

# Your Deceptive Heart

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**Bible Text:** 1 John 3:19-24  
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Well, let's go to 1 John, 1 John 3, and one of the, um, most powerful texts, I guess, on the assurance of salvation. As I looked at it more and more, I thought, "Well, that's really the core of where John's going with this." And no doubt, um, as he's writing to these churches and probably a lot of younger believers in these churches, and believers who were being deceived and lied to by false teaching of the day, not the least of which which was the Jewish legalist who would try to push works and keeping of the law as a part of one gaining the right standing before God, John seems to want to correct that.

This, this afternoon, it was interesting that I got a phone call from one of our businessmen and he was already contemplating how we can get this debt paid off and what he was gonna do on it and about it and everything, and I just kinda laughed and he was a little bit tongue-in-cheek but he was very seriously because I know him and I know he's very serious, and, uh, he talked about, "Well, if we can get guys to give this much and we get that paid off," and I said, "I agree and I'm all for that. You can call every one of them, but," I said, "it never works the way you think it's gonna work. You just can't figure it out. Somebody'll give a great offering that normally doesn't give one, or," or and as I've said for going on 40 years, and all the, Lord knows how much money we've raised in 40 years, I want to say to you though, your pastor, I have a clear conscience. I have lived what I've asked you to do. Um, I have given when I've told you to give and I've tried to be generous and at times by an American definition, even sacrificial. But nevertheless, saying all that to say this, it, it takes all of us and I think that's what God wants it to. It takes some who can give very large gifts, and it takes the rest of us doing what we can do and we all just participate in it together.

So I just thought it was interesting but then I thought about my text for this evening and I thought, "Why would this man call me and just share that after hearing it said this morning?" Well, first of all, I've been here for 40 years and I know people very well that've been here a long time, or a lot of them, most of them, but secondly, it's because he loves the church. He loves the church. He believes what he has God gave him, and as he can, he wants to use it for God's glory. And then I thought about my own pilgrimage. I mean, um, I was converted out of almost paganism, I guess you would, well, I guess we're all in a sense converted out of paganism, aren't we? We're all the enemies of God, the Bible says, but I mean with no knowledge and no connection to organized religion at all. Maybe when I was a child there was some. And, uh, immediately after the night I was

converted in my car, I started attending church. Isn't that weird? I started wanting to be around Christians and it took me a while to learn that not everybody in church is a Christian. I, I, I realized after a while that I, I, I was supposed to love these people and did commit to love them but it didn't just flow out of a natural part of my heart and spirit to love all of them, and then as time went on, I learned that Dr. Gray, uh, Allison at the former President, he's in heaven now, Mid-America Seminary was right when he said 75% of Southern Baptists are lost, they're unconverted, and then when you've challenged him, he'd say, "Fruit. Fruit. There ain't none." And, uh, what is it? Billy Graham used to say that 80% of church members were unconverted. Pretty good authorities. These are men who knew the church and knew it very well, and so I learned through the years that there's a reason why though I love these people, I didn't feel this natural spiritual heart love the way the Bible taught it, and then as God put me in a healthier church, a truer church, I sensed that much much more strongly than I used to. But I, I thought about the change in your heart and how whatever else it includes – listen to me now – when God really saves you, one of the clear marks of true conversion is that you begin to love the people God loves. You begin to love his church. I don't mean just the organization. We do love that, we love the wisdom of God and the way he's biblically structured the church and the beauty of God, that there's a beautiful thing that he's created called the church, but I mean the people. There's just something there. I, it's not too unusual, I, I guess, you know, Brother David Young has a lot of phrases. Have you noticed that? If you're around him, he's got a lot of phrases and usually they're funny and, um, one of them that's not necessarily funny but it's kinda a, a, a cultural, I guess, and, and we use it sometimes in, in staff meetings and stuff, we'll be talking about somebody in the church and one of us will say, "Man, I love me some So-and-so. I love me some So-and-so." And the reason why we say that is because it's bigger than we both like the same ball team or we both like the same outdoor activities, or we both whatever, come from the same background, it's that we see Christ in that person and we love that. We're drawn to the Christ we see in them and that's something John brings out here so pointedly and thoroughly about, um, Christians and our salvation.

Let's look at it together, 1 John 3:19-24. "We will know by this," and that reflects back on the previous verses, "We know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure," and I think that's the best translation, not persuade but nevertheless either one will work, "and will assure our heart before Him," and this continues the phrase now, this is not a disjointed thing, verse 20 follows verse 19 in flow, and "in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things." You better be glad God's greater than your heart, your lying, deceiving, cheating heart. I was even going to entitle this "Your Cheating Heart" but it throws some of you back on Hank Williams Sr. and you'd sing it and not listen to me preach. But it is, it is a cheating heart. Your heart's a deceiving heart. Your heart's a lying heart. Thank God he's bigger than my heart.

Doesn't it bother you when you get around Christians and they go by their heart? "Well, this is just in my heart." I don't care if it's in your heart. Lord, help, your heart's so rotten and filthy and vile and black and depraved it took the death of Jesus to get rid of it. I don't want to hear from your heart, I want to hear the truth of God. Amen? Now, look, there obviously there are contexts where that's good and fine, alright? But I'm talking about

when it comes to biblical and spiritual truth. "Well, I just feel..." Well, everybody feels and look at our world today, they're all feeling something, aren't they? We're not a people who live by principle anymore but feelings, silly little, effeminate feelings. I'll stop right there.

Look at verse, um, 22, "and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of the Son, the Son Jesus Christ rather, and love one another, just as He commanded us." Notice those two together. Notice those two together. Believing in Christ and loving Christians on a level plane there, as if when there's one, there's the other. Where there's the other, there's the one. They're always together. They never ever ever are not together. Believing in Jesus and loving brothers and sisters in Christ, i.e. primarily your local church, they're always together.

Verse 24, and "The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given to us."

So I want to talk about your deceptive heart. Your deceptive heart, I mean your natural heart. The word "heart" here, "kardias," the word we get the English word "cardiac" from, and, uh, it just means "the innermost part," and it probably most of the time in the Greek usage of the ancient word, it meant your mind and your emotions. We would talk about it more as the emotions today. We would separate the two but it's the innermost being involving both the mind and the emotions, but what I want to point out and what John's alluding to very clearly here is that your natural heart, the heart you were born with, the innermost part of your being is no good. You're no good in the innermost being. Your heart will lie to you. It will cheat you out of God's blessings. It will deceive you. Matter of fact, it's trying to cheat you out of the blessings of God from the moment you came into this earth, and when you consider the things of God and then after you're a Christian it continues to try to cheat you out of what God has for you.

Jeremiah 17:9, a verse we use a lot when we're talking about the condition and standing of man naturally speaking before a holy God, "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; and Who can understand it?" The heart, the natural man. That's why we have to marvel over the glorious mercy and grace of God to cause us to become righteous in the eyes of this Triune holy God because the, the, the gulf that was, was crossed and, and the distance between us woeful sinners and a holy God was beyond comprehension yet God took care of it through his Son Jesus Christ.

Now the point is as Christians we must not, matter of fact, it's a sin to do so, we must not live by this deceiving cheating heart's impressions and we must live by his truthful word. We don't live by our natural hearts, what it says, feels, perceives, desires, but we live by truth, truth in God's word, and what you'll find out in Christianity, when you commit yourself to truth, your emotions catch up. Pretty soon you start having joy in the truth of God but sometimes you have to commit to God and his truth until the emotions catch up. That's the way principled and mature people live their lives.

Now turn over to Matthew 15 for just a moment. Would you do that? Matthew, the first Gospel, chapter 15, and let's look at a description of the old natural heart from Jesus in Matthew 15 beginning in verse, um, 18. Matthew 15:18, "But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart," that's the unregenerate natural heart you're born with, out of that heart "comes evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man." Of course, the context was the Jewish, uh, ritual ceremony of, of cleansing of the hands had somehow, uh, in their thinking, a way of cleansing you before God or making you acceptable before God and Jesus said, "You've missed everything. You've taken the forms and the typologies and missed the true thing. You've missed the truth of the God who can come in the person of the Son Jesus and really cleanse the heart, and you wiping off dirt on the outside is not going to do anything."

He says, "That's what's in the natural heart." Your heart tries to deceive you from ever coming to Christ for salvation, does it not? Did your heart not tell most of you, "You can be saved later. You can come to Christ later. There's always later." I want to tell some of you young people sitting here, some of you 5, 6, 7 years old may know enough that God will hold you accountable at the judgment for pushing away Christ and not putting your faith in Christ. "You can be saved later." Has your heart not lied to you or did it not lie to you, rather, before you were saved? "Well, you're good enough. Oh, nobody's perfect. Everybody's sinners. We all fail." Yes, and we're all condemned by a holy God. Your heart's trying to deceive you. Your heart deceives you before you're converted by saying, "Well, religion will save you. There'll be a time and you can go down to the church, you can talk to the pastor and, why, he'll baptize you in the baptistery. You can start taking Communion at the Lord's Table or," or if you're in another type of Christianity or practice of Christianity, "you can take the sacraments," or whatever it is, whatever they teach. Your heart is lying to you because putting on religion doesn't change anything about your conditions, your standing before God. And I heard this, um, by someone that I love very dearly, "God wouldn't send anyone to hell. He's a loving God. He wouldn't do that." That's your deceiving heart. Well, you don't want to be a fanatic. You can just kind of believe the things of Christ but you don't have to sell out to this thing, be totally committed to it.

Well, your heart tries to deceive you from salvation but your heart also tries to, to rob you of the treasures of salvation. "Well, you've sinned now and God can't use you. You sinned now, you blew it now, God can't use you now." Uh, I told you about a famous preacher, well-known, well well-known preacher who, who was charging college students about going to the mission field and he uses some phraseology I would not use, but the point he was making was if you young people wait to surrender to the ministry until you get victory from sinful lust and temptation, you'll never go to the mission field. If you wait until that's never an issue, if you wait until you're scoring 100 in the area of sexual temptation and lust, you'll never surrender to serve God. And he has a point. God didn't save you to use you because you now score 100 on the sin test. God uses sinners. He uses humbled sinners. He uses repenting sinners but God uses sinners.

Your heart wants to lie to you and say, "God can't use you now. You're not good enough." He lies to you. "You're not smart enough. You're not talented enough. You don't preach like Brother Jeff and run around and scream all the time. Your style's not right." You know what all that is at the end of the day? It's pride. You're thinking about you instead of what God's telling you to do. "You didn't get baptized at the right church." Your deceiving heart uses feelings and human performance to cheat you out of the treasures and the joys of knowing and serving Christ.

Well, a couple of points in the outline here. First of all, let's talk about the treasures your deceiving heart tries to cheat you out of. The treasures your deceiving heart tries to cheat you out of. 1. He certainly tries to cheat you out of peace with God. Peace with God and that, by that I mean gaining that assurance of salvation and having peace in my standing with God, that I'm no longer under his wrath and condemnation but I have been forgiven and cleansed.

Notice it there in verses 19 and 20. He says, "We will know by this that we are of the truth," and we will know by this, the last part of the verse, "and will assure our hearts before Him." The word "assure" there is that idea of quietening the heart; to find conciliation in the heart; comfort, if you will. Uh, some scholars says persuade is a better word. It could go either way, the scholars tell us, but I'm convinced that's what that means. That's what I call coming to a settled rest that my faith is in Jesus and Christ that saved me.

Okay, well, now John just practically now, we will know by this. What is the "this"? Look at verses 17 and 18. Context explains a lot of things in Scripture. "But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother," see his brother, "in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?" His point is this is a brother in Christ. The cultural context would be that, folks, when you became a Christian, you divorced yourself from all other worldly attachments. I mean, there, you didn't live in a post-Christian culture like we live in where still in the South today there's a general embracing acknowledgment that it's good to be a follower of Jesus Christ. Yeah, a lot of it's superficial and fake, but it's still there in the culture to some. That didn't exist here. When you came to Christ, the Jews hated you, the Greeks despised you, your own family and friends perhaps turned their back on you, and you just had each other. And by the way, I believe that's what God is doing in our day, he's cleansing and purifying his true church and the true church is gonna have to come together in this present age. And his point is, in this state of almost constant oppression and persecution for following Christ, and that causes a brother or sister to literally be without necessary food, clothing and shelter, and you just shut them out. It's not, "I'm doing my best for you. I'll try." No, it's just you shut them out is what the verse means. You slam the door on them and say, "I don't care." What he's saying is you can't possibly one, be one of God's saved children if you don't have a special love for other Christians.

You know, I, I've said this to you before. I was, when I was converted, I know there were some sweet and, and precious people who tried to help me and I thank God for them, but I don't remember anybody for a long time saying anything to me about the assurance of

salvation other than this: did you pray that prayer? Did you ask him to save you? Well, if you asked him, then he saved you. You really have to twist the Scripture to even find anything close to that in the New Testament. It's just not there. That's not where you find assurance of salvation. John says, "By this we will know." By what, John? "By the fact that you have a genuine love that's active toward other Christians." It's one of the best evidences that God has saved you and changed your heart. Wow.

Now don't, now don't, as I screamed at you last week, if you are one of these hyper-compulsive people and you start checking off boxes, "Well, how much have I shown love to Christians this week? I hope I scored high enough to be saved." That's not what we're talking about. It's talking about there's a new natural drawing in your heart to be in communion and fellowship with a new kind of people called Christians. Why are you here on Sunday night? And I'll just go ahead and say it, those folks who as a pattern willfully will not attend church on Sunday night, I don't think there's good hope for their salvation if the Bible's true. Now I'm certainly true Christians can fall into a season of a, a slothfulness there. I'll accept that. But you want to be with those people whom Christ has saved when Christ saves you.

So that, he says, is how we will know we're of the truth. Verse 18, he elaborates, "Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth." You actually live out a genuine love one for another in your church when God has saved you.

Then he says, verse 19, "By this we will know that we are of the truth, and we will assure our hearts." So when your heart tries to deceive you, when your heart tries to lie to you, when your heart tries to cheat you out of the fact that you have peace with God through Jesus Christ, you can quieten your heart, that's what the word means, find conciliation in your heart, find rest and peace in your heart by saying, "Now wait a minute, it's clearly true there was a time when I didn't really care about church, I didn't want to be around the people of God, I didn't have a special love for them, and I see this at least the seed of that, the germ of that, if you will, resident in my heart now." And that's a good basis for knowing that you are God's according to the Apostle John and according to, of course, sacred Scripture.

Well, he continues on in verse 19. Again, this is one sentence. It don't need to be chopped up, "in whatever our heart condemns us," if our internal judgment of our conscience condemns us for something and we feel condemned and dirty and unacceptable, we have the last phrase of verse 20, "for God is greater than our heart and knows all things." You can say, "Yes, but my heart stands up and condemns me." Yes, but Christ stands up and vindicates you. Christ stands up and advocates for you. Christ stands up and takes your place at the judgment bar of God. Christ becomes your righteousness, not your behavior, not your skill level, not your obedience level, not your law-keeping ability. It is Christ who saves. Child of God, do you get that? Christ is your righteousness, not just what Christ has done that's essential, but Christ himself is your standing before God. So assure your heart, say, "Heart, hush. My confidence is in Jesus Christ."

In biblical counseling, all of us always use Philippians 4:8 and 9. The Bible says to think on these things, Philippians 4:8, "whatever is true." You may feel something so strong, you may feel something so convicting and so real, but if it isn't true according to the word of God, you're commanded to stop thinking that way and think on truth. You don't live by your feelings, you live by the truth. So we say, "Okay, John, how can we know we're of the truth? How can we know we're God's children?" And it varies person to person but some of you, you really suffer with a compulsive condemning heart and you need to talk to your heart and tell it to shut up and look at Jesus. Look to Jesus. Look to Jesus. Rest in him and look at the change he's brought in your life to love others.

Well, your deceptive heart's gonna try to rob you out of peace with God even though it's already been accomplished. You can't enjoy it. But secondly, your deceiving heart will try to rob you from prayer to God and from answered prayer. From prayer with God or to God, and from answered prayer. Look at verses 21 and 22, "Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us," if we can get our hearts in line with the truth and get our old fallen, by the way, your conscience is a gift from God but your conscience is not infallible. Your conscience is stained and tainted and fallen in sin. You have to educate the conscience with the truth of the word of God and you have to talk to yourself with truth until you, you no longer condemn yourself, you look at yourself how Christ looks at you, as a cleansed, forgiven and now righteous one before him. And when you get to that place where you accept wholly his full unconditional love and pardon of you, then you no longer, the phrase here in verse 21, your heart does not condemn us, then we have confidence before God. You're not gonna go to God trusting in him, asking to him, looking to him, petitioning him if you believe he already crushes you in condemnation and doesn't want you around. You have to get your heart by the truth of God into that place of quieted, trusting, rejoicing rest that you're God's and you belong to him and it's unconditional. Then you'll pray more to God.

You see, folks, prayer's not some sort of woeful coercion God puts upon you, it's a glorious privilege he gives his children that are unconditionally blessed and welcomed. Did you hear that? Look at it as a blessed treasure we're given through the provision of Jesus Christ. You say, "Pastor, you don't know how much I've sinned." Yeah, but I know how much I've sinned. Matter of fact, no, you are neither not one know how much we really sin because we're not omniscient and holy like God is. God knows how much we've sinned and God says we can come boldly to the throne of grace. When you sin, you don't run from God, when you sin, you run to God and it gives you a chance to confess the truth to God. "God, that's just what I am. That's just what I am. That's how low, that's how low I am. That's how defiled I am. That's how depraved I naturally am. That's just like me, God, that thought, that notion, that motive, that anger," whatever it is. But you can carry on that communion with God very often with the spirit of repentance because you can come boldly because you've conditioned your heart to quieten down, get off the condemnation binge and accept what Christ has given you in Jesus, through his grace and provision.

So prayer's not gonna come out of you very much and very, it's gonna go be very real until you trust he receives you fully through Christ. And then verse 22, "and whatever we

ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight." Now this is the commandment, verse 23, that we believe in Jesus. We've, we've fulfilled his commandment by believing on Christ and we've, we love him, we receive his gift of Jesus Christ and we want to walk in his truth. Now look, if you want to glorify God and walk in his truth and you believed in his Son, then what you ask is gonna be according to his will and you will receive it. You have no desire, if you're a true Christian you have no desire to ask anything that's outside of his will, and if you go to God with any request and if you say, "God," you say, "God, I would like to have this or I'd like for You to do that, but O God, whatever You know is wisest and best." That's the only way you can walk. You see, you see, there's no way – listen to me – there's no way to commune with this God without a whole and total confidence that he's wise. Are you with me? So you would never go to him demanding something. Maybe there's one thing well to go to God demanding, demanding that he glorify himself through our lives. That's a pretty good demand but there are not many of those.

So we know God will answer that kind of prayer. You're just not gonna seek God in prayer unless you rest that he fully accepts you in Jesus Christ. So your deceiving heart tries to rob you of the joy of communion with God. Now there are three additional blessings that I see here. First of all, the peace of God and that's very akin and maybe inseparable from the peace with God, but the peace of God is something we carry with us as Christians, or you could say the peace with God is that standing we have before God that we're not under his wrath but we have peace and assurance before him.

Look at verse 19 again. "We know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our hearts before Him." That means we walk with the peace of God in our lives. Jesus said in John 14:27, "Peace I leave you. My peace I leave to you. Let not your heart be troubled." There it is again, the old deceiving heart. Here's what he's saying, Jesus is saying, "Your heart is going to lie to you at times. Your heart is going to be deceptive to you at times so you've gotta grab hold of your heart, your inner thinking and feelings, because what I've told you is true, your heart's not true, and that will give you My peace that I've left with you." Just this unconditional forgiveness and, and sometime we say that but it doesn't sink in. Unconditional forgiveness. Unconditional forgiveness.

Not only unconditional forgiveness but, secondly, he delights to fellowship with you. God delights to fellowship with you. And thirdly, his continued love is unconditionally yours. His love will continue on unconditionally forever. Now that's the recipe. When you grasp those things, that's the recipe for walking in the peace of God. In a sense, nothing can hurt a person who walks in those truths. You see, the Good Shepherd desires to lead his sheep by the still waters but the deceptive heart cheats us out of this splendid treasure.

Well, not only the peace of God is an additional blessing I see here but the pleasure of God. This communion, this, this place you get yourself to where you enjoy and, and feel this unconditional welcome to go to God, then you begin experiencing God's pleasures. Psalm 16:11 says, "In thy presence is fullness of joy, and in thy right hand there are pleasures forever." Now in the context of these verses, we're reminded that one of the



pleasures of God is realized in fellowshiping with God's people. You see, I enjoy you in a special way because I enjoy you in Christ and you enjoy me in Christ. It's all in him. It's not just you, it's him in you. It's not just me, it's him in me and that causes us, it's, it's, it's, there's a mystical element to it. I can't put my hands on it, I can't even wrap my minds, mind completely around it, but there is that special bond and connection. We are one in the bond of love, the old song says, and it's true. A spiritual bond in loving oneness and when we enjoy that, I'm gonna tell you, it's just something special to us. I've heard over and over and over again from people, "We're ready to get back in small groups. We're ready to get back with our brothers and sisters in Christ." Why? Because there's something we miss when we're not together and that's part of it, not all perhaps but part of the pleasures of God. Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst." The context is church discipline but nevertheless in anything we're doing for God, when two or three Christians are together and committed together to serve God, there's a, there's the element of God's presence with us that gives a pleasure nothing else can give. The pleasures of God are given by him and the pleasures of God are present in him.

Well, not only the peace of God is another additional blessing and the pleasures of God is another additional blessing that if we're not careful our deceptive heart will try to rob us of these treasures, thirdly, our praise to God. Our praise of God can be an element that's robbed. Now he doesn't mention praise specifically but he mentions our communion with God and listen to me, there is no prayer to God that doesn't have some praise. It just doesn't exist and there is a beautiful truth in praising God. The Bible says in Psalm 33:1, "Praise is becoming to the upright." Now hold on right there. He says if your heart's condemning you, if your heart is lying to you and you don't feel welcomed, and you don't feel loved, and you don't feel approved of God, then you're not gonna praise God. You're not gonna praise him. Why do we praise God? We're not in this foolish, uh, uh, sentimental fleshly nonsense that goes on in so many churches where their doctrine's about a thimble deep but their emotions run like rivers and they get all caught up in the feeling of it, and they call it worship and praise. Brothers and sisters, you can't worship and praise a God you don't know and you can't know him if you're not deep in this book. And to know him – listen to me – and to know his Son Jesus Christ and to know that radical, unconditional, unending favor and blessing and love and welcome he's given you can't help but cause your heart to say, "Praise His holy name." "Christ receiveth sinful men, even me with all my sin." Why does the songwriter say, "Say it o'er and o'er again, Christ receiveth sinful men"? Because we can't help but praise him. When we grasp, rest in, quiet our old troubled condemning heart down and joy in the unconditional cleansing and favor and blessing and welcome of God through Jesus Christ.

Are you listening to me tonight? I don't care where you've been. I don't care what you've done. I don't care how many times you've done it. I don't care how violently and fiercely your heart condemns you. You listen to me, God is greater than your heart. Now sure you're repentant, and sure you wish it hadn't happened, but it's over. It's under the blood of Christ. It's gone. Now you joy in this God who forgives you and welcomes you unconditionally and tell your heart to hush, be quieted, assure your heart, the text says, and that will bring that praise to God.

I'm telling you. Oh, my goodness. Do some of y'all remember the praise and worship movement? Another one of these movements. Bless Southern Baptist hearts. Everything that goes around they chase after and try to bring it into the church. Well, there was a time when they called it, they called it the praise and worship wars because some people in the church, the young people primarily, wanted to get with it. They wanted some pop music, they wanted some rock music. Let's get it going. Let's get it whooped up a little bit. Then came the musics and now they've got the drives and now we've got churches that literally have millions and millions and millions of dollars in special effects so they can really worship God. I'm gonna tell you what that is: that's wicked, carnal idolatry is what that is. Our God doesn't need anything like that to help us know him and worship him. What our God, all our God requires is this book properly preached and the Spirit of God making it alive and illumined in your heart and minds. If you want to see your people praise and worship God, teach them the truth of God and let them marvel in him. And by the way, then when a pandemic hits and you can't get the great, mighty, multimedia extravaganza circus machine going that you call a church, your people just like, "That's not why we come anyway."

It's so easy to pastor a church biblically. Let me think about that just for a moment. It, it's easy in one sense and it's a real challenge on the other but I will say this: with folks like you it's a blessed thing and a wonderful thing because we've been through so much together and God's had to humble and rebuke us and correct us and I'm the leader of the needing humbling and rebuking and correcting. I'll confess that. But we have together and we've grown together and we've learned to love him more, and as we love him more, we just love each other more, and really all we need to do is get together and somebody open the book. We'll sing the glories of his name and preach the truth of his word and that's enough. That's enough. They may run us out of this building one day, they may do a lot of things, but if we can get together somewhere and open the book, we can have joy and praise and worship before our God.

Well, II. First of all, I've been talking about the treasures your deceptive heart tries to cheat you out of, now let's talk real quickly about the truth that silences these deceptive hearts. The truth. Well, he comes down to verse 23 and he says, "This is the commandment, that we believe in the name of the Son Jesus Christ." I call that the upward faith. That's the first part of the truth. The upward faith. You've believed. That's an aorist tense verb. It means finished action with continual results. You believe. Now do, you do keep on believing and I like to use the phrase you keep on being a faither but there was a moment in time when you became a believer. That's settled, now the result, the continuation goes on in your life. He said that's the first thing, have you believed, that upward faith is the thing, the truth that will help silence that deceptive heart that says you're condemned, you're not right, God doesn't like you no more, you, you've sinned too much and you can't be saved, all that junk that the heart says that's not according to truth.

So the upward faith, notice secondly, the inward witness. Look at verse 24, the last phrase, "We know by this that He abides in us," that you're one that God saved, that lives in how? "By the Spirit whom He has given to us." By the Spirit. It's the witness of the

Spirit. You remember the phrase, the man of the Spirit. One of the ways the Spirit is alive in your life is when you hear, read the word of God, meditate on the word of God, go to your small group and hear the preaching of the word of God. The word of God comes out in truth and something in you grabs that truth and says, "Amen! I believe that." The Spirit bears witness with the truth of the word of God inside your heart.

Now don't separate this from love for the brethren because the Bible says the love of God's been shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit of God. In other words, they always go together. This Holy Spirit in you that affirms the Bible and says yes to the truths of the Bible is also the Holy Spirit that says, "I'm just really loving those people more and more. I want to be around them. I want to help them. I want to serve them. I want to encourage them. I want to bless them."

Well, I'm getting ahead of myself. The inward witness is the Holy Spirit and then the one I've really already just talked about is the outward evidence. The outward evidence. And again, we go up to verse 23, "This is the commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another just as He commanded us." That's the outward witness. That's the outward evidence rather, that you're God's child, this love for one another.

Now I've said this so many times to you because I, I, I've seen it so very very much and it's absolute raping the word of God to do it, and that is when people come across these, these statements on loving your brothers and sisters, they make it mean loving all of mankind. That is not what he's saying. Sure, we love all mankind more after we're converted. We just love humanity better. We see people made in the image of God and Christ died for all and sure we do, but there's a special, unique, redemptive love for one another in the family of God. That's what he's talking about because, by the way, worldly people can love the world, ungodly, unrighteous worldlings love the world. We don't love the world the way they love the world but we do love the world, but we love the church and we love God's children in a special way. That's the outward evidence.

Now just, just real quick. Look up at verse 10. I'm gonna run through this and I'm done. "By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love the world." No, that's not what it says. "Nor the one who does not love his brother," a specific category of people.

Verse 11, "For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another?" No, a specific group, "one another."

Verse 12, "not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his," who? "Brother's were, were righteous."

Verse 13, "Do not be surprised, brethren," who is he talking to? A specific group of people. "Brethren, if the world hates you." And by the way, the, the word "hate" is the

idea of detesting you deeply. It's not just like, "Well, we just kinda don't fit with you guys." No, the more they see Christ in you, the more they detest your very being. He says don't be surprised if that happens. I want to shout at all of these church leaders who are straining and doing what I call pretzel theology, they bend their doctrine and theology into a pretzel trying to make it pleasing to the world, trying to get the world to like us when God says, "The world's not gonna like you if they get to know you. They hated Me enough to crucify Me and they're gonna hate you." Now don't go out and try to make them hate you, they'll hate you anyway, alright?

Well, that's not my point. My point is notice the people he's talking about loving each other, it's a specific collective of people. "Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you." Verse 14, "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we've believed on Jesus." That's not what that verse says. That is true but there's something else he wants to say here, because we love the world? No, "we love the brethren." I'm in verse 14, because "He who does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his," the world or his fellow man? No, "his brother," those in the church, other Christians, "is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us," limited atonement, particular redemption, "and we ought to lay down our lives for the," world? No. We may do that, in fact, but that's not the emphasis of the text, the emphasis is for a particular specific group, "the brethren."

Verse 17, "whoever has the world's goods, and sees others in the world in need." No, that's not what he says, "who see his brother in need." Of course, we would help others in the world if they had need and we could help them, but that's endless. But there is a specific collectivity that we really want to make sure we take care of, that's our brother who is in need and we certainly can't close our hearts against him. If we do so, how can the love of God abide in him?

Verse 18, "Little children," who's the children? The children of the world? No. The children of the local church. The children who are truly God's. "Let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth." That's the outward evidence.

So the truth that helps our deceiving heart and helps us come to that full assurance and rest is do you have the upward faith? Have you believed in Jesus Christ? Have you placed your faith in Jesus Christ? Have you seen the inward witness? Have you experienced the Holy Spirit in you? Hey, by the way, convicting you of sin now in ways he did not convict you before? How many times has a newer Christian come and said, "Pastor, I don't believe I'm saved. I feel so dirty and I've sinned." I said, "You didn't feel that dirty and that sinful before you were saved." The conviction is evidence that's the witness of the Spirit. And what about reading your Bible? He said, "Well, you know, I've been a little lazy but I want to get back into it again, and I do enjoy studying it. I'm understanding it in ways I've never understood it before and I enjoy hearing your preaching before, and before I hated you." I've heard that, by the way. "I love to hear you preaching and before I hated you." That's the witness of the Spirit.

So there's the upward faith, there's the inward witness of the Spirit, and then the outward evidence of a new love for God's children. Yeah, we love all men but we particularly have this new love, we want to see God's church do good and go forward, and we like to be around those people. So don't listen to your cheating heart. It wants to cheat you out of knowing Christ. It wants you, to cheat you out of the treasures you have in Christ. You listen to this truth and you rebuke your heart and tell it to start feeling in line with the truth of the word of God.