

I invite you to open your Bibles to this morning's scripture text, which can be found in the book of 1 John, chapter 3: verses 19-24. This can be found on page ___ in your pew Bibles. As we continue in our series, "Joseph," Scripture reveals that the cure for an accusing heart is to abide with our Lord.

Our Fathers Word

1 Jn 3:19-24

This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

This is the word of God for the people of God

Over the past few weeks we have been looking at the story of Joseph. We have discovered some of the challenges and rewards with being chosen, a child of God. His story reveals some difficult life challenges that can ultimately bring us God's favor and blessings by focusing on God and choosing to remain faithful. The challenge of feeling rejected and abandoned by family, friends, and people God has put into our lives. Challenging times when life seems to be throwing one test after another at us to determine our willingness to follow God. It has been revealed how God can take the evil attacking us, the woundedness and suffering, and use it to draw us deeply into a loving relationship with our Lord to help us to rely upon his power, not our own. It is utterly amazing how God can use our suffering to transform our hearts so that He can work through us, revealing His will and purpose. The way to build love, find peace, and receive favor and blessings from God. Abiding with God and keeping our focus on Him, our willingness to be used by God, and our choosing His will, not our own, puts us on the right path for blessings and favor.

But there is one who would prefer that you fail in your efforts. To keep you in pain, keep you suffering, keep your heart from turning to God for your salvation. He is the devil, Satan, the accuser. Joseph knew all too well about the tactics of the accuser, the evil one. But we see again and again how God can take evil, and use it for good. But we must be willing participants in God's plan for this to be the outcome. We must not allow the devil to destroy our hope. We must be faithful to God and put our trust in His plan to overcome.

Just when it appeared that Joseph had found a satisfactory situation, even in slavery, the narrator prepares the way for Joseph's spiraling descent into greater difficulty by describing him as handsome in form and appearance. His youthful good looks led to the repeated adulterous advances of his master's wife.

Joseph's strength in refusing these advances were fueled by his loyalty to his master and even more significantly, his recognition that the Lord was indeed with him. Therefore, he asks, how then could I do this great evil and sin against God? After one particularly tempting situation, Joseph wisely fled from her presence, which prompted Potiphar's wife to falsely accuse Joseph of rape when his master, her husband returned home. This was a crime that was punishable by death. Rather than his execution, his master took Joseph and put him into the jail. Now Joseph had experienced both betrayal and false accusation, had descended from the status of favored son to slave to prisoner, and the narrator surprisingly reminds us that the Lord was with Joseph.

We are going to take a look at where Joseph's heart was. When the accusation of this crime comes, does he attempt to defend himself or allow God to defend him? Does he lash out at his accuser? No, he turns to the one source that can make it all right again, God.

Potiphar's wife meant it for evil, but God used it for good.

As Joseph has been experiencing, life can be achingly difficult.

It has been for me from time to time. Many times, I've thought life was finally getting better, only to find out I was wrong. It was just the calm before the next devastating storm. Nothing was better. In fact, life became even harder.

I grew afraid to even hope again. Because hoping just brought more pain. I wondered where God was when things kept getting worse.

Many years ago an unfortunate situation happened to me shortly after losing my job. As a result of an unruly teen-aged daughter, and a disorderly interaction with her approaching the bus stop, I found myself accused by the court system. I was eventually vindicated though, all charges dropped. Everyone who knew me insisted the charges against me could never be true, that harming or even threatening my family was not in my character, and yet, I was being accused. As my wife stood by my side in my defense making our plea to the court, I thought things would continue to get worse. I did all that I could do, I turned to God in prayer. I forgave my accusers and held fast to my faith that God was a good God and hoped he would bring me through this accusation. Bad things can happen to good people I was discovering.

Those years are still a blur to me. Just as I was coming to terms with one calamity, the next one came raging through. I wondered how I could handle yet another blow. My faith was all I had. God was my refuge and my strength.

Sin can rob us of the enjoyment of God's love. When we get sin in our hearts we're not as open to that love of God as we ought to be. Satan can rob us of the love of God. Satan wants to steal that awareness of God's love from our hearts. Satan wants to fill us with doubts about whether or not God could really love us and care for us as much as the Bible says He does.

Self can also cause us not to enjoy that love of God by causing us to fail to love one another.

But there is another thing that can keep us from enjoying the love of God the way we ought to enjoy it and that is, the problem of an Accusing heart.

1 John 3:19-24 tells us,

This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him.

And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

Look at v. 20 very, very carefully. It says, "For if our heart condemn us." That's the thought I want to build this message upon.

Multitudes in America are on tranquilizers. They have to have a pill to get them up and going in the morning. They have to have a pill to put them to sleep at night. Another pill to enable them to deal with their own condemnation of heart. The sad fact is that there are many Christians who lack peace in their heart the same as those who do not know the Lord Jesus as their Savior.

The word assure means to persuade our hearts, or to put our hearts at rest. It is only as we assure our hearts before Him that we can deal with this problem of accusation in our heart. There are two kinds of hearts that are mentioned in these verses.

The Condemned Heart (v. 20). — The human heart is a very sensitive, spiritual organism. I'm not talking about the physical heart but about the spiritual heart, about the real you. The human heart has its ups and downs and we can be plagued with an accusing conscience, an accusing heart. Let me explain what I'm talking about. It says, "if our heart condemn us." The word condemn really means "to know down" or "to be put down." Sometimes our own heart puts us down. You've received the Lord Jesus as your Savior, you're trying to live for the Lord and you're sincere in your heart's desire to do that. Then past sins begin to eat at you and you allow yourself to dwell on those sins.

When Satan sees you beginning to allow your heart to accuse you about your past sins he begins to accuse you as well. We then find ourselves in a worse situation. We don't pray, read the Bible or seek God because of our guilt.

What do you do with the problem of an accusing heart? Look at v. 20. What we have to do when our own heart condemns us is turn to the Lord.

The Confident Heart (v. 21). — When my heart condemns me, do you know what I do? I look to the omnipotence of God, the greatness of the mercy of God. Look at the second thing you do. It says God is greater than our heart and knows all things. God knows all things, that's God's omniscience.

Why is that a comfort for an accusing heart? Because God knows everything there is to know about us and He still loves us! There's not a gossip in the world that can tell God anything about you that He doesn't already know. No enemy of yours can disclose anything about you to God that God doesn't already know.

He knows all about you and isn't it good news to know that though He knows all things about you He still loves you. Someone once said, "Only God could love a human being."

In verse 22 we find the way of answered prayer.

Jesus said, "Ask and it shall be given unto you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you." The Bible says whatsoever we ask we receive of Him. But there's a condition. You can have answers to prayer in your life if you will keep His commandments.

DO YOU KNOW ONE OF THE BEST WAYS IN THE WORLD TO GET YOUR PRAYERS ANSWERED? Study the Scriptures and find the commandments of God. Then start obeying those commandments and on the basis of the Word's claim -- what God has told you in the Bible, you can have.

What is one of His commandments? Look at v. 23. Are you believing on the Lord Jesus? Are you trusting in the Lord, are you loving your brothers and sisters in Christ? Then you're on prayer answering ground. You're keeping His commandments.

Then it says, "...and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." Don't just keep his commandments, but find out the things that please the Lord and obey them. It may be things that He has not necessarily specifically commanded us, but those things that are pleasing to Him. We honor God when we make great requests in our desire to please Him.

ILLUS: A man came to Alexander the Great and made an outrageous and unbelievable request. And to the astonishment of his lieutenants Alexander the Great granted that man's request. They couldn't believe their eyes. When he did it they questioned him about it. Alexander said, "I gave it to him because he honored me by the magnitude of his request."

When we get to heaven we will be amazed at the things we could have had while here on earth if we had but asked great things of God. Not things to consume upon ourselves but things that would build the kingdom and honor the Lord Jesus. James 4:2 says, "you have not because you ask not." We have a perfect right to come to God with these hearts of ours and ask God to fill our hearts with His peace. If we're doing His will, if we're seeking to please Jesus in our daily lives, then we have the privilege of answered prayer.

III. THE WAY OF ABIDING (v. 24).

The believer dwells in the Lord. This is the way of abiding. The closer you get to a person, the more about that person you know. And the word dwell here means to make your home in. It's simply saying that the Christian who is obedient to the Lord, obeying the commandments of the Lord, is close to the Lord. He is dwelling in the Lord. It's a wonderful thing to be in fellowship with the Lord, to be abiding in Him, to be close to Him. But then I want you to notice that wonderful reciprocal relationship. We dwell in Him and then the rest of the sentence says, and He in the believer. Do you see what he's saying right there? He's simply saying, IF YOU GET CLOSE TO THE LORD, THE LORD WILL GET CLOSE TO YOU. You dwell in Him and He will dwell in you.

There is a magnificent statement in Revelation 3:20, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and will sup with him and he with me.” He is talking here to the church. Remember also the disciples on the road to Emmaus. They did not recognize the Lord until they invited Him in to break bread, to abide with them, then they realized He had risen from the dead. They rushed to tell the story and said, “did not our hearts burn within us as He talked with us in the way...”

The cure for an accusing heart is to get before Him, get in fellowship with Him, and let Jesus get in fellowship with us. It says in the last sentence, “hereby we know He abides in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us.”

That’s why I’m drawn to the story of Joseph. He knew what crushing disappointment felt like. He grew up as the favorite son of his father, but was later betrayed by his brothers and sold as a slave in Egypt. He rose to a position of trust in Potiphar’s house until his master’s wife falsely accused him. Joseph was thrown into prison where he remained for years, waiting and wondering if he would ever be delivered.

Joseph must have felt afraid and alone, uncertain of what the future might hold. So, how did Joseph make it through those years and emerge with a stronger faith? Why did he not give up, determined never to hope again?

Joseph suffered well amidst staggering disappointment because he knew God was for him and with him in the darkest places. Let us remember that God is for us, and with us in our hearts in the presence of the Holy Spirit. Abiding with us to set our hearts at rest in his presence.

Heavenly Father,

We praise you and we bless you Lord

We lift up our hearts to you in great adoration for the many

Blessings you have poured out into our lives.

Thank you for sending Jesus to us and to the world.

Forgive us for the times we have turned from you Father in our suffering

When we have failed to open our hearts to you.

We hear you knocking Lord, we hear your voice,

we open the door of our heart to let you in now Lord, and pray for you to

fill us with your Holy Spirit as we seek to live in you.

By your power help us to set our hearts at rest in your presence

to overcome our accusing hearts, give us your peace Lord.

Protect us from the evil one, keep him from filling us with doubt,

keep him from stealing our love, our joy, our peace.

We give you all the praise, all the honor, and all the glory.

Amen