

1 John 3:18-24

“Whenever Our Hearts Condemn Us”

“At first glance it is somewhat surprising to find that John interrupts his second presentation of the tests—righteousness, love, and truth,—to deal with doubt, at least so late in the letter...

How does a Christian deal with doubt? Although there are many causes for it, there is only one answer: by knowledge. The Christian must simply take himself in hand and confront himself with what he knows to be true concerning God and God’s work in his life. In other words, faith (which is the opposite of doubt), being based on knowledge, must be led by it. This is the point that John develops at the close of this third chapter.

He does it in a broad way, however, ... First, he deals with the ‘condemning’ heart,’ John’s own term for describing the problem. In these verses he offers two ways by which we may ‘set our hearts at rest in his presence.’ Second, he deals with the results that flow from having thus dealt with our heart: confidence of access to God and confidence that our prayers will be answered. Finally, he deals for the first time in the letter with the witness of the Holy Spirit, treating it, however, not as some additional source of confirmation but rather as expressing itself in the three test already explained.”

Boice

- The **conscious** is **a matter of the heart**. It is a gauge God uses to either condemn us or give us confidence and certainty. There are a number of principles about the heart that can be derived from scripture.
- From a biblical perspective, the heart refers to man’s entire mental and moral activity, both the rational and the emotional elements. In other words, the heart is used figuratively for the hidden parts of the personal life.
- The heart stands for the seat of our being. Everything flows from the heart. The emotions, will, intellect, and spiritual life. We determine and decide according to what is in our heart.

Rom. 10:10 *For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.*

- God does his work in the heart of man to bring him to salvation. We reasoned from our heart the validity of the gospel when we were saved. God requires belief in Jesus to be a decision from the heart.
- The act of the will is connected to the heart.

2 Cor. 9:7 *Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

Acts 5:3 *Then Peter said, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?”*

- Connected to the heart are human wishes and desires.

Rom. 1:24 *Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.*

- Other emotions, such as fear, discouragement, despair, sorrow, love, hate and joy all originate in the heart, the center of our being.

Prov. 12:25 *An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up.*

- These emotions aren't just a flippant response to a given situation; they flow from the depths of our being. Some are highly emotional, others are not. Some have overly sensitive hearts, others don't.
- God has put in man a heart. It is what *constitutes* our inner being. Because it is the essence of our being, God puts great emphasis on it. Therefore, God's evaluation of man is based on the attitude of the heart.

1 Samuel 16:7 *But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."*

- God is concerned with man's inner disposition and character because it shows a person's true nature.
- He judges the **integrity** of a someone's heart both morally and spiritually.

1 Kings 39b *Forgive and act; deal with everyone according to all they do, since you know their hearts (for you alone know every human heart),*

1 Chron. 28:9 *And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the lord searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts.*

Prov. 16:2 *All a person's ways seem pure to them, but motives are weighed by the LORD.*

- That is why God goes **straight to the heart**. It tells him where man is coming from. It represents a person's true nature and character.
- God is concerned about the inner disposition of man, his heart attitude, because of how it affects others.

Jer. 17:9 *The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond all cure. Who can understand it.*

- Scripture indicates that the condition of our heart is determined by man himself.

Matt. 15:19 *For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.*

- **No excuses** – we are what we choose to be in spite of our past and present circumstances.
- God has put in the heart of man discernment between good and bad.

Rom. 2:14-15 *For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them. (internal revelation)*

- These verses indicate that God has put in man a sense of morality, a sense of right or wrong, and a sense of compassion and discernment. This intensifies upon salvation. All those attributes are brought to the forefront because of an awakened spiritual and moral awareness.
- Because the heart is at the root of a person's inner disposition, this is the place where God does his work.
- God works through a believer's heart (conscience) to enable him or her to discern the difference between right and wrong. It is through the conviction of the conscience that a person is moved to keep his heart at rest before the Lord. It comes through the power of the living Word.

Heb. 4:12 *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

- Conscience refers in general to that human moral awareness that judges an action right or wrong.
- Conscience is the NT comes from a verb which means "**to know with**". This suggests a moral consciousness which compares an **action** with a **standard**.
- If a believer's conscience condemns him, then he or she is to take steps to set their hearts at rest in God's presence.
- Self-condemnation can be due to a number of factors.
 1. It can be a matter of disposition. Some people are just more introspective, sensitive and melancholier (low self-esteem, always feeling guilty) than others.
 2. It could be a question of health that affects how someone thinks.
 3. It could be due to circumstances.
 4. Or it could be conviction over sin.
- It is important to know the reason why our hearts are condemning us. Is it for valid reasons?
- John gives us two ways to keep our hearts at rest before the Lord.

3:18-19 The first truth we may use to assure our hearts is self-examination, to look at our life and determine if we've been living well for the Lord.

- Apparently, putting agape love into action has a great deal to do with keeping our hearts at rest before the Lord.
- John is saying, "examine yourself," and if this self-sacrificing love is evident in your life, then you can be at rest with God.

3:20 The second truth we may use to assure our hearts is knowing that God knows us better than ourselves. It is knowing that he began a good work in us and it is he who will bring it to completion.

Phil 1:6 *...being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

- In other words, whatever our hearts may say, God knows us better than even we ourselves do. He saved and acquitted us. And he is the one who is sanctifying us.

“...two references are made by which the doubting Christian may reassure or pacify his heart. The first looks back to what has just been said concerning love as it expresses itself in deeds. The second looks forward to God’s verdict of acquittal, a verdict to be trusted regardless of one’s own doubts and misgivings.” Boice

Roman 8:31-34 *If God is for us who can be against us...Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.*

3:21-22 *If a believer’s heart does not condemn him, then he can expect to live a Spirit filled life that gives him not only confidence before the Lord, but also confidence in prayer.*

- It is important to the Lord that we have confidence before him. This comes through knowing ourselves and knowing who we are in the Lord. Whether a person has confidence before God or lacks confidence before God affects their relationship with Him. The one who stands condemned by his or her heart can have no confidence before the Lord. But if a heart is not condemned, then that person can expect to be blessed in a number of wonderful ways. Peace being one of those blessings.

- The **first advantage** of an uncondemning heart is “confidence in our standing before God.”

Greek reads, “*confidence toward God,*” in which we turn trustingly toward him.

Rom 5:2 *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.*

- The **second advantage** is confidence that our prayers will be answered.

3:22 -23 John states that prayer will be answered, not just for some Christian in some instances, but in every instance for any Christian who meets certain conditions.

1st, and foremost is to believe in the name of God’s Son, Jesus Christ.

2nd, is to obey his commandment to love one another (present tense which means an ongoing love).

3rd, is to do what pleases him.

John 14:21 *Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”*

3:24 The **third advantage** is living a Spirit filled life upon which there is no greater joy.

Eph. 1:13-14 *3 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.*

- Scripture tells us a lot about the heart, and because the heart is so important (it’s how God gages a person), we should treat it with care.

Prov. 4:23 *Above all guard your hearts, for it is the wellspring of life.*