

Help For A Hurting Heart

1 John 3:18-24

Introduction

1. Has anyone or anything ever broken your heart? Getting a bad grade? Someone yelling at you? The loss of a big game? The breakup of a relationship? The death of someone you love?
2. I broke my own heart at the age of 14 when I played baseball in Atlanta, Ga.: Lost in the state playoffs, went 1/3 of an inning, gave up 6 runs! I let my team and my coach, Buddy Eason down! I cried. My heart was crushed. I had failed someone I loved and admired very much.
3. It is possible to have a broken heart, or at least a condemning heart, toward God. How we love, how we live, and what we believe can get off track and when that happens: it will, it should, break your heart to realize you have disappointed your heavenly Father who gave His Son to save you from your sins.

Transition

God's Word has a cure for a broken heart. It provides medicine for a condemning heart. Yes, there is healing for an accusing heart. It is found in 3 important words: love, obedience and faithfulness.

I. Love Provides Acceptance In His Presence. 3:18-20

- Verse 18 links vs. 11-17 with vs. 19-24. Love and obedience, as exhibited in vs. 11-17 will let you know you are in the truth (v. 18), reassure your heart (vs. 19-20), give you confidence when you pray (vs. 21-22), and demonstrate you abide in Him (vs. 23-24).
- Love and truth go together. Love and confidence go together. Love and obedience, they all go together.

1. Have certainty in the Faith. 3:18-19

My little children (*teknia*) – term of tenderness and endearment

Do not live in word or tongue...but in deed and truth – talk can be cheap, words are empty without action. John makes this clear in v. 19.

And by this we know – looks back to v. 18 and makes a connection with what follows.

We know (1) we are of the truth and (2) shall assure [persuade, set at rest] our hearts.

How?

- We can know we are of the truth, in the truth, when we love others as God in Christ has loved us. An active love life towards others offers evidence that we are of the truth, “truth which is distinctively God's truth as revealed in Christ and His gospel.”

2. Have confidence before the Father. 3:19-20

- And shall assure (better “persuade”) our hearts before Him. Why? (1) God is greater than our hearts and (2) He knows all things.
- When we do not love in action and truth (v. 18), God, who is (1) greater than our hearts and (2) knows all things, deals with us. Our heart rightly condemns us, blames us, judges us for not loving others in a real, true, and genuine sense. God in grace and mercy can help us overcome and conquer this. He will motivate us (v. 17) to just say no to a hard heart, an unloving heart. He sees everything and so He knows what is going on. Indeed, He knows our hearts better than we know it ourselves. He will inspire us, encourage us, challenge us to love others just like He

has loved us (3:16). Our conscience, our heart, who we really are on the inside may be either too severe or too lenient in its verdict, but not God. He is greater than all and He knows all. He is the perfect judge. None of the believer's failures or successes escape His notice. It is the difference between conscience and omniscience! He knows! He sees! Loving others as He loves us will provide acceptance in His presence.

Application

Tell God, "I don't know myself sometimes, anytime; why I do what I do (*or don't do). But you do and so I commit it all to you! I put it all in your hands."

- David said in Ps. 139:23, "Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me...and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."
- Paul said in 1 Cor. 4:3-5, "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God."

Application

"Should your conscience be your guide?" No! Let the Word of God and the Spirit of God (v. 24) be your guide. God's Word says, let love reign in your heart. Then you will know you have acceptance in His presence.

II. Obedience Provides Confidence In Our Prayers. 3:21-22

- Confidence toward God (v. 21) naturally leads to confidence in prayer (vs. 22). Confidence is grounded in our love life. Confidence is based on the obedient life.

1. Be confident in your position. 3:21

Beloved (*agapetoi*; 4:1, 7) – term of concern and compassion for those who have struggled with a condemning heart. Verse 21 stands in stark contrast with v. 20. When we commit judgment to God and His Word, and lay naked our heart, thoughts, motives and actions before Him, (nothing held back!), He heals our heart, forgives our sins (1:9) reminds us He is our advocate and atonement (2:1-2) and motivates us to love others (3:16). In such a position we can indeed have confidence. We can have BOLDNESS toward God.

Confidence (*parresian* 4x [2:28; 3:21; 4:17; 5:14]) – means boldness, freedom of speech. It speaks of the confidence a child has in approaching the father that he knows loves him, the father he knows is there, the father he knows who cares.

Illustration

"Every time he needed me I was nowhere to be found. I was locked up." Robin Reid, father of Richard Reid, the British man accused of trying to light a bomb in his sneakers during a trans-Atlantic flight. The elder Mr. Reid spent 18 years in jail for such offenses as burglary and car theft while his son was growing up. (*World*, 1-12-02).

Our Father is different! He is no absentee Father! He is a good, great, perfect Father who loves us with a daddy's love.

- This is the God, the Father in whom, before whom we can have confidence when we are loving others and obeying Him.
- 2:28 – confidence at His coming / 3:21 – confidence in prayer

2. **Be confident in your petitions. 3:22**

- The key to answered prayer is obedience. If we do not obey Him we have no reason to think He will answer us when we pray.

James 4:2-3 says, “You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.”

1 John 5:14-15 says, “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.”

Whatever we ask – is all-inclusive, but also conditional. The one asking is the one (1) keeping His commandments (4x in vs. 22-24) and (2) doing what pleases Him. This will regulate and guide your prayer life.

John Stott says, “Obedience is the indispensable condition, not the meritorious cause, of answered prayer” (p. 152).

1 Cor. 10:31 says, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” This includes our prayers. Seeking God's glory by obeying Him and pleasing Him gives us confidence that He will hear us and answer us, answer us in a way that is for His glory and for our good. That is the kind of answer we should always want to receive when we pray.

3. **Be confident in your performance. 3:22**

Keep – (pre. act. ind.) – to guard, keep, obey

Do – (pre. act. ind.)

Matt. 22:36-40 says, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

John 15:12, 14, 17 says, “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. These things I command you, that you love one another.”

John 14:15 says, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.”

- When I am obeying Him I know (and even feel) that I am pleasing Him. When I am obeying Him I know (and even feel) that He is watching me. When I am obeying Him I know (and even feel) that He is listening to me when I pray.

- John Stott lists 6 conditions that must be met for prayer to be answered: (1) in Jesus' name, (2) for God's glory, (3) a heart that does not cherish sin, (4) a forgiven and forgiving heart, (5) faith and (6) an obedient life.

Transition

The obedient life provides confidence in prayer.

III. Faithfulness Provides Assurance In Our Position. 3:23-24

These verses are subtly and quietly Trinitarian with the Father alluded to in vs. 23 & 24, the Son in v. 23 and the Spirit in v. 24. The essence of the Gospel and the Christian faith are found in these verses as well.

1. Confess the Son. 3:23

- John establishes the central command that is the sum of all mandates in Scripture. Fundamentally there is a comprehensive command communicated in a dual form: (1) an active belief in the Father's Son, Jesus Christ (doctrinal test), and (2) an active love for one another (moral test).

Believe – trust, 1st occurrence (9x in 1 John, esp. ch. 5) of the verb in the letter

Name – the person and all He is in His person and work

Son – emp. His deity and unique relationship to the Father

Jesus – human name – “Jehovah saves” or “the Lord is salvation” (Heb. Joshua)

Christ – office, anointed one, O.T. Messiah.

- “To believe in the name of Jesus Christ is to place your trust, your faith, in Him and only Him and all that He is – the divine Son, the incarnate Deity, the sinless human, the perfect atonement for our sin, the Messianic Savior.”
- You trust all of Him, not some, part or even most. You trust the biblical Christ or you trust in no Christ at all.
- We trust in the Jesus confessed by the church in A.D. 451 at Chalcedon. Having dealt with the false teachings of men by the name of Arius, Apollinarius, Nestorius and Eutyches, the church confessed its understanding of what the Bible teaches about our Lord with these words:

“Following, then, the holy fathers, we unite in teaching all men to confess the one and only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. This selfsame one is perfect both in deity and also in human-ness; this selfsame one is also actually God and actually man, with a rational soul and a body. He is of the same reality [*homoousion*] as we ourselves as far as his human-ness is concerned; thus like us in all respects, sin only excepted. Before time began he was begotten of the Father, in respect of his deity, and now in these ‘last days,’ for us and on behalf of our salvation, this selfsame one was born of Mary the virgin, who is the God-bearer [*theotokos*] in respect of his human-ness.

[We also teach] that we apprehend this one and only Christ – Son, Lord, only-begotten – in two natures; without confusing the two natures, without transmuting one nature into the other, without dividing them into two separate categories, without contrasting them according to area or

function. The distinctiveness of each nature is not nullified by the union. Instead, the “properties” of each nature are conserved and both natures concur in one “person” [*prosopon*] and in one *hypostasis*. They are not divided or cut into two *prosopa*, but are together the one and only and only-begotten Logos of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus have the prophets of old testified; thus the Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us; thus the Symbol of the Fathers has handed down to us.”

2. Care for the Saints. 3:23

- Faith and love are twin companions as we have seen. What we believe will impact how we love.
- John says He gave us the commandment to love one another. This again looks back to the words of Jesus on the night He was betrayed.

John 13:34-35 says, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

If you really and truly believe in Jesus you will really, truly, genuinely and actively love one another.

Application:

At home: A husband will not snap his fingers at his wife. A wife will not put down and nag at her husband. Parents will not yell at, ridicule and wound their children. Children will not mock, disobey and dishonor their parents.

At church: Pastors will not rule their congregation with an iron fist. A church will not criticize and challenge the leadership and its pastor.

No, we will support, encourage, pray and yes, love one another.

3. Commune with the Spirit. 3:24

- A transitional verse, a linking verse, that connects vs. 18-23 with 4:1-6.
- Keeping His commandments and abiding (118 in the N.T.; 66 in John) in Him go together. Having the Spirit and abiding in Him go together.
- The Spirit comes as a gift not obligation, and He and He alone enables us and equips us to abide, stay with, and remain in Him (God).
- **Romans 8:16** says, “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”
- The Bible’s view of the Spirit is clear and definite. He is the 3rd person of the one true God. It is not the self conjured grandmother of liberal commentator Ann Quindlen who said concerning debate over the words “under God” being deleted from our pledge, “I have a warm personal relationship with God; I often picture her smiling wryly and saying, in the words of Shakespeare’s Puck, “Lord, what fools these mortals be!” or perhaps something less fond.” (*Newsweek*, 7-15-02, p. 64). No, we see a different God, a different Spirit in Scripture. We worship and abide in the Spirit of the true and living God who says, “test the Spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world (4:1).” This is the Spirit of truth

(John 14:16), the Comforter, Counselor (John 14:26), the one who will guide us into all truth (John 16:13). This is the Spirit in whom we abide.

Conclusion

Several years ago a popular teen magazine ran an article entitled, “Do You Believe in God?” The article drew an avalanche of responses. Several quickly grab your attention, and provide a glimpse into hearts of despair as well as a heart of hope.

I was absolutely terrified when I read, “There is a God and only ONE God. If you aren’t right with my God, then you will burn in Hell,” which one girl said in your column. I now know how the Holocaust could happen. I feel that the whole concept of religion began in order to encourage a moral foundation, the heart of which is the Golden Rule: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Whether you believe in one “God,” 100 “Gods” or no “God,” your personal beliefs should bring peace and openness in appreciating others. Kate Vierhus, 15, San Jose, California.

I was taught that God was the Almighty and was good, but the past few months have set me straight. There is no God. At least, not the God everyone is talking about. If He/She was real, then there wouldn’t be so much disease, death, hurt and heartbreak in the world. In December, one of my friends lost her mother. In January, a friend was killed on his way to school. In April, a friend of the family lost his long battle with AIDS. And in May, one of my best friends also lost her mother. What God would want to do this to anyone? None that I know of or believe in. Tara Fritsch, 18, Riverdale, New Jersey.

I was 17 when I left high school, depressed and without direction. I found myself pregnant and married a man who essentially reaffirmed that I was not going to amount to much. I later divorced him and continued making monumentally lousy decisions. Then I met someone, now my best friend. He too is a parent. He began to tell me that I was worth something. He listened as I expressed my disgust with what I had done with my life. At times, I even personally attacked him. But his patience was unbelievable. Today, I am a student in a very competitive medical program and a much better parent. I owe all my success to my best friend, who has been there every step of the way. So what does this have to do with whether I believe in God? Who do you think my best friend is? Tracey St. John, 34, Herndon, Virginia.

There is help for a hurting heart. It is found in a perfect Father and in His Son by means of a perfect Spirit in whom we abide. He will never let you down. He will never fail you. He will never let you go. There is indeed, help for a hurting heart.