

Dealing with Doubt

1 John 3:19-24

The Apostle John wrote his first epistle so “that you may know that you have eternal life” (5:13). Toward that end, John set forth tests by which a child of God may be assured of his salvation. However, rather than gaining assurance, some are plagued with further doubt.

- I. The _____ of our hearts (19-20)
 - The security of our salvation is a _____.
 - The assurance of our salvation is a _____.
- II. The _____ of our hearts (21-23)
 - A. Confidence in _____ to God (21)
 - B. Confidence in _____ from God (22)
- III. The _____ in our hearts (24)

When we love others as Christ loved us, we will know experientially that we are of the truth and we will assure our hearts before God because of that. However, if and when our heart condemns us for failing to love in this way, we may reassure ourselves in knowing that our omniscient God is greater than our condemning heart.

- Paraphrase, 1 John 3:19-20

The Spirit whose presence is the test of Christ’s living 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 (4:1ff.; cf. 2:20, 27). It is also he who empowers us to live righteously and to love our brothers and sisters (cf. 4:13; Gal. 5:16, 22). So if we would set our hearts at rest, 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 commands and to love our brothers; for the condition of Christ dwelling in us and of our dwelling in him is this comprehensive obedience (24a), and the evidence of the indwelling is the gift of the Spirit (24b).

- John R. W. Stott