

Dealing with Doubts

Text: 1 John 3:19-24

Topics: Feelings, Attributes of God, Holy Spirit

Series: Bold Assurance

South Orlando Baptist Church

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When you struggle with doubts...

1. Reflect on the _____ of God (19-20)
 - A. "God is greater than our conscience, and He knows all things." Reflection on the love, grace, mercy, and trustworthiness of God and His Word are helpful as we journey through our doubts.
 - B. Even if, for a time, you feel condemned, 2 Timothy 2:9 tells us that "the Lord knows those who are his."
 - C. It is faith in God and the trustworthiness of His Word that is the foundation of our salvation. We should not try to assure ourselves through feelings alone.

2. Remain in _____ (21-23)
 - A. John recaps his letter here by encouraging the doubter to pray, keep his commandments, do what pleases him, believe in the name of His son Jesus Christ, love one another, and abide in God.
 - B. "He that wants assurance must not stand still, but exercise his graces till his doubts vanish." Richard Baxter.
 - C. Do your seasons of doubt drive you towards obedience or from obedience?

3. Remember the _____ of the Spirit (24)
 - A. At some point in a Christian's walk, there should be an inner awareness of the abiding presence and empowering of the Holy Spirit.
 - B. The Spirit whose presence is the test of Christ's abiding in us, manifests himself objectively in our life and conduct. It is he who inspires us to confess Jesus as the Christ come in the flesh, as John immediately proceeds to show (iv. 1ff.; cf. ii. 20, 27). It is also he who empowers us to live righteously and to love the brethren (cf. iv. 13; Gal. vv. 16, 22). So if we would assure our hearts when they accuse and condemn us, we must look for evidence of the Spirit's working, and particularly whether he is enabling us to believe in Christ, to obey God's commandments and to love the brethren; for the condition of abiding is this comprehensive obedience (24a), and the evidence of abiding is the gift of the Spirit (24b). John Stott, Epistles of John: An Expository Commentary.
 - C. Romans 8:16 (HCSB) "The Spirit Himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God's children."

Application Questions

1. What is God greater than? (3:20)
2. What is the result of not being condemned by one's heart? (3:21-22)
3. What is God's command? (3:23)
4. What is the result of obeying God's command? (3:24)
5. How do believers know that God lives in them? (3:24)
6. What are some reasons that believers might have a hurting heart? A condemning conscience?
7. Why should love for others give us assurance of salvation? Isn't love a natural feeling?
8. How can doubt and guilt actually serve to assure us of God's presence in our lives? Do you know anyone who never has doubts and never feels guilt? Does that seem healthy?
9. Why do we look to God for assurance and not to our own consciences?
10. What aspect of our conscience is untrustworthy?
11. Why can we be sure that God will answer our prayers? Does this give license to ask for whatever we want?
12. Why must we keep John's doctrinal test and his moral test together?
13. What happens if we relax on one or the other?
14. Why is the Holy Spirit such an astounding gift to every Christian? How does His presence provide assurance? How does His presence enable obedience?