

DRIVE THE DARK OF DOUBT AWAY

1 John 3:19-24

INTRODUCTION

Illustration – There is an expression in the high tech business world, “Spreading FUD.” → “FUD” is something your competition intentionally spreads in order to put you at a disadvantage.

The phrase dates from the early 20th century.

But the prevailing usage now is in the High Tech industry.

What does “FUD” stand for → Fear, Uncertainty, and Doubt

Application – **James 1:6-7** – “But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, ⁸*being* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

That is what doubt is like in the heart of a man or woman. It shakes the foundation. We want our heart to be firm and own the words we sing when we sing about how firm a foundation we have in Jesus.

→ Heart Assurance vs. Heart Condemnation

One of the privileges of being a shepherd of the flock is to be able to provide comfort, confidence, and peace to those sheep who are in fear and doubt.

→ This is the pastoral heart of **John**

John 5:24 – “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.”

Is “eternal life” really eternal?

→ True Christians have eternal salvation.

But some don’t enjoy it because they don’t think they have it.

The Council of Trent – conducted between 1545 and 1563 in Trent, northern Italy, one of the Roman Catholic Church’s most serious ecumenical councils. During this event, they placed an anathema on the biblical gospel of salvation by faith alone.

Also → “*No one can know with a certainty of faith ... that he has obtained the grace of God. No one can ever know that he’s obtained saving grace.*”

Is that right? Doesn’t that quote seem to go in direct contradiction of what we read in Scripture?

For example, 1 John 5:13.

John writes to: alarm the self-assured and to encourage the faint hearted.

3:4-10 Doing is the test of being

→ What you do proves what you are.

3:11-18 Love – The distinguishing mark of the presence of God

→ **READ 1 John 3:19-24**

Proposition: John gives us **3 Encouragements:**

- I. **Assurance**
- II. **Confidence**
- III. **Obedience**

So That: To drive the dark of doubt away

I. Assurance **1 John 3:19-20**

Point – Let me begin with a question ...

Is **assurance** an objective rational reality?

Or is **assurance** a subjective emotional experience?

If you said “Assurance is an objective rational reality,” you are on safe ground. This is where the weight of the glory of God and the doctrines of grace in the pages of Scripture lead us.

However, if you said, “Pastor, I fear you may have committed the logical fallacy of false bifurcation.” (In other words, a false “either-or”) You might have continued, “I believe our assurance is, in the main, an objective rational reality ... but ... could it also have a whisper of subjective emotional experience?”

→ If you said this, you are on track with the thinking of the Apostle John in our passage ...

Assurance is: An objective rational reality outside of us AND a subjective emotional experience inside of us.

Proof – “¹⁹**We shall know by this that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before Him,** ²⁰**in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.**”

“**We shall know by this**” – this phrase brackets our text (vv. 19 and 24)

- v.19 - objective rational reality outside of us
- v.24 – subjective emotional experience inside of us

“**that we are of the truth**”

1 John 1:6, 8; **2:4, 21**; 3:18-19; 4:6; 5:6;

2 John 1:1-4; 3 John 1:1, 3-4, 8, 12

People who are of the truth, → love in deed and truth (v. 18)
We are people of the Book.

“^{19b}**and shall assure our heart before Him**” – from the Greek word *παίθω* (from which we get the English word ‘pathos’)

- means to *convince, persuade*; allay fears; *believe*
- it comes from a word meaning to tranquilize, to calm
- to soothe an alarmed conscience, to calm fear and doubt

→ to set a troubled heart at rest

Psa 2:12 – “Do homage to the Son, lest He become angry, and you perish *in* the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!”

Psa 11:1 – “In the LORD I take refuge;”

Matt 28:14 – “And if this should come to the governor's ears, we will win him over and keep you out of trouble.”

Phil 1:6 – “*For I am confident* of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Phil 1:25 – “convinced of this”

Phil 2:24 = “I trust in the Lord”

NIV – “we set our hearts at rest in his presence”

In our text today, John highlights:

The **Condemnation** we face, the **Confidence** we discover,
The **Command** we obey, and the **Communion** we enjoy

First, the **Condemnation** we face ...

“^{20a}**in whatever our heart condemns us;**”

Illustration – The Tell-Tale Heart is a short story by Edgar Allan Poe published in 1843. It is told by an unnamed narrator who attempts to convince the reader of his sanity while describing a murder he committed.

The victim was an old man. The murder was carefully calculated. The narrator dismembers the body and hides it under his floorboards. But his feelings of guilt results in him hearing what he believes to be the dead man's heart still beating.

Some folks think the sound he was hearing was the beating of his own heart. Others think Poe intended the sound to be that of deathwatch beetles.

But the murderer is so plagued by what he perceives to be the sound of the beating heart of his murder victim, he tears up the floorboards and reveals the dismembered body he concealed to the police.

Point – God's intent here is not to drive you farther under your bed. His intent is not to lead you further into despair.

“^{20b}**for God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.**”

As we grow in Christ, we learn to doubt our doubts.
We learn to become more uncertain about our uncertainties.

Col 2:2 – “the full assurance of understanding,”

Col 4:12 – “fully assured in all the will of God.”

Heb 6:11 – “realize the full assurance of hope”

Heb 10:22 – “let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith”

Illustration – The forgiving father and the conviction of the son in the pigsty. He returns not to be a son, but to be a servant. And what did he receive? A lavish reception and a party ☺

Illustration – In *Pilgrim's Progress*, **Pilgrim** and **Hopeful** find themselves in **Doubting Castle**. They are there from Wednesday to Saturday, tortured by the **Giant Despair**.

Finally, on Sunday morning, **Christian** remembers a key he has called **Promise** that will open any lock in **Doubting Castle**.

Christian pulls out the key and opens the dungeon door with ease and **Christian** and **Hopeful** both come out.

Application – In the same way, we need to remember God’s promise to you as His child. We need to remember the danger when preaching is weak ...when holiness is not exalted ... when the Gospel is minimized ... where you’re told to lift your hand, walk an altar, or repeat a prayer to invite Jesus into your life →

There is a danger of not understanding the true gospel.
There is a danger of not understanding the high cost of discipleship...of not understanding the lordship of Christ. ...of not understanding true repentance ...and a danger of not understanding the pursuit of holiness.

But when preaching is strong ... when holiness is upheld ...
When the biblical gospel is proclaimed ... when there is a call for true repentance and genuine faith is displayed
... God’s children are encouraged and strengthened and God is pleased to save many.

II. Confidence 1 John 3:21-22

Point – We move from the **Condemnation** we face.
John now highlights the **Confidence** we discover.

Proof – “²¹**Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God;** ²²**and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.**”

“**Beloved**” – Pastor John’s tender heart

“if our heart does not condemn us”

Beloved, by God’s grace, we no longer have the tell-tale heart of festering guilt

By God’s grace, the true heart knows its King when He speaks and ... **“we have confidence before God”**

This is not natural arrogance, but spiritual confidence.

This is a fearless attitude that is open and clear. This is a heart that is brave with conviction and courage in the face of danger.
→ The right to speak freely of a full citizen of a Greek city-state

The last verse of Acts → **Paul** is under house arrest in Rome
...

Acts 28:31 – “preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.”

→ this same word is translated as “**boldness**” in **Phil 1:20** and **Acts 4:31**

2:28 – “little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.”

“^{22a}**and whatever we ask we receive from Him**”

John 14:14 – “If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do *it*.”

John 16:23 – “Truly, truly, I say to you, if you shall ask the Father for anything, He will give it to you in My name.”

Point – The **Condemnation** we face, The **Confidence** we discover,

→ The **Command** we obey

“^{22b}**because we keep His commandments**”

This is at the very heart of being a disciple.

Stott – the indispensable condition, not the meritorious cause

Definition of True Discipleship →

Matt 28:19-20 – “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

“^{22c}**and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.**”

This is NOT stating the exact same thing twice.

“**keep(ing) His commandments**” is obeying the ‘black and white’ revealed will of God. “**do(ing) the things that are pleasing in His sight**” is making right decisions in the gray areas of the unrevealed will.

Illustration – A mother and her ten-year-old daughter were finishing their breakfast when a phone call urgently requested the mother to come to a neighbor’s home because of an emergency. Before leaving, the mother asked her daughter to wash the dishes and clean the kitchen while she was gone.

The daughter washed and carefully replaced the dishes, cleared off the kitchen stove, and swept the floor. Since her mother was not back yet, she went into her brother’s room and made the bed and cleaned the room. Then she took a broom and carefully swept the living room floor and the front porch because she knew it would please her mother.

→ This daughter’s love for her mother prompted her to go above and beyond her mother’s specific command.

Application – Beloved, in the same way, you will face situations in your life which are not be covered by a specific command from God. But your love for your Savior will

prompt you to act in a way you know will be pleasing to the Lord.

III. Obedience

1 John 3:23-24

Point – 19th century Scottish theologian **Peter Forsythe** – “*The first duty of every soul is not to find its freedom, but its Master.*”

I will add to this choice statement → when the soul has found its Master (really, when the Master has found the soul ☺), that soul is emancipated from the bondage of the will to sin and the fear of death.

Proof – “²³**And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.** ²⁴**And the one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And we know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.**”

This is a twofold “**commandment**” – John moves from plural commandments (v. 22) to a singular commandment (v. 23) to plural commandments again (24)

→ entirety **Matt 28:20** – “keep all that I commanded you.”

1) “**believe**” – πιστεύω – same root as faith → faith works

2) “**and love**” – Edwards – “*Love is the chief holy affection.*”

These two are connected. You cannot truly believe without loving nor can you truly love without first believing.

Believe in what? The text continues:

“**we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ**” → This is not offering up some limp shallow prayer and then closing

every time with the magic mantra, “In Jesus’ name.” This is not saying, “Jesus is my homeboy. I’m good with him.”

→ Jesus is NOT just another option on the endless conveyor belt of religious figures.

The “**name of**” Jesus means who He is, His character. It means His authority. It means His Lordship. It means being under all He commands.

Again, on this side of glory, not perfectly. But this is our heart’s desire.

This is captured well in the following sweet hymn:

*My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus’ name.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.*

Illustration – H.A. Ironside told the story of the time an elderly man came to him after a service distressed as to whether or not he was saved. The old man said, “I will not go on unless I know I’m saved or else know it’s hopeless to seek to be sure of it. I want a definite witness, something I can’t be mistaken about!”

Ironside replied, “Suppose you had a vision of an angel who told you your sins were forgiven. Would that be enough to rest on?” “Yes, I think it would. An angel would be enough.”

Ironside continued, “But suppose on your deathbed Satan came and said, ‘I was that angel, transformed to deceive you.’ What would you say then?” The man was speechless.

Application – Ironside then told him God has given us something more dependable than the voice of an angel. He has given “**His Son**,” the man, “**Jesus Christ**,” who died for our sins. And He testifies in His own Word if we trust Him our sins are gone. “We believe in the name of His son, Jesus Christ”

^{24a}**And the one who keeps His commandments”**

Beloved, our sins are: **confessed** and **forgiven** on the one hand ... and **repented** and **forsaken** on the other hand.

Point – The **Condemnation** we face, the **Confidence** we discover, the **Command** we obey → The **Communion** we enjoy

Proof –

“^{24b}**abides in Him, and He in him. And we know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.**”

This is the first explicit reference to the **Holy Spirit** in 1 John
→ sets stage for **4:1-6**

“**we know by this**” → the same expression as v.19

Assurance is: an objective rational reality outside of us
AND a subjective emotional experience inside of us.

Rom 8:15-17a – “For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’ ¹⁶The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ^{17a}and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ,”

Another sweet hymn speaks to this:

*Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee, God of glory, Lord of love;
Hearts unfold like flowers before Thee, opening to the sun
above.*

*Melt the clouds of sin and sadness; drive the dark of doubt
away;*

Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day!

→ Beloved, God is not the author of unfinished business. He completes what He starts.

Isa 32:17 – “The work of righteousness shall be **peace** and the effect of righteousness: **quietness** and **assurance forever.**”

That is God’s promise to you and to me.

CONCLUSION