

1 JOHN: DISCERNING TRUE FROM FALSE SPIRITUALITY

Part XII: True Spirituality's True Godly Love, 1 John 4:7-5:3

D. True Godly Love's Practical Expression Of Obedience To Scripture

(1 John 4:20-5:3a)

I. Introduction

- A. Having shown that true godly love is self-sacrificing to disciple others (1 John 4:7-11), that it exposes the unseen God (1 John 4:12-16) and gives boldness in facing Christ's judgment seat (1 John 4:17-19), John added a final characteristic of this true love in 1 John 4:20-5:3a -- its practical expression in obeying Scripture.
- B. We thus view this 1 John 4:20-5:3a passage for our insight and edification (as follows):

II. True Love's Practical Expression Of Obedience To Scripture, 1 John 4:20-5:3a.

- A. Having established the fact that we believers love because God first loved us (1 John 4:19), John began a section that defined the practical expression of that true love, stating first of all that a true godly love must of necessity be directed toward God and one's fellow brother in Christ.
- B. Thus, John wrote that if a man claimed that he loved God while he hated his brother in Christ, he was a liar, for if one does not love his brother in Christ whom he has seen, he cannot love the unseen God, 1 John 4:20.
- C. The reason for the need to love one's brother in Christ if one truly loves God is that God has commanded the believer to love his brother if he truly loves God, 1 John 4:21.
- D. Someone may then ask who his brother in Christ is so as to direct his love toward him, and John anticipates this question, and addressed it in 1 John 5:1 (as follows); Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 900-901:
 1. One who believes Jesus is the "Messiah" (*Christos*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 823; Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 895) has permanently been born (*gegennetai*, perfect passive of *gennaō*, "give birth to," Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; The Analyt. Grk. Lex., 1972, p. 76, 79) of God: the passive voice indicates that this birth is authored by God outside of the meritorious works of man, and the perfect tense shows the believer has unconditional salvation security in his sonship with God, 1 John 5:1a.
 2. Thus, everyone who loves Him, i. e., God, Who gave birth to him who believes unto salvation also loves him who has been permanently born (*gegennemenon*, perfect passive participle of *gennaō* again, cf. II, D, 1) of Him, that is, of God, 1 John 5:1b. [John does not state it here, but the logic is inescapable: if one has been born of God to dwell forever in God's presence as his child, it only follows that one who claims to love God and also be in His presence as His child would of necessity also love his brother in Christ!]
- E. Someone may then ask what is the practical expression of such a love, and John answers this question by his comments in 1 John 5:2-3a (as follows):
 1. By means of this test do we believers know that we love the true children of God, that "whenever" (*hotan*, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 592) we love God and "do, perform" (*poieo*, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 687-689) His commandments, 1 John 5:2.
 2. Indeed, John went so far as to add that this is the genuine love of God, that we "observe, keep" (*tereo*, Ibid., p. 822-823) His commandments, 1 John 5:3a.
 3. Remarkably, then, John was stating that our love for our fellow brethren in Christ is measured by our obedience to God's commands: if love for God is also a love for one's truly saved brethren in Christ, then the best expression of love for one's brother in Christ is to obey the commands of the God Who saved him and Who is also the spiritual Father of one's brother in Christ!
 4. [This test of love is at odds with the views of many evangelicals today: many of them teach that we can be too particular about heeding Scripture to where we cease loving the brethren, but God to the contrary here claims that our measure of loving the brethren is marked by our obedience to God's Word!]

Lesson: *The practical expression of true spiritual love is that one loves the God who gave him spiritual birth in Christ at salvation, and such a love will of necessity also be extended to other brethren in Christ who have been given spiritual birth by the same God. Such spiritual brethren are marked by their faith in Jesus as the Messiah, and the mark of true spiritual love expression is heeding God's commands in the Word of God. In the end, true godly love toward God and also toward those who are truly born of God will be ultimately expressed in one's heeding God's commands, heeding His Word.*

Application: *May we truly love God and truly love our fellow brethren in Christ who have believed that Jesus is the Messiah, and may we realize the reality of that love as measured in the degree to which we obey written Scripture!*