

I JOHN: A STUDY IN SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT

II. Discerning True And False Spiritual Fellowship

(1 John 1:5-7)

I. Introduction

- A. John wrote 1 John to counter heretical views (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 881), so the epistle provides discernment, and is thus “filled with contrasts – light and darkness (1:6-7; 2:8-11); love of world and love of God (2:15-17); children of God and children of the devil (3:4-10); the Spirit of God and the spirit of Antichrist (4:7-12, 16-21).” (Ryrie Study Bible KJV, 1978, “Introduction to the First Letter of John: Contents,” p. 1770)
- B. We view the epistle for much needed spiritual discernment in our own era, and we study John’s instruction on discerning true from false spiritual fellowship in 1 John 1:5-7 for our insight, application and edification:

II. Discerning True And False Spiritual Fellowship, 1 John 1:5-7.

- A. “Since fellowship is the objective of John’s letter” as noted in 1 John 1:3, “it was natural for him to begin” the teaching content of this epistle “with a discussion of this subject,” Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 884.
- B. Thus, John reported on the message the apostles had heard from Christ, that John was now declaring to his readers that pertains to fellowship with God, and that message is as follows: God is “light,” and in Him is no “darkness” at all, 1 John 1:5. The Greek text uses a double negative (*ouk* followed by *oudemia*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 813), what is incorrect grammar in English, but is used in New Testament Greek to strengthen the negative (J. Gresham Machan, N. T. Grk. For Beginners, 1951, p. 176, ftm.). John then reported to his readers that according to Christ, God is **only** “light,” and in Him is **no** “darkness” **at all!** We explain:
1. Light reveals what is reality, that is, what is the truth, and the “revelatory terms . . . ‘the truth’ and ‘His Word’ are prominent in 1 John 1:6, 8, 10” of the context of 1 John 1:5, Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T.
 2. Also, in John 7:52, the Pharisees told Nicodemus that Scripture never predicted that a prophet would arise in Galilee, but in John 8:12 Jesus claimed to be the “Light of the world,” countering that claim by the Pharisees, for Isaiah 9:2 asserted that the people who sat in darkness in Galilee would see a Great Light, the Messiah! Jesus was God’s Revealer in Galilee since Judah’s people in Isaiah 8:19-20 had turned away from God’s truth in Scripture and the testimony of the prophet Isaiah to seek after witches and mediums!
 3. Since Jesus had called John to follow Him in Galilee where this prophecy was fulfilled (Matthew 4:18-22), John attached his mind to the Isaiah 9:2 passage in interpreting Christ as the “Great Light” in his writings!
 4. Thus, God is truthfully revealed in His written Word and in His Son Incarnate, Jesus Christ, and in God is absolutely nothing that violates that standard of truth that is revealed in His written Word and in His Son.
 5. So, to fellowship with God, one’s walk must **fully** align with God’s truth in Scripture and in His Son!
- C. Consequently, John added that if we say that we have fellowship with God but we “walk” – a verb that figuratively refers to how we live – in darkness that is in violation of God’s written Word, we are lying and not doing the truth, 1 John 1:6. “Ten times John used “darkness” to refer to sin (John 1:5; 3:19; 12:35 [twice]; 1 John 1:5-6; 2:8-9; 11 [twice],” Ibid., p. 885. Sin is the violation of God’s revealed truth in Scripture according to 1 John 3:4, so committing any act of sin is walking in darkness, of which God has no part, and walking in darkness is not to experience spiritual fellowship with the Lord.
- D. However, John stated in the positive sense that if we walk in the light of God’s revealed truth as God is in that truth, that is, as He is revealed in and fully aligned with that truth in His Word and in His Son, we have fellowship with Him. (The term “one another” refers here to the believer and to God, but it later also applies to righteous believers having spiritual fellowship with other righteous believers, 1 John 1:7a with 1:3.)
- E. As we walk in the light of God’s revealed truth, aligned with it, regardless of our past sins and the presence of our sin natures, the blood of Christ is constantly cleansing us from all sin, 1 John 1:7b. With this gracious provision of the cross of Christ, we can enjoy ongoing, genuine, and full spiritual fellowship with the Lord!

Lesson: *God is fully aligned with His revealed truth in His written Word and in His Son Who revealed God’s truth in His earthly life and ministry. Thus, to fellowship with God, a believer must live in TOTAL alignment with God’s truth, and God through Christ’s atonement keeps on cleansing him from every past sin and from the presence of his sin nature. However, if we believers claim that we fellowship with God but we in ANY way violate His revealed truth, we lie because we are out of fellowship with the Lord, and we are not doing His truth.*

Application: *(1) May we fully align with what Scripture reveals of God’s truth to fellowship with Him. (2) May we thus not interpret Scripture carelessly, but be sure that we know its truth since it affects our fellowship with God.*