

"The Obedience Test, Part 1"

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[0 : 00] I got to be honest with you, at great risk and peril to myself, I have brought something into this sanctuary. I know what I'm about to show you, there may be a rush upon me in the pulpit to try to grab what's in this box.

You might be live streaming right now and you might want to start bidding on things, but this is not for anyone's purchase. I hold in my hand this dazzling rock.

Now, I've estimated that if this is a diamond, a real diamond, it's about 600 or 700 carats, which puts it in like the \$150, \$200 million range.

Now, you may be wondering some questions. How have I come across this \$150 to \$200 million diamond, if it is a diamond?

Now, the question is, how do you know this thing is for real? How do you know this thing is genuine? And the way you go about finding whether this particular rock in my hand is genuine would be to ask some questions, perform some tests.

[1 : 07] So the first question you could ask me is, Pastor Mike, are you and Jenny millionaires without us knowing? And the easy answer is no, not even close.

So we're not millionaires. We couldn't afford to buy a \$150 to \$200 million rock like this. And if we had it, I wouldn't anyway. Now, you might ask a different kind of question.

You might, okay, Mike, let's analyze the actual composition of this thing in your hand. So you're like, if I were to take a 10-pound sledgehammer and bring it down on top of that thing in your hand, what would happen?

If it were to shatter, I'm guessing that's glass. But if my 10-pound sledgehammer bounced off that thing, maybe it is a diamond.

Here's another test. Let's say that you just happen to have a cauldron in your basement that can heat up to about 2,600 to 3,000 degrees Fahrenheit.

[2 : 10] If you drop that this in that, would it melt like wax? And if that's the case, it's glass. Or would it stand the test?

Now, here's a question that would really get at the heart of things. Mike, how did you acquire this thing? And if I told you I bought it at Hobby Lobby for \$9.39, I think you guys would be like, okay, well, that's kind of cleared it up.

Tests. How do you know something is the genuine real deal? You test it. And in the book of 1 John, the apostle John sends us a series of tests to test us to whether we're genuinely born of God, children of God, followers of Jesus.

And all throughout the book of 1 John, there is this cycling of tests, three tests. There is the belief test. Do you believe the truth about Jesus Christ, that He's fully God and fully man, and died as a propitiation for our sins?

And then there's the obedience test, the test of saying, do you obey the commands of Jesus? Do you obey God's commands in His words?

[3 : 32] Are you walking as Jesus Himself walked, 1 John 1.6? We're going to be looking at the obedience test today. The third test is the love test, to abound in love.

Do you love as God loves? Do you love the other children of God, bought by the blood of Jesus, as God loves them? So when we can sum up these tests as the belief tests, the obedience test, and the abound.

Believe, obey, and abound in love. And this morning, as I mentioned, we're looking at the obedience test. This test actually spans 1 John 2.28-3.10.

And what we see happening in these verses is that John connects our present obedience, what he calls practicing righteousness in 2.29. He connects them to the appearing of Jesus Christ.

In fact, he connects them to two appearances of Jesus Christ. In our section that I'm going to preach this morning, in chapter 2.28-33, he connects our present obedience to the future appearing of Jesus.

[4 : 41] And in verses 3, chapter 3, verse 4-10, he connects our present obedience to the past appearing of Jesus Christ. So, for the next two weeks, part 1 and part 2, the obedience test of present obedience to Jesus because of the appearing of Jesus.

So, here's the big idea. If you're following me along, if you want to jot these down in the back of your bulletins, here's the big idea. Christian, your future hope fuels your present obedience.

Child of God, your future hope in Christ, in His coming, in His glory, motivates your present obedience to Christ.

Future hope fuels present obedience. And so, the way that we're going to go about this is I'm going to ask you three diagnostic questions about your present obedience with an eye to the future coming of Jesus.

So, let's look at this first diagnostic question. will you stand before Him confident or will you shrink from Him in shame when He comes?

[6 : 02] Let me read 1 John chapter 2 28-33 and now little children abide in Him so that when He appears we may have confidence and not shrink from Him in shame at His coming.

If you know that He is righteous you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of Him. See what kind of love the Father has given us that we should be called children of God and so we are.

The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know Him beloved. We are God's children now and what we will be has not yet appeared but we will we know that when He appears we shall be like Him because we shall see Him as He is and everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure now.

So, when He comes will you stand before Him confident or will you shrink from Him in fear? Let me just establish just a couple things first. First, Jesus is coming back.

If you flip back in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 25 it's at the end of the first book of the New Testament. Jesus has entered into Jerusalem He's just days hours away from being crucified and He is explaining to those listening what's going to happen at the end times.

[7 : 25] And one of the things that's going to happen is He's coming back. And so in chapter 25 verse 31 Jesus says this about Himself. When the Son of Man comes in His glory and all the angels with Him then He will sit on His glorious throne.

Jesus is coming back. Jesus has said He's coming back. He has foretold us because He's our great prophet that He's coming back. What we know even from Billy's reading of 1 Thessalonians 5 is that He's coming back suddenly like a thief.

He's coming back at a time no one knows the day or the hour. Matthew 24 verse 36. And when He comes back everyone will see it. It will be undeniable. You look at Revelation 1-7 and all the nations of the world apart from Him are going to groan at His coming.

It's going to be obvious for all. It is the game changer. He's coming back. But the second thing you need to know about His coming is that when He comes back He will judge all humanity that ever lived.

If you still have your finger in Matthew 25 in verse 32 we read before Him the Son of Man sitting on His throne as a king before Him will be gathered all the nations.

[8 : 43] And He will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. It's a picture of judgment. And He will place the sheep on His right hand but the goats on the left.

Then the king Jesus will say to those on His right come you are blessed by my Father and inherit the kingdom prepared for you. Come on in. And then in verse 41 then He will say to those on His left depart from me you cursed into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

When He comes back He's going to judge all humanity. He's going to separate all humanity as those who have trusted in Him and lived for Him and those who have not.

In 2 Corinthians 5.10 we read this that every Christian will stand before the judgment of seed not just to say welcome in but Jesus will judge them on what they have done for Him.

we will stand before the judgment seat of Christ to receive what is due for what He has done each has done in the body whether good or evil.

[9 : 53] Again this 2 Corinthians 5.10 is not a judgment of whether or not you belong to Jesus but a judgment of reward for how you've invested your life for Jesus on earth.

That's why 2 Corinthians 5.11 says Paul says knowing the fear of the Lord I'm going to be judged by Him someday I persuade others now. Every one of us will stand before Jesus when He appears and to give an account for how we have lived our life.

So let me bring you back to 1 John 2.28 When we read and now little children abide in Him so that when He appears we may have confidence and not shrink from Him in shame at His coming when He appears and His coming are talking about the same thing when He comes back and when He judge.

When He appears will you stand before Him and have confidence? confidence. It's a really interesting word in Greek.

It literally means to speak boldly. To say I've got nothing to hide. Could you imagine Jesus coming back in His glory and you stand before Him and be able to say I've got nothing to hide.

[11 : 21] It's not a confidence in your own righteousness as though your salvation is riding on it. You can't save yourself. Only the finished work of Jesus His righteousness imputed to you can save you.

So what's the confidence in? It's in the confidence of saying now that He has saved me I have given everything I can for Him without regret.

I've lived my life as best I could for the one who gave His life for me. And to be able to stand before Jesus and say Jesus I wish I had more years to have given to you.

I wish I had more lives to give to you to bring more people to you to declare your praises to live for your glory to practice righteousness. I wish I had more time.

Not because you're looking to earn salvation but in response to what He's done for you as worship unto Him.

[12 : 23] I only wish I had more time. Will you stand before Him with confidence oh Jesus only if I had more to give or will you shrink from Him in shame?

All of us know what shame is. All of us know what it's like to have a reckoning with someone like our parents or our teachers coaches bosses you name it we all know what it's like to have a reckoning with someone and we don't want to be seen we don't want to make eye contact because we've got nothing to show.

Could you imagine a blood bought follower of Jesus standing before Him upon His return and shamefully not wanting to make eye contact with Christ because they know they've wasted their life?

Could you imagine that? Having wasted your life for living for the things that this present world says is important but in the end it just passes away.

Could you imagine someone living decades of their life having given their life to things that are lesser and temporary and you've got to explain yourself to Jesus?

[14 : 08] C.T. Studd wrote a book or wrote a poem it's probably my favorite poem yours stands up just one life which will soon be passed only what's done for Christ will last will you be honest with yourself this morning if Jesus were to appear this afternoon and you found yourself standing before Him would you stand with confidence oh Jesus only if I had more time I would do so much more for you or would you not want to make eye contact with Him would you be ashamed well I've got good news for you there's a way to avoid the shame on that day it's right here in our text and now little children abide in Him so that purpose clause when He appears we may have confidence and not shrink from Him and shame at His coming do you know how not to be ashamed on that day you abide in Him now you abide in Him now and you can be confident before Him on that day

Jesus pictures this abiding relationship as an ongoing dependent relationship to Him where you are perpetually recognizing Him as who He claims to be King of kings and Lord of lords the source of life and you are seeking to constantly obey what He's told you to do out of obedience to Him when you live like that you are a branch abiding to Jesus the vine I am the vine you are the branches anyone who abides in me and I in him bears much fruit practices righteousness for apart from me you can do nothing imagine Jesus is the son of our solar system and we are planets in abiding orbit around Him and we are orbiting around Him with joy knowing who He is obeying what He says and we give Him all the glory any glory we have is coming off of His glory in verse 29 we read if you know that He is righteous you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been

born of Him if you know that Jesus is righteous if He is pure and He is pure if He is good He is good if He is holy He is holy and if He is honorable He is honored in heaven above all else right now if you know this if you know this about Jesus and you are abiding in Him you can be sure anyone yourself included who is practicing righteousness who is seeking to be pure who is seeking to be good who is seeking to be holy who is seeking to live an honorable life in God's eyes that that person has been born of God too born of Him the Father this is the first time this phrase born of Him is used in the first John and it's going to be used nine times in the rest of the book if you have been born of God you have been made alive by the Spirit of God you've been regenerated it's John 3 and you have a whole new set of desires for your God because you're now His child and now you have an inclination of heart to practice righteousness to please Him practicing righteousness is a shared fruit of all who belong to God all who are born of God and it resonates with one another if you're not practicing righteousness but and you're not abiding in Jesus you need to start asking a question are you in fact a child of God and if you come to the conclusion that I don't think

I am the solution is trust in Jesus turn from your sins turn from what you're trusting and that's not Jesus and turn to Jesus who will light you up and deliver you from your sins when Jesus returns will you stand before Him confident or will you shrink from Him in fear and the solution is abide in Him now and you will be confident before Him then our future hope fuels our present obedience the second question is this do you know who you belong to now and who you belong to no longer you Christian you cannot forget who you are when the when the Apostle John finishes writing verse 29 and he finishes with those words has been born of Him born of the Father that moves John onto a topic that never got old for him here's John writing in his 70s and what he's about to say to us is high hearted joy and you can tell because one of the things he does is he includes himself in what he has to say see what kind of love the Father has given to us that we should be called children of God and so we are that should be an exclamation point not a period

Christian you must be thoroughly convinced of God's out of this world love for you you know when I was writing this sermon I was thinking that another option for this second diagnostic question would be this when you think about God's love Christian do you think of God's love as general and ordinary like wallpaper or do you think of God's love as particular to you and extraordinary that he would love you there's this little phrase what kind see what kind of love the father has given to us that is a bigger deal than what the English seems to convey it's one word in Greek and it basically means this you're not from around here out of the country out of this world extraordinary

[21 : 09] Matthew 8 Jesus is on the sea of Galilee in a boat with his disciples in the sea of Galilee is raging it's crazy Jesus is sleeping his disciples are freaking out and they finally say let's wake up the master and they say save us we're perishing Jesus says where's your faith and then he gets up stands up and he rebukes the wind and the waves and it's completely calm and you know what the disciples then say he's not from around here who is this guy he's not from this country and they were amazed they marveled this word used of Jesus in Matthew 8 is being used here in 1 John 3 1 of God's love for us it's extraordinary it's out of this world what kind of love is this love that God so committed to us that he would even call us his children you got to understand something brothers and sisters he doesn't love us because we're lovable we are yes his image bearers but we've rejected him we've rebelled against him and we followed the prince of the power of the air for some duration of our lives and he loved us still what kind of love is that we were his enemies and now we are his children because of his out of this world love for us he loves us from heaven here extraordinary

Romans 5 8 but God demonstrates his own love towards us and that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us he didn't love us because we are lovable but because he is loving because he is good because he's kind and by his sovereign grace he chose us in his love from before the foundation of the world for himself you can't earn it it's right there see what kind of love the father has given to us it's a gift you can't earn this love but we forget amidst COVID spikes amidst racially tense moments in our city amongst political upheavals in our nation we lose sight of that we have these screaming nows in our face and we lose sight of God's great love for us not to mention the constant press from our culture to think just as isolated individuals to think materialistically to prize entertainment and check out in all this stuff we forget who we are and John says at the end of in the middle of 3 1 and so we are exclamation point children of God loved by God the father that's who you are that's who I am that's who you are and we can never forget about it imagine what happens when you start living your life and you have this track on replay in

your mind that says something like this God loves me not because I'm lovable but he is loving God loves me and I'm his child and he's my heavenly father could you imagine what happens when you thinking about that and walking through your life I need to tell you something if you are meditating on God's love for you you're going to grow in faith in what God says about you and you're going to grow confident and you're going to have a growing distaste for sin here's why

God's love for you isn't just a rub your back kind of love God's love for you child of God is a purifying love it's a holy love it's a Hebrews 12 discipline of the father who is seeking for us to share in his holiness and harvest a harvest of joy love his love for us is a Romans 8 seeking to conform us to the image of his beloved son in holiness love that's how he's going to love us and that's why we live in contrast to the world it's right there in the text the reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him the world is the unregenerate humanity regard us they don't hold us in high esteem we used to live among them we get it we know why and they don't hold us in high regard because they don't regard him that could either be the father or

Jesus what we can say is they don't have high regard for our great triune God you used to be part of the world but when God in his love called you as his child to himself he called you out of the world and as a result of being born of God we have these new inclinations to love God and to long for the return of Jesus which fuels our present obedience let me ask you the last question who or what are you putting your hope in who or what are you putting your hope in we see this in verses two and three if if you're a child of God you are loved by God you abide in

[27 : 33] Christ now to be confident before Christ then and what we're going to see now is when you hope in the Jesus of then when he comes in his glory you will become like Jesus now beloved we are God's children now and what we will be has not yet appeared but we know that when he appears we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is and everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure hope is a very interesting word the biblical use of hope and the world's use of hope are two very different meanings of hope the world uses hope more along the lines of wishful thinking it's like wouldn't it be really good if this happened or that happened wouldn't it be really good if this vaccine came in and we got everybody vaccinated and there was no more COVID-19 that's a hope there's no promises wouldn't it be really good if when when Joe Biden becomes our president things just dramatically change and there's peace in our country no promises wouldn't it be really good if there's no more racial tension in the city of Kenosha and we don't have to see those kind of block hadings of Sheridan anymore no promises the world's hope gives no real substance to set your heart fully upon biblical hope hope is a forward aimed faith in the rock solid promises of God's word biblical hope is a faith filled confidence that God will be faithful to all of his promises so the question is what kind of hope have you been hoping with have you been hoping with a small h world's hope you know that because you're suffering great disappointment and fear or have you been hoping with capital h hope the promise that Jesus is coming back and you will see him in 1 John 3 2 John reminds us that we are living between the already and the not yet we are now God's children because of what Christ has done but what we will be has not yet appeared what we will be now that's an interesting phrase that kind of grabs my attention a little bit what we will be so it sounds as like John is saying who I am right now in my present state is not going to be what I will be in my final state Christian your present state of being and that body of yours with all those sinful desires of yours is not your final state of being your final state of being depends upon

Christ's appearing look at verse two beloved we are God's children now and what we will be has not yet appeared but we know that when he appears we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is our present state is not our final state and our final state will take place at his appearing when we see him and we'll be like him his appearing is the same word that we saw in 2 28 and it's actually the same word that shows up in 1 John 1 2 when the life is made manifest the life appears speaking of Jesus life appears and John says and we behold him and we bear testimony to him he's talking about the first appearing of Jesus here we're talking about the second appearing of Jesus and you will see him you will see him and you will see him as he is and when we see him as he is in that moment we'll be made like him turn into your

Bibles to Philippians chapter 3 verse 20 and 21 hear God's word but our citizenship is in heaven and from heaven we await a savior the Lord Jesus Christ that's hope it goes on who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself in other words when he comes back we get transformed by his power in a likeness of his

glory brother and sister you've got a resurrection body coming if you flip back a little bit more to first Corinthians 15 talking about the return of

[33 : 14] Jesus I tell you this is verse 50 I tell you this brothers flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable that means we got a problem because we can't enter into the kingdom of glory as we are behold Paul says I tell you a mystery we shall not all sleep but we will all be changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet for the trumpet imperishable and we shall be changed at his coming for this perishable body must put on the imperishable and this mortal body must put on immortality when the perishable puts on the imperishable and when the mortal puts on immortality then shall come to pass the saying that is written death is swallowed up in victory oh death where is your victory oh death where is your sting we will be singing that when Jesus comes back and we see him face to face we will see him as he is when he comes back he's going to come back in glory and we will be immediately dramatically completely and eternally changed as he is your present state isn't your final state and your final state will be like

Jesus in his glory so here's what that means now because of what Christ has done sin's penalty has been paid for for us amen now because of what Jesus has done sin's power has been broken for us but we still struggle right then when he comes sin's presence is going to be completely eradicated because we shall be like him hope do we have any glimpses of Jesus in his glorious state that you can set your heart on we do in Matthew 17 2 the transfiguration we get a little glimpse of Jesus in his glory but I want to aim you at revelation revelation 1 12 through 16 revelation 19 11 through 16 revelation 21 22 through 27 these are all depictions of

Jesus in his glorious state and when you start setting your heart on the wonders of these depictions of Jesus in his brilliance you will find hope and motivation to say no to sin now it's biblical hope it's forward aimed faith in the promise of God's word that we will be like him we will see him as he is and here's the effect chapter three verse three and everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure everyone who hopes in him it's a purifying hope brothers and sisters the thought of the glorious return of Jesus and we shall see him as he is is a purifying hope worldly hope is not a purifying hope biblical hope in the return of Jesus is when dwelling on the risen reigning radiant Christ and you realize that we're one day closer to his return it causes a hunger to practice righteousness now to be pure now to be good now to be honorable now just as he is righteous when we hope in the glorious coming of Jesus then we become like him now beholding him we are transferred from one degree of glory to the next now if you're struggling with a particular area of sin let me consider help you to consider something would you start spending time in passages like revelation one and revelation 19 and revelation 20 21 and 22 so that God forms in your mind this glorious Christ and as you start to see him as he is in your heart inclines itself and wants to worship and live for him and become like him it starts crowding out sinful desires another way to think about it is this if you've got a question mark on something you're thinking something you're feeling something you're doing or you're about to say would it make any difference if

Jesus came in that moment came back in his glory would it make any difference in what you would do what you would say what would you think and feel what you would click what would you send would make any difference when you hope in the glorious Jesus then you become like him in purity now child of God your future hope fuels your present obedience alright I brought you through three diagnostics when he returns will you stand before him in confidence or shrink from him in fear abide in him now and be confident before him then do you know who you are now and who you belong to no longer God when he called you as his child to himself he called you out of the world remember who you are you are beloved of God who or what are you putting your hope in because when you hope in the glorious coming of

[39 : 11] Jesus then you will become like him now the future of appearing of Jesus is not just a orthodox box to check it's a doctrine that motivates us unto practical holiness now it fuels our practice of righteousness and it shows that we are children of God will you pray with me God in heaven we thank you for a timely message on this topic and God we ask that you by your Holy Spirit would press in these truths into our hearts so that we would be rightly affected God if you by your Holy Spirit has convicted people of sin all glory to your name God may we repent and believe in joy

God if you have convicted people that they are not children of God God transferred them from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of your beloved son today would you have them God call out

to you and confess you Lord Jesus as Lord and God I pray that you would all use all of this to focus
us as a you you you you you you