

1 John 3:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

Analysis

And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. John presents love in deed and truth as the ground for assurance. "And hereby we know" (kai en toutō gnōsometha)—the future tense suggests ongoing, growing knowledge. "That we are of the truth" (hoti ek tēs alētheias esmen)—we belong to truth's sphere, aligned with reality as God defines it. Those who love genuinely demonstrate they're God's children, born of Him who is truth.

"And shall assure our hearts before him" (kai emprosthen autou peisomen tēn kardian hēmōn). Peithō (πείθω) means to persuade, convince, or assure. Our hearts (conscience, inner self) can be assured when standing before God. The assurance comes not from sinless perfection but from evidence of genuine love demonstrated in deeds. This love proves we possess saving faith and are truly regenerated.

This addresses the problem of assurance. How can sinful, imperfect believers know they're saved? Not by trusting feelings or introspection alone, but by examining the fruit of love. Do we love fellow believers in deed and truth? This evidence assures hearts prone to doubt. However, the assurance rests ultimately on God's character (v. 20), not our performance. Our love is imperfect, but God is greater than our hearts and knows all things—He knows whether we truly love Him and His children despite our failures.

Historical Context

The question of assurance troubled Christians throughout church history. Medieval Catholicism often left believers uncertain about salvation, depending on continual penance and good works. The Reformation recovered the biblical teaching of assurance through faith in Christ's finished work, evidenced by the fruit of the Spirit including love.

Puritans and Reformed theologians developed extensive teaching on assurance, distinguishing between the immediate assurance of faith (believing God's promises) and the reflective assurance from examining spiritual fruit. John provides this second type—examining whether we love in deed and truth gives assurance we're of the truth. This isn't works-righteousness but recognizing that genuine faith produces visible fruit.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does your pattern of loving fellow believers in deed and truth provide assurance that you're truly saved?
2. What's the difference between assurance based on examining fruit (as here) and assurance based on trusting God's promises?
3. If you lack assurance, might the problem be failure to love in deed and truth rather than God's unwillingness to save you?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας ἐσμέν,
And G1722 hereby we know that of G3588 the truth we are
G2532 G5129 G1097 G3754 G1537 G225 G2070

καὶ ἔμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ πείσομεν τὰς καρδίας ἡμῶν
And before him shall assure G3588 hearts our
G2532 G1715 G846 G3982 G2588 G2257

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 10:22 (Truth): 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.

1 John 3:21 (Parallel theme): Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.

Isaiah 32:17 (Parallel theme): And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

Romans 4:21 (Parallel theme): And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

John 13:35 (Parallel theme): By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

John 18:37 (Truth): Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

2 Timothy 1:12 (Parallel theme): For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

