

# I JOHN: TRUE SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP

## **XV. Explaining True Spiritual Love**

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

### **I. Introduction**

- A. When John wrote 1 John, he implied in 1 John 1:3 that a number of his readers did not enjoy spiritual fellowship with the Apostles, with God the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ!
- B. This lack of true fellowship occurs with many believers today as Christ predicted in Revelation 3:14-22 for our era. We thus view 1 John 4:20-5:3 on explaining true spiritual love (as follows):

### **II. Explaining True Spiritual Love, 1 John 4:20-5:3a.**

- A. Having mentioned in 1 John 4:19 that we believers who fellowship with the Lord love others, John then addressed the errant belief that one might claim to love God but not his brother in Christ.
- B. John corrected this claim, writing that if anyone said he loved God but hated his spiritual brother in Christ, he was a "liar" (*pseustes*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 900), 1 John 4:20a.
- C. The reasons John gave for charging a believer was a liar in this case was twofold (as follows):
  - 1. First, John claimed that love for the unseen God can only be expressed by love for one's visible brother in Christ, 1 John 4:20b; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 900.
  - 2. Second, John explained that the command from God that we love the Lord is joined together with His command that we love one's spiritual brother in Christ, 1 John 4:21. Note how this explanation fits Christ's teaching in Matthew 22:37-40 KJV that "all the law and the prophets" hang on "these two commandments," that (1) "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Deuteronomy 6:5) and (2) "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Leviticus 19:18).
- D. A believer may ask who is his spiritual brother, so John explained that everyone who believes that Jesus is the Messiah "has been permanently begotten, born" (*gegennetai*, perfect passive of *gennaō*, "beget, bear," The Analyt. Grk. Lex. (Zon.), 1972, p. 76; *Ibid.*, Arndt & Gingrich, p. 154-155) of God, and everyone who loves Him [God] Who beget, bore also loves him who "has been permanently begotten, born" (*gegennemenon*, perfect passive participle of *gennaō* [again], *Ibid.*, The Analyt. Grk. Lex.; *Ibid.*, Arndt & Gingrich) "out of" (*ek*, *Ibid.*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., p. 823) Him [God], 1 John 5:1. (Note the repeat emphases on the believer's unconditional eternal salvation security implied in the use of the perfect tense [eternal] and passive voice [unconditional, without human meritorious works or later lack of them] of the verb *gennaō*!) Thus, whether a believer is easy to love because he fellowships with the Lord or whether he is difficult to love because he is carnal, functioning in false spirituality, one's love for God demands that he love his brother in Christ regardless of the status of that brother's fellowship with the Lord! (*Ibid.*, Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 901)
- E. However, on an equally important point, John clarified what **constitutes** the love of God whereby we experientially know that we love God and other believers in **truth** (as follows), 1 John 5:2-3:
  - 1. This is how we "experientially know" (*ginosko*, *Ibid.*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T.) that we love the children of God, when we love God and we "keep" (*tereo*, "observe God's commands with a high level of devotion to the Lord," Theol. Dict. of the N. T., vol. VIII, p. 142; U. B. S. Grk. N. T.) His commandments, 1 John 5:2.
  - 2. John's reason for this explanation is based on the fact that the love of God is expressed in the very act itself of "keeping" (*tereo* again, *Ibid.*) God's commands "with a high level of devotion" to Him, 1 John 5:3a.

***Lesson:*** True spiritual love is a believer's love for God coupled with his love for his brother in Christ, even if that brother is undesirably out of fellowship with the Lord. However, that true spiritual love is also expressed only with devoted obedience to the Lord, what will cause great tension between the godly believer who fellowships with the Lord and the carnal believer who does not fellowship with God to where the godly believer may need to express a caring love for the carnal believer from a safe distance when the carnal believer is abusive, 2 Timothy 3:1-5!

***Application:*** (1) May we view our need to love God as necessitating our loving fellow brothers in Christ, and that even if those brothers are undesirably ungodly in their walk. (2) Yet, may we recognize that true spiritual love is entirely consistent with one's heeding God's Biblical commandments with a high level of devotion to the Lord, what will affect one's level of spiritual fellowship with other believers, depending on whether they truly fellowship with the Lord or walk in darkness. (3) Thus, may we not judge ourselves to love or not love as we ought by how compatible we are with other believers, for fellowship with carnal Christians is not fellowship with the Lord, but may we judge ourselves objectively by whether or not we heed Scripture with complete devotion to the Lord!