

Assurance of Heart

I John 3:19-24, May 9, 2010

Rogate Sunday ("O Sing")

Beloved of the Lord.... Wouldn't you agree, the love of a mother is different than the love of a father? While fathers do indeed love their children immensely, would gladly suffer any hardship for them, even work their fingers to the bone, a mother's love is just as deep, yet a mother's love is gentle and kind. There is a softness to a mother's love that men are quite incapable of, even a kind and merciful spirit that heartily sympathizes with a child's every wound. Yet as great, kind, and gentle as a mother's love is, how much greater must God's love be who gave us from His heart not only the gift of our mothers, but even the gift of His only-begotten Son? "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" Hence our Lord has both the father's love for a child, AND that gentle, kind, merciful and soft love of a mother, for all who trust in their heart Jesus is their Savior. Today then let our hearts be assured of His gentle love and favor, "for if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things"

I. The assurance of the Holy Spirit. As we begin, why does our heart condemn us? While it is our own conscience which testifies loudly to the sins of our life, we don't love God as we should, we don't long for heaven as we should, we don't love our neighbor as we should, we have not obeyed our mother as we should,our heart that condemns us is that part of us which experiences sorrow and sadness, even despair concerning sin. Love for God produces sorrow of heart concerning sin. We cannot but confess with the prodigal son, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son." The condemning heart, is that same heart which is on the threshold of despair. It sighs and says, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

But dear child of God, "Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things." This is the assurance of the Holy Spirit. To counterbalance that condemning heart which despairs because of sin, the Holy Spirit within assures us and testifies God is greater than our heart, namely Christ and His blood are more powerful than our sin: "for God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." While our heart does bear a right and true testimony to our sin and God's just condemnation

of it, the Holy Spirit, our Comforter declares a louder testimony, a more powerful truth, namely "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." Luther thus writes, "Since we are living in the midst of sins and evils both of which drive us to sadness, the apostles wants us to rise against them; and although we at times fall into sin, yet we should let our joy in God be stronger than our sadness in sin.....we should let joy rule and Christ be greater than our sin." Thus if the question is asked, can any believer be certain of his salvation, the answer is YES INDEED, for the Gospel message of Christ in the Bible assures and comforts our hearts with the forgiveness of sins, victory over death, even life everlasting in heaven. "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." Heb. 10:22

II. Whatsoever we ask we receive. With such a faith there likewise comes a certain and growing confidence, hence "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, *then* have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments." Faith itself always rests secure and is at ease in the arms of Jesus, the Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep. While we will have our battle with that the old man within us that doubts, faith itself cannot but always be 100% confident in His blood, His merits, His justification. Hence IN the faith we are but little children who have no fear as we draw near to our heavenly Father. "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him because we keep His commandments." For the sake of Christ, whose blood alone cleanses us from all sin, we by faith are counted as holy before His throne and "If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteousness." The garment of faith upon us, His righteousness and not our own, our heavenly Father would not dare to turn us away, therefore we in prayer place our petitions before Him, the desires of our heart, and in, by, and through faith know that as long as it is for our own good, God will not withhold these petitions from us. Faith then is and can be very bold in prayer. Abraham was bold wasn't he?... when the Lord said yes to 50, then 45, then 40, then 30, then 20, then 10....Truly God answered yes to every prayer, but in the end those cities were destroyed, for there were not even 10 righteous among the wicked.

Concerning prayer then and God's will, faith likewise submits to God's will which is always best. When He grants us trials and tribulations, there is always a good purpose behind it, namely to purify and strengthen our faith. He seeks only to draw us more closely to His bosom. When tried, we cannot but examine our life and see how sinful it has been, hence

we repent more sincerely, pray more fervently, and trust more completely in God and not ourselves. Whereas we throughout life are much like a driver in a car holding on firmly to that steering wheel thinking we are in control, God reminds us He is at the wheel, He is at the helm of this ship, and He is in control. By faith alone we learn to let go of the steering wheel. Faith let's go and let's God. In a manner of speaking, when faith is at its best, our hearts find perfect peace and contentment in the knowledge that God is at the helm of this ship. Faith knows He only seeks to guide us into that harbor of heaven. Doesn't this give us assurance of heart?

We certainly can find no assurance and comfort in this world of sin. Like Sodom and Gomorrah, our nation today is ripe for judgment when one in four children is murdered by choice. Whereas God teaches young men and women to save themselves for marriage, and then in marriage have and raise children to God's glory, our world today teaches men and women to use birth control, live for the pleasures of the flesh, and put off marriage and children as long as possible. The Bible says "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled, but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." How sad that though motherhood is such a great blessing, and the happiest women in all the world truly are those mothers who get to be at home raising their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, the world looks down upon such women, condemns them, and encourages them to abandon their children to the babysitter and go back to the workforce. We then who know the truth of God's Word ought to do everything we can to support Christian mothers in their proper calling of raising these little lambs for Christ's Kingdom. Rest assured God is pleased with you Christian mothers who obey God's commands "and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." Therefore ignore the world which condemns you, and "be fruitful and multiply." God will give you the strength you need in motherhood and never forget Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

III. The greatest commandment of all. Verse 23 of our text now says, "This is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment." What glorious words these are! What is the greatest commandment of all? What is God's greatest desire, that sincere desire of His great heart? "That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus!" This Gospel is only a command in that it is simply God's earnest desire that all believe the Son of God to be the ransom, the Savior of all, – therefore "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Since this wonderful

Gospel Truth is indeed true – for God cannot lie, it is a sin when sinners do not receive and believe in faith Jesus, for unbelief by its very nature is to call God a liar. God is not lying when He says, "God so loved THE WORLD" and Christ "died FOR ALL" and "we trust in the living God who is the Savior of ALL MEN, SPECIALLY OF THEM THAT BELIEVE." And finally Second Peter two tells us that even those false prophets who preached lies and ultimately perish in damnation, these are they who deny "the Lord that bought them" – past tense!

Hence when any man or woman denies the Gospel of Jesus Christ, they are calling God a liar, but they are really lying to themselves. Christ really did die for them, the same as all others. His heart was so great that He had mercy upon all and loved all and paid for all. Won't we then believe Him when He says "Thy sins be forgiven thee, go in peace." Believing in Him don't we have and possess true spiritual peace? Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." What are you afraid of then dear Christian, when Jesus tells you not to be afraid? Need we fear death when Christ has conquered death, and risen from the dead? Need we fear the devil when he is firmly under the heel of God's own Son? Indeed we know Christ has by His blood already conquered ALL OUR ENEMIES, and that is why we need not live in fear, but we live in peace. To obey the gospel is nothing more than to believe the Gospel, and that is why we love the brethren.

Therefore "love one another, as He gave us commandment." "He that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. Hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us." It is because the Holy Spirit dwells in you, dear believer, that you also dwell in Him. Indeed Christ has by the Gospel made you a part of Him, a member of His own body, and in, by, and through Him your heart will always find comfort. Therefore let the Holy Spirit who lives in you, let our hearts be assured of His gentle love and favor, which is far greater than any mother's, "for if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things"