

1st John

Lesson 11 “How To Assure Your Heart”

I. Introduction - Over the last year, we have studied one of the largest and most influential churches in the first century, which was the church in Ephesus.

A. The Apostle Paul started this work and then turned the church over to his protégé Timothy. After Paul's death, John became the apostolic authority to this church and the churches in Asia Minor and did a lot of ministry in Ephesus.

B. *1 John* is a follow up to *Ephesians*, *1st* and *2nd Timothy* which were written to the church in Ephesus. This letter was written in Ephesus and went to this church and other churches in this region.

1. John wrote to combat the first heresy in the early church, Gnosticism.
2. Gnosticism taught a dualism (2 gods - a higher level god who was distant and removed and a lesser god (The demiurge) who created the world and everything in it. Gnostics taught all matter was evil and so it was impossible to do good because everything created was inherently evil, therefore why try to do good?
3. Gnostics also taught Jesus didn't come in the flesh because if He did, He would have been evil since all matter is evil.
4. Taught Jesus didn't come to save us from our sins, but from our ignorance.
5. The gnostics didn't focus their teaching on the scriptures, but rather a mystical *gnosis* (knowledge). This was secret knowledge and for the select few.
6. All of these teachings contradict the message of the gospel and discipleship. Jesus came in the flesh to save us from our sins and reveal the father. God created the world in His image and it is good. Jesus came to transform us and the world back into the original image. Jesus's teachings weren't secret, but declared plainly in the scriptures and the church was told to share and disciple the world.

C. A big part of what we have looked at so far in *1 John 3*, is the process of transformation. We have seen that just because we are no longer under the law of Moses, we are not called to be a law unto ourselves; we are called to the higher law of love (**James 2:8**) - love God and people.

1. The challenge with this is sometimes we will miss it and when we do it is easy to go back under the law of Moses and condemn ourselves.
2. This is why the next several verses talk about how to assure (persuade) our heart we are right with God when we blow it in the process of transformation.

II. How To Assure Your Heart

A. **1 John 3:15-23**

1. **Verse 15-16** These verses are connected. A true believer does not practice hatred toward others. We have a practice of laying down our life for others.
 - a. We know God's love by looking at His actions.
 - b. The key to learning and walking in this is focusing on Jesus's love for us. Also **1 John 4:19**.
2. **Verse 17** This question is a litmus test of love. If I have to give to someone who has a legit need and do not, I have to ask the question, do I really have God's love in me? Am I really born again?
3. **Verse 18** Amplifies on this by saying to love in action, not just word. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Your actions speak so loudly I can't hear what you're saying."
4. **Verse 19** The challenge with the previous verses is that the best of us are going to have times where we miss it. We are going to have times where we had to give time, money, resources, etc and did not. Does this mean we aren't born again?
 - a. This is why John says we have to assure (persuade) our heart.
 - b. **Matthew 27:20 Example** - You have to talk yourself into this.
 - c. By what truth do we assure or persuade our heart?
5. **Verse 20** Our heart can condemn us when God does not. If you are born again, God will never condemn you. **Romans 8:1 NKJV, Romans 8:1 TPT** - When you are in Christ, you are in Christ. Your actions don't get you in. Your actions are simply a revelation of your nature. **Ephesians 2:1-3 KJV** describes our old nature.
 - a. Application to this is while the Holy Spirit dwells in our heart, we cannot always trust our heart. We have to spend time in the word breaking off carnal lies we have believed to pick up on the voice of the spirit.
 - b. Our heart is comprised of soul and spirit. The word helps us pick up on the spirit. **Hebrews 4:12** - Car example.
6. **Verse 21** When our hearts don't condemn us, we have confidence toward God (faith). Ex: I've seen more people get healed off a revelation of healing than teaching them about healing.
7. **Verses 22-23** When we ask we receive if we keep His commandments....And this is the commandment. We believe in Jesus and out of the overflow we are loving or wanting to love others (subjunctive). **That's it and this is the truth we are to persuade our hearts with.**
 - a. Look back at **verse 17**. If you habitually don't want to help those in need when you can, you probably aren't born again. But if you at least have desire to though you fall short and miss the mark, you can comfort/persuade your heart you are right with God because you believe in Jesus and love others. That's the litmus test.

III. Conclusion - I didn't teach any of the above to encourage sin or selfishness. I taught it because many of us have sensitive hearts and when we miss it we can accuse ourselves and debilitate ourselves with criticism. **1 John 3:18-20 MSG. The grace of God has set us free from that kind of criticism so we can move forward in life.**

A. Pray Closing Prayer

B. Sign Off for Online Audience

IV. Discussion Questions

1. What impacted you the most from this teaching?
2. Name a time when your heart condemned you and you thought it was God condemning you. How did that impact your walk with Him?
3. How did you overcome this lie?
4. Based on this teaching, why is it dangerous to look at another person's actions to determine if they are right with God?
5. *Verse 22* says whatever we ask, we receive of Him. What's the best thing you have ever received from God when you asked with confidence.
6. Why does so much "Christian teaching" today make it sound like we must perform after we are saved to maintain our salvation? Where does that come from?