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## **Heart Assurance**

### **1 John 3.19-24**

#### **Series: Blessed Assurance (Communion Series)**

**The Village Church**

**October 5, 2025**

#### **I. Introduction**

- A. We've had ring-side seats for the construction of a building
  - 1. Now, here at Shell Point, there's always been a lot of building
    - a. It's hard to remember a time when there wasn't a construction project of one sort or another taking place on campus
  - 2. But the construction of Vista Cay and the new amenities building is happening right in the center of the Island
    - a. In which about half of our community's residents are able to observe it's rising out of the ground, day by day
  - 3. And as we observe it we note how section by section, very methodically and purposefully, each construction element is placed
    - a. And how each element depends on previous elements
    - b. So that the edifice begins to take meaningful shape
  - 4. We seen the site preparation process
    - a. The underground infrastructure
    - b. The driving of pilings
    - c. The pouring of floors
    - d. The pouring of support columns
    - e. The building of walls
  - 5. And step by step, the nature and intention of the architects becomes more and more evident
- B. Good teachers do that too, as they build the edifices of learning
  - 1. For good education involves building a structure through which understanding and meaning develops
    - a. And sometimes the learner isn't even aware that an intellectual building is being constructed in the mind
    - b. But eventually, there it is!
    - c. And the world begins to make sense as the structure of learning becomes a framework through which the world begins to make sense
- C. John is just such an exceptional teacher
  - 1. His purpose in 1 John is to build an intellectual and spiritual building that would give us **Assurance of our salvation** in Jesus Christ
    - a. A spiritual edifice that can stand up to whatever hurricane-force winds the world might throw at us
  - 2. **1 John 5:13** (ESV) —

- a. 13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.
  3. The goal is knowledge
    - a. Knowledge that you have eternal life
  4. And John has been building this structure for assurance, brick by brick, as it were
  5. He lays a foundation of four tests, or four pillars, on which this building of assurance rests
    - a. **The Test of Love** – our love of our brothers and sisters assure us of our salvation
    - b. **The Test of Obedience** – our obedience of the commands of Christ further build our assurance
    - c. **The Test of Truth** – our confidence that Jesus is the incarnate Son of God further supports our assurance
    - d. **The Test of Abiding** – our continuing in our commitment to follow Christ is yet another pillar support our edifice of assurance
- D. Every now and then, in the process of construction, a new element is introduced
  1. A new element that builds on the elements already installed
  2. I've been enjoying the weekly videos produced by SPTV, starring Adam Hinds, in which he interviews John Southard and other project supervisors
    - a. As they explain the current project elements
  3. And almost always, a new element is introduced
- E. Well, in our text this morning, John does the same with us
  1. He introduces a new concept
    - a. The first time he's raised the issue in this epistle
    - b. Which is quite remarkable when we realize that we are more than half way through the epistle
  2. It's a concept that is integral to the building itself
    - a. As a matter of fact, it's an element that is integral to each of the pillars, or tests, that he's laid out for us
  3. This new concept is the **Heart**
- F. As important as the heart is in the Christian life, it is remarkable that John hasn't mentioned it up to this point
  1. I think it's been there all along
    - a. Just as concrete seems to have been integral in nearly every part of the buildings on the Island
  2. But now John introduces it into our spiritual edifice
    - a. Because it will be integral to our assurance
- G. And when John introduces a concept as crucial as the heart of the believer, he does it in spades
  1. He uses the word repeatedly – four times in just three verses
- H. Text
  1. **1 John 3:19–24** (ESV) —
    - a. 19 By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our **heart** before him;

- b. 20 for whenever our **heart** condemns us, God is greater than our **heart**, and he knows everything.
- c. 21 Beloved, if our **heart** does not condemn us, we have confidence before God;
- d. 22 and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.
- e. 23 And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.
- f. 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.

## II. **The Critical Organ**

- A. The **Heart** is the critical organ in the human life
  - 1. Of course, our physical heart looms large in our status of overall health
    - a. So much so, that serious heart defects are a matter of life or death
  - 2. Before the advent of electroencephalograms (EEG's), whether one's heart was beating or not was the determinative factor in assessing when someone has passed from this earthly existence
    - a. And it has been this way even since the ancient world, the world of the Bible
  - 3. That's why the same term, "heart", has been used metaphorically as the critical organ in one's spiritual health
- B. The word in the Greek for **Heart = kardio (Gk)**
  - 1. That's right – the same word from which we get our word "cardiac"
    - a. And certainly, in the Greek language kardio was used to refer to the physical heart, just like we do
    - b. But in the Bible, it's used more often to refer to the immaterial core of the human personality
  - 2. It refers, for instance, as **the origin of feelings and emotions**, both positive and negative
    - a. **Acts 2:26** (ESV) — 26 therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope.
    - b. **John 16:6** (ESV) — 6 But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.
  - 3. It also refers to **the seat of passions and desires**, again, positive and negative
    - a. **Romans 10:1** (ESV) — 1 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.
    - b. **Romans 1:24** (ESV) — 24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves...
  - 4. And it also refers to **the locus of our thinking and understanding**

- a. **John 12:40** (ESV) — 40 “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.”
  - b. **Romans 1:21** (ESV) — 21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.
- 5. But perhaps most importantly, it is **the center of our religious affections**, the means by which we ultimately relate to God, whether of the believer or the unbeliever
  - a. **Luke 16:15** (ESV) — 15 And he said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. ...”
  - b. **Romans 8:27** (ESV) — 27 And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.
  - c. **Mark 7:21** (ESV) — 21 For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery...
  - d. **Ephesians 4:18** (ESV) — 18 They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.
- 6. So it’s evident, that the Bible holds the heart, as the central operating system of the human life, to be the critical organ
  - a. Especially as it enables the human be to relate to God
  - b. Or as it defines the relative spiritual health of the human in the realm of moral desires, inclinations and intentions
- C. In our text, John uses the issue of heart in light of his purpose of assuring us of our salvation in Jesus Christ
  - 1. And behind all of this is the experience of the believer in which the heart – in its expressions of the mind, the emotions, the will, the affections – can either be the source of assurance or the source of doubt, and even of condemnation
  - 2. For the text speaks of our heart either being assured, or of being the source of our condemnation
  - 3. How is it, then, that the heart of the believer is to be assured?
    - a. Well, there are two ways
- D. **The Evidence of Love**
  - 1. **1 John 3:19** (ESV) —
    - a. 19 **By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him...**
  - 2. “By this...” refers to that which has just come before it
    - a. And what has come before refers to John’s first test, or pillar, of love for one another
  - 3. **1 John 3:17–18** (ESV) —
    - a. 17 But 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?

- b. 18 Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.
  - 4. In other words, as looks back at our lives, and assess our conduct toward our brothers and sisters – especially toward those in need
    - a. If we see that the general disposition of our lives, including our responses and conduct, is supportive of one another, personally and materially
    - b. Then our hearts can be encouraged, and we can be assured
  - 5. Recall from our last message in this series, the phrase “let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth”
    - a. So our love for our brothers and sisters need to be more than words
    - b. In spite of what we often say – “it’s the thought that counts” – it’s more than that
    - c. As James says, genuine faith is active and responsive, or it’s not genuine faith
  - 6. More than that, it’s not only in deed, but also in truth
    - a. That is the truth of the gospel
    - b. The truth of the commands of Christ
    - c. The true of the ethical framework of the Bible
    - d. It is not act of love to affirm what the Bible condemns as sin
    - e. **1 Corinthians 13:6** (ESV) — 6 [love] does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.
  - 7. So, when we act in such a way that there is evidence of this kind of love, our hearts are assured
    - a. Our minds think more accurately about our standing before God
    - b. Our wills are more confident in our purposes
    - c. Our emotions exhibit more joy
    - d. And our affections toward God are more satisfying and delightful
- E. **The Verdict of God**
  - 1. But what if we still find ourselves doubting our salvation, which can often be the case
    - a. This can be due to the disposition of our personalities – some are more naturally melancholy than others, more “glass half empty” kind of people than others
    - b. Or there may have been actions in the past that didn’t reflect the kind of love indicated in the verses just examined – and that may have left a stain or a wound in our hearts
    - c. And we find our hearts actually condemning us
  - 2. What to do then?
    - a. Well, then we go back to the spiritual drawing board, so to speak
    - b. That’s when we go to the doctor for an evaluation – a second opinion (although this should not be thought of as a second opinion, but a definitive judgment
    - c. This is when we let God do His assessment of our souls
  - 3. **1 John 3:20** (ESV) —

- a. 20 for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything.
- 4. So we go to God, as let Him be the judge
  - a. Because we really are not competent to judge ourselves
  - b. Oh, I know we all try to self-diagnose our physical ailments
  - c. How does that work out for you? Probably not all that well, or at least, not all that well consistently
- 5. 1 Corinthians 4:3–4 (ESV) —
  - a. 3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court.
  - b. In fact, I do not even judge myself.
  - c. 4 For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted.
  - d. It is the Lord who judges me.
- 6. But the test of God is really pretty simple
  - a. Here is the test: Do you trust in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation?
  - b. That is, do you trust in the righteousness of Christ alone, and not in your own righteousness, for your salvation?
  - c. Or do you trust in yourself, or your own resources, or your own supposed righteousness (of which you have none that can stand up to the holiness of God)?
  - d. Or do you trust in your own religious acts for your salvation?
  - e. Or perhaps you trust in Christ, plus something – plus your own works, your own religious activity, your own charitable acts, your own whatever?
  - f. Or perhaps you trust in something you did in the past, like walk an aisle or raise a hand at an evangelistic meeting? As valuable as that was, that is not the basis of one's assurance of salvation
- 7. No, the issue is simply, is Jesus Christ, and Him alone, His righteousness, His life, His death paying the penalty for your sin, His resurrection
  - a. Is this Jesus, and Him alone, your Savior?
- 8. That's what we've been hearing over and over again in our study of Romans!
- 9. Romans 3:21–25 (ESV) —
  - a. 21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—
  - b. 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:
  - c. 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
  - d. 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,
  - e. 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.

- f. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.
- 10. If you trust in this Jesus alone for your salvation, the verdict is in!
  - a. You are not guilty!
  - b. God looks at you and sees Jesus!
- 11. **Romans 8:1** (ESV) —
  - a. 1 **There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.**
- 12. How's that for assurance?
- 13. Now, having said that, I still run into people, believers, who will acknowledge all of those things
  - a. They do trust in Jesus alone for their salvation
  - b. They do understand the scripture that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus
  - c. But who still, because of some sin or pattern of conduct which they know to have been reprehensible, refuse to forgive themselves
  - d. They think they need to continue to carry guilt over those sins, as if their atonement isn't complete unless they make themselves miserable
- 14. And when I've seen such dear folks in counseling, and listen to their stories, and hear their testimonies, I usually say something like this:
  - a. "There is one sin that you've yet confessed"
  - b. This is usually surprising, even shocking, to them, for they have often done more soul searching than anyone can imagine, and really don't know what I'm talking about
  - c. So they say, "What sin is that?"
  - d. And I say, "It's unbelief"
- 15. When they look at me with their puzzled expressions, I say this:
  - a. "You say you trust in Jesus for your salvation.
  - b. "You know the scriptures that say that if you believe in Jesus Christ alone for salvation that you are justified before God.
  - c. "You know that the scriptures say that if you have been justified by faith there is no condemnation.
  - d. "So you know, then, that God forgives all of your sins.
  - e. "But you refuse to forgive yourself!
  - f. "Who do you think you are?
  - g. "Are you greater than God?
  - h. "Why don't you believe Him?"
- 16. Dear friends, if you truly do trust Jesus alone for your salvation, and the verdict of God is "Not guilty!"
  - a. How arrogant of you to disbelieve Him!
- 17. No! Receive the verdict of God
  - a. **He is greater than your heart, and He knows everything**
- 18. And that, ultimately, is your greatest source of assurance

### III. Confidence Before God

- A. Now, how important is it to have this assurance of salvation?
  - 1. The text gives us two wonderful benefits
- B. Access
  - 1. 1 John 3:21 (ESV) —
    - a. 21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God...
  - 2. John uses the word “confidence” several times in this epistle
    - a. In two of those cases, he speaks of confidence in the final judgment
    - b. 1 John 2:28 (ESV) — 28 And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.
    - c. 1 John 4:17 (ESV) — 17 By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment...
  - 3. But in this verse it refers to confidence “before God” in our communion with Him, specifically in prayer
  - 4. We can come confidently before God because if we are justified by God through faith in Christ we have unfettered access to God
  - 5. Romans 5:2 (ESV) —
    - a. 2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.
  - 6. The veil of the temple has been torn asunder
    - a. There is no longer any separation between us and God through Christ, our Savior
    - b. We can come to Him with the utmost confidence that when we approach Him, He welcomes us into His presence
    - c. Like the king did with Queen Esther, when he extended the golden scepter to her when she approached
    - d. But even more with us!
    - e. There is no reluctance on God’s part when we approach
    - f. No suspicion, no hesitation
    - g. Just the opposite – just God’s delight in our approach – just as you, as grandparents, light up when your grandchildren come to spend time with you!
  - 7. And by the way, we do not need to approach God through any kind of mediator
    - a. Christ is our only mediator, and He has already given us direct access to the Father
    - b. No need to approach through any other medium
    - c. Praying to the saints – what an insult to the finished work of Jesus Christ on our behalf!
    - d. And yes, praying to Mary as if she is the mediatrix – why would do such a thing when you have direct access to God the Father through faith in Jesus Christ, your only Savior!
  - 8. Hebrews 4:16 (ESV) —



- a. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
- C. **Answered Prayer**
  - 1. Not only may we approach the Father with confidence, we may be confident that He not only hears, but also answers, our prayers
  - 2. **1 John 3:21–23 (ESV) —**
    - a. 21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God;
    - b. 22 and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.
    - c. 23 And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.
  - 3. What a promise!
    - a. Whatever we ask, we receive!
  - 4. And yet, there are conditions
    - a. “Because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.”
  - 5. And what are His commandments? And what pleases Him?
    - a. Believing in His Son Jesus Christ
    - b. And loving one another
  - 6. In other words, fulfilling the tests, or pillars, of our assurance
    - a. The pillar of love
    - b. And the pillar of truth – knowing Jesus to be the incarnate Son of God
  - 7. When we meet those conditions, you can be sure that God will answer
    - a. And whatever His answer, it will be to your great benefit and blessing
    - b. Even when the answer is “No!” or when it is “Not yet!”
    - c. He will answer
    - d. And we can be confident that He will, as long as our hearts are assured

#### IV. **The Abiding Heart**

- A. Finally, John adds yet another new element to the building of assurance that he is building in us
  - 1. And that concept is the ministry of the Holy Spirit
- B. Now again, I think the Spirit has been there all along
  - 1. But this is the first time John has mentioned the Spirit’s work in this epistle
- C. **1 John 3:24 (ESV) —**
  - 1. 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.
- D. John has addressed the issue of abiding earlier in this epistle
  - 1. But in that case the emphasis is on the continuing in the faith
  - 2. But now he speaks more of the spiritual union we have with God, and God with us

- a. And the Holy Spirit is the person who effects that abiding
  - b. The person who indwells the believer, accomplishing the spiritual union we have with God
- E. Incredible! God with us!
  - 1. Or, as Paul says,
    - a. **Colossians 1:27** (ESV) — 27 To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory.**
- F. We have assurance because of the Spirit who indwells us
  - 1. As a matter of fact, the only way any of those other elements of our assurance are realized – the pillars of love, of obedience, of truth, of abiding – is because of the ministry of the indwelling Spirit
  - 2. “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.”
  - 3. Your commandment keeping, your loving, your obedience – is evidence of the Spirit’s work in you
- G. So our master builder – John – continues to erect this wonderful edifice of assurance, this structure, this framework, this cathedral!
  - 1. By giving us a heart of confidence before God
  - 2. A heart that does not condemn us
    - a. Just the opposite
  - 3. A heart that assures us that we belong to Him