

Assurance **1 John 3:19-21**

Introduction

For the last two weeks, we have gone over love and righteousness as the marks of a Christian. We see that John pulled no punches when he stated that for Christians, they do not practice or continually sin but practice righteousness. For Christians, they show love in deed and in truth. John says in verse **19** that we are of the truth. We are of Christ, in fact, in **3:2**, we shall be like Him. As Christians, we become more Christ-like as God conforms us to the image of His Son. This is a very high standard...so high that John stops here in verse **19** and his pastoral concern steps in. At this point, he realizes that Christians probably are feeling their consciences stricken, speaking against them in regards to their own inability to show love, to help those in need, or to practice righteousness in a consistent manner. At this time, doubt gnaws on their hearts, and they could possibly doubt their own salvation. Even more so, when we stand “before Him” as John says, we really realize how little we are compared to Him. John wants his readers to understand that in the light of their condemning heart, God is much greater than their hearts.

I. Condemning heart

- Conscience
 - Before salvation—defiled conscience

Titus 1:15 *To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled.*

Note: Conscience is take the values you have learned and judging yourself based on those values. Before we were saved, all our consciences were filtered through the worldly values. This is why Scripture says “everyone did what was right in their own eyes.” Conscience is God-given to guide is in right and wrong; however, the world’s conscience does not care they are violating His laws or their rebellion against Him.

Illustration: Judas Iscariot—hung himself after feeling guilty.

- After salvation—Purified conscience

Hebrews 10:22

Note: When we are saved, our conscience has been changed, transformed. Now it is filtered through the Law of God. We are acutely aware of offending God. Our conscience is further purified by the Word of God, so that we become more aware of our sinfulness and weakness. Our conscience becomes more sensitive, more accusing when we do wrong.

Illustration: Isaiah (**Isaiah 6:5**); Peter (**Luke 5:8**)

Transition: People that battle with assurance, struggle with it and get depressed are Christians because of their accusing conscience in the light of the Law of God

- Law of God
 - Does not offer mercy or forgiveness (**Romans/Galatians**)

Note: The Law kills. The Law knows nothing of forgiveness, and it tells us to “Do this or die.” There is no forgiveness; there is no grace. The Law serves one purpose—to reveal to us about sin and to tutor us to Christ because of our need for a Saviour. The more we study the law of God, the more realize our own failures and weaknesses.

- Bad theology
 - Loss of salvation

Note: The thought of losing one’s salvation often leads a person to doubt and despair. We are not talking about “praying a sinner’s prayer” or remembering the date of when we got saved because those in itself are not the gospel and does not lead to salvation. We are talking about the regeneration of the heart where a person repents of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Sovereignty of Satan

Note: Belief that Satan can steal your salvation or convince God that you are not worthy of salvation is plain wrong (even heretical). Yet people believe that and that leads to doubts of their salvation due to their failures.

Transition: For whatever reason, all Christians come to a point in their life where they doubt that they are saved. They struggle with who they are in the face of the living God. When they see him, instantly, they become afraid. Yet, John says, “God is greater than your hearts and knows all things,” and he says this as an encouragement because he knows that the best way to calm our anxious heart is to know the greatness of our God!

II. Greatness of God

- God provides mercy
 - Unending mercies

Lamentations 3:22-23 *Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.*

31-32 *For the Lord will not cast off forever. Though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion According to the multitude of His mercies.*

Ephesians 2:4-7 *But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

- Complete forgiveness of sins

Psalms 103:11-12 *For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.*

Jeremiah 31:34 *No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."*

- There is no condemnation for us

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

- Justification by faith

Note: Do you understand what really happened when God saved you? Do you understand that you were a sinner and God knew it? You were condemned by Him as a just and righteous and holy Judge? Do you understand that that penalty had to be paid? Do you understand that God substituted His Son to pay the penalty that His wrath required, and that He paid it in full and God was so satisfied with the Son for the payment, that He raised Him from the dead and exalted Him to His right hand and gave Him the name Lord, which is above every name? Do you understand that the work of Jesus Christ was complete? That sin was fully paid for? That when He died He died bearing the punishment for all your sins? And when you put your trust in Him, God credits all His righteousness to your account? Do you understand that the Old Testament says that because your sins are paid for in Christ, God Himself will never remember them again? You won't forget, but He does. That He will remove them as far as the east is from the west? That He will bury them in the depths of the sea? That written across your account, the account that you owe to God, the debt of sin, is the statement, "Paid in Full" written in the blood of Christ? Do you understand that? Though your sins were scarlet, they are white as snow, though they were red like crimson, they are as wool. You've been washed. You've been cleaned. You've been purged. You've been purified because He who was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, as Isaiah puts it, the chastisement that had to come to us to make peace with God was laid on Him and by His stripes, that is His suffering, we are spiritually healed. (John MacArthur)

- Security of believer's salvation (once saved always saved) (**Romans 8**)
 - **v 1** (why is there no condemnation?)
 - **v 28-32** (Who can change this? Who can bring a charge against us?)
 - **v 33** (Can God stop loving us?)
 - **v 38-39**

Conclusion: Assuring our hearts

John says that we are to assure our hearts, which is a command. It is not a sin to be assure of one's salvation because the NT writers had a lot to say about being sure of their salvation. This is because have assurance of our salvation affects how we approach Him. Note that John says, "If our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God." We are sure of our salvation not because of our "experience" or because we said a sinner's prayer, but because of what He has done for me. We cling on to His promises. If we lack assurance, then our prayers and approach will be feeble and timid. Will our Lord accept such timidity from us?

“And by this we know” is in future tense, indicating that it is something that we learn as a Christian. Paul says this to Timothy as well in his letter to him:

2 Timothy 3:14 *But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them.*

We are encouraged to have boldness before the throne of grace and have confidence before our Lord. Note these passages.

Colossians 2:2 *that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ,*
1 Thessalonians 1:5 *For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.*
Hebrews 6:11 *And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end,*

Note the words: “full” and “much”. We are also to learn how to assure our hearts. The fruit of our salvation always results in good works as John draws attention to us through his words, “by this”. “By this we know we are of the truth and shall assure our hearts before Him.” What is “by this” referring to? What we have studied previously: love and righteousness. A Christian will practice both love and holiness through deed and truth. Because we know we do those things, we can assure our hearts. What’s more is that we know God is greater than our hearts and we know that His mercies are endless and rich to us.