

Series: 1 John
Title: Assurance by the Spirit
Text: 1 John 3: 19-24
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1 John 3: 19: And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

What makes us “*know that we are of the truth?*” Christ said, “*Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice*” (*Jn 18: 37*). We know we are of the truth and have assurance in our hearts because we hear Christ’s Voice in our inner man! Christ has given us the Holy Spirit of God. He has created in us a new heart. By his irresistible grace he makes us hear his Voice and obey him.

Hearing Christ’s voice, he effectually makes us obey his commandment to believe on him.

John 5: 24: Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. 25: Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

Hearing Christ’s voice, he effectually makes us obey his commandment to love our brethren.

John 15: 9: As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. 10: If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love. 11: These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and *that* your joy might be full. 12: This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. 13: Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. 14: Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

Mark 8: 35...whosoever shall LOSE HIS LIFE FOR MY SAKE AND THE GOSPEL’S, the same shall save it.

These two things make up God’s commandment which we hear and obey by the voice of Christ speaking effectually into our inner man by the Holy Spirit.

1 John 3: 23: And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

Christ’s voice spoken effectually into our new heart makes his people lay down our lives for his sake and the gospels by making us believe on Christ and love Christ and our brethren who are his. *We believe on Christ and love our brethren in deed and in truth* by renouncing all our works as we confess Christ publicly and unite with our brethren under the gospel. *We believe on Christ and love one another in deed and in truth* by ceasing all attempts at saving ourselves by our works as we rest in Christ through faith. *We believe on Christ and love our brethren in deed and in truth* by bearing persecution for declaring the gospel of Christ and him crucified. *We believe on Christ and love our brethren in deed in truth* by continuing assembling together with them under the preaching of the gospel and as we together send forth the gospel into all the earth. *We believe on Christ and love our brethren in deed and in truth* by bearing the burden of our brethren who are overtaken in a fault as we restore them in the spirit of meekness, pointing them to Christ and waiting on Christ to work in their hearts, as opposed to self-righteously exalting ourselves as we use the law to bite and devour them by exposing their sins.

By the Spirit of God we are taught to believe on Christ and taught how to love our brethren as we perceive how Christ loved his people.

1 John 3: 16: Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.

We perceive the love of God in Christ the Son laying down his life for us from his birth to his death: by the Son of God coming in the likeness of sinful flesh for his people, by Christ willingly being despised and rejected of men for his people, by our Captain suffering the temptation of satan for his people, by our Head and Representative fulfilling the law and prophets for his people, by the spotless Lamb of God being made sin for his people, by our Substitute being made a curse for his people, by Christ our Life being buried in a tomb for us that we might eternally live. *“Of God are we in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us Wisdom and Righteousness and Sanctification and Redemption” (1 Cor 1: 30).* He did not simply enter covenant and say he would lay down his life for us. Christ loved us in deed and in truth. This is how he teaches us to lay down our lives for our brethren—not in word only but in deed and in truth.

Notice how John’s message in his epistle is the same as Christ Jesus our Lord. John declares,

1 John 3: 11: For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. 12: Not as Cain, *who* was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous. 13: Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. 14: We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.

John is declaring the same message that he heard the Lord Jesus preach before going to the cross.

John 15: 12: This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. 13: Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. 14: Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you...17: These things I command you, that ye love one another. 18: If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you. 19: If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

“Marvel not if the world hate you”, brethren, the world has hated Christ and his brethren since the days of Cain. Christ said *“If ye were of the world the world would love his own.”* You and I once were of the world. We were once loved by this world and we loved the world while we hated Christ and his brethren.

1 John 3: 14...He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. 15: Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

Before God gave us a new heart, making us to dwell in love, we abode in death. We hated Christ and his brethren with enmity in our sin-nature. We were the murderers: God-killers, Christ killers, gospel killers, soul killers like the devil. No one in that state has eternal life abiding him.

So who made the difference? Why does the world now hate us? Christ said, *“but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”* Look back to 1 John 3: 1. John said, *“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.”*

Christ made us hear his voice effectually, commanding us, *“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.”* And what does he command? He said, *“This is my commandment, That ye love one*

another, as I have loved you.” Christ is not our friend because we love him. But we love him because he first loved us. We love him because he was our friend when as yet we did not consider him ours. He laid down his life for us when we were enemies. It is through the blood of Christ that the Spirit of God regenerated us so that now, we love him. John says, *“Ye know ye have passed from death to life because ye love the brethren.”*

Brethren, this “love” which is of God is not the “lust” of the flesh which some call love. Nor is it that love which is deep love for family. This love which is of God is translated from the word “agape”. It is the love translated “charity” in 1 Corinthians 13 where we are told *“though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.”* That means any so-called faith with this love is no faith at all. It means this love is not simply the bestowing of goods to feed the poor.

What is this love? This love believes on Christ. This love loses its life for Christ and for the gospel of Christ in love to Christ and to our brethren who are, and shall be, born of Christ. This is a spiritual love which is of God, created in the new birth in the new man when we are made to be of the truth by hearing the voice of Christ by the indwelling Spirit which he has given us.

When we hear Christ’s voice, he knows us and makes us to be of the truth, giving us faith and giving us this love. True faith and this love are vitally connected; inseparable; where there is true faith this love is present.

John says, *“Love is of God. And everyone that loveth”—with this God-given love—“is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love”* (1 Jn 4:7-8).

Therefore, Christ said to some, *“But I know you, THAT YE HAVE NOT THE LOVE OF GOD IN YOU.”* How did he know that? *“I am come in my Father’s name and YOU RECEIVE ME NOT”* (Jn 5:43)—meaning, you believe me not.

He told them later, *“If God were your Father”—if you were born of God and given true faith and this love—“YE WOULD LOVE ME: for I proceeded from and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me”* (Jn 8: 42).

If God were their Father they would have loved Christ because *“EVERYONE THAT LOVETH IS BORN OF GOD, AND KNOWETH GOD.”* This God-given love is present where God-given faith is present.

We are of the truth—having faith in Christ and loving Christ—because Christ has made us hear his voice and Christ has known us and made us to follow him. *“He that is of the truth heareth my voice,”* Christ said.

1 John 3: 19: And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

Proposition: Our assurance that we are of the truth is by Christ’s voice speaking into our inner man, keeping us believing on him and keeping us loving him and our brethren, by communion with Christ, by the Spirit he has given us.

GOD IS GREATER THAN OUR HEART

1 John 3: 20: For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

This has an application to those who are children of the devil. If a person’s heart condemn them and they are never made by God to repent and believe on Christ then they prove to be a child of the devil. In that case, if

a man's heart condemn him, he should know, God is greater than his heart. God knows all things about him. He may ignore his conscience but he cannot ignore God. God will make him answer and shall condemn him far more than his heart.

But John is assuring believers and comforting believers. And we know and are assured that we are of the truth because God is greater than our hearts. The "if" could be translated "when." Every sinner born of God hears these things—that the true child of God believes on Christ and loves brethren in deed and in truth. But at times, our heart condemns us because our faith is so weak and we know that we do not love as we ought. But hereby know we are of the truth. How so? Our heart condemns us! We would not care if we were a child of the devil.

When the heart of a child of God condemns us, God our Father is rebuking his child in loving correction "*for whom the LORD loveth he chastens and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth*" (Heb 12: 6). I said this to you for the first time way back in the beginning. We are terribly prone to accuse the preacher when our heart condemns us. If the message blesses our hearts we, correctly, give God the glory. But if our heart condemns us, far too often we accuse the preacher of preaching at us. But if the word being preached is true according to the word of God, and if we are a true child of God, then it is God condemning us in the heart. Christ said,

John 15: 1: I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. 2: Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every *branch* that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Those who garden know that some of the things you do to a plant to make it grow and bring forth fruit often looks like it would kill the plant. But it is needful to make the plant fruitful. When our heavenly Father chastens us, "*No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness in them that are exercised thereby*" (Heb 12: 11).

Our heavenly Father knows what his child needs. When we begin looking to ourselves, putting faith in our faith or putting our assurance in our love, then God prunes us to increase faith and love in Christ alone. He keeps us looking only to Christ and keeps us loving Christ and love our brethren, in deed and in truth.

What a blessing that God our Father makes our conscience condemn us to turn us from self to Christ and his people! He only does that to those he loves!

WHEN OUR HEART CONDEMNS US NOT

1 John 3: 21: Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, *then* have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. 23: And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

Another way God assures our hearts is by purging our conscience. When we hear these things concerning faith in Christ and love to brethren, and our heart condemn us not, but we are comforted, it is because we are in communion with Christ.

The only way a sinner keeps his commandments—believing on Christ and loving our brethren—is by the Spirit of God purging our conscience with the blood of Christ. We believe on Christ and love our brethren by Christ being in us and us being in Christ. That is communion. Notice verse 24, "*And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.*" Christ said,

John 15: 3: Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. 4: Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye

abide in me. 5: I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Then by having a pure conscience that we have kept Christ's commandments, we have boldness at his throne of grace in prayer—"*Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.*"

Hebrews 10: 18: Now where remission of these *is, there is* no more offering for sin. 19: Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20: By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; 21: And *having* an high priest over the house of God; 22: Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Then "*And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him*"—why? Because we are in communion with Christ—"*because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight*"—as we saw from verse 24, we only do that when Christ dwells in us and us in Christ, meaning, because we are in communion with him. Our performance of his commandments in no way merits his favor to answer our prayer. But God approves of that which is done in faith, from a heart of love, and with a view to his glory. And he shows his approval by granting our desires. Christ said,

John 14: 12: Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater *works* than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. 13: And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14: If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do *it*...20: At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. 21: He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. 22: Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? 23: Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

So it is by God the Father and Christ Jesus abiding in us that we are able to keep his commandments, believing on Christ and loving our brethren. And he shows us his approval by granting our prayer.

This is not a blank check to fulfill the lusts of our carnal flesh. But the truth is, when we are in that state of communion, so that we believe on Christ and love our brethren, the only thing we ask is for is that which is the Father's will to do.

For instance, when we have communion because he abides in us then we only ask that God will continue to abide with us, that we might continue in faith and love. He shows his approval of our faith and love by answering our prayer because the thing we prayed for is already the will of God.

When we believe on Christ and love our brethren by having communion with him, we ask that our needy brethren who are condemned in their conscience be restored to Christ. That is us believing on Christ to do it and loving our brethren by praying for him to do it for them. He shows his approval of our faith and love by restoring our brethren because it was already the will of God to restore them.

It is only when our sin-nature takes us captive that this communion is interrupted. But it is only interrupted on our side. He still abides in us; we are the ones who start looking to our flesh, trying to find assurance in our faith itself or in our love itself rather than in Christ who gave it and sustains it. So he chastens us, condemning us in our conscience. But thankfully, our brethren are in communion with him, obeying him in faith and love, and God shows his approval by answering their prayer. And their prayer is for his will to be

done, for us their brethren, that God might show his approval of their faith in him and their love for us by restoring us. Therefore, God answers their prayer by doing what was already his will to do.

By this never-ending faithfulness and love on God's part to do his will toward his people, Christ keep us all (who are his redeemed children) believing on him and coming to his throne of grace and loving our brethren by our petitions for one another.

BY GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

1 John 3: 24: And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

Hereby we know we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. It is because we keep his commandments of believing on him and loving our brethren. And we do so because we dwell in him and he dwells in us. And hereby we know that he abideth in us by the Spirit which he hath given us.

We hear Christ's voice speaking in our inner man by the Spirit which he hath given us. This indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is not the special gift of God, belonging to a favored few. It is the special gift of God, common to all his elect.

John 14: 15: love me, keep my commandments. 16: And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; 17: *Even* the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. 18: I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. 19: Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. 20 At that day ye shall know that I *am* in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.

1 John 3: 19: And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him...

Amen!