

God is Greater Than Our Heart

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Certainty: Absolute Truths that Produce Joyful Assurance
Love; Eternal Life; Eternal Security; Confidence; Assurance
1 John 3:19–24

1 John 3:19–24 KJV 1900

¹⁹ And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. ²⁰ For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. ²¹ Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, *then* have we confidence toward God. ²² 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. 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.

John is exposing a problem that is common to all mankind: **our hearts can mislead us**. In the context of John's hearers, they had witnessed some hurtful words and actions from those who had left the body. In experiencing this, they had to make a choice, either to follow what their hearts were saying or to turn to a better alternative for assurance. John would NOT have us think that the opposite of self-condemnation is self-confidence. Rather, for the true Christian, the alternative to self-condemnation is sovereign-confidence. **Assurance does not come from SELF but from the God who is greater than our heart.**

[1 John 3:19-20](#) Convince your heart that God is greater

- **The need to be convinced:** *And hereby we know that we are of the truth* — our tendency towards wondering about our identity is understood. This could have been caused by the false teachers or other particular reasons unstated by the author.

- **The way to be convinced:** *and shall assure our hearts before him* — living out the love we profess is a means to convincing our hearts before God. Belief coupled with love leads to assurance. Some people lack assurance/confidence, not because they have not made an open profession, but because they are not practicing what they profess.
- **The problem with being convinced:** *if our heart condemn us* — there are two primary interpretations as to why this condemnation may be real but the writer does not tell us. There are two primary ways to interpret this as either a stingy heart that condemns generous giving or a self-condemning heart that feels unworthy.
- **The prescription for being convinced:** *God is greater than our heart* confirms that our hearts are at a disadvantage before God. We cannot trust our hearts, positively or negatively.
 - *knoweth all things* speaks to the attribute of God's omniscience as well as our accountability before Him. This is an accountability that should constantly be in the forefront of our minds. He knows our hearts and not just our actions. He knows if we are loving in deed and truth or not.

Parents, as much as we love our children, they have evil hearts that will mislead them. Teach them early and often that they need to trust God. Are you convincing their hearts or teaching them to follow their hearts?

There are those who have a false assurance. This false assurance is based on something other than a good profession with evident works. How are you finding assurance of your profession?

Christians who live in a world where we are trying to find confidence in many other things (i.e. accomplishments, happiness, work ethic...etc.) must constantly be reminded that God is greater than our hearts. Live in this light! Are you turning to God's word for the constant reminder that you cannot trust your heart?

[I John 3:21-23](#) Approach the God who is

greater

[in confident prayer]

- *Beloved, if our heart condemn us not* shows us the hope that we do not have to live under self-condemnation.
- *then have we confidence toward God* is a statement about having boldness to enter before God.
- *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.* This verse confirms that our prayer life will be confident when we are not self-condemning which results from convincing our hearts that God is greater. What does God use to convince us that He is greater? Our Christian living.
- *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.* Notice how this has now been made one commandment. Belief in Jesus and love for brethren are in inextricably connected.
 - › **Convincing our hearts requires belief and obedience.**

Technology and science today give us a pseudo confidence and make us feel a confidence that leads us away from prayer. Are you approaching God in prayer? Saying that you are a believer and loving according to that profession has direct impact on your confidence in prayer. Are you living a life consistent with your profession?

[I John 3:24](#) Experience the affirmation of the God who is greater

[by His indwelling Spirit]

- *And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him* is a statement of union or relationship. This is a mutual connection.
- *And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us* is a statement of God's gracious provision and of experience. This also

transitions to the next section of the book. The overall point is that being a Christian is not some cold, business transaction of belief and works; but that as we believe on the name of Jesus and actually love one another, we are assured of our relationship by the indwelling Holy Spirit. While we have looked at assurance that is rooted in truth, we must also know that there is experience to be enjoyed, but it also must be rooted in truth.

- We must not overlook the connection between prayer and the Holy Spirit here. Though the connection is not explicit, we know from other portions of scripture such as [Galatians 4](#) and [Romans 8](#) that the Holy Spirit helps our prayers.

How do I convince my heart that God is greater? How do I approach the God who is greater? How do I experience the God who is greater? The answer to all three of these questions can be found in the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. Though Jesus did not have an evil heart, he knew well what was in the heart of mankind. In [Matthew 15:19](#), Jesus remained faithful to His Father though he lived in a world full of lust. Though Jesus did not have an evil heart, he was able to approach his Father in prayer with confidence because He had loved his disciples and lived obediently:

John 17:20–23 KJV 1900

²⁰ Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; ²¹ That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. ²² And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: ²³ I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

Notice a threefold connection between [I John 3](#) and [John 17](#). **First**, Jesus is praying to the Father. **Second**, Jesus verbally affirms that he has done the work that his father sent him to do ([John 17:4](#)). **Third**, there is confirmation of union/relationship with the phrase “I in them, and thou in me...” Jesus remained faithful in confident prayer to His Father. The gospel of John also confirms that Jesus gave the Holy Ghost to his disciples:

John 20:22 KJV 1900

²² And when he had said this, he breathed on *them*, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:

This promise of the Holy Ghost, the very Spirit of Christ, indwells his believers, and as we live obedient lives, we are helped in our prayers and affirmed in our experience by the Holy Ghost.

So, you have a choice to make today. Will you follow your heart, or will you convince your heart that God is greater? Will you have confidence in prayer through your spiritual obedience, or will you be okay with not approaching the God who is greater? Will you experience the Holy Spirit's inner affirmation of your relationship, or will you try and find affirmation in things of this life?