

# 1 JOHN: DISCERNING TRUE FROM FALSE SPIRITUALITY

## Part IX: Understanding Spiritually True Love

### B. Understanding What Spiritually True Love IS

(1 John 3:16-18)

#### I. Introduction

- A. Truly upright believers obey Christ's command to love one another, cf. John 13:35; 1 John 2:7-11; 3:14a.
- B. However, the love God has in mind is unlike the definition for love that the ungodly have, so the Apostle John in 1 John 3:16-18 clarified what true godly love *IS* (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 895):

#### II. Understanding What Spiritually True Love IS, 1 John 3:16-18.

- A. Though 1 John 3:10a claims the children of God are distinguished from Satan's children as only God's children produce a righteous lifestyle, 1 John 3:10b introduces a new paragraph on a different subject, *Ibid.*
- B. We discovered in our last lesson in 1 John 3:10b-15 what spiritually true love is **not** that we might *avoid* it, so in 1 John 3:16-18, John clarified what true godly love actually *IS* that we might *practice* it (as follows):
  1. John stated that we believers have come to understand (*egnokamen*, perfect tense of *ginosko*, "to know," U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 819; Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 159-161; The Analyt. Grk. Lex. (Zon.), 1972, p. 113) "the [definite article] love" (*Ibid.*, U. B. S. Grk.N. T.), namely, the true spiritual love of God literally "in this" (*en touto*, *Ibid.*), that is, by the test that follows, 1 John 3:16a.
  2. That **test** as stated in v. 16b was that Christ laid down His "earthly life," His *pseuche* (*Ibid.*; *Ibid.*, Arndt & Gingrich, p. 901-902) "for the sake of" (*huper*, *Ibid.*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; *Ibid.*, Arndt & Gingrich, p. 846-847) us. Thus, true godly love comprises such a high level of concern for the welfare of others that one sacrifices whatever he possesses of his earthly life that is necessary for the welfare of the other parties.
  3. John then applied Jesus' example, writing that if we truly love as God calls us to love, we "are obligated" (*opheilo*, *Ibid.*, Arndt & Gingrich, p. 603) to lay down whatever we possess of our earthly lives (*pseuche* again, cf. v. 16b) that is necessary for the welfare of (*huper* again, cf. v. 16b) other believers, 1 John 3:16c.
  4. To illustrate, John claimed that if a believer has "worldly goods" (*bion tou kosmou*, *Ibid.*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; *Ibid.*, Arndt & Gingrich, p. 141) and sees his brother in Christ have need of such goods and the owner has no pity on the needy, how can the love of God "remain" (*meno*, *Ibid.*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T.) in that owner. With John's definition of *meno* referring to fellowship with God as Jesus taught in John 15:7, he meant, "how can the true love of God that is found by fellowship with God be in that owner?" (1 Jn. 3:17)
  5. John thus urged that we should not "love" in word or talk, that is, by our **claims** to be loving, but in deed and thus in truth, 1 John 3:18. We should actively give of what we materially have to help the brother in material need and not just talk about loving another or claiming that we love other believers!
  6. However, John's teaching has a far more extensive application: Jesus' example of giving of His "earthly life," His *pseuche* for us, obligates us to give of our *pseuche* "earthly life" for other believers, what involves any entity we possess in this life that is needed by other believers. Such things may be our time, attention, skill, knowledge or any such entity a fellow brother needs for his welfare!
  7. Most often, this sharing with needy believers involves ministering the spiritual gift God has given us to profit the rest of the Church body, 1 Corinthians 12:4-7:
    - a. When Paul wrote of the Holy Spirit's assigning spiritual gifts to the Church body, he claimed that each believer is given his assigned gift for the *sumpheron* (v. 7; U. B. S. Grk. N. T., p. 605), for "the advantage, common good" of the entire Church body (*Ibid.*, Arndt & Gingrich, p. 787-788; ESV, NIV).
    - b. Thus, God Himself has dispersed the gifts to all individuals in the body so that each believer is obligated to use his spiritual gift to meet the edification needs of all the rest of the Church, and in light of 1 John 3:16-18, that means that if he truly loves as God calls him to love, he will develop that gift and use it for the sake of all the believers around him, cf. 2 Timothy 1:6; 1 Peter 4:10-11; John 21:15-17.

***Lesson:*** True love in fellowship with God follows Christ's example of laying down whatever one possesses of his earthly life and its possessions that are necessary for the welfare of fellow believers around him. This can involve the entities of material possession or time, attention, a skill or knowledge, and most significantly, the development and ministry of one's spiritual gift for the profit of the rest of the body of Christ!

***Application:*** May we love as God calls us to love, following the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, in laying down whatever we possess of this earthly life and its possessions that are necessary for the welfare of other believers.