

EPISTLE OF 1 JOHN
HAVING ASSURANCE IN OUR HEARTS
1 JOHN 3:18-24

INTRODUCTION

Last week we saw as we ended in *Vs 18* how that we, as Believers, are to have a **genuine love for the Brethren!** It is not to be in just **WORDS** (i.e. by trying to give them good counsel) or in just **TONGUE** (i.e. telling them that we love them), but it is to be a **love that is expressed in both DEED (doing something tangible) and in TRUTH (genuinely loving a person with the heart)! (Vs 18)**

Genuine love is practical, visible, and active! It comes with concrete actions!

Verse 19 says “*hereby we know*” which refers back to *verse 18*.

I. WHEN GENUINE LOVE FOR THE BRETHERN IS SHOWN BY US IT GIVES US ASSURANCE IN OUR HEARTS BEFORE GOD! (Vs. 19-20)

John declares here that **our obedience** to the commandment to **love one another** is the basis for knowing that we belong to the LORD! It reveals to us that we have truly believed on Jesus!

When we come before God **we can receive assurance that our love has integrity because it is confirmed by the deeds done out of a true heart!**

A Believer who practices genuine love of the Brethren grows in His confidence before God!

How do we have an assured heart? By loving the Lord and His people, not in just word and tongue, but in deed and truth! **(3:18)**

This assurance that we walk in the truth **should not** be supremely dependent upon our own perception of ourselves, but on God’s perception as *verse 20* helps us understand.

A condemning heart or an accusing conscience can rob a Christian of peace and assurance.

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Sometimes our heart accuses us wrongly because our heart is deceitful above all things!

Jeremiah 17:9 *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*

There are many Believers who have accused themselves falsely, or been harder on themselves than necessary. A Believer who walks in love with a heart open to God should go into God's persuading presence and ask Him to take away false opinion or the condemnation that comes our way from the accuser of the Brethren!

Romans 8:1 *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

Because God is superior to our heart, He can persuade our heart when we are in His presence! One of the things God uses to persuade us is our genuine love of the Brethren expressed in deed and in truth!

Recorded in Luke 10:38-42, Jesus visited Bethany, and He stayed at the home of Mary and Martha. Martha was busy preparing the meal, but Mary sat at Jesus’ feet and listened to Him teach her. Martha criticized Mary before Jesus, but Jesus knew Mary's heart and defended her.

Remember how the Apostle Peter wept bitterly after he had denied his Lord and went back to fishing? He was filled with remorse and repentance for his sin. But He was having trouble getting beyond his failure. Jesus knew Peter’s heart and after His resurrection the Lord appeared to Peter and the other Disciples in John 21 and the Lord personally assured him that he was forgiven by drawing a threefold affirmation of his love for the Lord from him and asking him each time to feed His sheep!

He had denied the Lord three times, but God was greater than his heart. Jesus, knowing all things, gave Peter the assurance he needed.

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We need to be careful lest the devil accuse us and rob us of our confidence! (Rev. 12:10)

Once we have confessed our sin and left it behind, it is forgiven. We need not allow it to accuse us anymore!

Once Peter was forgiven and given assurance by the Lord, he was able to face the Jews boldly and say, "*But you denied the Holy One and the Just!*" (Acts 3:14) because his own sin of denying Christ had been dealt with and was forgiven and forgotten by the Lord!

No Believer should treat sin lightly, but no Believer should be harder on themselves than God is!

There is a morbid kind of self-examination and self-condemnation that is not spiritual. If we are practicing genuine love for the brethren, our heart must be right before God, for the Holy Spirit would not "shed abroad" His love in our heart if there were habitual sin in our life.

For when we grieve the Spirit, we "turn off" the supply of God's love! (*Ephesians 4:30-5:2*)

We need FEELINGS. How dull life would be without emotions! We know that emotions are a part of life, but they are not a reliable guide to morals and truth. For that, we must always depend on the Spirit and Word of God!

If we have trusted Christ as our Savior, certain facts remain constant regardless of our fluctuating moods.

Our **feelings** may say, "*I don't feel very saved today.*"

The **fact** of Scripture replies, "*We are justified by faith*" (Rom. 5:1).

Romans 5:1 "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Our **feelings** may say, "*I feel so lonely and afraid.*"

But the **facts** of Scripture reply, "*...for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*" (Hebrews 13:5).

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And "*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.*" (James 4:8)

The apostle John recognized that feelings can misrepresent facts.

He said that when we love in deed and in truth, that is one way that we can know we belong to Christ! God has given us a full range of emotions. But if our feelings run contrary to the truth— (i.e. The facts of God's Word)—we must not rely on them!

How do we escape the gnawing accusations of our heart? Not by ignoring them or rationalizing our behavior, but by setting our hearts on God's love.

When we feel guilty, we should remind ourselves that God knows our heart as well as our actions. His voice of assurance in our heart is stronger than the accusing voice of our heart.

**II. ASSURANCE IN OUR HEARTS BRINGS FORTH
CONFIDENCE IN OUR PRAYERS! (Vs 21-22)**

Once our heart has been honestly adjusted by the Holy Spirit and God's Word, *verse 21* tells us we will have **confidence** toward God!

Hebrews 4:14-16

Confidence toward God not only brings **ASSURANCE** in our hearts but it brings a **BOLDNESS** in our praying!

Hebrews 10:22-23

If our heart has no misgivings about our integrity **we gain assurance toward God!** **Confidence** implies a **boldness toward God!**

It suggests frank speech because we have nothing to hide from God! If we set our hearts at rest in God's presence we develop a **comfortable confidence before Him!**

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Active love for the brethren works to produces such confidence toward God. This confidence toward God gives us boldness to approach God and abide in His presence.

This confidence gained through acts of love for the brethren proves to us that we are living in God's will.

Verse 22 teaches that the confidence gained in God's presence also enables us to ask and receive from Him.

Loving one another is also a prerequisite to answered prayer. Because we keep His commandment to believe, love, and act as God would have us to, we receive whatever we ask from Him. Kneeling before God in boldness gives assurance that when we pray we will receive that for which we pray.

Note the phrase "*whatsoever we ask.*" **When we love God, keep His commandments, and walk in His will, His will and our will become perfectly blended together.**

God delights to give us what we ask when it is in His will. Never underestimate His desire to respond to our prayers.

Notice that the promise to answer prayer is dependent on our keeping God's commandments and doing what pleases Him.

These verses don't give us all the conditions for answered prayer, but they emphasize the importance of obedience. One great secret of answered prayer is obedience, and the secret of obedience is love.
"If ye love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15).

III. ASSURANCE COMES FROM THE ABIDING PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WITHIN US! (Vs 23-24)
These two verses clarify and emphasize **keeping His commandments and abiding in Christ!**

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Verse 23 asserts the basic commandments that must be kept to please God—**believe on Jesus Christ and love one another!**

Having stated the need to please God by obeying His commands, John more clearly expresses what that means. He sums up the commands in one command which has two parts.

Faith in Jesus and love toward man sum up a Christian's obligations just as the great commandment does! (*Matthew 22:34-40*)

That word *believe* here notes **a once-for-all event involving faith, trust and commitment.** Belief and love go together. **The proof of belief is continuing to love one another.** Without the right belief in Jesus love for one another will be absent!

The only way we can demonstrate what is in our heart and life is by what we do. **Love is in the present tense denoting that it is a continuing practice.**

We can infer from this that there is no true belief in Jesus without a continuing true love for His people. There is also no true love for His people without belief in Jesus Christ.

Verse 24 teaches us that assurance comes from both our abiding in Christ and Christ abiding in us by our being indwelt by God's Holy Spirit.

We that are "in Christ" by faith have a desire to abide in Christ by keeping Christ's commandments because Christ dwells in us! And we know that Christ dwells in us through the Holy Spirit that He has given us!

As the Believer keeps Christ's commandments He abides in Christ! Note also the mutual abiding of Christ in us and we in Him. He abides in us through the Spirit whose abiding is God's permanent seal of ownership and eternal guarantee of salvation! (*Ephesians 1:13-14*)

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Abiding in Christ is a key experience for the Believer who wants to have confidence toward God and enjoy answers to prayer.

Jesus, in His message to the disciples in *John 15:1-14*, illustrated "*abiding*." He compared His followers to the branches of a vine. So long as the branch draws its strength from the vine, it produces fruit. But if it separates itself from the vine, it withers and dies.

Jesus was not talking about salvation; He was talking about fruit-bearing. The instant a sinner trusts Christ, he enters into union with Christ; but maintaining communion is a moment-by-moment responsibility. Abiding depends on our obeying His Word and keeping clean! (*John 15:3, 10*).

We have been taught that when a believer walks in love, he finds it easier to pray and to obey God, and therefore he maintains a close communion with God. As *John 14:23* says, "*If a man loves Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come into him and make Our abode with him.*"

Conclusion

It was the Spirit's convicting power that brought us to belief on Jesus.

When we believed on Jesus the Spirit came into our lives to enable us to keep God's commandments to love and to follow His will for our lives.

When we abide in Christ and He abides in us we grow into His likeness.