

“The Life Test” – 1 John 2:29

Have you noticed lately that there is a virus going around? And it seems to be getting worse and worse. The virus I’m talking about is not the Corona virus. The virus I’m talking about used to have a pretty simple cure but evidently nobody wants to cure it anymore. They try to just accept that they have it and insist that everybody else ignore the virus or even tell them that the virus is a good thing and to be celebrated.

The virus is the mental disorder called transgenderism. A man, born a male with all male anatomy just decides one day that he doesn’t feel like a man anymore and wants to be a female. And we are all supposed to enable and encourage him and call him Becky or Caitlyn or whatever and pretend along with him that he is a woman. Well, just know that I won’t be pretending. Paul said in **1 Corinthians 13** that when I was a child, I thought as a child but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

We used to cure the transgender virus by giving the man or woman good counseling and by speaking truth to them but as **2 Thessalonians 2** says, they are now living under powerful delusions. It’s part of how we know we are living in the end times. These are sad times but exciting times as well.

But how do we know if a person is really a male or female? Sounds like a dumb question to me, doesn’t it to you? Just a few years ago, most of us didn’t know much at all about transvestites. You sure didn’t know any or see any on TV but now I can ask that question and it isn’t a dumb question to some people anymore. But we can tell pretty easily with most people. There are usually obvious physical differences. There are also bone structure differences and most certainly there are DNA tests that we can do to prove it one way or the other.

Just because you feel like a member of the opposite sex and you say your name is whatever you want it to be and you dress like that sex does not mean you are that sex. Everybody knows this and it is foolishness to pretend otherwise. And it is proven out with testing.

But what about you Christian folks? How do you know you truly are a Christian? How do you know you are a true born-again follower of Jesus going to Heaven? For some people that may also sound like a dumb question. You may say that you really feel like it. You may list your church credentials or your family history or all the good things you’ve done to prove you are a good person; at least better than that other guy. Isn’t that good enough? Isn’t that test enough?

I would like to invite you to turn in your Bibles to the New Testament book of **1 John**. It is way toward the back and not to be confused with the **Gospel of John** that comes after the book of **Luke**. 1 John is written by that same guy but many years later and **1, 2, and 3 John** were written as letters not like the Gospels. 1 John is between **Peter** and **Jude** nearly to **Revelation**. And in 1 John we see several tests for us to be able to prove to ourselves that we are Christians.

This is the second test we are taking in this series to be able to prove to ourselves and only to ourselves that we are true believers. This is not to prove it to somebody else nor is it for us to be able to tell if somebody else is a believer. That’s not our call. We can only judge our own salvation. The problem is that Satan is a liar and he can’t help but lie. He likes to lie and he’s good at it. So, if you are a Christian, Satan wants you to think you are not and if you are not, he wants you to think you are.

The first test we took was two weeks ago when we looked at **1 John 5** to see if we truly had faith. And if we truly have faith, John tells us that our lives will be the proof. Let’s read just one verse. **1 John 2:29** says, *“If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him.”*

Stop right there. I wonder if old John (and he was old, somewhere in his 90’s probably) had gone to Paul’s school on how to pack a verse with as much deep theology in as few words as possible. There is a lot to unpack here; some of it obvious and some of it more subtle. But the main word in this verse is “righteous.” What does the word “righteous” mean? Anybody?

Well, according to my big concordance, its foremost meaning is to be right, mainly right with God. It entails being accepted by God and being justified. It has moral, ethical and virtuous implications. It is the standard by which we should be living if we are true believers. And the first thing John says here is that Jesus is righteous. If you know that “He” is righteous...That “He” is Jesus. He not only is right with the Father but what He does and what He says is right. It is correct. It is truth.

My niece Blair and her husband Joey are both thin and kind of small-framed people but they had a baby just recently that is the fattest kid I've ever seen in my life. She sends me pictures of him pretty often and I'm like, "How many cheeseburgers did that baby just eat?" He's huge. He's three months old and he's the weight of a two-year-old. The doctor says he is fine and healthy. He's just a happy, hungry boy and that's good.

But if you look through the fat and the rolls and the triple chins, he looks just like his parents. They aren't fat at all but the baby has their eyes and their chin and their smile. It is obvious he is Blair's son.

Now, just like this baby looks like his parents, we should look like Jesus. Of course, I'm not talking about how Jesus looked physically. I mean we should act like Him and talk like Him and do the kinds of things Jesus would do. And if Jesus is righteous, we should also be righteous because we have been "born of Him." Have you ever been really, really thirsty? I don't mean your throat is a little dry. I mean it's starting to get bad. You can't think of anything but getting some water.

Jesus said in **Matthew 5** that we should hunger and thirst for righteousness. It should be our main goal in life. Can I do this and be right with God? Can I say this and be right with God? Does this thing or habit or place or person make me look more like Jesus? Jesus is righteous and so our lives should be righteous as well. That is the test for us today but what does that look like?

I remember my dad telling me about taking a test in college. At the top of the page, in big letters, it said, "Read through the entire test before answering any problems." So, he started reading through it but some of the questions he knew that he knew so he just answered them. And he got busy answering all the ones he was confident in and then when he got to the last question on the test, it said, "Please turn in this paper with no answers completed." Or something like that. It was a test within a test and it was to see if you could follow directions.

Well, our test today is kind of tricky as well. You see, anybody can do good works. And some people are more naturally good and moral than other people. And some people have really changed and are now much better people than they used to be. Does that make them Christians? Not necessarily.

Now, I can tell you some of the things that make up a righteous life. I could tell you that you need to pray and read your Bible. Church attendance is a big part of being righteous. Doing good things for other people is what righteous people do. They give food to the food pantry and give coats for the coat drive and they visit the sick and tithe to the church and make brownies for the pastor and all that stuff. But anybody can do that and lots of non-believers do it. And that does not make them believers. You don't get to Heaven by doing good things. But there are three things you need to remember about good works. Number one, it doesn't make you a Christian but it's what Christians do. Number two, what is your motivation? And three, where does your power come from?

When I say that good works don't make you a Christian but a Christian will do good works, I get that thought from the book of James, among other places. James says in chapter two that faith without works is dead. We saw last time that we have to have faith and Ephesians 2 says we are saved by grace and **through faith**. But if that faith is never backed up by good works, it is dead faith. If an apple tree never produces apples, chop it down. It is good for nothing.

Again, the point of this verse in 1 John is that if we are born of God, we will do good works. If we are in His family, we will do what Jesus did. Jesus lived His life on this earth doing good works and toward the end of His earthly life, He even said we will do more and better things than even He did. **John 14:12** says, "whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these." So, Jesus believed in good works and commanded the good works, even more than what He did. That's saying something right there.

But the second thing to remember about good works is that your motivation counts. There is a story about a priest in Russia who started giving little children candy when they learned their Bible verses. One little boy in particular was very good at memorizing and quoting scripture and was even able to quote all four Gospels after a while. It took a lot of candy to get him there but he was able to do it.

The problem was this little boy's name was Nikita Khrushchev and he later became the communist czar of Russia and was an avowed atheist known for quoting scripture to mock religion and God. His motivation had simply been candy and it showed in his later life.

In **Luke 21** it says, *“As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. 2 He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. 3 “Truly I tell you,” he said, “this poor widow has put in more than all the others.”* What was her motivation? Candy? No. Just her love for God and Jesus saw her heart and counted what she gave as more than any other.

Sometimes it can be hard for us to see our own motives. We think we are doing it for the right reasons but unbelievers are unable to do it for the right reason. They think with their minds that they are righteous but it is just for the reward. What is your motivation? Look deeply into it and be honest. You don't want to fail this test.

The third thing we need to consider when it comes to good works is where does your power come from? How are you able to do these good deeds? Now, before I get into that, I want to stop and give Victoria a little house-warming gift. **Victoria sits on the front row and is easy to pick on.* I want to give you my very best. Here it is. *I gave her a nasty old rag that was filthy dirty* Victoria, this is a rag that means a lot to me and I want you to have it. I worked real hard to prepare it just for you. What? Don't you like it? Why? Well, yeah, it's not real clean but I want you to have it. It means a lot to me. Don't you want it? Of course, you don't want it and God doesn't want our good deeds done in our own power either.*

Isaiah 64 says that when we are living a sinful lifestyle and doing things in our own power for our own glory, whatever good we do is like giving God a filthy rag. He is not asking you to try harder to do more and better things. He wants to be the power behind what we do. He wants to get the glory for what we do. He wants to enable you to do things you could never do on your own.

I was talking to somebody the other day – well, I say I was talking to them. Actually, they were talking to me. You know what I mean. Talk, talk, talk. On and on. And Todd, in his own power was done about three sentences in. I started with the usual, “Really?” “Uh huh” “Wow.” Then I looked at my imaginary watch. I looked away. I yawned. It didn't matter. This person kept talking.

Then it hit me. This person just needed to be heard. They probably don't have many people in their life who will even try to listen. So, I asked God to give me the strength to just really listen and He did. Now, that may not sound like a big deal. And in the scheme of things, it may not be. But it was for that person. And I could not do that on my own. I proved that but God allowed me to be used to somehow help that person in spite of me.

We sing a song around here sometimes called “The Same Power” and it has lyrics that talk about how we, as believers, have the same power within us that Jesus had when He rose from the grave. And we probably think that power only manifests itself when something huge happens. *“Well, God gave me the ability to lift that car off that hurt little girl” or “I beat cancer because of the power that God gave me.”* Stuff like that. But God gives us the power that we need every day to listen to people who need to be heard. He gives us the power to give sacrificially when our accountant says not to. He gives us the ability to witness to the weirdo in the cubicle next to us. He gives us the patience to deal with defiant kids or insecure bosses or selfish spouses. He gives us the power to conquer addictions. That is His power.

And that is what it looks like to be righteous like Jesus is righteous. That's what it looks like to be right and do right in His power because we are born of Him. It's not just doing good deeds. It is doing good deeds that you would not otherwise be able to do. And when that happens -when He gives us that power – He gets the glory and it works out for our good.

Now, do you see that kind of thing happening in your life? Do you see yourself looking and acting and sounding more and more like Jesus even when you don't think you can get through what you are going through? Do you see and feel His power at work in your life like never before? If not, maybe that ought to send up a red flag for you. Maybe you need to talk to somebody.

I would love to talk with you about that right now. Timmy will be up here as well to help you with anything going on in your life. Do you have that relationship with God through His Son Jesus that we talk about here all the time? All you have to do is believe that Jesus is God and that His sacrifice on the cross was enough to satisfy the Father for the payment of your sins. You can't pay that price. But Jesus did and all you have to do is believe it.

But that belief will bring about change. And it won't always be easy. In fact, it may be the hardest thing you'll ever have to do but the reward is well worth it. There is only one way to Heaven and that is by God's grace. Accept it right now and ask Him to forgive you of all your sins. Then make Him Lord of your life forever. That starts right now. Do it now as the music plays.