



“Dear Children, God Is Greater Than Our Heart”

1 John 3:19-23, Hebrews 10:19-25

Sunday | March 11th, 2018 | Pastor Patrick Bowler

CONSULT THE SCRIPTURES

1 John 3:19-23
Hebrews 10:19-25

(See also Rom. 1:20; Acts 24:16; Ecc. 7:22; Jer. 17:9; 1 Cor. 4:1-5; Heb. 4:16)

CONSULT THE SCHOLARS

[M. R. Vincent] “Now there was a very good and obvious reason for emphasizing this thought of assurance. John knew the misgivings of the Christian heart; and he knew, moreover, how they would be awakened by the high standard of Christian character which he set up in this chapter. Look at these statements: “Every one that

hath this hope in Him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure.” “Every one that abideth in Him sinneth not. Every one that sinneth hath not even seen Him nor known Him.” “He that committeth sin is of the devil.” “He that is born of God doth not commit sin.” It is not difficult to conceive the effect of such statements upon a sensitive conscience. Let us bring ourselves to these tests. Shall we not need to assure our hearts? In the consciousness of infirmity, with the remembrance of error, under the pressure and thrust of daily temptation, is it strange if the heart accuses? Is it strange if the question is raised, “Am I indeed a child of God? Do not these errors and lapses prove me to be a child of the devil?”

Now I think we should all be led to anticipate, in view of this fact, and as the natural sequence of the former part of the chapter, a thought, not of severe criticism and judgment, based upon God's infinite knowledge, but of fatherly compassion and assurance dealing with our self-accusations, and quieting our misgivings.

The Christian consciousness exercises a judicial office in us, accusing or approving. Our heart passes judgment. But what we especially need to remember, and what, as it seems to me, is the very core of the teaching of this passage, is that the decrees of the

heart are not final, but must be carried up to a higher tribunal for ratification. Even our renewed heart is ignorant and blind. God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things.”¹

DISCUSS

1. In Disney's animated film *Pinocchio*, what was the character “Jiminy Cricket” a personification of? How would you define the conscience?
2. Does Scripture support the idea of a conscience (“see also” texts listed above)? What are the limits of the conscience?
3. Read 1 John 3:19-21 and discuss. Though a difficult passage to fully understand, what is significant to you? Do you tend toward the view that vs. 19-20 is one of judgment and warning or one of compassion and reassurance? (Note: spend time discussing this passage; because it's a difficult passage, it be a good exercise to explore it)
4. In meditating on 1 John 3:19-21, Pastor Patrick identified four different hearts: (vs. 19, 20) 1. The heart that condemns justly, 2. The heart that condemns unjustly, (vs. 21) 3. The heart that doesn't condemn justifiably, 4. The heart that doesn't condemn unjustifiably. Discuss the differences between these different hearts.
5. Read Heb. 10:19-25 and discuss. The author says we are to draw near to God confidently (see also Heb. 4:16, Heb. 11:1). How are we able to do this (discuss from the text)?
6. What immediate applications can be made in light of this text?

¹Vincent, M. R. (1887). *Word studies in the New Testament* (Vol. 2, pp. 381-382). New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.