

Confidence Before God

1 John 3:19-24

LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER IS ONE EVIDENCE OF SALVATION. v.18

1. The Gospel can change life-taking hatred (v.12 – Cain) into life-giving love (v.16 – Jesus).

2. Love is shown in both deed and truth. v.18

→ John the pastor/shepherd... shepherding our hearts with the truth...

WHEN OUR HEARTS CONDEMN US. v.19-20

1. Love in both deed and truth is evidence that we are of the truth. v.19

→ What about the many times when we have not loved this way?

2. Sometimes our heart condemns us. v.20a

- “Whenever” = Believers should expect this. NASB: “in whatever our hearts condemn us”

→ There is a difference between ‘unbelief’ and ‘doubt.’

→ Doubt and struggle can take different forms...

- Accusation from the enemy—expect this. Ref. Rev. 12:10; 1 Peter 5:8
- Conviction by the Holy Spirit—this is a good thing.
- A guilty conscience—this could be good or bad.
- When others judge us—rightly or wrongly.

3. God is greater than our heart. v.20b

- A guilty conscience is NOT the standard of right and wrong—God’s Word IS the standard.

→ “God is greater than our heart” = God and His truth override our heart. They overtake our condemnation.

“...what to think when moments of profound insecurity overtake us. Our assurance is anchored in God and God alone, never in our own ability to generate feelings of confidence. John is urging that God is the final arbiter of our personal spiritual well-being. We do not look into our hearts to see if we feel secure and then use this as evidence of our security in the truth. If our conscience condemns, God overrides its verdict. This is possible for two reasons: God is mightier than our hearts, and he knows far more about us than we can ever imagine.”¹

→ Note how John pastors his flock (and his own heart!). Paul reasoned the same way. Rom. 8:31-34; 1 Cor. 4:3-5

→ If the Lord finds acquittal (i.e. not guilty)—why should you live as if you were condemned?

CHRIST IS OUR CONFIDENCE. v.21-24

1. Christ our confidence before God. v.21

→ On what basis can we have confidence before God? A: On the basis of Christ alone. 2 Timothy 1:12

- John: we can have confidence in the day of judgment on the basis of who Christ is (not who we are).

2. Christ our confidence in prayer. v.22-23

- A child of God has the freedom to come before God in prayer.
- God hears us when we pray—because of Christ.
- This is why we pray “in Jesus’ name.” (His merit—not ours.)

3. Christ’s Spirit in us. v.24

¹ Gary M. Burge, *The NIV Application Commentary, Letters of John*. Zondervan, 1996. p.164.