

# No Condemnation

## 1 John 3:16-24

### Introduction

You know John 3:16, right?

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

A great verse! Did you also know that many of the books of the Bible contain great truths in chapter 3 and verse 16? It's fascinating.

- When he heard about this, one of my former pastoral colleagues decided to preach a sermon on every "3:16" in the Bible.
- Now there are 66 books in the Bible, but only 61 of them have at least three chapters and some of those 61 don't have 16 verses in chapter three.
- So his goal was to take slightly more than a calendar year and preach nothing but 3:16 sermons ... no matter what the text said.

Week #1 was Genesis 3:16:

To the woman (God) said, "I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." (Genesis 3:16)

Now this is one verse in the section where God first promises the Messiah, so He could make that one work.

He was right, though. There are some really great 3:16 verses, and it would be well worth your time to flip through the pages of your Bible to read them. You will find things like:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness... (2 Timothy 3:16)

Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. (Colossians 3:16)

Our second reading today has another very good 3:16:

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. (1 John 3:16)

Two weeks ago when I started this sermon series, I introduced you to this quote from the introduction of a commentary on 1 John:

John has thrown a great stone into the water and the rings that encircle the stone are moving out in all directions. (Earl Palmer)

1 John 3:16 is a ripple verse. And, as I told you in the first sermon, those ripples get unpacked in a word we all know:

**NO!**

Our focus today is on these verses that follow the 3:16:

If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him. (1 John 3:20-22)

Here's the truth taught in this passage:

Because Jesus laid down His life, there is no condemnation for those who put their trust in Him.

No condemnation. None. Not even one speck.

Why is that so? The text offers two truths.

### **TRUTH #1: GOD IS GREATER THAN OUR HEARTS**

Look at verse 20.

If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. (1 John 3:20)

Here's what we know to be true. When Jesus died on the cross, His blood covered every sin that you and I have ever committed and will ever commit. Completely.

- I used a gift card at Lowes recently. I had used it several times before for some smaller purchases. But on this day, it didn't quite cover all my bill.
- I didn't think about it. I just stood by the register waiting for the machine to spit out my receipt.
- Finally, the clerk came over and said, "Sir, you still owe \$23.07. Your gift card wasn't enough."

Sometimes too I come before the Lord to confess my sin, and I leave the time of confession still feeling guilty.

- It's like the death of Jesus wasn't quite enough for my sin. I still owe \$23.07.

The text talks about "hearts that condemn." A condemning heart is one that robs you of the joy of being fully forgiven. It's not always wise to trust your heart because, as Scripture reminds us:

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked... (Jeremiah 17:9)

Over the years many Christians have continued to carry unnecessary guilt around. But our hearts are not the ultimate judge and jury. The text also tells us that:

God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. (1 John 3:20)

God's view is the only view that matters. Remember the teaching from the first sermon in this series – the teaching that is our weekly confession:

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from **ALL** unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

If you struggle with something like this, here's what I want you to do. Write the confession down and mark it "PAID IN FULL."

- That's not a psychological trick I'm trying to play on it. It is the Gospel truth. I
  - If you have confessed it, God has forgiven it because of the 3:16.
  - If you are still feeling guilty about, your heart is lying to you.
  - Remember always that God is greater than your heart.

## **TRUTH #2: WE HAVE CONFIDENCE BEFORE GOD**

Truth #2 is born out of Truth #2. Look at verse 21:

Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God... (1 John 3:21)

Because there is no condemnation, once the condemning heart has been silenced, the result is that we have confidence before God. The Greek word here is:

parrēsia

It is an interesting word. It means that you are so comfortable in someone's presence you can speak freely and candidly to someone. It is sort of like "freedom of speech," but it is not something you have to fight for – like freedom of speech is in this country.

- But more than that, the word carries the obligation to speak the truth for the common good, even if there is great personal risk.
- Your fear of the risk is minimal compared to the confidence you have in God's love for you.

Several times throughout the years of his papacy Pope Francis has called on Roman Catholics to "live out the Gospel with parrēsia." When he does so, he is exhorting his listeners to speak the truth of the Scriptures boldly and courageously, and to be living testimonies of the Gospel while doing so, regardless of the consequences.

- In other words, because of the 3:16 you are so confident that God is with you and that you are walking in His presence, you can trust Him in everything.

That's what you hear if you ever listen to the testimony of Mike Holmgren, Super Bowl winning coach of the Kansas City Chiefs. In it he will tell you about a major heartbreaking moment, when he was cut from the New York Jets as backup quarterback to Joe Namath. He says:

I had committed my life to Jesus Christ when I was 11, but in my pursuit to make a name for myself in football, I left God next to my dust-covered Bible. But after getting cut from the Jets, I pulled out my Bible and found comfort in a verse I had memorized in Sunday School: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6). I asked Jesus Christ to take control again. My priorities in life are faith, family, and football--in that order." Now I am confident in my faith, despite what happens around me.

## **APPLICATION**

So, we conclude where we started – with the truth of the 3:16:

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. (1 John 3:16)

We are three weeks removed from Easter. Liturgically, this is the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Easter season. By now, the meaning of the cross should be sinking in. Christ laid down his life for us.

- And if we trust in Him for the forgiveness of our sins, we have been set free from every sin.
- In the words of the Apostle Paul:

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. (Romans 8:1-3)

Do you know what that feels like?

No condemnation. None. Not even a speck.

Amen.