general subject of the testimony of our  
hearts is entered upon. Thus we get the  
context and rendering, as follows): **because**   
(as if it were said, and this *persuading*   
*our hearts before Him* is for us a  
vital matter, seeing that condemnation and  
acquittal by our own hearts bring each  
such a weighty conclusion with it) **if our  
heart condemn us, it is because** (our self  
condemnation is founded on the fact, that)  
**God is greater than our heart, and knoweth  
all things** (i.e. the condemning testimony  
of our conscience is not alone, but is a  
token of One sitting above our conscience  
and greater than our conscience: because  
our conscience is but the faint echo of His  
voice who knoweth all things: if it condemn us,   
how much more He? and therefore   
this persuading, for which this verse  
renders a reason, becomes a thing of inestimable   
import, and one which we cannot   
neglect, seeing that the absence of it  
is an index to our standing condemned of  
God. And then, having given the reason  
why the *condemnation* should be set at  
rest by the *persuasion*, he goes on to give  
the blessed results of the *persuasion* itself  
in vv. 21, 22).

**21.**] **Beloved** (there is no  
adversative particle, because this address  
throws up the contrast quite strongly  
enough, as introducing the very matter  
on which the context lays the emphasis,  
viz., the *persuading our hearts*), **if our  
heart condemn us not, we have confidence  
towards God** (said generally; not with  
direct reference to that which follows ver.  
22, which indeed is one form of this confidence:   
see ch. v.14, where the connexion  
is similar. The confidence here spoken of  
is of course present, not future in the day  
of judgment. **towards God**, i.e., with  
reference to God: but more than that: to  
God-ward, in our aspect as turned towards  
and looking to God.

It must be remembered that the words are said in the  
full light of the reality of the Christian  
state,—where the heart is awakened and  
enlightened, and the testimony of the Spirit  
is active: where the heart’s own deceit docs  
not come into consideration as a disturb-  
ing clement),

**22.**] **and** (such another  
*“and”* as that in verse 10 above, where,  
after the general statement, *“and”* introduced   
the particular instance in which the  
general truth was carried forward. So  
here: By dwelling and walking in love,  
we can alone gain that approval of our  
conscience as God’s children, which brings  
real confidence in Him and real intercommunion   
in prayer, which is a result and  
proof of that confidence) **whatsoever wo  
ask, we receive** (present: not put for  
future, as Grotius thinks. The Apostle is  
setting forth actual matter of fact) **from  
Him** (these words must be taken in all  
their simplicity, without capricious and  
arbitrary limitations. Like all the sayings   
of St. John, they proceed on the  
ideal truth of the Christian state. “The  
child of God,” as Huther says, “asks for  
nothing which is against the will of its  
Father”), **because** (ground of the above  
*receiving*) **we keep His commandments,  
and do the things which are pleasing in  
His sight** (on the last expression [and  
parallelism] see Exod. xv. 26; also Deut.  
vi. 18, xii. 25, Ezra x. 11, Isa. xxxviii. 3.  
It is added, not as explanatory of *keeping*  
*His commandments,* but to connect with  
His granting our prayers, since our lives  
are in accord with His good pleasure.  
This however brings us to the theological  
difficulty of our verse, wherein it would  
seem at first sight as if the granting of  
our prayers by God depended, as its meritorious   
efficient, on our keeping of His  
commandments and doing that which  
pleases Him. And so some of the Roman-  
Catholic expositors here. But both here  
and elsewhere the solution of the difficulty  
is very easy, if separated from the party  
words of theology, and viewed in the light  
of Scripture itself. Out of Christ, there  
are no good works at all: entrance into