

I JOHN: A STUDY IN SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT

X. God's Assurances That We Love The Brethren

(1 John 3:19-24)

I. Introduction

- A. 1 John was written 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 today, and study 1 John 3:19-24 on discerning God's assurances that we love fellow believers in Christ for our insight, application and edification:

II. God's Assurances That We Love The Brethren, 1 John 3:19-24.

- A. God assures us that we love the brethren by our deeds of supporting their lives, 1 John 3:19-21 with 3:17-18:
1. The phrase, “And hereby we know that we are of the truth” in 1 John 3:19a KJV likely refers to 1 John 3:17-18, that “practical acts of love in which the (living) needs of others are met, Christians can have a basic assurance that they are participating experientially in the truth,” Ibid., B. K. C., N. T., p. 897.
 2. However, “(i)t is precisely in the sphere of a believer's love for other Christians, in which Christ has set him so high a standard, that he may feel deeply his own inadequacy and failure. But if his heart condemns him, he can remind himself that God takes account of those things which at the moment his heart ignores,” Ibid. This is the thrust of the meaning of difficult translation of 1 John 3:19b-21, Ibid.
- B. God assures us that we love the brethren by providing answers to our prayers, 1 John 3:22-23:
1. Whatever we ask of the Lord in prayer, we receive of Him because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight, 1 John 3:22. Obviously, one of those things we do that are pleasing in God's sight is that we pray in accord with His will and thus receive His answers to our prayers as states 1 John 5:14-15; Ibid.
 2. The commandments John had in mind are again named in 1 John 3:23, that we believe on the name of God's Son Jesus Christ and love one another as He commanded us. Thus, answers to prayer are an indication that we indeed believe in Christ and truly love the brethren.
- C. God assures us that we love the brethren by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, 1 John 3:24 et al.:
1. When a believer keeps God's commands, he “dwelleth” (KJV) in God and God in him, 1 John 3:24a. “That the abiding life involves this mutuality is made plain in the Parable of the Vine and the Branches (John 15:4-5, 7),” Ibid., p. 898.
 2. This mutual “dwelling” between God and the believer was mentioned by Jesus in John 14:21-23: when a believer obeys God's commands, he shows that he loves God, and the Father and the Son will love him and manifest themselves to that believer. The ways this occur may include Biblically sanctioned coincidences (Acts 8:36-38) or Biblically sanctioned strong impulses to do certain things (Acts 17:16-17 with Philippians 2:12-13) or even Biblical sanctioned dreams or visions that give insight (Acts 16:6-10).
 3. This fact also leads John to conclude in 1 John 3:24b ESV that “by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.” Just as the Father and the Son minister in practical ways to the believer who obeys the Lord, the Holy Spirit ministers to the believer, assuring him that he fellowships with God.
 4. Accordingly, the Holy Spirit like God the Father and God the Son also ministers in practical ways to clarify to the believer that he loves the brethren in accord with God's command that he do so. Otherwise, the Holy Spirit Who convicts the world of sin, of righteousness and judgment (cf. John 16:8-11) will work to convict the believer that he harbors sinful hatred toward other believers.

Lesson: *God assures us that we believers who fellowship with Him truly love fellow believers by our deeds of supporting their lives, by providing answers to prayer as we pray in accord with God's will, and by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. If we struggle in our conscience over whether we truly love fellow believers, we must rest in the Lord to have Him either clarify that we indeed love the brethren or to convict us of sin if we do not, Psalm 23:3b.*

Application: *(1) For assurance that we truly love fellow believers, may we rest in the realities of (a) our taking action to support their lives, (b) in getting answers to prayer, and (c) in the assurances of the Holy Spirit. (2) If we have a troubled conscience over the issue, may we rely on God Who knows our hearts better than we do to clarify to us the reality of the issue that we might make the needed adjustment in accord with His will.*