

¹⁹ By this
 we shall know
 that we are of the truth
and reassure¹ our heart before Him;

²⁰ for
 whenever² our heart³ condemns us,
God is greater than our heart,
and He knows everything.⁴

²¹ Beloved,
 if our heart does not condemn us,⁵
we have confidence before God;

²² and
 whatever we ask
we receive from Him,
 because we keep His commandments
 and do what pleases Him.⁶

²³ And this is His commandment,
 that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ
 and love one another,
 just as He has commanded us.

²⁴ Whoever
 keeps His commandments
abides in God,
and God in Him.

And by this
 we know
 that He abides in us,
 by the Spirit
 whom He has given us.

¹ Translations may jump around on this word. Normally the word means something like “convince, persuade,” but that doesn’t really fit the context here. It can also mean “reassure, set at ease, pacify,” and while this isn’t the common meaning, it is used similarly in Matt. 28:14.

² This verse is not an easy one to understand in Greek and so translations in English tend to jump around a bit. The ESV takes the beginning of verse 20 to be in contrast to verse 19 our heart should be at peace (v. 19), but in whatever or whenever our heart convicts us (v. 20), then

³ At times the heart can be trusted (e.g. Rom. 2:15; 2 Cor. 1:12), but because even our heart is stained by sin it is not the final source of truth (e.g. Jer. 17:9; 1 Tim. 4:2). What then is the ultimate source of truth?

⁴ The point of this seems to be, don’t simply rely on what your heart tells you, trust instead what God says. If God says you are forgiven and righteous in Christ, you are!

⁵ The idea here is that we have peace and confidence in our hearts before God because of what Jesus has done for us (see 1 John 2:28 on this confidence).

⁶ Compare this with Matt. 7:7; 21:22 and John 14:13; 15:7. How is God not a “magic genie”?