

1 John 2:29

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

Analysis

If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him. John concludes the chapter with a test linking righteousness and regeneration. "If ye know that he is righteous" (ean eidēte hoti dikaios estin)—this conditional assumes believers do know Christ's righteousness. "Righteous" (dikaios) describes Christ's perfect conformity to God's holiness and law (cf. 2:1, "Jesus Christ the righteous"). This is foundational Christian knowledge—Christ is perfectly righteous in character and conduct.

"Ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him" (ginōskete hoti pas ho poiōn tēn dikaiosynēn ex autou gegennētai)—the verb "know" shifts from eidēte (intellectual awareness) to ginōskete (experiential, practical knowledge). "Every one that doeth righteousness" (pas ho poiōn tēn dikaiosynēn)—the present participle "doeth" indicates habitual practice, lifestyle orientation. Dikaiosynē (righteousness) means conformity to God's standards, holy living, moral uprightness.

"Is born of him" (ex autou gegennētai)—the perfect passive "is born" (gegennētai) indicates completed action with continuing state. Those habitually practicing righteousness have been born of God and remain in that regenerate state. This doesn't mean righteousness causes regeneration (that reverses cause and effect) but that regeneration necessarily produces righteousness. Children resemble their Father; those born of the righteous One demonstrate family likeness by doing

righteousness. This test exposes false profession: claiming rebirth while living unrighteously contradicts spiritual reality.

Historical Context

The connection between regeneration and righteous living runs throughout Scripture. Ezekiel prophesied new covenant transformation: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you...and cause you to walk in my statutes" (Ezekiel 36:26-27). Jesus taught: "by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20)—genuine faith produces good fruit. Paul declared believers are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Ephesians 2:10).

This verse addresses the Gnostic separation of spirituality from ethics. Gnostics claimed spiritual rebirth through enlightenment while moral conduct was irrelevant. John refutes this: genuine rebirth produces changed life. Those truly born of the righteous God will practice righteousness—not perfectly but characteristically. The trajectory is holiness, not sin; when believers sin, they confess and return to righteousness (1:9, 2:1) rather than persist comfortably in sin.

The Reformation distinguished between justification (legal declaration of righteousness based on Christ's imputed righteousness) and sanctification (progressive transformation producing actual righteousness). Both are essential; neither is optional. Calvin taught that justification and sanctification are inseparable though distinguishable—received together in union with Christ. Those justified will be sanctified; those claiming justification while showing no sanctification reveal false profession. John's test remains: those born of God do righteousness.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does your habitual practice reveal whether you've been born of God—what fruit evidences regeneration in your life?
2. What's the difference between perfectionism (claiming sinlessness) and practicing righteousness (habitual holiness despite occasional sin)?
3. How should this test shape church membership—what role should visible fruit of righteousness play in recognizing genuine believers?

Interlinear Text

ἐὰν	εἰδῆτε	ὅτι	δίκαιος	ἐστιν	γινώσκετε	ὅτι	πᾶς	ὁ	
If	ye know	that	righteous	he is	ye know	that	every one		G3588
G1437	G1492	G3754	G1342	G2076	G1097	G3754	G3956		
ποιῶν	τὴν	δικαιοσύνην	ἐξ	αὐτοῦ	γεγέννηται				
that doeth	G3588	righteousness	of	him	is born				
G4160		G1343	G1537	G846	G1080				

Additional Cross-References

1 John 3:7 (Righteousness): Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.

1 John 5:1 (Parallel theme): Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

John 1:13 (Parallel theme): Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

1 John 4:7 (Parallel theme): Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

1 Peter 3:18 (Righteousness): For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

Acts 10:35 (Righteousness): But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

1 John 5:4 (Parallel theme): For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

James 1:18 (Parallel theme): Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

Hebrews 7:26 (Parallel theme): For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

Acts 22:14 (Righteousness): And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.