

# **I JOHN: TRUE SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP**

## **IX. Discerning True Fellowship By True Love**

**(1 John 3:11-18)**

### **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, a state that Christ predicted in Revelation 3:14-22 would exist in our era of Church History. We thus continue our study of 1 John in viewing 1 John 3:11-18 on discerning true fellowship as evidenced by true love (as follows):

### **II. Discerning True Fellowship By True Love, 1 John 3:11-18.**

- A. In 1 John 3:11, John repeated the truth he had given back in 1 John 2:7-9 that the message his readers had heard from the beginning was that they were to love one another.
- B. However, believers need to discern true from false brotherly love, so John explained what true love is **NOT** in 1 John 3:11-15 before describing what it **IS** in 1 John 3:16-18 (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 895-898):
  1. True love is **NOT** hatred that is expressed by harming other believers, 1 John 3:11-15:
    - a. John illustrated the extreme opposite of true brotherly love in the case of Cain, a man "of the Evil One" (*to ponerou*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 818), who slew his brother, 1 John 3:12a with Genesis 4:1-8.
    - b. Cain slew Abel because his works were evil and Abel's works were righteous, 1 John 3:12b.
    - c. Thus, we believers should not marvel if the unsaved world hates us, for the unrighteous works of the unsaved are critiqued by our righteous works, leading the world to hate us like Cain hated Abel, 1 Jn. 3:13.
    - d. We also know in an absolute sense (*oida*, *Ibid.*) [by Scripture and the Holy Spirit] that we have permanently departed (*metabebekamen*, perfect tense from *metabaino*, "to depart," The Analyt. Grk. Lex. (Zon.), 1972, p. 265) from death unto life [unconditional salvation security] if we love the brethren, v. 14a.
    - e. However, the believer who does not love the brethren "remains" (*menei*, present tense of *meno*, "remain," *Ibid.*, p. 263) in death, out of fellowship with God and guilty of [moral] murder, 1 John 3:14b:
      - i. Though 1 John 3:14b is often understood to mean that a believer cannot hate another believer, the one who hates here hates a "brother," so the hating one is a believer, *Ibid.*, B. K. C., N. T., p. 896.
      - ii. Also, the verb "remaining" in John's theology of spiritual relationships expresses fellowship, so he claimed that a believer who hates his brother in Christ is out of fellowship with the Lord, *Ibid.*
    - f. Thus, every believer who hates his brother is a murderer in the moral sense, and we know absolutely (*oida* again, *Ibid.*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., p. 819) [through Scripture and the Holy Spirit] that everyone who is a murderer does not have eternal life "remaining" in him, 1 John 3:15. By this claim John did not mean that a believer who hates another believer is not saved, but that he is out of fellowship with God and is not experiencing his new life in Christ, (*Ibid.*, Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 896-897)
  2. As for true brotherly love, it **IS** self-sacrificial care expressed in acts of helping other believers, v. 16-18:
    - a. John wrote that we have experientially come to know (*egnokamen*, perfect tense of *ginosko*, *Ibid.*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T.) true love by [Christ's] laying down His "earthly life" (*psuche*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 901-902) for us, and that we should lay down our "earthly lives" (*psuche*, *Ibid.*) for our brothers in Christ, 1 John 3:16.
    - b. In application of this statement, John wrote that a believer who has "the means of subsistence" (*ton bion*, *Ibid.*, p. 141) and sees his brother have material need but shuts up his "affections" (fig. mng. of *splagchnon*, *Ibid.*, p. 770) from him [in not sharing of his goods] does not have God's love "remaining" (*meno* again, *Ibid.*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T.) in him, meaning he is out of fellowship with God, 1 John 3:17.
    - c. We must love not only in word, which is a false love, but in truth marked by acts of selfless help, v. 18.
  3. In summary, then, a false brotherly love tends to destroy, be it the extreme case of murder or the lesser case of moral murder or even the least case of failing materially to help a needy brother whom we are able to help. Conversely, true brotherly love nurtures, builds up and salvages a brother's life in every way.

***Lesson:*** *Brotherly love is not performing acts of selfishly harming other believers, but performing acts of selflessly aiding them. If we do not thus love, we do not fellowship with God, but if we truly love, we fellowship with Him.*

***Application:*** *(1) If we do NOT love other believers in tending to harm and not selflessly help them in deed, may we confess it as sin to be restored to fellowship with God. (2) If we DO love the brethren, may we keep doing so!*