



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

1 JOHN 3:19-20 – ASSURANCE IN THE FACE OF DOUBT!

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John makes it clear that the practice of love in our lives is a sure indication of our salvation. (1 John 3:14-15) A person may claim to be filled with God's love but it is mere words if we cannot meet tangible needs.

And why are we called to this love for one another? Paul said because the love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts! (Romans 12:10-13, Galatians 6:10) We love because Christ first loved us. That's why and how we can love like this.

I. 1 JOHN 3:19-20 – ASSURANCE IN THE FACE OF DOUBT!

(19) "We shall know by this that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him," (20) "in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart, and knows all things." 1 John 3:19-20

The gospel summons us to share our time, our friendship, our possessions and more with our needy brothers and sisters. Christ constantly gave of Himself to others in need. (Matthew 9:35-36) It is Christ's selfless sacrifice for us that shapes and inspires us in the practice of love for others. And it is this practice of love that gives assurance of true Christian faith. So, John interjects a message about doubt, because of his concern for the believers. Remember, likeness is the evidence of belonging. And God wants us to know that we are really His because we love like Him.

And yet, there are times when we doubt that reality. Could it really be true that we belong to Him? There are times when our heart condemns us as 1 John 3:20 says and we need the Lord's kind assurance that He loves us and we are His.

When the grace of God is truly planted in our hearts, it will always result in a changed nature marked by a desire to love God and love our neighbor. Though this will never be perfect, it is none the less an abiding desire.¹ And so in these next verses, it would seem that John realizes that true believers can at times struggle with doubt as to whether they are true believers or not. We struggle with doubt and it can be difficult to have a settled assurance of our right standing before God because we don't always love like we should. And so John writes in these next verses, that *"we shall know..."* (1 John 3:19)

A. "WE SHALL KNOW BY THIS..."- 1 JOHN 3:19

"We shall know by this that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him," 1 John 3:19

It is important to John throughout this Epistle that we have confidence in our right standing with God. This confidence, to

"know", is important to John, and us as well. John draws this reassuring conclusion from the previous verses. If we love our Christian brothers and sisters *"in deed and in truth"* (1 John 3:18), then by this we will know we *"we are of the truth"*.

"We shall know" comes from the Greek word *"genosko"* which means to realize, to learn and it is written in the future tense revealing this is promise based on an existing quality.² This understanding and certainty is based on an existing quality in every genuine believer. That existing quality from the previous verses is of course a love for fellow believers. By this God gives us the assurance and certainty of being in right standing with Jesus Christ.

This certainty is that *"we are of the truth..."*. So when believers know they have a sincere love for the brethren, they can be certain they are *"of the truth"*. Only those who are saved through the salvation provided by the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross can love in that way. The *"truth"* refers to Scripture and the teachings in God's Word. It is that belief in His Word which marks every Christian who has repented and believed in Christ. It refers to what Scripture teaches as John 17:17 shows.³ (Psalm 119:160)

It is easy to look at our many failures when we doubt our salvation and God's good work in our lives. But we need to focus on what the Lord has done. Look at what the Lord is working out in our lives based on what He has worked in. (Philippians 2:12-13) Real love in action shows we are *"of the truth"*. This is God's work in our life.⁴

It is the truth that can give us the assurance we need in the face of uncertainty and doubt. Not only can we be assured from Scripture that we have genuine faith, but also on the basis of our love for the brethren with a desire to please God. (1 John 3:3) John tells us that these *"shall assure our hearts before Him."*

"assure" Greek **"peitho"** a verb which means to convince, persuade, set at rest, and could mean tranquilize.

John says that in the awesome presence of our holy God, we can have a calm assurance, our hearts can be set at rest *"before Him"*. Have you received that assurance from the Lord? We

BIBLE STUDIES

WYOMING HOUSE AND SENATE, GOVERNOR'S OFFICE, SPOUSES, STAFF & LSO: WEDNESDAY AT 6:30AM, WYOMING CAPITOL, HERSHLER BUILDING, CAPITOL EXTENSION CONFERENCE CENTER, ROOM W052

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need that assurance in the face of doubt and fear. No matter what we feel, John reminds us of this truth.

B. GOD KNOWS ALL THINGS - 1 JOHN 3:20

(19) "We shall know by this that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him," (20) "in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart, and knows all things." 1 John 3:19-20

As we know, our hearts can condemn us legitimately and illegitimately. With John writing, *"in whatever our hearts condemn us..."*, it stresses the thought this may happen over and over again in a Christian's life. God has given us a "heart", or conscience if you will that is a warning device to confront sin. Our hearts will condemn us rightly when we sin, such as neglecting to love.

But our heart can have a false way of condemning us, especially when we listen to the lies that the devil throws our way. Satan tries to condemn us and seeks us to believe lies about our just standing before God. He reminds us of past sins and failures that should separate us from God. But 1 John 1:9 reminds us that we are cleansed from our sins and God graciously removes them as far as the east is from the west. (Psalm 103:12)

Then John reminds us of another truth, *"for God is greater than our hearts..."*. There is a higher court than the human heart and this Court says, *"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* (Romans 8:1) This truth is a verdict of acquittal by God Himself which can be trusted no matter how we may feel or doubt. We can't always trust our hearts.

Our confident assurance must not be based on any presumption, rightly evaluating ourselves before God. But God Who knows everything has acquitted us before the standard of His holiness, based on Christ's sinless sacrifice and not on ourselves. Our confidence is found solely in Him.⁵

We can rest on the fact that God knows our hearts and *"is greater than our hearts"*. Then John gives one more incredible

truth. God *"knows all things."* We can rest in the knowledge that God knows all things... *everything!* And He is greater than our hearts. He knows what is true. He knows we love, even if weakly at times and less than perfectly. He sees all and knows our most profound failures and weaknesses. Yet He has forgiven those, who by faith, have believed in Jesus Christ and continues to work in our hearts to make us more like Christ. (Philippians 1:6)

God knows us better than we know ourselves, no matter what our heart says, and He has acquitted us! By His judgement alone are we declared not guilty.⁶ Romans 8:31-34 reminds us, *"What can we say...if God is for us, who can be against us."* Doubt, guilt and failure are not far from any of us. But God doesn't just take our sins and failures and minimizes them or ignores them. No, He knows them better than us, and for believers they are forgiven and if God is for us, is there anyone greater that can be against us?

Again, the presence of love in our hearts gives evidence of our genuine salvation. And we can't rest in our feelings, but on God Who is greater than our hearts and knows all things. Peter said to Jesus after Jesus asked him three times if Peter loved Him. Peter responded in John 21:15-19, *"...Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You."* He knows everything.⁷

We struggle with doubt and it can be difficult to have a settled assurance of our right standing before God because we don't always love like we should. And so John writes in these verses, that *"we shall know..."* (1John 3:19)

With that in mind, where are you? Do you know Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord? Are you in right standing before God? If you have never repented of your sins and turned to Jesus for salvation... *you should do that now!*

¹ MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary Series on 1-3 John*. Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 2007. Pg. 140.

² MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary Series on 1-3 John*. Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 2007. Pg. 143.

³ MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary Series on 1-3 John*. Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 2007. Pg. 143.

⁴ MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary Series on 1-3 John*. Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 2007. Pg. 143-144.

⁵ Boice, James Montgomery, *An Expository Commentary: The Epistles of John*. Baker Books: Grand Rapids, MI, 1979. Pg. 101.

⁶ Boice, James Montgomery, *An Expository Commentary: The Epistles of John*. Baker Books: Grand Rapids, MI, 1979. Pg. 101.

⁷ Hamilton, Ian, *Let's Study the Letters of John*. The Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, UK, 2008. Pg. 49.