

**C. The Old Testament indicated that the character of God (eternal life, born of God) would be given to the one who believes in the Son, which would result in purity, righteousness, no sin, and love of the brother (2:29--3:24a).**

**1. The Old Testament indicated imputed purity and righteousness through belief in Jesus, who brings new life (love of brother) to the believer that, unlike the life inherited from Adam, cannot sin (2:29--3:13).**

It is important to note that this section is very focused on the “family of God,” using the terms “born of God,” “children of God,” etc.

**a. Through belief in Jesus (“the righteousness”) the believer becomes a “child of God” which cannot be identified by the eyes (the world), but will be known at Christ’s appearing when everyone shall see that the believer is like Christ, pure. (2:29—3:3).**

**1) By belief (the righteousness) one becomes born into the family of God (2:29).**

2:29 If you know that He (the Father) is righteous, you know that everyone also who does the righteousness is born of Him (the Father)<sup>77</sup>.

ἐὰν εἰδῆτε ὅτι δίκαιός ἐστιν, γινώσκετε ὅτι καὶ πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν δικαιοσύνην ἐξ αὐτοῦ γεγέννηται.

This section identifies the “children of God” as those who do what is called “righteousness.”<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> The point of this is that if one does the righteous deed he is righteous. Again this is a verbal equivalency. It does not say that if one does good (meaning righteous) deeds that it makes him righteous, since that would not be orthodox. It does not say that good deeds are righteousness (equivalent with God’s character), since that also would be unorthodox. Thus, it cannot be talking about good deeds.

Of course, those who hold this say that good deeds are the proof that one is righteous. But it cannot say that without adding something. In other words, it must say the one who trusts in Jesus and has good deeds is righteous. And the text does not say that.

Righteousness is the character of God, or His desires. The desire of the Father is that one believes in His Son (see 3:23) and receives the love of God (“eternal life”), which is sacrificial love for the brother.

Here (in agreement with John 6:28-29) this righteous (deed) is to believe in Jesus Christ. Genesis 15:6<sup>79</sup> showed Abraham’s righteous deed was to believe in the “Seed of the Woman.”<sup>80</sup> From Adam (coats of skins, etc.) to Abel to Enoch, it was always to believe.

Note also that 3:23 says that the command of the Father is to believe in the Son (and love the brother which is the imputed love). These commands are the desires of the Father, which are also the “righteousness.” The character of the Father is what one does (i.e., righteousness), which is to believe in the Son.

The character of God is related most to the Hebrew *hesed*, which is the one-way love of God toward the hopeless. Thus, this love of God, demonstrated in the Christ and His death, is now in the believer to be expressed toward the brother. The verses that express this particularly in 1 John are in 4:10-11.

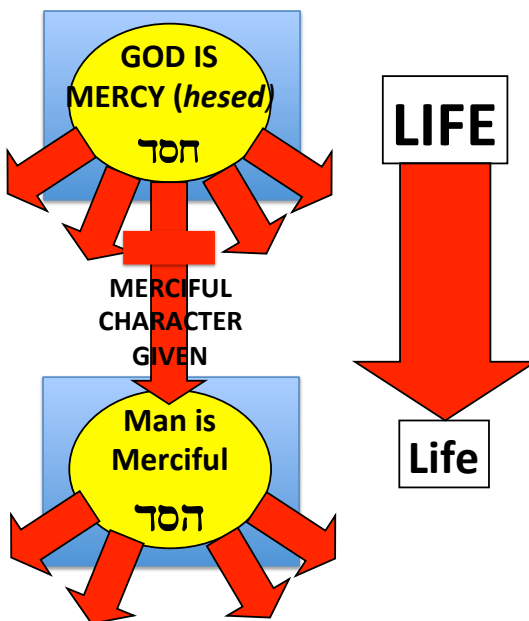
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<sup>78</sup> Abel’s sacrifice defines this “righteous” deed in 3:12, where he believed in the coming Messiah through his sacrifice. There in 3:12 it claims that Abel’s deed(s) were righteous. Abel’s sacrifice was exhibiting his faith in coming “Seed of the Woman” to die for his sins. It is that which makes one “born of God.”

<sup>79</sup> The question as to what Abram believed is interesting. He did not simply have “faith” in a generic God, but was revealed something specific to believe in. This was the “Seed as the stars of the heavens” a simile used only in Genesis in 22:17 where the seed is singular (note the “he” pronoun there). Thus the “righteous deed” here when referring to Abraham is the belief in Messiah of the Old Testament, i.e., Jesus. In addition, an examination of Genesis 15:6 shows that the context is that the “Seed” God promised was singular, meaning Messiah of Genesis 3:15 was to be the fulfillment of the promise.

<sup>80</sup> Refer to the paper by this author for more information on “doing righteousness” as equivalent to “believe”. Charles P. Baylis, "Are the Children of God and the Children of the Devil Really Obvious (1 John 3:10)?" read at *The Evangelical Theological Society*, 43rd Annual Meeting, November 23, 1991.

<sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. <sup>11</sup> Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. (1 John 4:10-11)



Thus it is that one seeks a commonality in the family of God, because of the “love” that God has given the believer, and that love “ought” to be expressed in care for the brother. This “love” is an identifier of the family of God, that is, they find a commonality with those who have trusted in Christ.

Nota Bene:

It should be recalled that there are two paths in this book. There is one, which seeks to please God through the performance of works. This seemingly seeks to emulate to some degree God’s desires, or His commands. The other is that of pleasing God through His provision of the Son for full righteousness.

To insert works into this book as a “proof” or “attainment” in any sense that competes with what Jesus Christ does is totally “out of context.” In other words, the believer’s attainment of appeasing the wrath of God (“propitiation”) is always and only through Jesus Christ.

The believer's proof of salvation is also only through Jesus Christ. To say otherwise is to give some credence to one's performance and thus "self-righteousness." One's proof, one's attainment, is always and only in Jesus' death and resurrection and the apostolic witness to such. However, note that the love of the brother is placed in the believer and is a proof that he has that love in him, since it cannot be from any other source but Christ's death. Thus there is recognition of those in the family as "brothers," but this is part and parcel of "believing" and not a separate item from it. Clearly when one believes, they recognize their change from the family of the devil to the family of God.

**2) Those who are born of God (2:29) receive the character of God, which is love (sacrificial love for the brother), and through Christ the believer is made pure which will be seen when He returns (3:1-3).**

3:1 See how great a love the Father has bestowed (given) upon (to) us (apostles), that we should be called **children of God**; and *such* we are. For this reason the world does not know us (apostles), because it did not know Him. 2 Beloved, now we (apostles) are **children of God**, and it has not appeared (been revealed) as yet<sup>81</sup> what we (apostles) shall be. We know that, when He (the Father) appears (is revealed), we shall be like Him (righteous), because we shall see Him just as He is (the Father is by seeing Jesus).<sup>3</sup> And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

ἴδετε ποταπὴν ἀγάπην δέδωκεν ἡμῖν ὁ πατήρ, ἵνα τέκνα θεοῦ κληθῶμεν, καὶ ἐσμέν. διὰ τοῦτο ὁ κόσμος οὐ γινώσκει ἡμᾶς, ὅτι οὐκ ἔγνω αὐτόν.<sup>2</sup> ἀγαπητοί,

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<sup>81</sup> It should be noted that the true "Child of God" is not apparent to the world, but is obvious to the "Child of God" according to 3:10. This is because of the knowledge of the believer that trust in Christ makes him a child of God (5:13). This would seem to be a contradiction to John 13:35, but John 13:35 only states that all men will know that the love for one another shows all men that they are disciples of Jesus.

νῦν τέκνα θεοῦ ἐσμεν, καὶ οὐπω  
 ἐφανερώθη τί ἐσόμεθα. οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἐὰν  
 φανερωθῆ, ὅμοιοι αὐτῷ ἐσόμεθα, ὅτι  
 ὁψόμεθα αὐτὸν καθὼς ἐστίν.<sup>3</sup> καὶ πᾶς ὁ  
 ἔχων τὴν ἐλπίδα ταύτην ἐπ’ αὐτῷ ἀγνίζει  
 ἑαυτὸν, καθὼς ἐκεῖνος ἀγνός ἐστιν.

This continues the theme “born of God” in 2:29. It is the character of God that is given at the new birth. That character is the sacrificial love of the Father, the opposite of the Adamic love (self-centered love), which the world possesses. They hate the love that God has given and so do not recognize Christians as children of God. (Thus the identification of true “children of God” is not apparent to the sight of the pagan, but will be when Christ appears and the believer will be seen like Christ (pure)). It is this hope in Christ (belief) that purifies<sup>82</sup> the believer (see 1:7, 9 for the purification through Christ required to walk with God) (3:1-3).

**b. The believer who is “born of God” (2:29) and has the character of God (love, 3:1) to be a “child of God” (3:1) cannot commit sin since this is the life of God in the believer (3:4-10a).**

This is contrasted with the antichrist (and the world) who has only the dying, cursed, Adamic self. They thus reject this and commit “the sin” of rejecting God’s revelation like Satan deceived Eve and Cain followed. (3:4-3:10a). The antichrists assert that it is only through works that they achieve ‘no sin’ status (see 1:8, 10). If one bases his hope on the belief that he has life through Jesus, the Son, then he has life with the Father (child). If he rejects

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<sup>82</sup> This is not an imperative urging the believer to do something in addition to “hope.” In other words it is not, “the one who has this hope in Him” does something to purify himself, so that he can be as pure as Jesus. It is saying that the “hope in Him” is what purifies the believer. Just as in 1:7 and 1:9, the believer is purified through belief in Jesus. A typical interpretation of this is that one does good things as a result of the hope to prove an actual hope. However, nowhere in the Bible does one “purify oneself” by good deeds, but always through an act (Old Testament), which symbolized imputation (e.g., rituals, sacrifices, washings, etc.) fulfilled in Christ.

that premise (cf. John 8:37-47) he is the seed (child) of the devil.

**[NOTE: The following verses will be quoted and then explained separately for clarity.]**

### **1 John 3:4**

4 Everyone who does<sup>83</sup> the<sup>84</sup> sin (rejects the revelation of Jesus as the Christ) also does the lawlessness (breaks the Law of God); and the sin is the lawlessness.

<sup>4</sup> Πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν καὶ τὴν ἀνομίαν ποιεῖ, καὶ ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία.

**Explanation:** The one who does “the” sin of rejecting Christ (Genesis 3:15, hope in the “Seed of the Woman,” Genesis 3:15) does “the” lawlessness,<sup>85</sup> which is opposing God and His revelation.

### **1 John 3:5**

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<sup>83</sup> Note the translation here is “does” and should not be “practice.” “Practice” is an interpretation, not a straight translation. The “does” is a simple present tense of the Greek word, *poieo*, which means “make” or “do.” Any inference that it should be “continual” or “habitual” cannot be done without the context clearly justifying it (and if the context would justify it, then one would not need to add “practice” since the context would be obvious). And, it is admitted by most, there is no context to justify it, and thus it is being read in from the interpreter’s (translator’s (?)) theology.

<sup>84</sup> Note the addition of the article here in this translation is different than the normal translations, which do not translate the Greek article. They prefer to translate it similarly to the word when it appears without an article.

Commentators and translator notes do not mention the article, which is fairly rare when combined with the word for singular “sin.” The articular singular of “sin” is fairly rare, especially when one considers its location in the New Testament. It appears 42 times. However, about 2/3 of them are located in 4 chapters in the New Testament. (27 of them are in Romans, and those are all located between 5:12 and 8:3!) That leaves 15 throughout the rest of the New Testament and 9 of them are in Johannine literature (the Gospel and 1 John). Thus, the use of this article with singular of “sin” must be considered as important and should not be negated.

<sup>85</sup> Since the antagonist is likely Jewish, this statement of “lawlessness” would have been particularly striking to him, since his claim was to have “no sin” or to “not sin” (1:8, 10) through the keeping of the Law (see the claim of “keeping the commandments” in 2:3-4).

5 And you know that He appeared (was revealed) in order to take away sins<sup>86</sup>; and in Him there is no sin.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>5</sup> καὶ οἶδατε ὅτι ἐκεῖνος ἐφανερώθη, ἵνα τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἄρῃ, καὶ ἀμαρτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν.

**Explanation:** God appeared in Genesis 3 in the Garden to judge Adam, but did not implement the judgment, but only pronounced the judgment, which was to come in the “Seed of the Woman.” This delayed the judgment so that there would be escape provided in the “Seed of the Woman’s” innocent death. Thus this verse is the reference to God coming in the garden to take away sins by introducing the “Seed of the Woman” to come. Thus, the “Seed of the Woman” has arrived and pronounced the judgment, but now in His actual sinless appearance. Thus, the sinless One would pay for the sins of the world and in that obedient death demonstrated the perfectly obedient “eternal life” that He had with the Father. Now the delayed judgment is imminent since the Righteous One has appeared and it is demonstrated that He will, and has the right to, judge.

### 1 John 3:6

6 No one who abides in Him sins<sup>88</sup>; no one who sins has seen Him or has known Him.

<sup>6</sup> πᾶς ὁ ἐν αὐτῷ μένων οὐχ ἀμαρτάνει· πᾶς ὁ ἀμαρτάνων οὐχ ἑώρακεν αὐτὸν οὐδὲ ἔγνωκεν αὐτόν.

**Explanation:** Thus the One who hopes in the Christ (abides in), has this eternal life (as well as the forgiveness of sins), and thus is “like Christ” in that the believer has this “life” which cannot sin. Without Him (the Father in the Son), one must sin since all they have is the Adamic nature, which does nothing but sin. The perfect tenses with the “seen” and “known” indicate that things have not changed from the Law. The believer under the Law was still hoping in Messiah, not in his own works, and now continues following the appearance of Messiah.

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<sup>86</sup> This is referring to God coming in the garden and pronouncing that the Messiah would be struck on the heel by the serpent, and thus would be the sacrifice for sins. That Messiah has now appeared and has taken away sins, undoing the work of the devil, which was to bring death through the rejection of God.

<sup>87</sup> There is no sin in God’s character, nor in the One who represents God’s character, Jesus.

<sup>88</sup> This is not saying “no sin” is a result of abiding in Him, but that not sinning is the state of one who is abiding in Him. In other words if one abides in Him (believes) then his belief results in a character that does not sin.

**1 John 3:7**

7 Little children, let no one deceive<sup>89</sup> you; the one who does the righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous;

<sup>7</sup> Τεκνία, μηδεις πλανάτω ὑμᾶς· ὁ ποιῶν τὴν δικαιοσύνην δίκαιός ἐστιν, καθὼς ἐκεῖνος δίκαιός ἐστιν·

**Explanation:** Again, the one who “does” (not to be interpreted as “practices” or “continues”) belief in Christ (“the righteousness”) is (i.e., equivalency) righteous (as Abram was righteous by belief, Genesis 15:6). Note that the “deceive” is identifying Satan as the source through the antichrists, thus it is the antichrists that are the source of saying this denial, which is defined by 2:22, a denial that Jesus is the Christ.

**1 John 3:8**

8 the one who does the sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God was revealed for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

<sup>8</sup> ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἐκ τοῦ διαβόλου ἐστίν, ὅτι ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς ὁ διάβολος ἁμαρτάνει. εἰς τοῦτο ἐφανερώθη ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα λύσῃ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ διαβόλου.

**Explanation:** The devil sinned by rejecting the revelation of God and led others (Adam and Eve) into it. Now the antagonists are doing the same as their father, the devil. When he tempted Eve and Adam into sin then death came on the earth to all mankind. Then the “Son” of God came according to Genesis 3:15 (“Seed of the Woman”) to destroy the works of the devil, thus ended death for all through His substitutionary death and to give them new (“eternal”) life. Thus the Son is the representative of God to undo the death brought by the devil and bring mankind to believe in the Son, thus the revelation (desires) of God.

**1 John 3:9**

- A No one who is born of God
- B does sin
- C because His seed abides in him;

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<sup>89</sup> This identifies the source of this as the antichrists (2:26), who are deceiving the believers.



B' and he cannot sin,  
A' because he is born of God.

<sup>9</sup> Πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ  
ἀμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ,  
ὅτι σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει,  
καὶ οὐ δύναται ἀμαρτάνειν,  
ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται.

**Explanation:** This is in a chiasm<sup>90</sup> in order to press home the meaning that this “child of God” has the character of God (“eternal life”) and thus is sinless, as is required if one is to enter the kingdom. Thus the issue of the “family of God” continues.

### **Excursus: The Problem of the Present Continuous (?) Tense in 1 John 3:9**

Probably the most difficult of passages to deal with is the passage of 1 John 2:29—3:10, where some proponents advocate that the issue is whether the false professor of Christianity is in a continuous state of sin (i.e., practices sin) which proves they are an unbeliever (or at times an unsanctified believer).<sup>91</sup> The most central problem is the issue of the present tense of “sin” (*amartano*) or of “do” (*poieo*), which is commonly translated “continually sin” or “practice sin.” In an earlier discussion the issue of the present tense was dealt with, demonstrating that there is no justification for a “continual present tense” within the verb itself, nor in any of its forms. Justification for its use as continual is totally based on the context and is never inherent in the verb itself (it can be used in a continual context but does not bring that sense on its own). Thus, the present tense of “to stand,” (i.e., “stands”) may be used in a one-time sense when standing for the National Anthem, and the same “to stand” may be used in a continual sense when one is standing for hours on end while waiting in line, or even in the figurative sense when one “stands”

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<sup>90</sup> This confirms, differently from that born of Adam, the one born of God has an imputed holy life, which does not have the capacity to sin. In 5:18 it is related to the life of Christ which was pure and holy: “We know that ***no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God*** keeps him and the evil one does not touch him.”

<sup>91</sup> The likely difficulty that commentators see is the inability to reconcile these verses and their literal translation that this one born of God “does not sin” (3:9) with the statement that the antagonist seems to claim wrongly that he has “no sin” or is “not sinning” in 1:8 and 1:10. The difficulty is solved (as discussed in this writing) when one realizes that John is referencing in 1:8, 10, Adam’s wrong claim of innocence before God (Genesis 1:10), while in 3:9 he is referencing the new identity in the “Seed of the Woman” which he needed to be resurrected into the kingdom. Again, the Old Testament context of Genesis 3—4, and Jeremiah 31:31-34 (forgiveness of sins for the old heart and the sinlessness of the new heart) must be utilized. Thus one still has sin due to the presence of the Adamic nature, which is forgiven through Christ, yet one has the new character, which is the character of Christ imputed into the believer.

for some principle. The verb itself does not change, only the context. Thus the translation of the verb should not change since if continuity is justified by the context then the context should also carry the continuity without help in the English translation. Thus, “I stand for the National Anthem” is totally different than “I stand for eternal security” but the verb does not need to indicate continuity, since the context carries it in the text. Thus the error the translators subtly admit, when they add “practice” or “continually,” is that the context does not have obvious continuity implied and thus must add it based on their theological perception of the meaning of the passage. Had the context justified continuity then they could have left it alone since their translation of the context would have indicated it. Of course, their translations then go to the pulpits of America where they exegete on the English text, assuming that “continually” or “practice” is a legitimate translation, thus importing, not the translation, but the interpretation which conforms to the theology of the translator.

This has been covered earlier in the discussion of Genesis 3 as related to this passage. Very simply the forgiveness of sins and the new life prophesied in the New Adam would provide a new character that could not sin. Interestingly the literal translation of 3:9 overemphasizes the total inability for this new character to sin.

- A     Each one who is born of God
- B     does not sin,
- C     because His seed abides in him;
- B’    and he cannot sin,
- A’    because he is born of God.

While it has been important to define things primarily from John’s Epistle and his references to the Old Testament, it might behoove the reader to refer to Matthew 5:19 where Jesus defines the requirement for entry into the kingdom . . . absolute perfection.

"Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven;<sup>92</sup> but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

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<sup>92</sup> Jesus then goes on to illustrate those who negate the “least of these commandments” who will be “least in the kingdom” by stating “unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Scribes and the Pharisees, you shall not enter the Kingdom of God.” And later in the immediate context He illustrates this by saying that if one calls their brother a fool they are guilty enough to go into hell fire (i.e., negated the least of these commandments).

Clearly by comparison, there are two categories, those who are perfect (“keeps”) and those who are less than perfect (“looses the least of these commandments”). Thus one must be perfect to enter the kingdom, not close, nor even have a consistent lifestyle, nor have a “continual,” “habitual,” lifestyle of good deeds. This perfection will be accomplished only by the imputation of a new heart.

**[End of Excursus]**

**1 John 3:10a**

10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not do righteousness [lit.: (a) righteous act] is not of God,

<sup>10</sup> ἐν τούτῳ φανερά ἐστὶν τὰ τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὰ τέκνα τοῦ διαβόλου· πᾶς ὁ μὴ ποιῶν δικαιοσύνην οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ,

**Explanation:** The *inclusio* with 2:29 is that the child of the devil is known because he rejects the revelation of God’s mercy in the Christ.

In 1 John 3:10, John says these “children of the devil” are identified by an action (“any one not doing righteousness” (“righteousness” is a singular noun)). The “not doing righteousness” (μὴ ποιῶν δικαιοσύνην) that makes it obvious (φανερά) is the same deed as was done in Genesis 4 by Abel. John follows the reference to doing “righteousness” by referencing Cain and Abel as defining the “doing,” or “not doing,” “righteousness,” in the following verses.

“. . . Cain, *who* was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous (δικαία)“ (1 John 3:11-12)

Note that the requirement of the “not doing righteousness” in 3:10 is illustrated by Cain’s evil deeds contrasted with Abel’s righteous deeds<sup>93</sup> in 3:12. Cain had only one activity (prior to the murder of his brother), which was the sacrifice of vegetables. By

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<sup>93</sup> Note that it is wrong to assume that “righteousness” in the singular should be a collective representing many sins/righteousnesses or a lifestyle, since not only is Abel’s single act listed as a plural (“deeds” is assumed), but also Cain’s singular evil act is also listed as a plural. Cain only did one thing prior to the slaying and that was his sacrifice. Abel was the same as he only did one thing, that is, to sacrifice. Thus their deeds were just one collective act per person, the sacrifice. Cain’s was evil, from Satan. Abel’s was righteous from God’s revelation of Messiah. The likely reason that a plural “deeds” is used is due to the fact he was likely sacrificing more than a single vegetable or animal as Abel’s sacrifice in Genesis 4 is in the plural, “firstborns.”

contrast Abel also did only one action that is recorded and that was the sacrifice of the firstborns (מִבְּכֹרֹת, plural) of sheep. Cain's response reflected his own approach to God apart from revelation through his own human wisdom.<sup>94</sup> Abel's deed reflected his trust in the revelation of God's Messiah in Genesis 3:15. Thus, like Cain, the "children of the devil" are obvious because they reject the Messiah revealed in the apostles (see 2:22, 4:2-3), just as Cain rejected the prophecy of Messiah in Genesis 3:15.

Thus, the obvious deed of "righteousness" (singular noun) in 3:10 is belief in Jesus as the Christ, just like Abel and unlike Cain who sought his own way to God.

**2. The Old Testament revelation indicated the love of brother in the story of Cain and Abel as the character of God in the believer (3:10b-13).**

10b nor the one who does not love his brother. 11 For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; 12 not as Cain, *who* was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds<sup>95</sup> were evil, and his brother's were righteous. 13 Do not marvel, brethren, if the world hates you.

καὶ ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ.<sup>11</sup> Ὅτι αὕτη ἐστὶν

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<sup>94</sup> This was due to the fact that he now had the "knowledge of good and evil," which was the ability to determine what was good and what was evil from one's own perspective, as opposed to God's determination of that in the revelation. This is confirmed by the Book of Hebrews 11:4. There "By faith Abel . . ." indicates Abel believed in a prior revelation of God, that of the sacrificed Messiah to come.

<sup>95</sup> There is some question as to why John would use the plural here "deeds" when he has been using the singular of "righteousness" or "the righteous deed", meaning "belief". If Abel's act of righteousness is his sacrifice, then it appears as though it should be singular. In John 6:28-29, there is an illustration of this very thing, with the definition of "belief" in the context.

John 6:28 They said therefore to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" 29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

In John 8:39, Jesus refers to Abraham's belief as "deeds" (pl.). However, Abraham did multiple points of belief, as it was a continuous action to varying degrees. Of course, what Jesus is pointing out is that belief is a deed, but is done multiple times, or continuously. So Abraham looked forward to Jesus continuously, but it was exhibited in different ways. Thus, the plural designates the fact that Abel believed, not that he simply sacrificed once which would have been a singular.

ἡ ἀγγελία ἣν ἠκούσατε ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς, ἵνα ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους, <sup>12</sup> οὐ καθὼς Κάϊν ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ ἦν καὶ ἔσφαξεν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ· καὶ χάριν τίνος ἔσφαξεν αὐτόν; ὅτι τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ πονηρὰ ἦν τὰ δὲ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ δίκαια. <sup>13</sup> [Καὶ] μὴ θαυμάζετε, ἀδελφοί, εἰ μισεῖ ὑμᾶς ὁ κόσμος

Those who believe in Christ are concerned with brothers who are in the family of God, while those who reject the Messiah will persecute those in the family of God<sup>96</sup>. The Genesis motif shows that Cain (a non-believer in God’s promise of Gen. 3:15) murdered Abel (a believer in Gen. 3:15 demonstrated in his sacrifice) since God rejected him because He rejected God’s desires.

Today the issue is the same. Thus, the believer in the Word of the apostles is unified in the body of the family of God. Those who are rejected, like Cain, will hate those in the family, who confess their identity in Jesus Christ.

3. **The character of God (“eternal life”) is the “love of the brother which proves one is a “child of God” by contrast to the unbeliever who hates the true “child of God” (3:14-22).**
  - a. **The identity of the “child of God” is through the love of brother as contrasted with those who hate the brother (3:14-15).**

14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. 15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

<sup>14</sup> ἡμεῖς οἶδαμεν ὅτι μεταβεβήκαμεν ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωὴν, ὅτι ἀγαπῶμεν τοὺς ἀδελφούς· ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν μένει ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ. <sup>15</sup> πᾶς ὁ μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἀνθρωποκτόνος ἐστίν, καὶ οἶδατε ὅτι πᾶς

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<sup>96</sup> This explanation is in John 15:12—16:4. There the apostles are warned that they will be hated by those who do not accept the word of Jesus. Since the apostles have the same word as Jesus they also will be hated. Thus it is the Word of Jesus that unites the family, which is present in the apostles. Anyone not having that Word will hate those who have the Word.

ἀνθρωποκτόνος οὐκ ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον ἐν αὐτῷ μένουσαν.

Having already identified the “family of God” as those who have trusted Jesus as the Christ, he now moves to the relationship of those in the family, that is, “brothers.” The “brothers” referred to in John does not extend to the unsaved (even though it is clear that God loves them, see John 3:16), but only to the “family of God,” to those who have trusted in Christ.

Due to the fact they are in the family there is a shared “love” for other brothers, since that is the “eternal life” (sacrificial mercy) that was given to those who trusted. Thus that is in the brothers, and they identify with those who are also brothers through their trust in Christ.

To understand the concept of “love” of the brother better, it is good to understand the contrast of those who “hate” the brothers (Christians). One only has two choices, he either identifies with Christian brothers, or he hates them because he is of the family of the devil.

This is Cain and Abel. Cain was identified as not in the family of God because he hated Abel. Why did he hate Abel? Because Abel trusted in Messiah while Cain trusted in his identity of works.

To understand this concept fully it is good to read John 15:1—16:4. And while this is particularly for apostles, it is quite easy to see how the sides shape up, especially under persecution where brothers must bind together against their common oppressor.

- b. The character of God in us was demonstrated by God’s love in Christ’s substitutionary sacrifice, which is to result in the sacrifice for the Christian brother as well (3:16-18).**

16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17 But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in

him? 18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>16</sup> ἐν τούτῳ ἐγνώκαμεν τὴν ἀγάπην, ὅτι ἐκεῖνος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἔθηκεν· καὶ ἡμεῖς ὀφείλομεν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀδελφῶν τὰς ψυχὰς θεῖναι.  
<sup>17</sup> ὃς δ' ἂν ἔχη τὸν βίον τοῦ κόσμου καὶ θεωρῇ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ χρεῖαν ἔχοντα καὶ κλείσῃ τὰ σπλάγχνα αὐτοῦ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, πῶς ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ μένει ἐν αὐτῷ; <sup>18</sup> Τεκνία, μὴ ἀγαπῶμεν λόγῳ μὴδὲ τῇ γλώσσει ἀλλὰ ἐν ἔργῳ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ.

The point is made here that if one has the identity with Christ, then they will love others who have that identity. And since the serpent is persecuting other brothers, the true brother will come to the aid of the needy brother as opposed to siding with the enemy who is persecuting the brother.

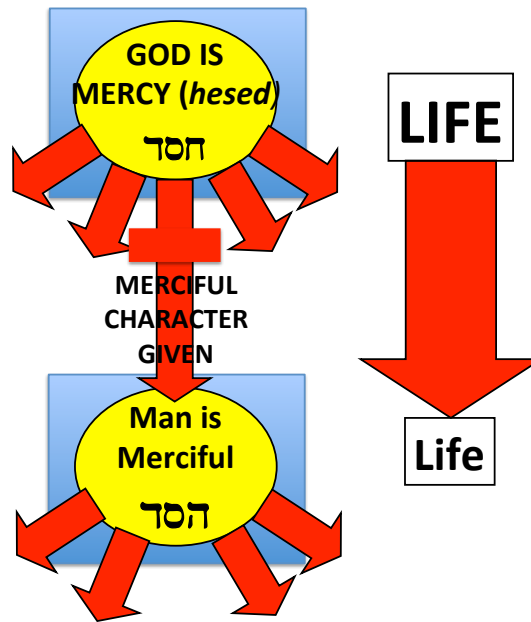
The love that the Christian has in him (“eternal life”) is exactly the life that was demonstrated by Christ’s death on the cross, and thus is the life the believer has in Him. Thus, also it should be exhibited to the brother in need.

The term here “closes his heart against him” is the Greek word for “closes the bowels of mercy.” In other words this one is not only being selfish, but is actually resenting the brother for being poor (persecuted), again just like the Pharisee type unbeliever.

Thus, it is the beginning to identify with the brothers and use that identity to take care of the fellow Christians in need. It is the identity that is the proof, followed by the helping. (In other words, the social gospel is not proof since it is done by unbelievers, but care for those who are true Christians done by those who are true Christians).

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<sup>97</sup> The “word and tongue” are all those claiming to “love the brother” and thus be in the “family of God,” that is, the antagonists claim they are with everyone in the “Family of God.” However, John is saying what separates the true children of God is the “deed and truth.” The deed being “love of the Christian brother” and the truth being Jesus as the Christ.



- c. **The love of brother (family of God) and the ability to love our brother is given by God (“eternal life”) and assures the true believer that he is of God (3:19-22).**

19 We shall know by this that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before Him, 20 in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. 21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; 22 and whatever we ask<sup>98</sup> we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

<sup>19</sup> [Καὶ] ἐν τούτῳ γνωσόμεθα ὅτι ἐκ τῆς

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<sup>98</sup> The promise for those who ask is “eternal life.” Frequently this is taken as a guarantee for other things. However, according to the Sermon on the Mount, the thing to ask for is “God’s righteousness” (Eternal life), and then all these things (physical things) will be granted. The context determines these as what you “need.” You need “eternal life,” and the physical things are granted to the believer only so as to fulfill God’s purpose of eternal life. Thus this age is an age of suffering, and while temporal prayers may be answered regarding physical things, ultimately one must die. Thus, the physical things that are guaranteed end up ultimately in the kingdom. During this age, God will give you what you need to glorify Him at the time. See Philippians 4:19. However, Paul affirms that he has had prosperity and hunger, so the “need” is the ability to serve God in suffering. Thus, God will give one what they need, and primarily that is the ability to serve Him.



ἀληθείας ἐσμέν, καὶ ἔμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ πείσομεν τὴν καρδίαν ἡμῶν, <sup>20</sup> ὅτι ἐὰν καταγινώσκη ἡμῶν ἡ καρδία, ὅτι μείζων ἐστὶν ὁ θεὸς τῆς καρδίας ἡμῶν καὶ γινώσκει πάντα. <sup>21</sup> Ἀγαπητοί, ἐὰν ἡ καρδία [ἡμῶν] μὴ καταγινώσκη, παρρησίαν ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν θεόν <sup>22</sup> καὶ ὁ ἐὰν αἰτῶμεν λαμβάνομεν ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ, ὅτι τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηροῦμεν καὶ τὰ ἀρεστὰ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ ποιοῦμεν.

This belief in the Christ and love of the brother is what gives the Christian assurance that he is a child of God. The issue of “fear” here is due to the fact that the antagonist is claiming that the Christian, by not keeping the Law, is under judgment. Thus, if the believer listens to the antichrist he will fear judgment, and question his belief in Christ as the means of propitiation. John is assuring him that this belief and love is the verification that he needs from God (the testimony of the Scriptures), but if his conscience should bother him and he questions, then he needs to simply rely in the proof of the Scriptures alone, whether his conscience (knowledge) confirms it or not.

This is confirmed by the fact that the believer is keeping the commandments (belief in Jesus, see 3:23 following). The issue of being granted whatever we ask is that what the believer is to ask for is “eternal life” both salvation and sanctification. Since God has promised it, then He will give it (see 2:25 for the promise). In other words, the child of God asks for “eternal life,” and receives it, while the unbeliever does not ask, and does not get, because he has no access to God.

#### 4. **The Old Testament commandments are fulfilled by belief in Jesus and the love of brother (3:23-24a).**

3:23 And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. 24 And the one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him.

<sup>23</sup> Καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐντολὴ αὐτοῦ, ἵνα πιστεύσωμεν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους, καθὼς ἔδωκεν ἐντολήν ἡμῖν. <sup>24</sup> καὶ ὁ τηρῶν τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν αὐτῷ· καὶ ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι μένει ἐν ἡμῖν, ἐκ τοῦ

πνεύματος οὗ ἡμῖν ἔδωκεν.

The summary of the Old Testament is that its fulfillment (“love the Lord thy God, and love thy neighbor”) is now fulfilled by belief in Jesus Christ, and the love of the fellow believer.

Thus, the family of God is clearly defined. There is the vertical (toward God) to believe in the Son. It is that that allows God to give the character to the believer, so that he might express it toward those in the family.