



FBC Dickson

UNFAILING LOVE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES • THE LIFE-GIVING BENEFITS OF LOVE •
S1 JOHN 3:19-24 • 7/26/2020

MAIN POINT

God, through love, gives us life. This lesson examines three aspects of the life-giving benefits of God's love to the restless human heart.

INTRODUCTION

The human heart is complex, it is vulnerable, but it is a vital part of who we are. Jesus famously said in Matthew 12:34, "the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart". We have a hard time hiding what is really in our hearts. Our hearts help us make moral choices. It allows us to express emotions. We have even developed sayings and platitudes such as "follow your heart" or "the heart doesn't lie". The problem is that the human heart has been affected by sin. It can often lead us astray or confuse us. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "the heart is more deceitful than anything else, and incurable—who can understand it?".

Why shouldn't we just "follow our hearts"? What is the danger in that?

What does Jeremiah 17:9 and Matthew 12:34 reveal about our hearts?

But there is good news for the afflicted heart. God knows all and God sees all. God's word and His Spirit offer us assurances as his children.

UNDERSTANDING

Let's review the three aspects of the life-giving benefits of God's love

1. God's Love Assures Us of Our Salvation

Read 1 John 3:19-20

What does John mean by "belong to the truth"? (see v. 18)

According to John what does our hearts/consciences do to us sometimes?

In what ways does our hearts condemn us? What does that mean?

Verse 19 refers back to verse 18. Truth is meant to be lived out. What you truly believe in your heart will manifest itself in your daily actions and speech. Service means always putting others before yourself. It sometimes means doing the ordinary or mundane or the trivial. Service requires love and humility. When we serve in humility our hearts are assured that we belong to God. But our hearts are still a fickle organ. Even in the midst of selfless service our hearts can still be afflicted by doubt. But John in verse 20 says not to worry. Even if our hearts still condemn us, God is greater than our fickle, afflicted hearts. God knows who you truly are. Not only does he know us, he desires for us to have assurance.

Read Romans 8:1

What assurance does this verse offer our hearts?

So sometimes we may have a guilty conscience, but God does not want that for you. This is where God's truth and his promises come in. Even when our hearts attempt to convince us we are guilty, God's word reminds us that Christ died as propitiation for our sins and stands even now as our Advocate. Christian, God knows all things, and He is greater than our hearts. This doesn't mean that our hearts lie to us all the time. If you are in Christ, then He is in you. He gave you the Holy Spirit to guide you, teach you, and convict you. So if you have a guilty conscience because of sin, your heart, rightly convicted by God, can lead you to repentance. God is at work in our hearts in both ways. Assuring our doubting hearts that we belong to Him while at the same time calling out the sin still in our hearts and leading us to repentance.

What promises of God help assure you of your salvation?

Why is assurance of salvation so important for our daily lives?

2. God's Love Gives Us Confidence in Prayer

Read 1 John 3:21-22

According to this passage, what is the prerequisite to receiving "whatever we ask" of Him?

What does it mean to pray to God "confidently"?

John here highlights the confidence we can have before God's throne. We can approach God's throne with a clear conscience. Not only that but we can have confidence that when we speak to God, he listens. Prayer is an amazing privilege that so many of God's children take for granted. He doesn't just desire for us to come to him in prayer, he delights in it.

If this is true, then why is prayer so neglected in our daily devotion?

We don't understand the blessing we have in prayer. If we did, we wouldn't neglect it so much. So, why don't Christians pray? There could be many reasons, but for the sake of sticking to John's argument here, he says even a guilty or doubting conscience can lead to a less vibrant prayer life. In other words, we don't tend to call on God when we are carrying the burden of a condemning conscience. But this is the beautiful thing about the love John is talking about. We can rest in the fact that God loves us. If we are his, we no longer stand condemned before him. When we recognize this truth, it frees us to love more deeply and serve more joyfully. It also leads us to pray more confidently. God hears you. His grace is louder than the voices of condemnation in your own head. We can pray with a clear conscience before God.

How can we make prayer a priority daily?

What daily practices help enhance your prayer life? (meaning posture, time of day, place, etc.)

3. God's Love Provides the Loving Reassurance of His Holy Spirit

Read 1 John 3:23-24

What does John say we have been commanded to do in v.23?

What does God promise to do for those that keep those commands?

The greatest benefit of God's love for us is that He has chosen to abide in us. There are two primary commands God has given us according to these verses: to believe in the name of his Son and to love one another. But what does it mean to believe in Jesus' name? . Jesus' name means "Yahweh saves" or "Yahweh is salvation". Jesus name in Aramaic was Yeshua, the same name we derive the name Joshua from. So, to believe in the name of Jesus means we believe he was the one sent by God to save. He is the one who brings salvation. Secondly we are commanded to believe Jesus is the Son, the second member of the Trinity. Jesus was unique in his relationship with the Father. In being the Son, that means he is the eternally existing Son. He is the eternal word, the logos, of John 1:1, "in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God".

We are also commanded to believe Jesus was the Christ, the anointed one of God. He was the long awaited and prophesied for Messiah of the Old Testament. The seed of Abraham, that would bless the nations. The king in the line of David who would rule forever. The suffering servant of Isaiah and the initiator of the new covenant in Jeremiah. When you put all this together you see that we are commanded to believe all Jesus says he is: salvation sent from God, the Son, and the anointed Messiah. Any gospel message that doesn't proclaim the totality of who Jesus is is a false gospel.

Those who remain in the truth of who Jesus is, God himself remains in them. This is a gracious gift of God. The keeping of God's commands can never be separated from abiding in God. You can't obey is He is not abiding in you. God's love for us makes love for him and obedience to his commands possible.

What does it mean for God to remain in us?

How do we "remain in Him"?

In what ways does it encourage you to know that God has chosen to abide in you by His Spirit?

The truth of God's abiding presence in us daily reminds us of His unfailing love for us. We belong to Him, and He belongs to us. We are his children, and He is our father. He invites us to pray to Him. He delights in hearing our voice. He takes joy in reassuring our hearts of His mercy and grace towards us. He desires to heal our condemning consciences and to affirm us as his children through the abiding presence of His Spirit in us. What a glorious truth to hold on to when times are so uncertain.

APPLICATION

How can you help a fellow believer who may be suffering from a doubting conscience and struggles accepting assurance of their salvation?

What is needed in your prayer life in order for it to be more confident?

How can you make abiding in Christ a daily habit?

PRAYER

COMMENTARY

1 John 3:19-20

Our consciences are often restless and troubled in view of past guilt; but, in thus furnishing the evidence of true piety by love to others, we shall pacify an accusing mind, and conciliate our own hearts, and persuade or convince ourselves that we are truly the children of God. See Robinson, Lexicon, sub voce πείθω peithō, l. b. In other words, though a person's heart may condemn him as guilty, and though he knows that God sees and condemns the sins of his past life, yet the agitations and alarms of his mind may be calmed down and soothed by evidence that he is a child of God, and that he will not be finally condemned. A true Christian does not attempt to conceal the fact that there is much for which his own heart and conscience might justly accuse him but he finds, notwithstanding all this, evidence that he is a child of God, and he is persuaded that all will be well. (Taken from Barnes' Notes on the Bible)

Whenever our hearts condemn us. Whenever one has an inward conviction of sin. It is vital in such times to have a living faith; the proposition that God is greater than our heart grants us assurance that he has forgiven us through the atoning work of Christ. (Taken from ESV Study Bible)

1 John 3:21-22

This passage has been interpreted in terms of believers assurance in two ways: 1.) If our consciences condemn us, God is kinder than our consciences, and if they do not condemn us, we have confidence that God will hear our prayers. 2.) If our consciences condemn us, God is more rigorous than our consciences, but if they do not condemn us, then we have confidence that God will hear our prayers. Alternatively the passage may be interpreted in light of Deut. 15:7-9, which warns the Israelites about hardness of heart toward needy people. John insists our mean-spirited hearts must be persuaded to make the sacrifice because we will not escape God's notice. If we do respond generously, we experience confidence in prayer. (Taken from NIV Zondervan Study Bible)

"Confidence toward God". Love banishes self-condemnation. When a Christian recognizes in his life the manifestation of love in deeds and actions, it results in confidence about his relationship with God. (Taken from The MacArthur Bible Commentary)

1 John 3:23-24

When believers had confidence towards God, through the Spirit of adoption, and by faith in the great High Priest, they might ask what they would of their reconciled Father. They would receive it, if good for them. And as good-will to men was proclaimed from heaven, so good-will to men, particularly to the brethren, must be in the hearts of those who go to God and heaven. He who thus follows Christ, dwells in Him as his ark, refuge, and rest, and in the Father through him. This union between Christ and the souls of believers, is by the Spirit he has given them. A man may believe that God is gracious before he knows it; yet when faith has laid hold on the promises, it sets reason to work. This Spirit of God works a change; in all true Christians it changes from the power of Satan to the power of God. Consider, believer, how it changes thy heart. Dost not thou long for peace with God? Wouldst thou not forego all the world for it? No profit, pleasure, or preferment shall hinder thee from following Christ. This salvation is built upon Divine testimony, even the Spirit of God. (Taken from Matthew Henry's Concise Bible Commentary)

God's Command is that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ. Every word in this command is significant. This is the first of nine occurrences of the word "believe" in 1 John. It means, "to trust or rely on". Jesus "name" conveys His person and work and all that He is and accomplishes. That Jesus is the "Son" emphasizes His eternal deity and unique relationship to the Father. "Jesus" is His human name, equivalent to the Hebrew name Joshua. It means "Yahweh saves" or "Yahweh is salvation". And "Christ" means "Anointed One", the Messiah of God. (Taken from Christ Centered Exposition Commentary on 1 John written by Danny Akin)