

# **I JOHN: A STUDY IN SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT**

## **VII. Discerning Spiritual Fathers And Their Needs**

**(1 John 2:13a, 14a, et al.)**

### **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 era, and study John’s teaching on discerning spiritual fathers and their needs in 1 John 2:13a, 14a, et al. for our insight, application and edification:

### **II. Discerning Spiritual Fathers And Their Needs, 1 John 2:13a, 14a, et al.**

- A. To understand how “spiritual fathers” have come to maturity, we review the steps they have taken beginning at the “little children” level and going on into the “young men” level before they enter spiritual maturity:
  - 1. When they were “little children,” the fathers learned to rely on the Holy Spirit and heed Scripture to discern false teachers and to gain assurance of their own salvation, and they became so proficient in these actions that they found power in life and service by relying on the Spirit and they overcame Satan whom they discerned through Scripture to be behind the false teachers, 1 John 2:13c, 18-27 with 2:13b and 14b.
  - 2. When they were “young men,” the fathers had overcome the world by not loving it and its lusts, but doing the will of God that their works might last into eternity, 1 John 2:15-17.
  - 3. Then, when the fathers as “young men” performed God’s will, they found that God the Father and Christ had manifested themselves to them in life, greatly fulfilling them as Jesus had promised in John 14:21-23:
    - a. Jesus told His disciples that he who had His word and obeyed it loved Him, and he who loved Him would be loved by His Father and by Jesus so that they would manifest themselves unto him, John 14:21.
    - b. When a disciple asked Jesus in John 14:22 to clarify this claim, Jesus explained in John 14:23 that if anyone loved Him, he would obey His word, and God the Father and Christ would come unto him and make their home with him. God’s involvement in that believer’s daily life would thus greatly fulfill him!
- B. Accordingly, as spiritually mature believers, “spiritual fathers” have come to know by way of personal experience daily fulfillment by their fellowship with Christ (and God the Father), 1 John 2:13a, 14a:
  - 1. 1 John 2:13a KJV claims spiritual fathers “have known Him that is from the beginning,” and we explain:
    - a. The verb “have known” translates the Greek verb *egknokate*, the perfect tense of *ginosko*, “know by experience. (U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 815; T. D. N. T., v. I, p. 689; John G. Mitchell, Fellowship, 1974, p. 64) In this verse, then, this verb means, “have come to know by way of experience.”
    - b. The One Who is from the beginning is defined back in 1 John 1:1-4 as Jesus Christ, and in view of John’s Gospel, chapter 1 verses 1-14, John in 1 John 2:13a emphasizes the eternal deity of Jesus Christ.
    - c. In other words, spiritual fathers have become fulfilled in experientially knowing in their daily lives the Lord Jesus in all of His full eternal deity and hence His All-Sufficiency!
  - 2. The Apostle John repeated his words of 1 John 2:13a to the spiritual fathers in 1 John 2:14a, giving no additional admonition to them in contrast to what he did with the “little children” and “young men.” John knew that “spiritual fathers” need no directive to mature any further, so he gave no admonition to them.
  - 3. However, though “spiritual fathers” are mature, until either death or the rapture of the Church, even “spiritual fathers” still have sin natures so that they can still lapse into sin, experiencing defeat before the world, the devil or the sinful nature, cf. 1 John 1:8. Thus, “spiritual fathers” must also be vigilant like less mature believers to rely on the Holy Spirit and focus on Scripture content to avoid falling back into sin!

***Lesson:*** *Spiritual fathers have reached spiritual maturity where their use of Scripture and reliance on the Holy Spirit has given them victory over the world, the sin nature and the devil, and they have come to find moment-by-moment fulfillment in their walk with their eternal, All-Sufficient God, Jesus Christ. However, since spiritual fathers still have sin natures, they are still vulnerable to committing acts of sin, so they along with less mature believers must keep their focus on Scripture and rely on the Holy Spirit to avoid lapsing into sin.*

***Application:*** *If we have matured as spiritual fathers, may we walk vigilantly to avoid sin to keep enjoying moment-by-moment blessing in interactive fellowship with our eternal God and All-Sufficient Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ! [We will also enjoy fulfilling interaction with God the Father based on the promise of John 14:21-23!]*