

Lesson 11 – 1 John 3:19-24

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Review/Introduction

John is writing so we might know that we have eternal life (1 John 5:13). He does this by presenting the objective truth (1 John 5:11-13) and subjective evidences that give assurance of salvation. We have talked a lot about both.

John writes presenting tests to determine if true saving faith has been exercised or are the readers (and ultimately us) deceived. He makes it very clear that a profession of possessing salvation without the evidences that flow from salvation is self-deception.

The Scriptures are clear that true salvation is accompanied by a changed life. Those who are truly saved will be progressing in sanctification because of God's work in their life and because they are striving in the power of Spirit to grow in their relationship with Christ.

¹²So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your salvation with fear and trembling;** ¹³**for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.**
(Philippians 2:12-13)

The objective basis of assurance is the finished work of Christ and His promise to those that exercise true saving faith. John's inspired writings give a plethora of objective truths.

¹⁵so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. ¹⁶“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:15-16)

³⁶He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:36)

²⁴“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. (John 5:24)

⁴⁷Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. (John 6:47)

²⁵Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26)

¹Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the *child* born of Him. (1 John 5:1)

The subjective evidence for assurance is the witness of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:16; 1 John 3:24), fellowship with God's people (1 John 1:3), walking in the light (1 John 1:6-7), hatred and confession of one's own sin (1 John 1:5-2:2), walking in obedience (1 John 2:5; 3:5-6), walking like Christ (1 John 2:6), not loving the world (1 John 2:15), purity (1 John 3:3), love (1 John 3:14; 18-19), overcoming the world (1 John 5:4), etc.

Specifically, last week we took a second look at the subjective evidence of love. Love is a distinguishing characteristic of the believer (1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11-12; 2 John 1:5). If you are a believer, you love because Christ lives in you (Galatians 2:20). It is a natural result of surrendering your life to Christ.

Love is a subjective evidence of salvation. “We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.” We can know we are a child of God if we see supernatural love being evident. But, hating demonstrates that salvation has not occurred. Saying you love is not adequate as a subjective evidence of salvation. True love is demonstrated. Since Christ laid down His life, so must you lay down your life for the brethren. There is no limit to the extreme, humble, sacrificial effort to serve the brethren.

John presents his tests in four spirals laying out doctrinal and conduct tests or evidences of true, real, actual regeneration. Each spiral starts with a doctrinal test then presents conduct tests. The spirals all have similar topics that are expanded on and/or reiterated in each spiral. John uses repetition to present his simple, yet profound, truths to encourage his readers and us.

III. Evidence of true saving faith – Spiral 2 (2:18-3:24)

- A. Doctrine – Hold fast to truth – Don’t Apostatize (2:18-27)
- B. Conduct – Christ’s coming is a purifying fixed hope (2:28-3:3)
- C. Conduct – Sin/obedience (3:4-10)
- D. Conduct – Love (3:11-18)
- E. Conduct – Convictions and Confidences (3:19-24)**

Today we will look at the fourth conduct test in the second spiral. What confidences and convictions do you have that show you have assurance of salvation?

Spiral 2 – Conduct – Convictions and Confidences (3:19-24)

1. Assurance of Salvation (3:19-20)

¹⁹We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him ²⁰in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things.

¹⁹By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; ²⁰for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. (ESV)

John starts his convictions and confidences with assurance of salvation. “Of the truth” means of the way of salvation. John has used truth to describe the message of salvation already in his epistle.

⁶If we say that we have fellowship with Him and *yet* walk in the darkness, we **lie and do not practice the truth**; (1 John 1:6)

⁸If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and **the truth is not in us**. (1 John 1:8)

⁴he one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and **the truth is not in him**; (1 John 2:4)

In reality, this also means that Christ is in you.

⁶Jesus said to him, “**I am the way, and the truth, and the life**; no one comes to the Father but through Me. (John 14:6)

“We know by this” refers to a reason that you can know that you are saved. Specifically, this is refereeing back to the demonstration of authentic love for the brethren.

¹⁴We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. (1 John 3:14)

The subjective evidences of salvation bring a conviction of salvation.

❖ **What evidences do you see in your life?**

But what if you don’t obey as well or much or quickly as Christ did? What if you don’t love as much as you should? What if you fall short in your loving? What if when you look at how you love, you do not see the extreme, humble, sacrificial service of Christ perfectly displayed?

In those times, your “heart” may “condemn” you. “Heart” refers the center and source of the whole inner life, with its thinking, feeling, and volition. In this context this could be called the “conscience”.

The conscience is different than the conviction of the Holy Spirit. The conscience is tainted by total depravity and can either accuse or defend you.

¹⁴For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, **their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them**, ¹⁶on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus. (Romans 2:14-16)

The conscience can bring false vindication or false guilt; the conviction of the Holy Spirit brings confession and repentance and a commitment to the word.

¹⁰For the sorrow that is according to *the will of God* produces a repentance without regret, *leading* to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death. ¹¹For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter. (2 Corinthians 7:10-11)

¹⁶Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (Colossians 3:16)

“Condemns” means to find fault with, to blame, to condemn (to determine or judge to be utterly wrong or guilty) and the usage pictures continual condemnation.

If you see the subjective evidences which point to God’s work in your life (particularly loving the brethren in deed and truth), then this is an overactive conscience, continually condemning you even when there is cause to rejoice as a child of God.

The subjective evidences “assure our heart before Him”. “Assure our heart before Him” means to pacify, soothe the alarm of our heart, set at rest, or exhibit confidence and assurance in a situation that might otherwise cause dismay or fear. Knowing you are “of the truth” because you see God’s work in your life to enable supernatural, extreme, humble sacrificial service love assures your heart.

God is sovereign, omnipotent, and omniscient – greater than your overactive conscience.

❖ **Are you assured because of the evidence that God is displaying in your life?**

2. Answered Prayer (3:21-22)

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

²¹Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; ²²and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. (ESV)

In contrast to an overactive, guilty conscience, the one who is walking in a manner worthy of the gospel has a clear conscience, confidence before God, and answered prayers.

Walking in a manner worthy of the gospel means walking in the Spirit:

1. “Keep His commandments” means to have a lifestyle of obedience. The reason this shows salvation is that you cannot “keep on keeping” if you aren’t filled with the Spirit.
2. “Do the things that are pleasing in His sight” means to have a lifestyle of doing things that are pleasing to God. “Pleasing” means acceptable, satisfying, agreeable, that which elicits an agreeable response, gratifying. This was the attitude of Christ and the attitude of the followers of Christ.

²⁹And He who sent Me is with Me; **He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.**” (John 8:29)

²⁰Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, *even* Jesus our Lord, ²¹equip you in every good thing to do His will, **working in us that which is pleasing in His sight**, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen. (Hebrews 13:20-21)

⁸for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light ⁹(for the fruit of the Light *consists* in all goodness and righteousness and truth), ¹⁰**trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.** ¹¹Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; (Ephesians 5:8-11)

❖ **Are you striving to do the things that are pleasing in His sight?**

If you are demonstrating salvation as you walk in the Spirit, keeping on keeping Christ's commands (including loving the brethren) and keeping on doing the things that are pleasing in His sight, then some things will be true:

1. You will have a conscience that is being sanctified. It will not falsely accuse you or defend you.
2. You will have confidence before God. You will have assurance of salvation.
3. You will have answered prayer. This is interesting because people often get this wrong. They think, if I am walking well, then God will give me what I want. They think there is a transaction – "I give obedience, He give me my wants."

³Trust in the Lord and do good; Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness.

⁴Delight yourself in the Lord; And He will give you the desires of your heart.

⁵Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, and He will do it. ⁶He will bring forth your righteousness as the light And your judgment as the noonday. (Psalm 37:3-6)

¹⁸The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth.

¹⁹He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He will also hear their cry and will save them. (Psalm 145:18-19)

It doesn't work that way. If you are walking well, keeping on keeping Christ's commands (including loving the brethren) and keeping on doing the things that are pleasing in His sight, delighting yourself in the Lord, then your desires become His desires. His desire is your conformity to the image of Christ. So, He brings forth your righteousness. He sanctifies you.

²⁸And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. ²⁹For those whom He foreknew, **He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son**, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. (Romans 8:28-30)

¹⁷Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, *there* is liberty.

¹⁸But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are **being transformed into the same image from glory to glory**, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:17-18)

❖ What do you pray for?

3. Abiding (3:23-24)

²³This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. ²⁴The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

²³And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. ²⁴Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us. (ESV)

Keeping on keeping his commands is typified by continuing belief in Christ. Flowing from that faith is loving one another.

²⁹Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.” (John 6:29)

Abiding in Christ results in keeping Christ’s commands. The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him.

⁴Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me. ⁵I am the vine, you are the branches; **he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.** (John 15:3-5)

⁹Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. ¹⁰**If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love;** just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. (John 15:9-10)

There is a mutual abiding. John’s use of “abide” means to remain in. Obedience is a subjective evidence of salvation that demonstrates that you remain in Christ and Christ remains in you.

The work of the Spirit in your life gives assurance of salvation – that Christ abides in you.

❖ **Do you see the Spirit’s work of sanctification through the word in your life?**

Conclusion

John is writing to present tests of true saving faith. The purpose is to ensure that his readers know if they have eternal life (actual, true, real regeneration) or not. Today, we looked at confidences that come for regeneration and Spirit filling – a sanctified conscience, assurance, and answered prayer.

Additional Study

1. Each time you come to the Scriptures, pray for the Spirit to give you understanding.
2. Read 1 John once this week a chapter at a time (one chapter a day for five days).
3. Pray that God would show you personal applications from today’s passage.
4. Read today’s passage noting repeated words/ideas and ask yourself what John means.
5. Re-read the notes from today and contemplate the thought questions.