

Confidence in God

I John 3:21-24

Last week we looked at John identifying true Christian love. We saw that it was not merely an emotion but an action that proved its unconditional and sacrificial heart towards people. We saw that in the example of Jesus that even when he knew what the disciples and Judas were about ready to do before his betrayal and death, he still chose to show the "full extent of his love" to them.

We saw that this is a model for us to follow, at times putting aside our own needs or own desires for the sake of someone else. Our need to retaliate, our time, our resources, our flexibility all for the sake of showing the full extent of love that we have been shown. It would be completely selfish for us to be given the love of Jesus Christ and hold it to ourselves. But just as love has been given to us, so we must respond in love.

John told us that our whole purpose in life is to love God and each other - a love that is undisguised, sincere and obvious - a family bond that unites us and places value on our relationships with each other.

Our love is to be an active love that shows itself, and doesn't simply exist with words. At times God blesses us with talents, or skills, or finances, or material objects not just to please ourselves, but so that others may be shown concern or help, and may be blessed through us.

And when we respond it shows that we have the love of God in us. It shows that God is doing something within us and He is using his truth to change us. Not only because He gives us truth but because we are willing and submitted to allow that truth to change us. Our life is about proving that God lives in us.

The more we allow God to grow us and produce fruit in our lives, the more confidence we will find as we stand before God. When we let God do something in us, we know that we will then live in such a way that we can be sure that God is proud and pleased. If we follow God with all that we have, even our own conscience can be put to rest because God looks at our hearts. He knows our true intentions and takes all of the facts and weighs them out.

If we missed the mark he does convict us, challenging us to try again, or do better next time. But never does our God condemn us, or write us off. He offers us a second chance to make ourselves better.

Today, I want to continue by looking **I John 3:21-24**:

Dear friends, if our conscience is clear, we can come to God with bold confidence. And we will receive whatever we request because we obey him and do the things that please him. And this is his commandment: We

must believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as he commanded us. Those who obey God's commandments live in fellowship with him, and he with them. And we know he lives in us because the Holy Spirit lives in us.

1. A Clear Conscience Produces a Bold Confidence.

Last week we looked at the fact that the human conscience at times condemns us, even when we have done the best we could. Is it possible then to have a clear conscience based merely on our own ability? We are too emotional, insecure, and uncertain to have a clear conscience. **I Corinthians 4:3-4** Paul tells us:

What about me? Have I been faithful? Well, it matters very little what you or anyone thinks. I don't even trust my own judgement on this point. My conscience is clear, but that isn't what matters. It is the Lord himself who will examine me and decide.

Paul in essence is saying here that his conscience is unable to discern or be trusted. That is why we struggle everyday with things that we have done in the past. Although we have asked for God's forgiveness and have repented and turned away from our sin, we still tend to carry with us the weight of our sin. Our human nature has a way of beating us up and never letting go of missed opportunities.

But there are also some who claim to have a clear conscience yet live in such a way that would even scare the demons. Our human conscience is deceiving.

But **I John 3:21**, in the NIV, says, "If our hearts do not condemn us...(a clear conscience)" pointing to the complete non-existence of guilt, and judgement. This is a human impossibility. How is it possible to have a clear conscience? **Romans 5:1-2** tells us:

Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of highest privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory.

We need to understand that we are made right with God simply because of what Jesus has done for us. There is nothing that we can do to earn our confidence. There is no work that can grant us our forgiveness. Our belief and dependence upon God and Jesus is the only thing that can clear our conscience. **Ephesians 2:8-9** tells us:

God saved you by his special favor when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God's people, let us go right into the presence of God, with true hearts fully trusting him. For our evil consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water. Without wavering, let us hold tightly to the hope we say we have, for God can be trusted to keep his promises. Hebrews 10:21-23

The work of Jesus Christ now grants us a clean conscience. Because of what he has done for you and me we can live free of the past. Because of what he has done we no longer have to worry about the penalty of our sin. Our evil conscience has been sprinkled with the blood of Christ and now it makes our conscience clean.

Now that you and I can have a clean conscience, not based on our achievement, but based on what Jesus has already done, we can have boldness. The type of boldness mentioned in **I John 3:21** is the kind that is "freely speaking, unconcealed, with fearless confidence."

We are not talking about a confidence that we find in ourselves but a confidence that we can find in an immovable God. We can't have confidence in ourselves because we lack the ability to be consistent, trustworthy, or even pure all the time. **Jeremiah 17:7-9** tells us:

But blessed are those who trust in the Lord and have made the Lord their hope and confidence. They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they go right on producing delicious fruit. The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?"

It is the confidence that we find in ourselves that gets us into trouble. But one who places their confidence on God will find deep spiritual growth - a growth that brings stability, and is constantly producing righteous behavior and character.

Those who rely on God for a clear conscience will also find a confidence in God's abilities. It is this confidence that now enables us to come into the presence of God. It is this confidence that motivates us to follow what He tells us. It is this confidence that challenges us to lay our own intentions and human thoughts aside to make way for God's heart and mind. We need help! And we can find it in God.

2. Confidence in His Provision.

John continues in **I John 3:22** and now tells us that when we put our confidence in God we receive whatever we ask for. This is not a theme verse for the "name it, and claim it" teaching that has gone throughout many churches. This is a testimony of God's ability to pull through.

Those who seek God for a clear conscience and who place their confidence in God, laying their entire lives on the line, obeying God, will also be seeking to do what God wants them to do. When they ask for something from God they are not seeking out of selfish desire but they are seeking for that which God wills for them. When we obey and do what pleases him we seek the will of God. In **John 8:29** Jesus said:

“The one who sent me is with me – he has not deserted me. For I always do those things that are pleasing to him.”

*“You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, because the work of the Son brings glory to the Father.” **John 14:13***

When we ask for something that will be pleasing or bring glory to God, we can have confidence that he will give it to us. Will financial prosperity always bring glory to God, or be pleasing to Him? Will the ownership of material objects always enhance our Christian walk?

We live in a world today where people will try anything to get more money or own just the right things. They will follow God in order to get, but their total focus may not be on God Himself. They have become worshippers of the creation instead of the creator.

But those who seek to please God and bring glory to his name can have confidence that God will provide in order to see this done. Even a blind man who was healed, knew this concept in **John 9:31**:

Well, God doesn't listen to sinners, but he is ready to hear those who worship him and do his will.

John tells us in **I John 5:14-15**:

And we can be confident that he will listen to us whenever we ask him for anything in line with his will. And if we know he is listening when we make our requests, we can be sure that he will give us what we ask for.

We can't simply ask for whatever we want. God only listens to that which will bring him glory, that which will please Him, and that which lines up with His will.

3. Believe in Jesus' Ability.

John continue on in **I John 3:22** and tells us that we must believe in Jesus Christ and love one another. The term believe here means to place full confidence, or to trust that God is able. Jesus used the same word “believe” and said in **John 6:29**:

Jesus told them, “This is what God wants you to do: Believe in the one he has sent.”

But as we rely on the ability of Jesus Christ, we can have confidence in the fact that no matter how we feel, God's forgiveness is real and has taken place in our own lives. Our consciences have been sprinkled with the blood of Jesus thus alleviating any sign of the past, or sin, or any condemnation.

We must have complete confidence in the ability of Jesus Christ not only to grant complete forgiveness and cleansing of our sin, but also in providing for us. If He has the ability to make us right with God, then he is fully capable to give us what we need and what he wills for us.

And as we live with a clear conscience and confidence in God, then we can have a true relationship with him. A relationship is the result of two parties giving up in order to give to each other. As we give up our wants and desires, God gives up His Son for us. And as a result of this relationship God then places His Spirit within us to prove that we are in fellowship. His Spirit who, out of concern and love for us, guards our hearts and mind, bringing growth, so that we can experience the full goodness of God.

May we develop a confidence in God, and in His Son, Jesus Christ.