

READING – 1 John 3:19-24

Sermon #7

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February 7, 2016

ASSURANCE – Part II

Holy Affections

Last week we spent our time primarily on verses 19 and 20 and what John wanted us to understand concerning assurance of salvation. I defined the difference between true believers, false believers and unbelieving believers. As Jonathan Edwards put forth in his writings that true believers have “holy affections” for God and this produces fruit of the Spirit in a believer’s life. This morning we will look at some of these holy affections that lead to fruit of the Spirit. There are six holy affections I would like to examine, although there are more: love, heart, conscience, obedience, prayer and Spirit. This morning we will spend our time on the first three; love, heart and conscience.

In preparation of seeing how love, heart and conscience relate to the life of Christian I want lay a foundation first. Having assurance of salvation brings comfort and bolsters ones faith. But as I considered our assurance of salvation and living a holy life I thought how Jesus said, “**Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”** (Matthew 5:15-16) Our salvation is not just about us, it is about the glory of God and it is about community and bringing the gospel to the lost. As I thought about making my time on earth productive, not referring to career and money, which is not eternal, I was thinking of kingdom productivity.

This thought took me back to the Old Testament, to Moses and to the Psalms. Psalm 90 is the only Psalm of Moses. Its title is **A PRAYER OF MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD.** Verse one begins, “**Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**” Every generation of believers who have ever lived are called to dwell in the Lord. It is God as the Holy Spirit that indwells our souls and this enables us to dwell with God. Now I want to skip down to verse 12, “**So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.**” Each day is a gift from the Lord and He has numbered them. If numbering our days is important to God; then we also need to number our days. Do we value each day? Are focused on Christ each day? When you lay your head down on the pillow at night can you say, “I served God and others today in a way that brought Him glory and honor.” The second thing I would like you to notice in this verse are the words “us”, “our”, “we”. “**So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.**” These words speak of community. We cannot be Christians in the fullest sense by living in isolation. Jesus said, “**let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.**” It is about Christ, about God and it is not primarily about you but it is how you can give glory to God and bringing Christ’s gospel or God’s light into this dark world.

I began with these thoughts because as we study 1 John 3:19-24 and our assurance of salvation I want you to place your assurance and holy affections on the foundation of what Moses said, “**So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.**” With godly wisdom we can make every day count and every day will have eternal results and blessings. Part of foundation is also to “**let your light shine before others.**”

Come with me now back to verse 19 of 1st John 3, “**By this** we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything.” Notice how it begins “**By this.**” “**By this** we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him.” “**By this.**” By this, what does “this” mean?

Drop down to verse 24. “Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And **by this** we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.” By the Spirit that indwells we are able to keep His commandments and this gives us assurance the God has saved us and is with us. This passage is bracketed by that little phrase “**By this**”, it appears in verse 19 and it appears again in verse 24. John is then giving us the means or the reasons why we know with assurance that we are saved, he says, “**By this.**” To exactly what does he refer? This is the fruit of the Spirit produced by obedience. I would like to speak on love, heart and conscience.

Love

Holy affection for God is manifest by our love for other Christians. With true salvation comes love. Look back at verse 18, which lays the foundation for our passage, “Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.” This prior passage deals with the holy affection of love. Backing up to verse 10, “**By this** it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.” If we do not possess the holy affection of love for fellow Christians then we are not of God. The Holy affection for God and for Christians is a mark that separates the sheep of God from the goats of the devil. Without godly

love there is no assurance. Verse 11 reads, “For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.” Having holy affection of love for God, fellow believers and strangers is a not new teaching. It is a principle throughout the Bible going back to the writings of Moses, “You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.” (Leviticus 19:33) John’s theme of the holy affection of love continues in verse 14, “We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.” Holy affection of true love for God and things of God; His written Word the Bible, prayer and being obedient are the fruit of a regenerated life lived through Christ.

In Paul’s letter to the Galatians the very first fruit of the spirit listed is “love.” (Gal. 5:22) If you are a true believer an outward sign is your loving attitude towards fellow Christians. Jonathan Edwards wrote in *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, “The Scriptures do represent true religion, as being summarily comprehended in love, the chief of the affections, and fountain of all other affections.” Without this holy love one does not possess the zeal to serve God on a meaningful level. When you have a holy affection of love for Christ many barriers disappear. Often Joyce and I would go into countries not knowing the people who would meet us and who we were to serve. I remember flying into a country and the man on the plane in the seat next to me asked where I was going within the country. I responded I did not know. He then asked who was picking me up at the airport and I again responded I did not know. This was a difficult country and my answers put panic on his face. I simply told him the God had everything in place and I would be fine. When I met the people at the airport holding up a sign with my

name it really took no time at all to begin to develop our friendship. In spite of different cultures, language and customs we all had Christ and our love for Him and our love for each other was immediately obvious. If you cannot love people who are different from you, be warned! The holy affection of love enables you to transcend differences. The people of God need to work at not having turf wars but finding common ground in the Bible that is unchanging and transcends time, culture and language.

In fact, I personally know that verse 16 is true, “[By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.](#)” I have had brothers who did not know me long willing to go to extremes to protect me and I have gone to extremes to protect others and if I had lost my life it would have been in God’s will. This love is manifest not in what we say, but in what we sacrifice. It is a kind of abandoned love in the sense that it yields up everything, even if necessary life itself for the benefit of those who are in Christ. This is the uniqueness of Christian love. This is the chief mark of a person who has been transformed into a child of the living God.

If you know someone who says they believe in Jesus, they've received Him, they have accepted Him into their heart, they prayed a prayer, they call themselves Christians – you will be able to observe the fruit of the spirit in their lives and these will help determine if they are a true believer. Since love is the foundation for all other fruit, the absence of it gives the right to question are they a true Christian. Are there holy affections evident in their life?

Heart

The second holy affection is evident in a new heart. The new heart that God gives you begins with love and moves into gratitude for the grace of God that saves an unworthy sinner. God's plan has always been to change those He calls. God said, "I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh." (Ezekiel 36:26)

John has the same thoughts, read with me beginning in verse 19, "By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; ²⁰ for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything." Our old sin riddled heart wants to condemn us, but God has given us a new heart and it is based on the love of His heart. God forgives us and washes clean with His blood. A new heart, this is encouraging and it is real. Our new heart makes it possible to have holy affections and love of God and all that is of God. Our salvation is evident. As we begin to see the world through the heart God has given us, our life's path of sanctification is underway. Our heart makes us desire the Word of God, prayer with God and to be with other believers, we look forward to being in church and having fellowship with other believers.

We begin to view our material wealth as not ours, but belonging to God and we desire to be good stewards. This takes us back to verses 17 and 18 of 1 John 3, "If anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth." We seek and listen to God as to how we should use what He has provided for His kingdom work. Tithing is a privilege and a joy. Tithing is the fruit of obedience of a new heart and is a mark of true faith.

A new heart of flesh activates within us our conscience. The world does not want to hear or feel or be convicted, but with our new heart we have involvement in all of these.

Conscience

Christians have an active and aware conscience. This is what John means by “whenever our heart condemns us” in verse 20. When God penetrates your heart, when you sit under good preaching, when you study and meditate on the scriptures your conscience begins to work as it is meant to. Webster defines conscience as “the part of the mind that makes you aware of your actions as being either morally right or wrong.” The word conscience means to be self-aware. Lets go to Romans 2:15, “They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them.” Whether we accept God’s law or not – it is before each person. God’s law is on their hearts, the effects of God’s law depends whether a person has a heart of stone or flesh. This is what Paul means by “their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them.” Our conscience observes what we think and do. It makes a judgment - either accuses or excuses. You do something right, your conscience consciously informs your thought that this is right, you did something good, you did something righteous and there's a sense of well-being, peace, joy and satisfaction. You commit sin, your conscience immediately is activated and it informs you what you are doing is wrong and it accuses you, attacks you, condemns you and indicts you. If you persist in the sin, it can bring you all the way to depression, self-loathing, insecurity and doubt. This is the function of your conscience. That's critical in every human being.

Believers and even non-believers would cruise into deep trouble without a conscience. Without a conscience, unbeliever's head down the highway to hell at high speed without any concern. Just as the nerves in your fingers warn you of the flame by its heat a conscience warns you of danger. My brother has Neuropathy and has lost the feeling in his hands and feet. He has to be very careful; if his sock is not put on right he can wear blisters in his feet. Beyond blisters he can wear down through the flesh and not know it for he cannot feel. My brother will tell you pain is a very great gift from God. Pain is God's device given to every human being to warn them that something's wrong and they are able react to it. What pain means to your body as it warns you and prompts you to act, your conscience is to your spirit and soul. It is your moral warning system. Without a conscience one would sink into deeper and deeper sin.

Everyone has a conscience, but the ability of the conscience to function well is dependent on the standards that have been instilled throughout one's life. The world claims people are good and have to be taught to be bad. We know this is not true by observing the behavior of a two year old. People must be taught the Law of God and goodness. Society standards are low and the result is the massive damage we see in people's lives all around us. One's conscience then reacts by the standards that it has been taught. If you have low morality and a low value of others you will have a low functioning conscience.

Since Satan is the prince of this world for a period of time, he desires to lower, and if possible, neutralize people's consciences. This process begins with the consistent lowering of moral standards in the world, that say a person can do anything he or she wants. Satan also lies which influences one's conscience confusing right from

wrong. Now the weak conscience responds at a diminished level. It is a downward spiral. Look at the fall of the Roman Empire and you can see this process. Look at the condition of American society and most countries in the world today and you see this very thing.

This is why it is important that people have a true understanding of the Law of God, a true understanding of morality and also know the grace and love of God. Most manmade law is the failed attempt to correct behavior without dealing with the root of the problem, that is, man needs salvation through Christ. Society now develops laws allowing people to live in ways that are not only ungodly, but destructive. These influences of society continue to lower the level of morality and unbeliever's conscience's ability to respond appropriately.

Both the Old and New Testaments deal with the problem of conscience. The New Testament has 140 verses that deal specifically with conscience. Paul wrote the believers in the corrupt city of Corinth, “[For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you.](#)” (2 Corinthians 1:12) Living a godly life in this corrupt and fallen world in simplicity is a testimony to how bad things have gotten. This is why most of the world including some who call themselves Christian do not want to hear the Word of God for they are convicted and pierced to the heart and they would rather have their comfortable misery of sin.

When Paul sent out Timothy he told him to stay true to God and “[wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience.](#) If one walks away from spiritual warfare and faith built upon the Word of God their conscience will suffer, and this

will lead to “rejecting this the truth of God which has caused, some have made shipwreck of their faith.” (1 Timothy 1:18-19) To not believe is one thing, but to think you believe and then walk away from the Bible as the true Word of God means you believed in a false god. Your hope was false! Millions then think they are saved but the truth is they are lost.

When God shows a person the depth of his or her sin and regenerates the soul, that person’s conscience awakens. When this happens we are as Paul said, “I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.” (Romans 7:9) As God awakens our soul we fall to our knees and cry out as the tax collector did, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” (Luke 18:13) From that point on we are to live with a godly conscience and live for Christ’s glory. The writer of Hebrews wrote, “how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” (Hebrews 9:14) I remember when God saved me; I had heard from many people it was the most wonderful experience and you feel the warmth of His love. But, for me it began with pain, searing pain as my conscience brought before my mind what a terrible sinner I was and how far I fell short. I thought why is the Lord not slaying me. I did not know about God’s grace and what He had done for me through Christ. When I learned this then my salvation did become one of overwhelming grace and mercy. I fell to my knees and felt God washing away my sin by the blood of Christ. I moved from a awakened conscience that devastated me with my sin that I had no awareness of before God regenerated my soul to a soul cleansed, fresh and ready to respond to God’s calling, to serving. I was a new creation in Christ.

Now we have a new conscience, a conscience sensitive to the Law of God. It is so sensitive it condemns us. Let's go back to 1 John, look at verses 19 and 20, "By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him;²⁰ for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything." As a well taught Christian my conscience is active and sensitive to wrong and sin, but when I repent and lay my sins at the foot of the cross Jesus cleanses me, refreshes me, He gives me hope and blessing – this is the meaning of my deliverance through Christ. When I sin I am condemned. My heart condemns me, my conscience condemns me, and this is good. I am condemned what do I do? I remember; Christ saved me and I was baptized as a sign of my commitment to Christ. I go back to verse 20, "whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart." A conscience focused on failure hammers us with guilt. But there is something greater than our conscience, there is something that can heal us – Christ hates sin, but covers our sin when we repent and turn to Him. As Paul said, "There is therefore now no condemnation..." Condemnation of what? It is simple, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death." (Romans 8:1-2)

When you and I sin and fall we go back to the position of gratitude for the grace of God in our life. God by His grace says, you are justified by the sacrifice of Christ. Christ loves you, just as He loved the apostles. Christ loved Peter and He is asking you the same questions He asked Peter, " 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He Jesus said to him Peter and he is saying to you, 'Tend My lambs.' " (John 21:15) Jesus asked this three times to show Peter the importance. How many times does Jesus have to ask you, before it sinks in He is calling you to lead a life of assurance

because of His sacrifice for you and that He wants you to serve others in His name.

As His child you know His love, He has given you a new heart and He has awakened your conscience. You have assurance of your salvation because of Christ. So, live the life He has called you to with courage, stand against evil, but also live with love and grace and mercy. This is the calling in your life from Christ and it my calling as your pastor. Go and live with passion for Christ and enjoy Him to the fullest!