

THAT YOU MAY
KNOW

A STUDY OF FIRST JOHN

“Assurance and
the Primacy of
God’s Love”

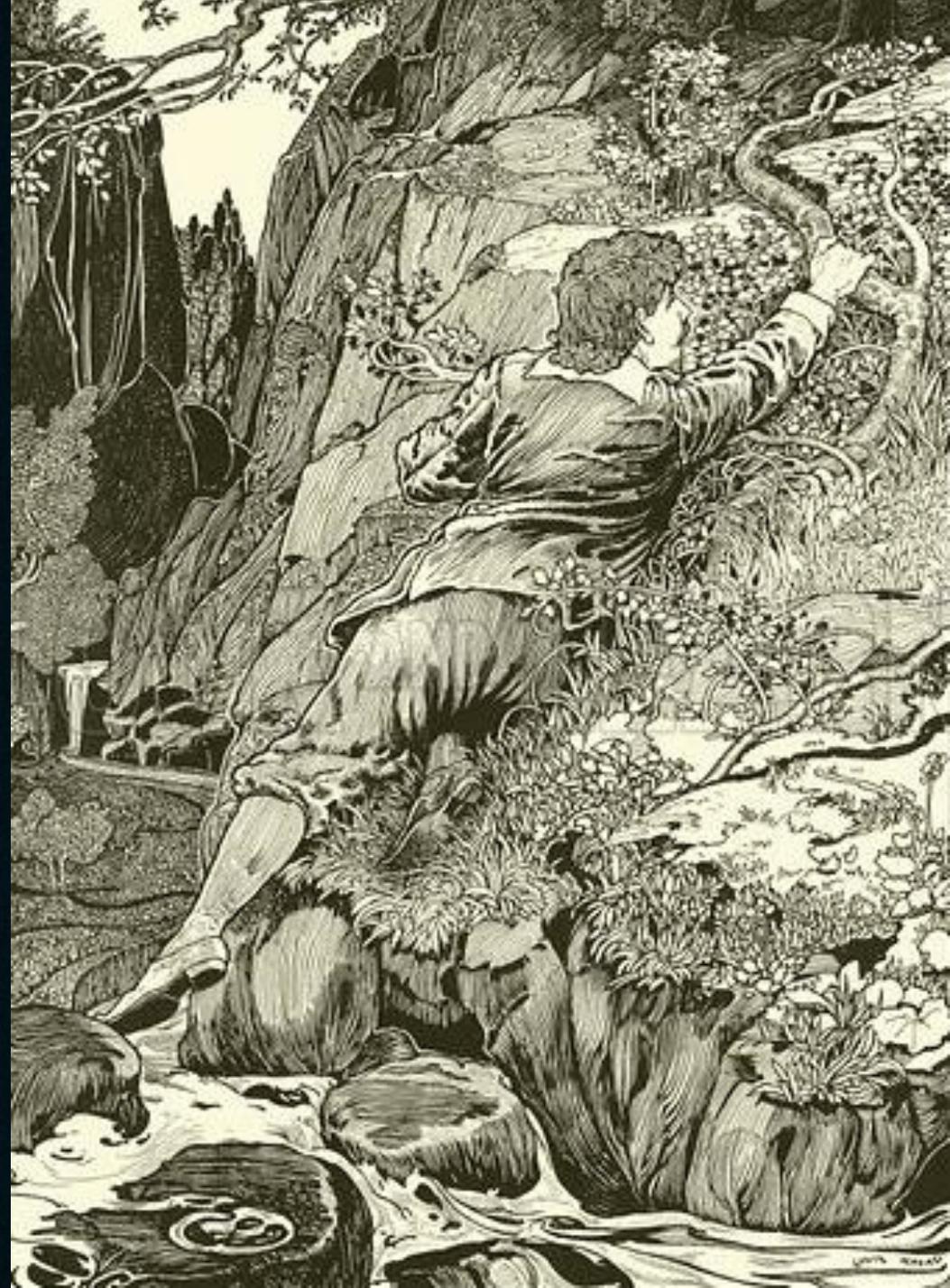
1 John 4:7–10

THE HILL DIFFICULTY (PILGRIM'S PROGRESS)

Christian now went to the spring, and drank to refresh himself, and then began to go up the hill, saying,

“The hill, though high, I choose to ascend,
The difficulty will not me offend;
For I perceive the way to life lies here.
Come, take heart, let's neither faint nor fear;
Better, though difficult, the right way to go,
Than wrong, though easy—where the end is woe.”

I then looked at Christian going up the hill, where, because of the steepness of the hill, I saw he went from running to walking, and from walking to crawling on his hands and knees.



Now, about midway to the top of the hill was a pleasant arbor, made by the Lord of the hill for the refreshment of weary travelers. When Christian arrived there, he sat down to rest. He then pulled his scroll out of his bosom and read to his comfort. He also began to examine the garment that was given him while at the Cross.

Thus, refreshing himself for a while, he at last fell into a slumber, and thence into a sound sleep, which delayed him there until it was almost night. While asleep, his scroll fell out of his hand. Now, as he was sleeping, one came and awakened him, saying, “Go to the ant, you sluggard—consider her ways, and be wise!” With that, Christian suddenly jumped up and hurried on his way until he came to the top of the hill.





Now, when he reached the top of the hill, two men came running to meet him—the name of one was Timorous, and the other Mistrust. Christian inquired of them, “Sirs, what is the matter? You are running the wrong way!” Timorous answered, “We were going to the Celestial City, but the further we go, the more dangers we meet with! Therefore, we have turned around and are going back.” . . .

So Mistrust and Timorous ran down the hill, and Christian continued on the difficult way. Thinking of what he heard from the men, he felt in his bosom for his scroll, that he might read from it and be comforted; but he could not find it. Christian was then in great distress and did not know what to do—for the scroll was his pass into the Celestial City.

Therefore, he was fearful and bewildered, not knowing what to do. At last, he remembered that he had slept at the arbor on the side of the steep hill. Falling down upon his knees, he asked God's forgiveness for his foolish act and then went back to look for his scroll. Who can sufficiently set forth the sorrow of Christian's heart as he went back! Sometimes he sighed, sometimes he wept, and often he rebuked himself for being so foolish as to fall asleep in that arbor which was only erected for a little refreshment for weary Pilgrims.

So, he went on until he again came within sight of the arbor where he had rested and slept. But that sight only increased his sorrow, by bringing his folly of sleeping once again into his mind. Thus, he bemoaned, "O what a wretched man I am—that I should sleep in the day time and in the midst of difficulty—that I should so indulge my flesh! For the Lord of the hill has built this arbor only for the refreshment of Pilgrims! How many steps have I taken in vain!"



Reaching the arbor, he sat down and wept. Then, looking around sorrowfully under the bench, he spotted his scroll! With trembling and haste, he snatched it up and put it into his bosom. None can tell how joyful he then was—for this scroll was the assurance of his salvation and his pass to the Celestial City. Therefore, he secured it in his bosom, gave thanks to God for directing his eye to the place where it had fallen—and with joy and tears resumed his journey.

Men of the Word

“Assurance and the Primacy of God’s Love” – 1 John 4:7–10

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.”

1 John 4:7

I. The Application of Divine Love



“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God”

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God” (4:7).

- **“Beloved”** – “one who is dearly loved”; the term is also found in 2:7; 3:2, 21; 4:1, 11; communicates affection and affirmation.
 - “The author practices what he preaches. In urging them to love each other, he first assures them of his own love for them” (Stott, *Epistles of John*, 160).
 - More than that, John believes that those to whom he writes are the recipients of God’s sovereign, unconditional love (see 3:1).
 - John is not questioning their faith but affirming it and explaining the implications that arise from it (see 5:13).

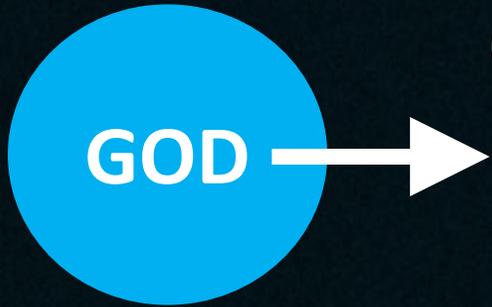
Ἄγαπητοί, ἀγαπῶμεν
(*Agarētoi, agarōmen*)
“Beloved, love!”

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God” (4:7).

- **“Let us love one another”** – a continuous pattern of life; the chief ethic of Christianity, the sum of Christ’s law (John 13:34–35; Gal 5:14; 6:2) and the chief evidence of the Holy Spirit’s influence (Gal 5:22–23).
 - **“Love”** – “It is a call for a high, unselfish love which freely seeks the true welfare of the one loved” (Hiebert, *The Epistles of John*, 196–97).
 - John has already emphasized the importance of Christian love (2:7–11 and 3:11–24); it will be his focus now until 4:21.
 - Salvation has social implications: “Fellowship with God and with his Son involves fellowship with one another” (Lenski, *Epistles of John*, 494).

“Beloved, let us love one another, **for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God**” (4:7).

- “For” – introduces three reasons why *the beloved* must love.



(1) “**Love is from God**” – the love John speaks of is not the world’s love for its own or the flesh’s love for gratification, but the kind that originates only from God Himself.

(2) “**Everyone who loves is born of God**” – love as a pattern of life demonstrates *spiritual regeneration* (2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4); “love is an activity of the implanted eternal life, and is therefore a proof that the life is present” (Orr, “The Letters of John,” 247).

(3) “**And knows God**” – love as a pattern of life demonstrates a *living relationship* (John 17:3).

“Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more.”

—1 Thessalonians 4:9–10

1 John 4:8

II. The Absence of Divine Love



*“The one who does not love
does not know God”*

“The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love” (4:8).

- The opposite of v. 7; John now speaks of the world of the unsaved.
- **“The one who does not love”** – a pattern of life characterized by the absence of seeking the benefit of other believers at personal expense.
- **“Does not know God”** – such a one lacks a living relationship with God (John 17:3; Ephesians 4:18).
- **“For”** – introduces the reason for why unloving people are not believers.
- **“God is love”** – not “love is God,” or that “God is nothing more than love,” but that God is known specifically by His giving of Himself for the benefit of sinners.

“If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.”

—1 Corinthians 13:1–3

Men of the Word

1 John 4:9

III. The Appearance of Divine Love



*“... God has sent His
only begotten Son into
the world....”*

“By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him” (4:9).

- John now describes what he means when he states that *God is love*.
- **“Was manifested”** – “to make visible, clear; to bring into the open”; for example, see 1:2; authentic love does not remain abstract but reveals itself *in action*.
- **“in us”** – “within us,” that is, within those who received *regeneration* and a *relationship* with God (v. 7; see Romans 5:5).
- **“God sent His only begotten Son”** – emphasizes the completed once-for-all dispatch of His only begotten Son for a mission; assumes the Son’s preexistence; a summary statement for the *incarnation*.

“By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him” (4:9).

- “So that” – introduces the *purpose* of the Father’s mission for His Son.
- “We might live through Him” – assumes that apart from the Father’s mission for His Son, *we could have no life*.
- To make visible His character as a God of love, God did not send an angel or some other created being, but sent *Himself* (see John 1:14, 18).
- **John 3:16** – “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

“The marvel which the text [John 3:16] brings before us is just that marvel above all other marvels in this marvelous world of ours—the marvel of God’s love for sinners. And this is the measure by which we are invited to measure the greatness of the love of God. It is not that it is so great that it is able to extend over the whole of a big world: it is so great that it is able to prevail over the Holy God’s hatred and abhorrence of sin. For herein is love, that God could love the world—the world that lies in the evil one: that God who is all-holy and just and good, could so love this world that He gave His only begotten Son for it,—that He might not judge it, but that it might be saved.”



—B. B. Warfield, “God’s Immeasurable Love,” 515–516

1 John 4:10

IV. The Apex of Divine Love



*“... He loved us and sent
His Son to be the
propitiation for our sins.”*

“In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins” (4:10).

- **“Not that we loved God”** – love is not defined *from the bottom up*—from the basis of human expression; in reality, *we did not love Him!*
 - KEY: The Father did not send His Son *in response* to our love.
- **“But that He loved us”** – a strong contrast; love is defined *from the top down*—from the basis of divine expression; in reality, *He loves us.*
- **“And sent His Son”** – once again, God’s love does not remain an abstract idea; His love is made clear through action—i.e., through the mission of His Son.

“This makes clear that God’s love and the actions it initiated were not a response to any love on our part. His actions were motivated purely from his own nature and concern, not ours. To think that God looked into the future and saw anyone’s response to him and based his saving action on that person’s future attitude or action, would be to place salvation into the hands of men and wrest it from the hands of God.”

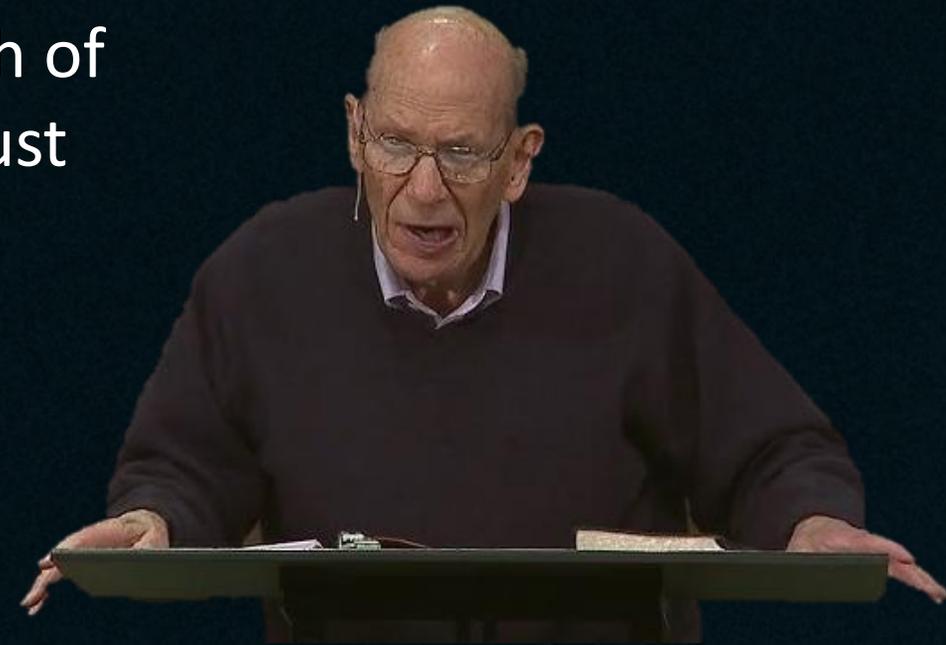
—Derickson, *1, 2, & 3 John*, 437

“In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* **the propitiation for our sins**” (4:10).

- “**The propitiation for our sins**” – “to appease or satisfy an offended party”; the term is found in the NT only here and in 2:2; the Son does not merely *provide* propitiation; He Himself *is* the propitiation!
 - *The problem*: sin not only estranges the sinner from God, but God from the sinner.
 - *The need*: sin must be justly punished, and God’s righteous wrath in response to those who commit it must be satisfied.
 - *The solution*: a sacrifice is offered—Jesus Christ, the righteous One—to pay the penalty for sins and bear the wrath of God to His satisfaction.

“Propitiation addresses the wrath of God. It is the work of Christ saving us from God’s wrath by absorbing it in His own person as our substitute. Expiation, which basically means ‘removal,’ accompanies propitiation and speaks of the work of Christ in removing or putting away our sin. Such is the symbolism of the two goats used on the Day of Atonement. The first goat represented Christ’s work of propitiation as it was killed and its blood sprinkled on the mercy seat. The second goat represented Christ’s work of expiation in removing or blotting out the sins that were against us. The object of propitiation is the wrath of God. The object of expiation is the sin, which must be removed from His presence.”

—Jerry Bridges, *The Gospel for Real Life*, 71–72



“It would be hard to exaggerate the differences between the pagan and the Christian views of propitiation. In the pagan perspective, human beings try to placate their bad-tempered deities with their own paltry offerings. According to the Christian revelation, God’s own great love propitiated His own holy wrath through the gift of His own dear Son, who took our place, bore our sin and died our death. Thus, God Himself gave Himself to save us from Himself.”

—John Stott, *God’s Good News for the Word*, 115



Men of the Word

“When I look at myself, I don’t see how
I can be saved. But when I look at
Christ, I don’t see how I can be lost.”

—Martin Luther

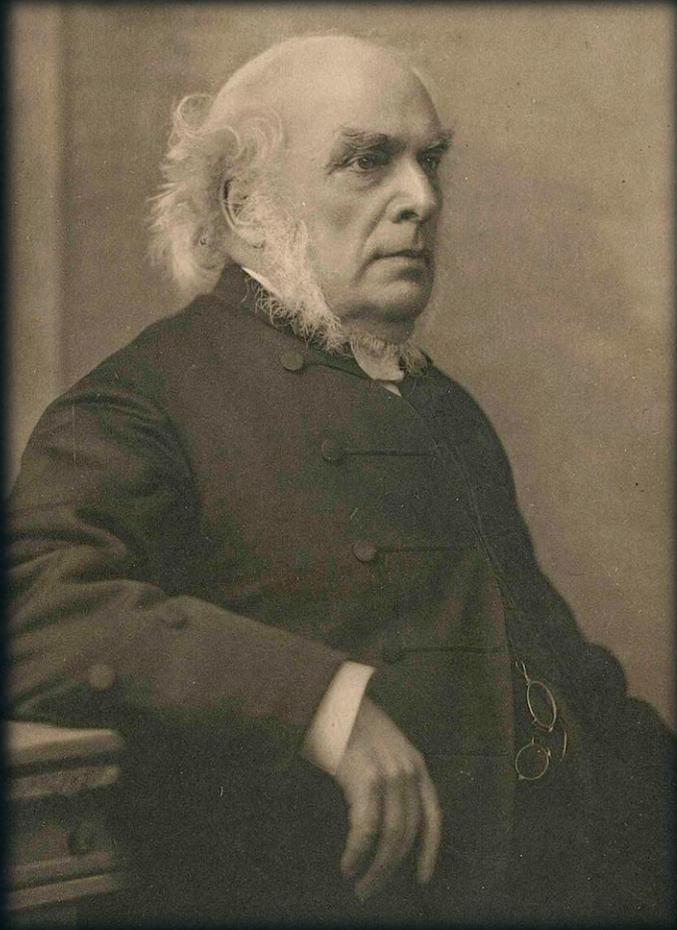


Men of the Word

THAT YOU MAY
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A STUDY OF FIRST JOHN

- ✓ Isolation from the fellowship of the saints suffocates assurance.
- ✓ Although warnings have their place, the greatest motivation to obedience is *love*.



“The love of God to us, and our love to Him, work together for producing holiness. Terror accomplishes no real obedience. Suspense brings forth no fruit unto holiness. No gloomy uncertainty as to God’s favor can subdue one lust, or correct our crookedness of will. But the free pardon of the cross uproots sin, and withers all its branches. Only the certainty of love, forgiving love, can do this.”

—Horatius Bonar

Men of the Word

THAT YOU MAY KNOW

A STUDY OF FIRST JOHN

- ✓ Isolation from the fellowship of the saints suffocates assurance.
- ✓ Although warnings have their place, the greatest motivation to obedience is *love*.
- ✓ Never doubt the ability of God to love *you*.

“The greatest sorrow you can lay on the Father, the greatest unkindness you can do to him, is not to believe that he loves you.”

—John Owen



Men of the Word

THAT YOU MAY KNOW

A STUDY OF FIRST JOHN

- ✓ Isolation from the fellowship of the saints suffocates assurance.
- ✓ Although warnings have their place, the greatest motivation to obedience is *love*.
- ✓ Never doubt the ability of God to love *you*.
- ✓ Keep the truth of God's love in Christ as the scroll you hold dear.



“Learn much of the Lord Jesus. For every look at yourself, take ten looks at Christ. He is altogether lovely. Such infinite majesty, and yet such meekness and grace, and all for sinners, even the chief! Live much in the smiles of God. Bask in His beams. Feel His all-seeing eye settled on you in love, and [rest] in His almighty arms.”

—Robert Murray M'Cheyne

Men of the Word

O how He loves you and me,
O how He loves you and me;
He gave His life—what more could He give?
O how he loves you;
O how He loves me;
O how He loves you and me!

—“O How He Loves You and Me,” by Kurt Kaiser

Men of the Word

2025-2026

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