



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

1 JOHN 3:21-23 – CONFIDENCE BEFORE GOD!

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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.¹ 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?

I. 1 JOHN 3:21-23 – CONFIDENCE BEFORE GOD!

(21) *“Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God;”* (22) *“and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.”*

(23) *“And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.”*

1John 3:21-23

Now John will highlight the blessings of an uncondemned heart. The One Who knows everything assures us we are His and that He is ours. And we can live and approach Him with a settled assurance...with confidence.

A. “...WE HAVE CONFIDENCE BEFORE GOD;”- 1 JOHN 3:21

“Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God;” 1John 3:21

John begins with *“if our heart does not condemn us...”*. This does not imply that we don’t sin but points to the action of a true and living faith that has a real sense of fellowship with God. And what comes with that is a confidence and peace. And this confidence is based solely on God’s gracious acceptance of us in Christ, not on anything we have done.²

So if our heart does not condemn us, *“we have confidence before God.”* Let those words sink in for a moment. John isn’t referring to confidence in general but rather of one’s standing before God Almighty and access to Him! It is a confidence by which we can turn trustingly toward God.

“confidence” Greek **“parresia”** means boldness and freedom of speech. In ancient times it was a valued right of a citizen in a free state to speak his mind. Freedom of speech without fear or shame. It is the idea of coming before someone of importance, power and authority and feeling free to express whatever is on their mind. It was a most valued right of a citizen.

So for believers it is being able to come into the presence of our Father Who loves us, without fear.³ It is confidence to approach God freely. This speaks of the believer’s free and

uninhibited communion with God in our daily life bringing us into intimate relationship with our Father...face to face!⁴ What an amazing blessing John points out for us!

B. THE BLESSING OF ANSWERED PRAYER - 1 JOHN 3:22

“and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.”

1John 3:22

So not only does the one whose heart does not condemn him have confidence in being able to approach God, but he also has confidence that his prayers will be answered. This is a remarkable statement because it is a claim that prayer will be answered, not just for some Christians in some instances, but for every Christian who meets certain criteria.⁵ Of course we must keep 1 John 5:14 in mind, *“And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.”* No loving father would ever want to give his child something that wasn’t beneficial.

So what are the conditions for this verse? John says, *“and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.”* John says that *“we keep”* and *“we do”*. Both are in present tense and refer to the conduct of those whose prayers are answered. This conduct does not earn God’s favorable response. Rather it is our obedience that gives evidence of our greater desire to do what is pleasing to God. Our obedience to God’s Word, His commandments, (Psalm 19, Psalm 119) reveal that our will and God’s will are in harmony.⁶

We must keep in mind that God’s blessings, what we *“receive from Him”* which includes answered prayer, are never rewards for what we do, as though we could ever merit anything from God. But it is God’s good pleasure to honor those who honor Him. (1 Samuel 2:30) And nothing honors God more than keeping His commandments and pleasing Him.

So John gives two simple related commands; that we obey His commandments and that we do what pleases Him. It is the idea of a child doing things for his father just in thoughtful ways that pleases him. And, also doing specifically what he has asked him to do and spelled out. It is when these two elements are present that the believer can approach God in prayer with total confidence. So what commandments am I suppose to obey to have my prayers answered? Look at the next verse.⁷

BIBLE STUDIES

1 JOHN 3:21-23 – CONFIDENCE BEFORE GOD!

C. THE BLESSING OF ANSWERED PRAYER - 1 JOHN 3:23

“And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.”

1John 3:23

John gives us “His commandment” to obey. This word is singular so in 1 John 3:23, this is all one command to obey which essentially has two facets: “believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ” and second, “love one another”.

To “believe” means that we trust in God’s Son as our only hope for salvation. It means we rest on His perfect, sufficient and atoning sacrifice on the cross for our sins. Only by His perfect righteousness of His obedient life we can be saved.

All people everywhere are sinners. That is why God tells everyone, He commands all people everywhere to repent and believe in His Son Jesus Christ. (Acts 17:10, John 3:16) We are all sinners and sin is a serious problem. Through our attitudes and actions we have rebelled against our Maker. And this great God is perfectly holy. And He must respond with fierce opposition to sin. He must punish it. Only when we understand God’s wrath toward sin can we realize that we need to be saved from it. Only when we hear the very bad news that we are deserving of judgement can we appreciate the very good news that God has provided salvation through His Son Jesus Christ. This is the hope of our life; that Jesus, God’s perfect and righteous Son, died in my place for my sins. Jesus took all the punishment. Jesus received all the wrath as He hung on the cross, so I could be completely forgiven.⁸

Regardless of our past, we have all sinned. Romans 3:23 says that we have all fallen short of the glory of God. We are sinners everyone and we desperately need the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ to be forgiven by God. Jesus stood in my place and was punished in my place. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

To “believe” is in the aorist tense in the Greek and refers to a completed action at one point in time and produces continuing results into the future. In other words, at the point

when I trusted in Christ’s saving work on the cross, this one action produces continuing results by God for the remainder of my life. When I “believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ”, from that time forward, it produces ongoing results into the future. The crucial question that only you can answer is this, do you “believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ.”? If not, repent of your sins and “believe”, trust in Him alone for salvation.

And this faith in God doesn’t exist in a vacuum. It unites us to Jesus Christ and makes us partakers of the very life of God. That is why John tells us of one commandment and yet tells us this faith is linked inextricably to a love for one another. So this faith not only unites us to Christ, but it also initiates us into the body of Christ, the people of Christ...the church.

So the second part to John’s command is, “love one another.” This word for love is “*agapao*” in the Greek. It is in the present tense and it involves continuing attitudes, habitual characteristics and actions of sacrificial love toward fellow believers. It is a love not based on feeling or emotion but of will and choice. It is this love that was demonstrated by Christ’s death on the cross. And thus faith in Christ and love for the brethren are inseparable.⁹

Thus, the two birthmarks of a Christian are; faith in Jesus Christ, God’s Son and a love for His people, our brothers and sisters in Christ. And as we have already seen in 1 John, the absence of love for one another means an absence of faith.

In the next verse, 1 John 3:24, John will share with us one more incredible blessing we receive. But we must keep in mind that our salvation is a way of life, following Jesus Christ no matter the cost. Have you trusted Jesus Christ alone for salvation from your sins? Only He can forgive you. Humble yourself, repent of your sins and turn to Christ. He is a friend of sinners. And all who call on His name will be saved. (Acts 2:21, Romans 10:13) This is the most important decision you can make.

¹ Boice, James Montgomery, *An Expository Commentary: The Epistles of John*. Baker Books: Grand Rapids, MI, 1979. Pg. 101.

² Hamilton, Ian, *Let’s Study the Letters of John*. The Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, UK, 2008. Pg. 50.

³ MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary Series on 1-3 John*. Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 2007. Pg. 145.

⁴ Hiebert, D. Edmond, *The Epistles of John: An Expository Commentary*. Bob Jones University Press: Greenville, SC, 1991. Pg. 169.

⁵ Boice, James Montgomery, *An Expository Commentary: The Epistles of John*. Baker Books: Grand Rapids, MI, 1979. Pg. 103.

⁶ Hamilton, Ian, *Let’s Study the Letters of John*. The Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, UK, 2008. Pg. 51.

⁷ Boice, James Montgomery, *An Expository Commentary: The Epistles of John*. Baker Books: Grand Rapids, MI, 1979. Pg. 103.

⁸ Mahoney, C.J., *The Cross Centered Life*. Multnomah: Penguin Random House LLC: NY, 2002. Pg. 14-15.

⁹ MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary Series on 1-3 John*. Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 2007. Pg. 148.