

Overcoming A Condemned Heart

#9

1 John 3:18-24

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Last week we saw how the Apostle John states the absolute necessity of love for the true Christian. Love manifested towards others is one of the first evidences that one is truly born from above. There is no such thing as a loveless Christianity.
- B. Love is the most talked about subject in the world today. In the brothels of Haight-Ashbury, it is perhaps the most popular word in the hippie language. The jargon of psychologists and psychiatrists is certainly filled with love. And from Hollywood we encounter its version of love in enormous quantities of technicolor and stereophonic passion. The religions of the world speak freely of love. Yet it is easy to see that though the world continues to talk about love, the world actually grows increasingly more loveless.
- C. The Apostle John tells us that only Christians can produce the highest kind of love. Agape love which is supernatural love; it is a love of self-sacrifice that comes only from God and results in truly helping other people. It is a love that loves the unlovely and does good to one's enemies.

II. THE COMMAND TO LOVE 3:18

- A. ***“Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue”*** – Christians are not to talk about love but to practice it. Love is not sentiment nor talk, but genuine acts towards others. It must be more than simply a warm thought or an intention or an imagined act.

The old Scotchman had it right when he said that “love is better felt than telt.”

- B. ***“But with actions and in truth.”*** – The Christian proves his love by what he practices and not what he preaches. Actions speak louder than words.

Love is according to truth (the truth of the Word of God). Thus it is not hyper-emotionalism or sickly sentimentality or effeminate softness nor is it gushing all over people with obnoxious flattery. No! It is a love based upon the unchanging truths of God's Holy Word.

III. THE CONDEMNED HEART 3:19-20

- A. ***“This then is how we know we belong to the truth,”*** – A Christian can actually know in his experience that he or she is a child of God through faith in Christ Jesus. How? When he sees a self-sacrificing love come forth from his heart to others. He begins to live for others rather than himself. Agape love is not natural to man in his fallen condition of sin, so when it shows up, it proves that Christ is really in a person and that person is evidencing salvation. *It is impossible to be a Christian and not progressively demonstrate agape love.*
- B. ***“And how we set our hearts at rest in his presence”*** – When a Christian begins to see his attitudes and life change, this gives him great assurance. He now begins to love those that he never loved before and loves those whom he thought he loved with new power and dynamic. This brings a tranquilizing-like effect to the human heart, for this is proof positive that something has happened. This is something objective and tangible that we can point to as evidence of the reality of salvation in Christ.
- C. ***“Whenever our hearts condemn us.”*** – This is the key to understanding this section of scripture. The Christian, after reading or hearing about the necessity of love to demonstrate the reality of his faith, probably will have some misgivings in thought about his own salvation. No man has ever loved perfectly and one might think, “Am I as loving as I should be?” His failures in love and duty to the Lord loom up before him as a gigantic mountain. The result is that his own heart condemns him. He is pricked in conscience about his failures and shortcomings. This is not a reference to a condemned heart when we do an outward, blatant, voluntary act of sin. For John has already told us that we are to confess this sin to God, for Christ died for it and then we are to keep moving in fellowship with the Lord. This condemnation in context refers to the failures, lack of opportunities, and indifference in exercising love to others. The devil would like nothing better than to get Christian people looking retrospectively over their lives and say, “Maybe I’m not saved. I have missed so many opportunities?” He would seek to discourage God’s children so as to make them ineffective in the Lord’s service.

When discouragement comes, confess it to the Lord. He understands the problem. Then get up and by God’s grace seek to do a deed or some act of love for another person. It doesn’t have to be something big but something to show self-sacrifice for others. Somehow this brings a person out of his shell of self-pity.

- D. ***“For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.”*** – When our hearts condemn us (and we all experience this kind of condemnation at times), we should contemplate God and realize that He is able to deliver and that He, in his omniscience, knows all about it. God knows the very worst about His children and yet he goes on loving them. Our discovery of condemnation has been an open secret to Him all along and he still cares for us. God will discipline His children fairly. Therefore, His omniscience should relieve, not terrify, us. While John doesn’t say it, he certainly implies that the cure for a condemned heart is to

confess the sin and begin to love people. The Devil would tell us that we cannot forgive and love, but God says the true Christian can and will forgive and love. You are of the truth, and therefore you can forgive another, and you can bless another heart, and you can minister in grace to another. Much of the loneliness, weakness and emptiness of people's lives are a result of shutting themselves away from the needs of others. Most of the problems of anxiety, restlessness and guilt could be tremendously alleviated if men would show some deliberate, active expressions of love for others through the power of Jesus Christ working in them.

IV. THE UNCONDEMNED HEART 3:21-24

- A. ***“Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God”*** – The person who loves, has an untroubled conscience, is a person that is walking in fellowship with his God. He has no known unconfessed sin in his life and he is occupied with Jesus Christ. This gives him confidence or boldness before God. His life is dynamic and meaningful, for he is in constant communion with the God of heaven and earth. Christianity is often not appealing to men because it is thought to be lifeless.

People often think of Christianity as dull, boring, mediocre and sterile because they have not experienced the excitement of true Christian living which is nothing more than knowing the God of heaven and earth in a personal way. They have not entered into a relationship where they see God working, answering prayer and giving life new meaning. There is nothing more exciting than to see an invisible God do, in your life, visible things which only He could do; meeting our needs, satisfying our hearts, accomplishing our desires, doing what we could never do. Christianity is not dull by dynamic!

- B. ***“And receive from him anything we ask,”*** – The person in fellowship with his Lord can ask God for things with boldness and expect to get a positive answer to prayer.
Psa. 66:18: “If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.” There is simply no limit to the nature or the type of request whether it is physical, spiritual, material or emotional. It does not always mean that we will get what we ask for; too often we ask things in selfishness that we might consume it upon our own lusts. However, God does and will answer prayer. There are many times when we see God supply a need, change an attitude, reverse decisions or restrain violence in direct answer to our prayers.

One time in seminary, my wife and I were flat broke. Now the Lord has provided for me in marvelous ways. Sometimes with large sums of money. But this time was a marvelous provision. We had no milk for our children and practically no gas in our car. It was Sunday morning and I had to teach a Sunday school class which was eight miles away. I prayed that the car would get me to the church and that we could have milk for our children. Well, I got to the church and that was a miracle. I arrived about twenty minutes early

and seeing the church was close to the seminary, I thought I would take a walk to the seminary and back. I took this time to prepare my heart in prayer. When I got to the seminary, something urged me to go to my mailbox at school. This thought seemed strange for I had been to my box the day before just about ten minutes before closing time. So I went to my box and in the box were two one dollar bills. What a joy. I put one dollar towards gas and one dollar towards milk and this held us over until Monday when we received a check in the mail. God knew our need before we ever asked, but I'm convinced that two dollars would not have been there had I not prayed.

C. **“Because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.”** – Now several conditions for answered prayer are set forth. God will answer our prayer if we are obedient in keeping His commandments. If we are desirous to have our wills in submission to His commands. Also if we are pleasing God. Not just keeping his commands but in everything we have an attitude that wants to please God. How many people there are who want God to answer prayer but they are not willing to meet His conditions for prayer. If God is not answering your prayers, perhaps you are regarding iniquity in your heart or you are indifferent to being an obedient Christian.

D. **“And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.”**—Now John singles out two of the most important commands. Men are to come by and act of faith and initially commit themselves to Jesus Christ and they are to keep on believing in Christ. Faith is the key to Christianity
Heb. 11:6: **“And without faith it is impossible to please God.”** The second of these commandments is that Christians should love one another. **Matt. 22:37-39:** **“Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”** **John 13:34-35:** **“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”**

When the Apostle was in his ebbing days, they would carry him into the church and he would repeat over and over, “Love one another.” They would say, “Why do you keep repeating this?” He answered, “If only you would keep this command it would be enough!”

E. **“Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them.”** – Again the Apostle points out that obedience is the mark of one who is truly abiding in Christ. No one may dare claim that he abides in Christ and Christ in him unless he is obedient to the three fundamental commandments which John has been expounding, which are belief in Christ, love for the brethren and moral righteousness based on obedience.

- F. ***“And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.”*** – God has given every Christian the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The presence of the Spirit will make Himself known through the life of the believer in Christ. Christians have the assurance that the Holy Spirit will enable them to live righteously and to love the brethren. No Christian can ever be the same as he was before he was a Christian because the Holy Spirit lives within him – convicting of sin and changing him into the image of Christ.

V. CONCLUSION

- A. The Christian life is an adventure, for Christ told us that he has come to bring men life and to bring it more abundantly.
- B. Jesus Christ will take any person who acknowledges that he is a sinner in acts and attitudes and give him or her a new kind of life. ***“If any man is in Christ he is a new creation.”***
- C. But this new kind of life is conditioned upon one’s acknowledgement of his sinful condition and a turning to Jesus Christ who alone can forgive those who are away from God. How does one become a Christian? ***“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.”***
- D. ***“For by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is a gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast.”***