



## “Overcoming Doubts”

*1 John 3:19-24*

**Theme:** Doubts are overcome by a sensitivity to the work of God in our lives.

### I. Confidence Is Produced by God’s Credibility – *3:19-21*

#### A. THE ANTICIPATION OF THE REQUIREMENT OF ASSURANCE – *v. 19*

1. This section began with a statement regarding being able to *“have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming”* – cp. 2:28
2. John indicates that there are several products of genuine faith that provide confidence – among them are *“practicing righteousness”* and *“abiding in Christ”* which produces the ability to *“practice righteousness.”*
3. One of the highest expressions of “practicing righteousness” is *“loving one another”* as it provides evidence of having been born again – v. 14
4. However, John anticipates that there will arise various crises of faith when we are plagued with doubts concerning whether we have genuinely been born again – *“We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our hearts before Him.”*
5. As we fail in our constancy of godliness – when we fail to love one another, or when we fall into sin, there will arise questions as to whether or not we are truly saved.
6. The sentiment often arises that wonders how we can possibly belong to the truth when we feel that our actions deny it, requiring the *“assur[ing] of our heart before Him.”*

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7. *“assure”* [πείσομεν] – refers to convincing or persuading.

### **B. THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE RELIABILITY OF GOD – vv. 20-21**

1. As Satan stirs our hearts to doubt by making accusation, or when we have conducted ourselves “out of character” with our new nature, and feel inconsistent with genuine Christianity, we can find consolation in the reliability of God never to forsake us – *1 John 1:9*
2. Thus, *“in whatever our heart condemn us”* we can find assurance – *“for God is greater than our heart and knows all things.”*
3. The Word of God and the truth of God are greater than our feelings or our consciences.
4. Our heart (or conscience) really cannot be trusted to make appropriate determinations concerning either guilt or innocence – cp. *1 Corinthians 4:4*
5. In fact, *“if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God”* – that is, there is the ability to trust that God will bring to light those areas that are inconsistent with Him when our hearts are truly yielded to Him.
6. John is basically saying here that God does not play games – causing us to attempt to play “hide-and-seek” regarding ways by which He has been offended. He will readily demonstrate to us areas of sin.

## **II. Confidence Is Produced by Our Conduct – 3:22-24a**

### **A. AN OPENNESS TO APPROACH GOD – v. 22a**

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1. We are called to fellowship with God, but if we are ridden with guilt and conscience stricken, rather than seeking that fellowship or enjoying it, we will be prone to flee or avoid the presence of God.
2. Hence, when we are willing to trust God's promises to us – promises of forgiveness and reconciliation, we are open to approach God with boldness and joy.
3. We thus *“have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him.”*
4. We come to the confidence that our Heavenly Father will not withhold any good thing from those who ask.
5. Instead of cowering in fear, we crawl up on the “lap” of our Father and ask Him to work His will in our lives.

### **B. AN ORIENTATION THAT ABIDES IN GOD – vv. 22b-24a**

1. The reason this confidence exists is given here – *“because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.”*
2. Again, there is a direct connection between our confidence in our relationship with God and the way we conduct our lives.
3. When we are living inconsistently with the new nature received at salvation, there is an appropriate concern about our relationship with God.
4. What is it that is *“pleasing in His sight?”*
  - a) *“this is the commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ”* – faith in Christ is the watershed that serves as the basis for the Christian virtues expected in every believer.
  - b) *“... and love one another, just as He commanded us”* – these are the keys to boldness and confidence in our approaching God in prayer.

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5. Hence, *“the one who keeps His commandments abides in Him”* – obedience serves as the evidence that we abide in Christ, and serves as the basis for our confidence in the reality of what God has accomplished in reconciling us to Himself.

### III. Confidence Is Produced by the Comforter – *3:24b*

#### A. THE TOKEN OF HIS COMMITMENT

1. If obedience to the commands of Christ serves as the basis for the evidence that we abide in Him, what serves as the evidence that He abides in us?
2. *“We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.”*
3. This is even a more sure provision of confidence since our obedience to the commands of Christ will always be imperfect, and therefore we could struggle with our lack of perfection.
4. In light of this, God takes over and provides a perfect source of confidence – His commitment to us as expressed through His Spirit.
5. The gift of the Spirit serves as the “earnest” of God’s promise to ultimately deliver us from sin and glorify us – cp. *Ephesians 1:13-14*.

#### B. THE TESTIMONY BY THE SPIRIT

1. One of roles of God’s Spirit is to testify to the fact that we are indeed God’s children – having been born again – cp. *4:13*.
2. We thus have the testimony of God concerning our salvation within us – cp. *1 John 5:9-10*.