

I JOHN: DISCERNING TRUE FROM FALSE SPIRITUALITY

Part V: Realizing The Importance Of True Brotherly Love In True Spirituality

(1 John 2:7-11)

I. Introduction

- A. There is a lack of spiritual discernment in many Christians today on what constitutes true fellowship with God, what can be illustrated in a tragic event that occurred with a cult in Guiana: not until the mass suicide in Jonestown did many Christians even realize "that something was terribly wrong with Jim Jones," the group's pastor. (Dave Hunt & T. A. McMahon, The Seduction of Christianity, 1985, p. 7)
- B. This problem also existed in the Apostle John's era, so in 1 John 2:7-11 he revealed the importance of true brotherly love in true spirituality (as follows):

II. Realizing The Importance Of True Brotherly Love In True Spirituality, 1 John 2:7-11.

- A. In 1 John 2:3a, John wrote we can "know" (*ginoskomen*, present tense; U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 814; The Analyt. Grk. Lex., 1972, p. 79) that we "have come to know" (*egnokamen*, perfect tense; Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., The Analyt. Grk. Lex., p. 113) God in our **experience** of the **Christian walk** (B. F. Westcott, The Epistles of St. John, 1974, p. 46) by **testing** as suggested by John's expression, "in this" (*en touto*, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.), which is translated "hereby" KJV or "by this" ESV.
- B. What follows in 1 John 2:3b-6 are **three test evidences** of true spiritual fellowship with the Lord, the first being that a believer experiences true fellowship with God **only if he obeys God's Word**, 1 John 2:3b-4.
- C. This claims leads the reader to ask which command John considered most important (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 891), and since John anticipated this question, he answered it fully in 1 John 2:7-11 (as follows):
 1. Introducing the most important commandment a believer is to heed in true spiritual fellowship, John noted that he was not writing a new commandment, but recalling one his readers had known from the beginning, the "new" command Jesus gave His disciples before His death to love one another, 1 John 2:7; John 13:34.
 2. However, this "old" command is ever "new" in the sense that it belongs to the dawning age of the Messianic Kingdom with the revelation of Christ as Messiah, 1 John 2:8; Ibid. The love that Jesus as Messiah "taught His disciples to manifest is a characteristic of the Age to come. It is the darkness of the present world and all its hatred which is destined to disappear forever (cf. 1 John 2:17a)," Ibid.
 3. Thus, one who claims to be in the light as to fellowship with God but who hates his brother in Christ is still in darkness as to his experiential walk in life, 1 John 2:9. John here exposes the presence of hypocrisy in Christian circles where believers may claim in various ways spiritually to fellowship with the Lord while they do not at all fellowship with Him as is evidenced by their hatred of fellow believers in Christ.
 4. On the contrary, he who loves his brother in Christ remains in the light of true fellowship with the Lord, and there is not in him any *skandalon*, anything that "gives offense" in the sense of causing one to stumble in sin opposite genuine fellowship with the Lord, 1 John 2:10; U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 815; Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 760; Ibid., B. K. C., N. T., p. 889-890. Failure to love one's brother in Christ thus produces **both** (a) an **internal** "stumbling block" for the believer who harbors the hatred (Ibid.) **as well as** (b) tempting **other** believers to sin (Ryrie St. Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to 1 John 2:10). In contrast, one who loves his fellow brother in Christ escapes facing both the internal "stumbling block" to sin in himself as well as escaping his becoming a "stumbling block" to cause others to sin!
 5. However, in contrast, one who hates his brother is entrenched in multiple spiritual problems, 1 John 2:11:
 - a. One who hates his brother in Christ experientially dwells in spiritual darkness, 1 John 2:11a.
 - b. Such a believer also then conducts his walk of life in the realm of spiritual darkness, 1 John 2:11b.
 - c. In addition, such a believer does not know where he goes in his walk in life, he has no sense of God's direction in it, for the spiritual darkness of his thinking and walk of life has blinded his eyes so that he is utterly insensitive to God's leading due to his darkness, 1 John 2:11c,d.

Lesson: *The key command God directs us to heed to fellowship with Him is the call Jesus gave before His death and that marks those of the coming Messianic age -- that of loving fellow believers. If we heed this command, we fellowship with God and have nothing in ourselves to cause either us to stumble in sin nor other believers around us to stumble in sin. However, if we do not heed it, we are in darkness, we order our lives in darkness, we cause others to stumble in sin and we lack God's direction in life and are unable to gain it due to our darkness.*

Application: *May we love other believers to have the light of God's fellowship and leading and avoid its awful lack.*