

# TEST 4: HAVING A CLEAN HEART

## 1 JOHN 03:18–24

### *Introduction*

Do we really love God? There are six tests that show us. This is the fourth test: Do we have a clean heart? If our hearts are really clean, then we love God; but if our hearts condemn us, then we do not love God. How then can we have a clean heart?

- I. A clean heart is produced by loving with actions and not with words only (vv. 18-19).
- II. A clean heart is produced by God's knowledge (vv. 20-21).
- III. A clean heart is produced by obeying the commandments (v. 22).
- IV. A clean heart is produced by obeying the supreme commandment of God (v. 23).
- V. A clean heart is produced by the Spirit dwelling within (v. 24).

### **I. *1 John 03:18–19 Love in Deed and Truth***

A clean heart is produced by loving with actions and not with words only. Most people have some feelings for a person when they see him, suffering or in need. And most people will talk about and express concern for the needy and suffering. But note this: if the needy and suffering person has done evil against us, then the feelings of many people change. They no longer feel compassion and are no longer ready to reach out and comfort or help. The attitude becomes...

- “He deserves it.”
- “He is being paid back.”
- “God is judging him for his evil.”
- “He made his bed, let him lie in it.”
- “He’s reaping what he sowed.”
- “If he wasn’t so lazy, he would find work.”
- “He could better himself if he tried.”

While this attitude is sweeping through their minds, they still profess to love God and to be caring for people. But note: this is exactly what Scripture is talking about. The love that we are to have is not only the love for friends, but it is the love for one's enemies, the love that loves those who oppose us and do things against us. This is what this exhortation is talking about.

*“Little children, let us not love [merely] in theory or in speech but in deed and in truth – in practice and in sincerity”* (The Amplified New Testament, v. 18).

To love only those who love us is to love only in theory and in speech. It is not loving like God loved; it is not practicing the love of God, the love for those who do evil.

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Now note the result: if we love as God loves — if we love those who do evil — then we know we are of the truth. God is truth; He does exactly what should be done. And He loves everyone, even those who do evil. Therefore, if we are to be of the truth, we must also love those who do evil. We must love all those who oppose us and do evil against us and stand against us. When we do, the most wonderful things happen: we bring assurance to our hearts. And note: our hearts are assured *before Him*. This means that we are *accepted by Him*. He accepts us to live forever in His presence. Why? Because we are loving all men even as He loves all men — loving even those who are evil. A clean heart — a heart that is full of assurance, a heart that knows that it is pleasing and acceptable to God — is a heart that loves even as God loves. A clean heart is produced not by loving with words, but by loving with actions.

**Thought 1.** Oliver Greene gives a good illustration that speaks to all of our hearts:

*“There are occasions when a minister visits widows where there are children in need, and after a pastoral call the minister bows in prayer and asks God to supply the need of that family, when at that time there are hundreds — perhaps thousands — of dollars of God’s money in the bank to the credit of the big church with the tall steeple! The parishioners in that church sing, ‘O, how I love Jesus!’ but they love Him in word only — not in deed and in truth. The Bible admonition is, ‘Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves’ (James 1:22)” (The Epistles of John, p. 141).*

## II. **1 John 03:20–21 God’s Knowledge and Assurance**

A clean heart is produced by God knowing everything. Note the words, “Whenever our hearts condemn us.” Everyone’s heart condemns him sometime. Everyone of us knows what it is to sense wrong and condemnation. God has made our hearts sensitive so they will sense wrongdoing. Why? So that we will correct our behaviour and not destroy ourselves. God is greater *than our hearts and He knows everything*. This means two things.

1. First, God knows everything about us. He knows when we are good and when we are bad. He knows everything that we do and more. God even knows our thoughts. He knows when we have done wrong and when we rightly or wrongly feel condemned. He knows every little thing that we feel or think. He even knows what we would have done under different circumstances. There is nothing, absolutely nothing, that is hid from God. No cover of darkness, no closed doors, no place off the side of the road, no place in the woods — no secret is unknown to God. Take all the evil we have ever done and all the condemnation we feel and sense — God knows every ounce of heaviness and guilt and condemnation we feel.

*Psa 32:3 When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.*

*Psa 38:4 My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear.*

*Psa 51:3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.*

*Acts 2:37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"*

*Acts 24:25 As Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, "That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you."*

*Job 10:14 If I sinned, you would be watching me and would not let my offense go unpunished.*

*Job 14:16 Surely then you will count my steps but not keep track of my sin.*

*Jer 2:22 "Although you wash yourself with soda and use an abundance of soap, the stain of your guilt is still before me," declares the Sovereign LORD.*

*Jer 16:17 My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from me, nor is their sin concealed from my eyes.*

*Ezek 11:5 Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon me, and he told me to say: "This is what the LORD says: That is what you are saying, O house of Israel, but I know what is going through your mind.*

*Hosea 7:2 But they do not realize that I remember all their evil deeds. Their sins engulf them; they are always before me."*

*Amos 5:12 For I know how many are your offenses and how great your sins. You oppress the righteous and take bribes and you deprive the poor of justice in the courts.*

*John 2:25 He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man.*

2. Second, God knows how to assure our hearts and how to give us confidence toward Him. God knows how to deliver us from the sense of guilt and condemnation. God knows how to remove *all condemnation* from our hearts. Think about it: all condemnation and all guilt removed forever from our hearts. God knows how to remove it all.

How can God remove all the guilt and condemnation that weighs upon our hearts and lives? By love. By loving us so much that He would give His Son to die for us. When we see God's love for us, when we receive His Son as our Saviour, we discover the most wonderful thing.

- => Jesus Christ removes the sense of guilt and condemnation: He actually forgives and cleanses us from sin.
- => Something else happens as well: we discover that we love everyone just as He loves everyone. Our attitude toward others is actually changed: we love everyone, and we want them to know the love of God just as we have come to know His love.

Our hearts just flow in full assurance and confidence knowing that everything is well with God. There is no more condemnation or guilt. We know that we are forgiven and cleansed through Jesus Christ. We know that we are acceptable to God and our hearts revel in the confidence and assurance of Him.

*John 3:18* “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”

*John 5:24* “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”

*Rom 8:1* Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

*Rom 8:34* Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died — more than that, who was raised to life — is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

*1 John 1:9* If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

*1 John 3:24* Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

### **III. 1 John 03:22 Obeying God’s Commandments**

A clean heart is produced by obeying the commandments of God and doing what pleases God. If a child disobeys his father, he displeases his father. The only way he can please his father is by obeying him. The same is true with God. If we are going to please God, we must obey God.

Note another fact as well. A father cannot reward his child if the child disobeys. The father just cannot grant the child’s request, not if he wants to teach him good behaviour. Neither can God. The only way we can receive the things we ask is to obey God. He cannot reward our unfaithfulness and disobedience.

This is a great verse of Scripture, for it tells us exactly how to receive the answer to our prayers. In fact, it tells us that we can receive *whatever* we ask, if we will do this one thing: obey God. Just obey His commandments. Obeying God’s commandments does two wonderful things for us:

⇒ It gives us everything we ask in prayer.

⇒ It gives us a clean heart, the most wonderful gift we could ever receive.

*John 14:2* “In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.”

**John 14:23** *Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”*

**John 15:7** *“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.”*

**John 15:10, 14** *“If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love. You are my friends if you do what I command.”*

**James 1:25** *But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it — he will be blessed in what he does.*

**Rev 22:14** *“Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.”*

**Deu 5:29** *Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!*

#### **IV. 1 John 03:23 Obeying God’s Supreme Commandment**

A clean heart is produced by obeying God’s supreme commandment. Note that God’s supreme commandment has two parts to it. If a person wants a clean heart, he must do these two things above all else.

1. First, he must believe in the *name of God’s Son Jesus Christ*. How can a person believe in the name of someone? We can believe a statement or some writing that a person makes. But what does it mean to believe *in the name* of someone? A person’s name stands for what he is, for the kind of person he is and for the kind of things he does. Therefore, to believe in the name of Jesus Christ means to believe in all that He stands for and in all that He is. Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the promised Saviour and Messiah of the world.

=> He is the Son of God who has come to earth to reveal God (see 1 Jn. 1:1-5).

=> He is the great advocate and sacrifice for man and his sins (see 1 Jn. 2:1-2).

Believing in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is the only way a person can ever have a clean heart before God. This is a basic and fundamental fact; it is the foundation of life. No person ever becomes acceptable to God until he believes in the name of God’s Son. Obeying this commandment is the very first thing that a person has to do to please God.

2. Second, he must *love all others* (see *Love*, 1 Jn. 2:7-8; 3:10-17).

## V. *1 John 03:24 Holy Spirit Dwelling Within Us*

A clean heart is produced by the Holy Spirit dwelling within us. The person who believes in Jesus Christ and loves others dwells in God and God in Him. How do we know that God dwells in us? By the Holy Spirit. This is made abundantly clear: “we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.”

=> Note that we live in God. This means that we take up residence in God, live and walk in Him, live and move and have our being in Him. It means that we make our home in Him.

=> Note that God lives in us. This means that He takes up residence in us; lives and moves and has His being within us. It means that God makes a home in our hearts.

Again, how do we know this? By His Spirit which He has given us. The Holy Spirit of God seals and guarantees us, gives us *absolute assurance*. He lives within us, which means that He talks to us, shares with us, leads and guides us, disciplines us, convicts and convinces us. All that is involved in living, the Spirit of God does within us. He is our constant and permanent companion. He never leaves us nor forsakes us. He is always infusing us with the assurance and confidence of God and with His presence and power.

*John 14:26* “But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

*Rom 8:16-17* The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

*2 Cor 1:22* Set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

*Gal 4:4-6* But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.”

*Eph 1:13-14* And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession — to the praise of his glory.

*Eph 4:30* And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

*1 John 3:24* Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us. ■