

The First Epistle of John

...so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ (1John 1:3)

1John 3:19-20

Review

Where is John writing from?

What heresy was he addressing?

What flavor of Gnosticism was John specifically dealing with?

What did the heretics teach?

How does John deal with this false teaching?

1John 1:6-10

Someone else read 1Jn 3:4-24

The 3 tests:

Moral Test of Obedience or Righteousness (2:28 – 3:10)

Social Test of love (3:11 – 3:18)

A digression about the our assurance of salvation and our condemning heart (3:19 – 3:24)

Doctrinal Test of truth about Christ (4:1 – 6)

Someone read v19-20

“We will know by this...” By what?

Gk = future tense = as reflected in the NASB, ESV, NET; but not the NIV, KJV, NKJV

Does anyone know why?

Variants between *receptus* and the earlier Greek MSS

“...of the truth...” Gk = *ek tēs alēthias* = out of the truth, or we originate in the truth.

“...assure our hearts...”

“Assure” (Gk = *peithein*) – usually means “to convince or to persuade” in the NT. But here means “to pacify, to assure” NIV “to set our hearts at rest.” (see Mt 28:14, 2 Mac 4:45)

But Menelaus being now convicted, promised Ptolomee the sonne of Dorymenes, to giue him much money, if hee would pacifie the King towards him.

“...before Him...”

Emphatic phrase in the Greek

Who is meant by “Him?”
God the Father or God the Son?

“Before” (Gk ἔμπροσθεν) – Literally, to stand in front of, either literally at the Day of Judgment, or figuratively in prayer.

Read v19-20

“...in whatever our heart condemns us;”

“in whatever” = *ho ti an* – e.g., Jn 2:5, 14:13

“our heart” = *hēmōn hē kardia* – “of us, the heart”

The definite article serves to make the noun generic (or representative of a class), hence a plural translation is perfectly valid, as is “conscience” (NIV and NET).

“condemns us” = *Kataginōskō* - literally “to know against”

Used in only 2 other places in the NT (1Jn 3:21; Gal 2:11).

“For” or “Because” is what word in the Greek?

“God is greater than our heart”

“Greater” – not just qualitatively greater, but also “greater in power, authority, or character.”

“...and knows all things.”

So, what’s John mean by this admittedly difficult passage?

We must bear several facts in mind when considering this question:

1. John is writing to assure his readers of that if they are obedient and love their brothers and sisters in Christ with pure, *agape* love, they can *know* beyond a shadow of doubt that they are born of God.
2. Christians often suffer from a guilty conscience, either because they have fallen into gross sin, and the Holy Spirit does His job and convicts our hearts; or they have been passed over in favor of someone else who (in their minds) is not as worthy as they are; or they have become inactive in their Christian walk.
 - a. I don’t believe John is talking about the first instance. He has already addressed what to do in this case (1:9). Confession does

not restore us to the Father's love (which He longs to lavish on us always), but it restores us to the rich, open relationship we long for with our Father in heaven.

- b. But what about the other two areas – being passed over or lacking an energetic faith?
 - i. Let's consider the area #2: Perhaps you don't feel appreciated for all the things you do. You have labored long, but no one seems to notice. No one seems to care that you have put forth so much effort.
 - ii. Or perhaps you did something with every good intention, but you were misunderstood. Instead of being grateful, they were angry and denounced you. You may even be tempted to believe their accusations.
 - iii. You may say to yourself, "Maybe they're right maybe I haven't been motivated rightly after all. How do I know my heart was right? Maybe others see more clearly than I do. Maybe I'm not a Christian after all."
 - iv. I think this is one experience John is describing here.
 - v. Now let's consider area #3: This may occur after one has been long inactive as a Christian.
 - vi. You have been disabled, laid aside, sick, or have perhaps taken a long vacation from your faith. The enemy is quick to come in and try to twist this into a sense of condemnation.
 - vii. He says: "The trouble with you is, you don't care anymore. You're lazy. You're indifferent. The reason is because you're not even a Christian.
 - viii. You do not recognize this as the voice of the Evil One, and feel it is your own heart speaking and you feel a sense of condemnation.
3. What's the remedy?
 - a. Knowing that we are "of" the truth. We must reestablish the fact of our relationship with Christ. We must have ground for believing and reassuring ourselves that we are indeed "justified by faith," standing in God's presence not by our own righteousness but by Christ's.
 - b. Romans 8:1
 - c. In Christ all that he is appears on our behalf and therefore there is no condemnation for those who are in Him.
 - d. Read Ephesians 6:14. What does the breastplate protect?
 - e. Realize again that you are "of the truth," for it is by the mind's knowledge that heart's doubts are silenced.
4. How do we do this? It is easier said than done.
 - a. But again John provides the answer: "By this - By this we know that we are of the truth." By what? Look at v18.
 - b. To gain this assurance, we must love deliberately! Put love into action!

- c. Do a kind and helpful deed, or speak a loving word to the one who has injured us or has caused us to be plunged into the morass of condemnation.
 - d. Matt 5:44
5. This is radical, isn't it? This is revolutionary – so much so that we find it very difficult to do. We reject it, for the most part, and this is why we spend so much of our time under a sense of condemnation.

I'll conclude with a quote from John Stott's commentary on this passage:
"Stronger than any chemical tranquilizer is trust in our all-knowing God."

I am sure these words have great practical value for God's people. For what is a tranquilizer but an attempt by chemical means to achieve an ease of spirit, peace of heart.

Hasn't God made more than ample provision through the spiritual mechanism of reassuring our hearts before him by means of active love in our lives? All this passage is really saying to us is that most of the problems of anxiety and guilt would be tremendously alleviated, if not completely eliminated, by some deliberate, active expression of self-giving love.