

The Christian's Confidence

1 John 3:19-21

Introduction.

1. This evening I would like for us to take a look at a difficult Bible passage found in 1 John 3:19-21.

1JO 3:19 We shall know by this that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before Him,
1JO 3:20 in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.
1JO 3:21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God;

2. This is one of the most difficult and completing passages in the New Testament.

a. John speaks of the Christian having confidence about his/her salvation.

b. "We shall know by this [by loving others] that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before Him," (1 John 3:19).

(1) This is not the difficult part of this passage.

(2) The Bible manifests those abiding in Christ can be confident about salvation. (1 Jn. 4:7b, 12, 13,15; 5:1, 2,4,19; 1:7, 2:1-5, 9-11; 3:1,2, 7, 14,24).

3. The difficult part of this passage is 1 John 3:20.

"in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart, and knows all things."

a. This verse seems to imply something very strange to our way of thinking.

b. John affirms we can have confidence "in whatever our heart condemns us."

c. Self-condemnation is often taken as a bad sign and it can be. (Rom. 14:23).

d. It is interpreted as guilt resulting from wrongdoing.

Translation Of The Text

1. Let's make a careful analysis of this passage by first examining the translation of the text.

2. The translation of the text is difficult.

3. There are several ways to translate it.

And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before Him. For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

By that we shall know that we are on the side of the Truth; and we shall satisfy ourselves in God's sight, that if our conscience condemns us, yet God is greater than our conscience and knows everything - TCNT

By this we shall know that we are of the truth, and reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything - RSV

Special Note:

- This translation renders the Greek words "hoti ean" "whenever" and the word "hoti" "for."
- The words can be translated "that if" and "that."
- I believe the RSV best translates the sense of the passage.

Who Is John Addressing?

1. In context it is evident he is addressing Christians.
2. John is not addressing all Christians.
 - a. Not everyone who has been baptized and wears the name Christian can be confident of salvation.
 - b. John had strong criticism and even condemnation for hypocritical Christians.
 - c. John had strong criticism for those lacking in love and those who did not walk in the light. (1 Jn. 2:9-11; 1:5-10).
3. I believe John is addressing conscientious Christians who giving diligence to do what God has commanded.

Different Types Of Christians

1. There are some Christians who are Christians in name only.
2. There are Christians who are content to do very little.
 - a. They feel as long as they attend church services and occasionally do good to others they are well-pleasing to God.
 - b. They have confidence they are on their way to heaven.
3. There are Christians who diligence to do all they can for the cause of Christ.
 - a. Some of these Christians realize, however, there is only so much a Christian can do.
 - b. They have inner peace.
 - c. This peace comes from trusting not in their good works, but in the grace of God. (Eph. 2:5-10).
4. There are Christians who give diligence to be faithful who always feel guilty.
 - a. If they go out and visit 10 people, they feel guilt because of the ones they did not get to visit.
 - b. If they feed 10 hungry people or even 1000 hungry people, they feel guilty and condemned because of those they did not or could not feed.
 - c. If they encourage 10 people to obey the gospel, they feel condemned because of the ones they did not reach.

Comments

1. Some of the best Christians in the world are filled with guilt and feelings of condemnation
2. The more they do the more they see to do and the greater their frustration becomes.
3. This feeling can lead to depression and even giving up the faith.
4. We have lost some wonderful Christians because they could not cope with their guilt of not being able to be perfect or do enough.
5. On top of this even the best of Christians sin and fall short of God's glory.
6. This also causes anguish and doubt.
 - a. It causes one to wonder if he is in Christ.
 - b. Surely if I am a Christian I will not have doubt or sin is the mind set of some Christians.

A Great Assurance

1. John gives a great assurance.
 - a. John contends that "God is greater than our heart, and knows all things."
 - b. God is not some god with limited knowledge of the world and universe.
2. God is omniscient - He knows all things.
 - a. This means God is aware of the Christian who struggles over not being able to make all the visits that need to be made, or over all the hungry who need to be fed, or over all the lost who need to be taught.
 - b. God knows the extent and genuineness of love in the Christian's life.
 - c. The presence of love is evidence one is a Christian.
3. This fact should instill confidence in those who always feel guilty.
 - a. God knows their hearts.
 - b. He knows their trust.
 - c. He knows their deeds.
 - d. He is willing to forgive even when our hearts do not. (1 Jn. 5:7).

Conclusion

1. This lesson is not directed to the lazy or indifferent or insincere Christian.
2. This lesson is aimed at conscientious Christians who are seeking to do all they can for the Lord.

- a. Yes, he sins. (1 Jn. 1:8.10).
 - b. Yes, he never accomplishes all the good that he could have done.
 - c. But he is still a Christian and God knows this and God is willing to forgive him and accept him as His child.
3. May the fact that God knows all things purge fear from their hearts and give them confidence they have salvation in Christ Jesus.

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