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A0439 -- Sept. 26, 2004 -- 1 John 3:10-15 -- What Love is Not

Let's briefly review 1 John 3:9: "*No one who is born of God sins; because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*" The born-again self, the regenerate aspect of our being, the inner man does not sin at all. Sin never finds its source in the born-again self. If we sin that sin finds its source in our flesh. So, John only has in mind here the born-again self, he is not looking at the total Christian, but the new regenerate aspect of our being. That part of us does not sin at all. Why? "*because His seed abides in him*". The seed of a sinless Parent dwelling in the child cannot be said to sin a little bit. If Christ was sinless and He put His seed in us then it follows that nothing that finds its source in that seed can be sinful, it can only be righteous. So, it follows that the born-again self "*cannot sin, because the regenerate self is born of God.*" The *seed* here refers to the impartation of the divine nature that Peter talked about in 2 Peter 1:4. According to Peter in 1 Peter 1:23 this seed is imperishable. He means that the seed is eternal life. You have been born again spiritually meaning you have eternal life. According to Paul you have the inner man, where this seed dwells (proper medium as soil is the proper medium for a plant seed), when given proper nutrients (abiding in the word of God), can be strengthened. It can grow so that our lives become increasingly dominated by our new self rather than the old flesh. This is the transformation of the mind that Paul talked about in Romans 12:1-2. Now, let's look at 10a. I think the verse division in v. 10 is unfortunate. You know that verse divisions were not in the original anyway, they were added in about 1550AD to help everyone get on the same page.

**10a evn tou,tw| fanera, evstin ta. te,kna tou/ qeou/ kai. ta. te,kna tou/ diabo,lou\
*10a In this is manifest the little children of God and the little children of the devil:***

The *en touto* (*in this*) here is anaphoric (refers backward) rather than cataphoric (refers forward). It therefore rightly fits with 2:28-3:10a and not to what follows in 10bff.

In this, therefore, refers to everything from 2:28 to 3:9. *the children of God* are manifested by doing righteousness (3:7). This is not to be regarded as a test of salvation. The only test of salvation is faith in the Son of God (1 John 5:1, 9-13). Have you believed in the Son of God? If you have believed in the Son of God then you have eternal life? If you have not believed in the Son of God then you do not have eternal life. This statement here is simply a declaration of how the children of God manifest themselves. It is impossible from this verse to make the claim that if a person sins, he is not a child of God. All Christians still sin (cf. 1:8, 2:1). 1 John is not a handbook for deciding who is saved and who is not. This section is about how a believer who is abiding manifests himself as a child of God. A Christian who does not abide does not manifest his true inward regenerate self. That aspect of him remains hidden.

When that inner regenerate aspect remains hidden a Christian can be called a *child of the devil*. Not because he is unregenerate. All unregenerate are *children of the devil* (Matt. 13:38; John 8:44; Acts 13:8-11). But a truly regenerate person can be called a *child of the devil* whenever he manifests the devil's work. The reason Christians can and do complete the work of the devil is because they deviate from sound doctrine. 2 John 9 makes it clear that a Christian can deviate from the proper Doctrine of the Person of Christ (2 John 7). If one deviates from this doctrine and becomes a vocal opponent to the truth then he can be said to be manifesting the work of the devil. He can be called a child of the devil. This should be no surprise because Jesus Himself rebuked His own disciple Peter by calling him "Satan" (Matt. 16:23). So, a *child of the devil* is anyone, saved or unsaved, who manifests the work of the devil. The saved person still has a flesh and this becomes the instrument of Satan to do his work. This can occur through demon influence, never demon possession.

Therefore, for a Christian to be called a *child of God* he must be abiding in Him. Abiding results in a divine manifestation of righteousness (2:29, 3:7). However, when anyone, Christian or not, manifests the work of the devil by becoming a vocal opponent to the truth he is at that point properly called a *child of the devil*.

v. 10a is the end of the section which began in 2:28 and extends to 3:10a. This section was about how to recognize the children of God. God's children are manifested when they do righteousness. Righteousness finds its source in His seed which abides in the Christian. When the Christian abides, he manifests the righteousness of God. This righteousness is not contaminated with sin at all. Sin finds its source in the flesh. The one who knows that God is righteous is able to recognize righteousness when a born of God Christian does righteousness (2:29).

Now for the next section which begins in 1 John 3:10b-3:23. We have learned how to recognize God's children by recognizing divine manifestations of righteousness in a fellow believer's life. But in what ways is this righteousness manifested? Some would say a moral life, but non-Christians can often live a highly moral life according to Rom. 2:1-15. And there is nothing distinctively Christian about this morality. What is distinctive is brotherly love. Brotherly love is a clear manifestation of Christian righteousness. And so, in this section John emphasizes love. Up until this point the Greek word "love" has been used 7 times. Between 3:10b-4:21 John uses "love" 35 times. "love" clearly becomes the dominant theme.

10b pa/j o` mh. poiw/n dikaios, nhn ouvk e;stin evk tou/ qeou/ kai. o` mh. avgapw/n to.n avdelfo.n auytou/

10b anyone who does not do what is righteous is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.

Notice verse 10b. *anyone who does not do what is righteous is not of God*. This statement must be taken as referring to saved people. Since those who do what is righteous display a divine manifestation of their born-again self, it is clear that those who do not do what is righteous do not display a divine manifestation of their born of God self. Instead, their inward regenerate self remains hidden. It is abundantly clear that these are saved people because John goes on to say, *nor is he who does not love his brother*. One must first be a brother (i.e., child of God) in order to not *love his brother*. So, the phrase here *not of God* does not mean unsaved. If John had wanted to say these people were unsaved, he would have had to say they were not "born of God". John does not say that. We must be careful to not say more than John says. This is no different than 1 John 2:9. There John confirmed that a Christian could hate *his brother*. An unsaved person has no Christian brother to hate! The phrase *not of God* can only mean that these actions of not doing righteousness nor loving his brother are not sourced in God. God does not approve of these actions. They are the devils work and not God's work. One commentator says, "The main theological use of *einai ek* is in the Johannine dualistic worldview to indicate origin from and/or adherence to one side or the other. The *good side* is described 15 times explicitly or implicitly in the terms of being 'from God (the Father)' ..." We might say it this way: the saved/regenerated Christian is a unique being in the universe. He is a dualistic being in the sense that he has two origins or sources from which he may act. Every act finds its source in either the new born again self or the flesh. These two are at war against one another. The tension will be resolved when we get a new resurrection body. This will be done on the basis of Christ's work on the cross. He came to take away all sin and destroy the works of the devil permanently. This is soon in the coming.

Notice the transition in this verse from speaking generally about righteousness (in fact this is the last use of righteousness in the epistle) to speaking about a specific kind of righteousness that only the Christian can manifest or fail to manifest: and that is the manifestation of *loving his brother*.

11 {Oti au[th evsti.n h` avggeli,a h]n hvkou,sate avp avrch/j i[na avgapw/men avllh,louj

11 For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another,

This is a command only Christians can follow. That is why John uses it as an example of righteousness that a Christian can manifest or fail to manifest. This message of loving our fellow brothers is a message that his readers had *from the beginning. from the beginning* does not refer to the original creation or to Jesus' ministry. It refers to the beginning of the Christian experience. Each Christian has a unique beginning. Each of us was saved at a different time and that is the beginning John has in mind. It is at the beginning of our Christian life that each Christians should hear the message, to *love one another*. It was originally an old commandment (Lev. 19:18), but Jesus gave this commandment in a new and fresh way in John 13:34 by showing us the commandment as He loved His disciples. As Christians we are called to make this commandment new each day by manifesting divine righteousness by way of *loving one another. one another* is the reciprocal pronoun *allelous*. It is not a one-way love but a circular love; Christian A loving Christian B and Christian B returning that love to Christian A. When this takes place there is a distinctly Christian manifestation taking place.

12 ouv kaqw.j Ka,i?n evk tou/ ponhrou/ h=n kai. e;sfaxen to.n avdelfo.n auvtou/\ kai. ca,rin ti,noj e;sfaxen auvto,n o[ti ta. e;rga auvtou/ ponhra. h=n ta. de. tou/ avdelfou/ auvtou/ di,kaia

12 not as Cain who was of the evil one and murdered/butchered/cut the throat of his brother: and for what reason did he murder/butcher/cut the throat of him? Because his deeds were evil and those of his brother righteous.

Verse 12 makes it strikingly clear that John is not contrasting a Christian versus a non-Christian. Those who make 1 John a handbook of tests to help one decide whether they really are a Christian or not take this as a case of a non-Christian murdering a Christian. But it cannot be determined from Scripture whether Cain was a believer or not! This approach misses the real connection between Cain and Abel. They were biological brothers

(Gen. 4:1-15). So, vv. 11-12 have nothing to do with a test to help a person decide whether they really are a Christian or not. Instead, this is an example of a brother hating another brother because of spiritual envy! Cain and Abel had a distinct brotherly relationship just like Christians have a distinct brotherly relationship. John carefully chose two brothers to illustrate his point of brotherly hatred.

Cain was, of course, *of the evil one* in the sense that what Cain did was *sourced* in the devil himself and had no relationship to God. Satan was a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). Whether Cain was saved or not is an unanswerable question because there is simply not enough biblical information to make that determination. What is clear is that John was not so naive to think that a brother cannot commit murder! In fact, Peter warns Christians in 1 Pt. 4:15, “but let none of you suffer as a murderer”. Moses was a believer when he took matters into his own hands and murdered an Egyptian taskmaster (Exod. 2:12). David was a believer and he murdered Uriah the Hittite (2 Sam. 11:15). Genuine believers can and do murder people whether commentators are willing to admit it or not! The Bible is full of examples of Christians who murdered others. John’s point here is that when Cain murdered his brother that act did not find its source in God but in the evil one. Interestingly, this verse gives us some insight as to how Cain murdered his brother Abel. The Greek word for murdered or slew is *sphazo* and means to cut the throat, to butcher, to slaughter. It seems that Cain used a knife and slit his brother’s throat and perhaps went on and butchered him. A very vile and reckless murder. This was Cain’s own flesh and blood. Now, John’s point here is that when a Christian hates another Christian or murders another Christian that action never finds its source in God. It always finds its source in the evil one. Why do things such as Christian hate and murder take place? For the same reason Cain slew Abel. ***because Cain’s deeds were evil and those of his brother Abel were righteous.*** We might say it this way, *spiritual envy!* Spiritual envy led to the first murder in history. When Christians feel guilty because their behavior does not measure up to God’s will they find it very easy to hate other Christians who they know God approves of. Spiritual envy can be a major problem in churches. Spiritual envy causes factious groups. Paul said these factions are necessary so that those who are approved by God will be recognized by the congregation (1 Cor. 11:19).

As you can see many commentators are miles away from John’s purpose here in the Cain and Abel example. They say a genuine Christian cannot hate another Christian. This is as stupid as it sounds. Genuine Christians actually do hate other Christians and spout off unloving words at their fellow brothers. To say that what John meant by the words ***his brother*** was ***his purported brother*** is purely reading into the text what is not there (*eisegesis* from the Greek verb *eisago* “into” “to lead”)!

13 mh. qauma,zete avdelfoi, mou(eiv misei/ u`ma/j o` ko,smoj
13 Do not marvel, brothers, if the world [antichrists] hates you [readers].

Verse 13 therefore makes perfect sense. If a brother can hate a brother then you should **not marvel** if the world hates you! It is totally inconsistent for a Christian to hate another Christian, but it is consistent for the world to hate Christians. Jesus told us this in **John 15:18-19** "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. ¹⁹ "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you." "While the readership might well **marvel** at hatred from a brother, the world's hatred is to be anticipated."ⁱ If we are loving one another and manifesting divine righteousness then the world will hate us just as the world hated Christ. They hated the person of Christ because of spiritual envy; and when Christ lives in and through you, they will hate you because of spiritual envy. This is, therefore, to be expected and not marveled at.

14 h`mei/j oi;damen o[ti metabebh,kamen evk tou/ qana,tou eivj th.n zwh,n o[ti avgapw/men tou.j avdelfou,j\ o` mh. avgapw/n to.n avdelfo,n me,nei evn tw/| qana,tw|
14 We [apostles] know that we [apostles] have crossed over from death into life, because we love the brothers: the one who does not love a brother abides in death.

We here refers to the *apostles* whereas **you** in the previous verse referred to *John's audience* and **the world** probably refers to the *antichrists*. This same **we, you, they** distinctions were made back in 2:19. Now you may be thinking that verse 14, now here is a test of salvation. It is not in any sense a test of salvation because if it were then what do we do with John's clear statements that a brother can hate another brother (2:9)? What John is saying is that there is a contrast between the world and the apostles. The world hates John's readers, but the apostles love them.

The key to this verse is at the end of the verse where John uses the phrase **abides in death**. **abide** is a distinctly Christian term. If John wanted to say these people were unsaved, he would have said **the one who does not love a brother is dead**. But he did not. Most people, when they see the word **death** immediately assume that that John is saying they are unsaved. But, the word death in the Greek, like in English, has a large range of uses. In English you might say, "you are **dead** on", "that is a dead end", or "he talked the subject to death." The Greek uses of **death** are broad just like in English (Rom. 4:19; Col. 3:5; 6:1; 1 Tim. 5:6). Perhaps 1 Tim. 5:6 is the best example of how John is using the word here in 1 John 3:14. Paul's context is widows in the church. He says "*she who gives herself to*

wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives.” John is saying the same thing here, the Christian who **does not love a brother** is dead even while he lives. He is not living his life in touch with God. He therefore abides in death. If you are abiding in death this means you are subject to divine discipline and you are not capitalizing on opportunities to gain heavenly reward. I imagine most Christians are living lives out of touch with God. They are like the lonely widow who pursued *wanton pleasure*. They are *dead even while they live*. They are totally ineffective Christians. So, John’s use of the word **death** here is like that of Philo who said, “What is good and virtuous constitutes life; what is bad and evil constitutes death.” And that my friend aligns well with biblical thought. All true goodness is a sign of life and of God; all evil is a sign of sin, the cause of **death**.

Now that we understand that John is using the word **death** to describe the Christian when he is out of touch with God (not abiding in Christ), then we can understand **life** and **death** in the first part of the verse. An experience of loving the brothers is an experience of a certain quality of life. John is drawing on principles Jesus taught and John recorded in his gospel. Many Christians forget the main purpose of John’s gospel found in John 10:10. Many people think that the purpose of John’s gospel is John 20:31. However, this does not account for every chapter of the Gospel of John. Chapters 13-17 are written to believers who already have eternal life. Therefore, John 10:10 encapsulates the purpose for the entire Gospel of John. Turn to **John 10:10** “*I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.*” Jesus says he came for two reasons: 1) that they may have life. He is talking about eternal life, salvation. But He also came 2) that they might have a certain quality of life, didn’t He? An abundant Christian life. So, it is one thing to have eternal life, but it is another thing to have an abundant Christian life. Many Christians have eternal life, very few enjoy the abundant Christian life. What is the main reason they fail to enjoy the abundant Christian life? Because they have never learned to abide in Christ. Abiding in Christ means to remain in him, to constantly remain in touch with God so that His vitality flows through you. Abiding might be described as continual fellowship with God. You do not let sin get out of hand, you deal with it day by day, minute by minute. If you are just confessing your sins on Sunday you have not learned how to abide in Christ. You spend most of your time out of touch with God, out on your own. And when you do this you cannot bear good fruit and God does not answer your prayers. So, like John, I command you to **abide in Him** (2:27, 28). You have got to learn how to abide so that Fellowship will be Promoted in this Local Congregation and in your marriage and around your children. Are you setting an example to your children of how to abide? Have you learned how to remain in touch with God so that you do not blow up at your wife? Have you learned how to remain in touch with God so that you do not blow up at your children and lose control? Abiding is an advance on fellowship because it includes advanced knowledge of the

commandments of God and a mentality that keeps those commandments. You stay in touch with God so that Christ can live through you and your life manifests Christ. That is abiding, folks, and it is rare in Christian circles today.

So, the beginning of verse 14 means that the apostles are enjoying a certain quality of *life*, namely, the abundant life (John 10:10). They know this because they have an immediate knowledge of this life as they love their Christian brothers. *Know* (*oída*) in this context is a manifestation of reality. They *know* that they are not *abiding in death* because they are actively engaged in *loving their brothers*. So, a Christian can *pass over* or *cross over* from merely having eternal life to having the abundant life, a joyous Christian experience. This has nothing to do with hand raising or Charismatic emotions. It has to do with a quality of life that the abiding Christian enjoys. It is distinctly marked by loving other believers. However, it includes much more than that: we might say it this way: He has got life by the horns (not in the sense of material success but rather in the sense of a DVP mentality). He knows the world and how it works and he uses divine wisdom to cut through issues to the real problem. He knows what to say and when to say it and who to say it too. His marriage and family are in order. His life is organized and not in shambles. He knows when to say 'yes' and when to say 'no'. In other words, he does not take on too much responsibility nor is he lazy. He puts God first, his wife second, and his kids third. All these result in an abundant Christian life; a life the apostles enjoyed even while people pressed them for their time. I think we could learn something from watching Jesus in the gospels. Was Jesus a social butterfly? Was He constantly trying to be the center of attention? No, He was a man's kind of man. In fact, there were times when He just wanted to get away. He wanted to be alone, not to go to a movie or have some selfish down time, but for renewal through prayer and the teaching of His Father. Many American Christians have put so many time pressures and constraints on themselves that they are unable to have the abundant Christian life. Whatever happened to putting God first, marriage second, kids third and the church fourth (Divine Institutions)? Whatever happened to families orienting their lives around the local church rather than the church being something tacked on to our other activities? When you keep the Divine Institutions in order and you orient your family life around the local church you will begin to enjoy the eternal life you possess. Until then you will not find rest or peace or joy in the Christian life. These are hard truths to swallow, but they are just that, hard truth. So, stop for a moment and get your priorities in line. Stop running yourself ragged trying to do everything and choose what is important and engage. It is as simple as that. You have just got to make the decision to do it and not mess around anymore. Cross over like the apostles from merely possessing eternal life to enjoying the abundant life in Christ.

15 pa/j o` misw/n to.n avdelfo.n auvtou/ avnqrwpokto,noj evsti,n kai. oi;date o[ti pa/j avnqrwpokto,noj ouv k e;cei zwh.n aivw,nion evn e` autw/| me,nousan

15 Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

Hating one's **brother** is not only an experience of death, it is also **murder**. When a Christian hates another Christian, he is really no different than Cain who murdered his brother. "The spirit of hatred is that we want "to be rid" of our brother and would not really care if he died. But this is the spirit of a **murderer**."ii No doubt many Christians are perplexed here about what John is saying. In the kingdom someone may ask John, how can you say **that no murderer has eternal life**? What about Moses and King David? John will simply say, "I never said that no murderer has eternal life. I said **that no murder has eternal life abiding in him**." Here again, the key to unlocking this verse is John's use of the word **abiding**. **Abiding** is that reciprocal relationship between the Lord Jesus Christ and the child of God. Jesus said it this way in John 15:4 "Abide in me and I in you". It is the branch being vitally in touch with the vine so that the branches can bear fruit. It is being in touch with God moment by moment every day. Not in fellowship on Sunday and Wednesday night and out of fellowship every other day of the week! That would mean you are spending about 3 hours in fellowship a week out of 168 hours. That is less than 2% of your entire Christian life. You have to learn to abide in Him, to have constant reliance on Him. This will never happen if you spend 10-15 minutes a day in the word. You have to spend hours per week in the word. No less than an hour a day. You say, "I do not have an hour." Make an hour. It is there; you are just not willing to make it happen. Get some Bible study tools. What is it to spend a couple hundred dollars on some solid Bible helps? Or to stop by the church library? It is nothing in comparison to how much we spend on magazines and cable TV each month. I am getting a list together of some solid Bible helps for different areas of study and we will be putting that on the church website soon. Therefore, when John says that **no murderer has eternal life abiding in Him**, he does not mean that the **murderer** is unsaved! Clearly both David and Moses were saved and yet murdered people. What he means is that Christ, who is eternal life, is not the source of murder. The Christian who murders or has the spirit of hatred toward another Christian, which amounts to murder, does not have Christ with Him in this course of action. Indeed, Christ came to **take away sin** (3:5) and to **destroy the works of the devil** (3:8). How could He ever advocate a spirit of hate or murder? It is the devil who has sinned from the beginning (3:8) and was a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44), not Christ, He came to destroy these things. They therefore have no place in the Christian life and indicate that the Christian is not vitally in touch with God nor does Christ condone his course of action. The reciprocal abiding has been cut off. Again, the imperative (command) for this section continues to remain a

continual challenge for you. Abide in Him (1 John 2:27-28). When you abide in Him then you will have boldness and will not shrink back from Him at His imminent coming.

ⁱ Hodges, Zane, *The Epistles of John* (Irving, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 1999), 155.

ⁱⁱ Hodges, Zane, *The Epistles of John* (Irving, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 1999), 159.

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