” – heightens the idea of astonishment and surprise.
- “Has bestowed” – implies a decisive act that results in an ongoing, continuous state; emphasizes God’s unilateral and sovereign activity.
- “Children of God” – having just described being “born of God” in the previous verse (2:29), John picks up the idea for his focus in 3:1.
- “And we are” – an emphatic statement; communicates both *amazement* and *confidence*.

“The Love of God”

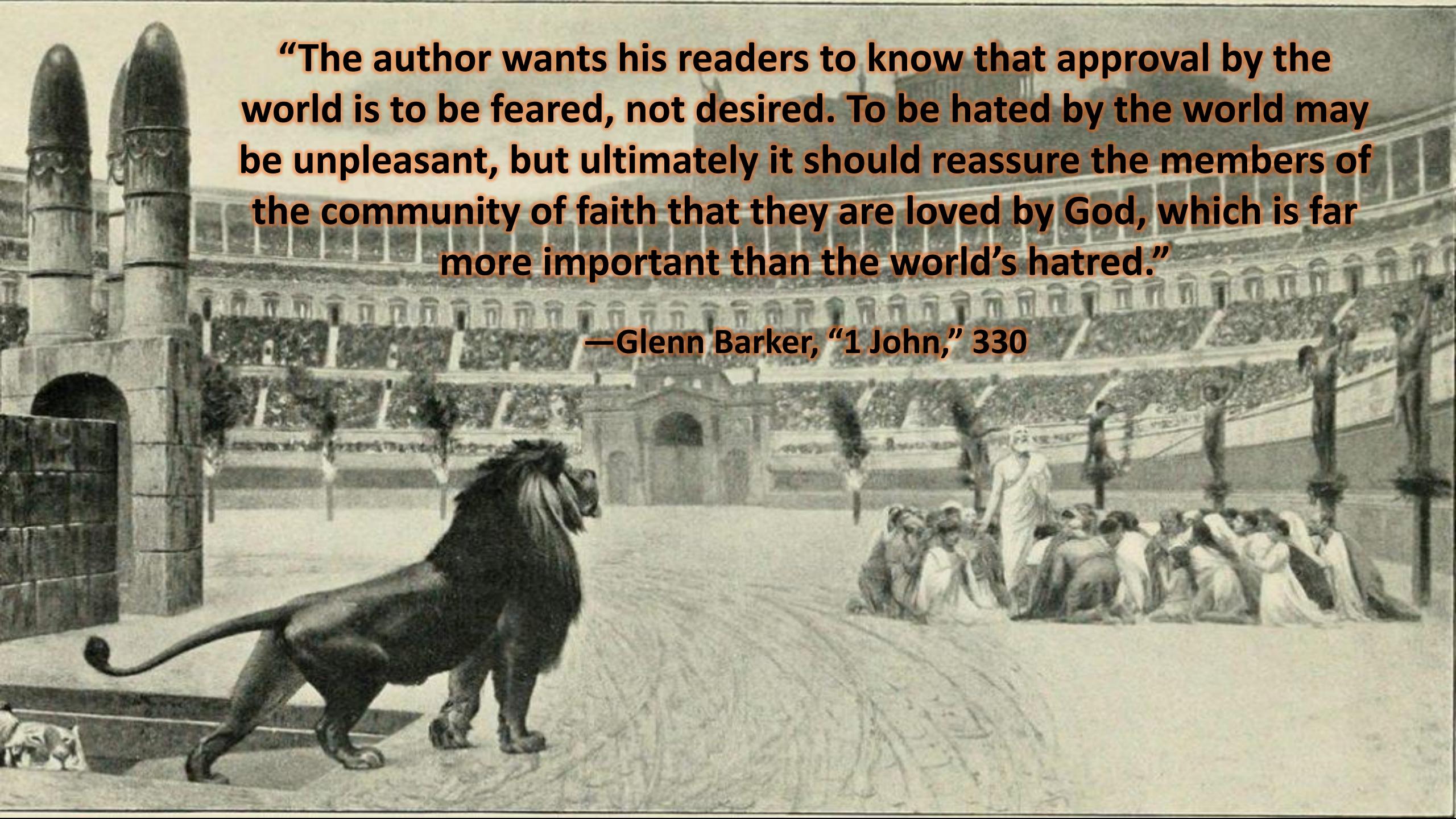
(Hymns of Grace #91)

The love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell;
It goes beyond the highest star,
And reaches to the lowest hell;
The guilty pair, bowed down with care,
God gave His Son to win;
His erring child He reconciled,
And pardoned from his sin.

Could we with ink the ocean fill
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were ev'ry stalk on earth a quill
And ev'ry man a scribe by trade,
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Tho' stretched from sky to sky.

“For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him” (3:1b).

- **“For this reason”** – refers to the first half of the verse: the sovereign, gracious act of God in making certain sinners “children of God.”
- **“The world does not know us”** – unbelievers cannot understand believers; they are *different*, so they treat them with ridicule and scorn.
- **“Because it did not know Him”** – not having God as their Father, they could not recognize Christ, and unable to recognize Christ (see John 1:10–11), they are unable to recognize His brothers (“family resemblance”).
- R. C. H. Lenski: “The mystery of regeneration is foolishness in its eyes; those who are children of God in Christ it considers deluded.”

A painting depicting a lion in a cage, with a crowd of people watching from behind a fence. The lion is on the left, looking towards the right. The crowd is on the right, looking towards the lion. The background shows a large, ornate building with many windows and a balcony. The overall mood is one of awe and fear.

“The author wants his readers to know that approval by the world is to be feared, not desired. To be hated by the world may be unpleasant, but ultimately it should reassure the members of the community of faith that they are loved by God, which is far more important than the world’s hatred.”

—Glenn Barker, “1 John,” 330

III. The Promotion of Assurance

1 John 3:2–3

“Everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself.”



“Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is” (3:2).

- “**Beloved**” – it is only natural that John would address his readers as such, having just stated what he did in v. 1.
- “**Now we are children of God**” – a settled fact about the believer’s current status (and an amazing one at that!); one that gives *confidence*.
- “**It has not appeared as yet what we will be**” – the believer’s current status is a foreshadowing of a greater status yet to come; but what is to come is so glorious that it cannot be understood now through experience.



“A child of God is here and now, indeed, like a diamond that is crystal white within but is still uncut and shows no brilliant flashes from reflecting facets.”

—R. C. H. Lenski

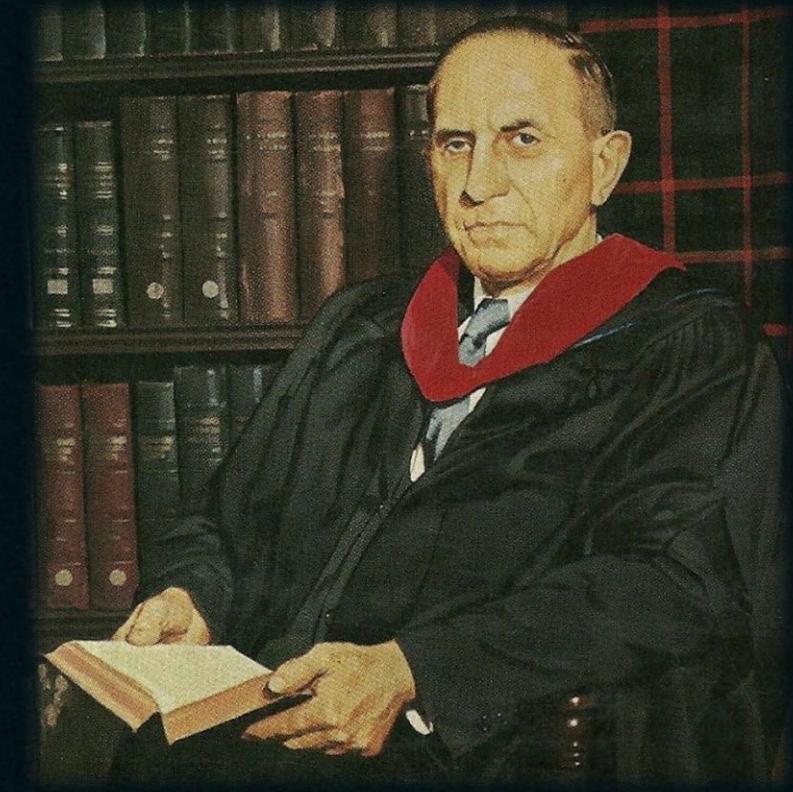
Men of the Word

“Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is” (3:2).

- **“We know”** – a believer cannot know now the glory he will personally experience in the future; but he can know something.
- **“We will be like Him”** – at Christ’s coming (see 2:28) the believer will be instantaneously and comprehensively transformed to resemble His likeness (see Rom 8:29; Phil 3:21; Col 3:4).
- **“Because we will see Him just as He is”** – the cause of this transformation; the believer will see His face not only with the eyes of faith (see 2 Cor 3:18), but with physical eyes; the impact of this Christ-vision be all-encompassing glory (see 1 Cor 13:12).

“This [glorification] is the highest end conceivable for created beings, the highest and conceivable not only by men but also by God himself. God himself could not contemplate or determine a higher destiny for his creatures.”

—John Murray, *Collected Writings*, 2.316



Men of the Word

“This immediate sight of Christ is that which all the saints of God in this life do breathe and pant after.”

—John Owen, *Works*, 1.379



“And **everyone** who has this hope **fixed** on Him **purifies** himself,
just as He is pure” (3:3).

- “**Everyone**” – a rule that has no exceptions.
- “**Who has this hope**” – an ongoing exercise of the hope of future transformation to His likeness.
- “**Purifies himself**” – the consequence of robust, informed hope in the promise of future glory results in present-moment moral purification; this purification does not happen by accident.
- “**Just as He is pure**” – hoping in this final and complete transformation to the likeness of Christ already realizes some of that transformation in the present.

THAT YOU MAY KNOW

A STUDY OF FIRST JOHN

“The Church’s One Foundation”
(*Hymns of Grace* #354)

STANZA 3

’Mid toil and tribulation,
And tumult of her war,
She waits the consummation
Of peace forevermore;
Till with the vision glorious,
Her longing eyes are blest,
And the great Church victorious
Shall be the Church at rest.