

1 JOHN: DEFEATING MISLEADING SPIRITUAL ERROR TRULY TO COMMUNE WITH GOD

Part V: Discerning To Overcome Hurtful Backgrounds Toward Hurt-Immune Maturity

C. Discerning Spiritual Immaturity As A Believer ("Little Children")

(1 John 2:13c, 18-27)

I. Introduction

- A. As we before learned, a believer may be immature so that he discerns and avoids only **some** but **not all** hurtful evils in the world; that leads to painful battles in his walk, Hebrews 5:13-14 with 1 John 2:13.
- B. Thus, it is important to be able to evaluate our maturity level to adjust and avoid such hurtful battles.
- C. John discloses three levels of maturity in 1 John 2:13-27, writing to the immature "little children" in 1 John 2:18-27. We now view that maturity level to evaluate ourselves and adjust for spiritual fulfillment.

II. Discerning Spiritual Immaturity As A Believer ("Little Children"), 1 John 2:13c, 18-27.

- A. In the 2 couplets where John describes the 3 levels of spiritual maturity, he begins each couplet addressing the mature "fathers" before moving to the moderately mature "young men" and then to the immature "little children", 1 John 2:12-27; John G. Mitchell, Fellowship: Three Letters From John, p. 64-75.
- B. So, **before** we even **view** John's message to immature "little children" in 1 John 2:18-27, we have learned in our last study that they are susceptible to hurt that more mature, "young men" face in not discerning the need **not** to love the world's lusts of the flesh, the eyes and the pride of this earthly life that the "fathers" have learned through depending on Christ alone for fulfillment, cf. 1 John 2:13a,b, 14-17.
- C. Additionally, "little children" face their own unique battleground, that of needing to discern their need **not** to seek spiritual fulfillment from people around them, and John discusses this matter in 1 John 2:18-27:
 1. John notes that immature, "little children" need to know that antichrists often exist in local churches and eventually leave these fellowships of believers because they are not true believers, 1 John 2:18-19.
 2. Immature believers can be upset by their departure, for the immature often assume all in a church are believers; thus, John reveals the departure of these parties exposes them to be impostors, 1 John 2:19.
 3. To compensate for being shaken over this problem, immature believers are to realize they are indwelt by the Holy Spirit Who acts as a subjective warning Entity so that, by dependence on God's guidance through His Word, they can avoid errantly looking to people for fulfillment and thus not inadvertently lean on errant "antichrists" in the process to their hurt, 1 John 2:20-27:
 - a. John revealed even "little children" have God's indwelling Spirit so they can discern truth, 2:20, 27.
 - b. The truth the antichrists cannot accept is that which focuses on the Incarnation and deity of Christ, 1 John 2:22-23. This truth is God's Word, something an immature believer needs to use to discern between true and false teachers like the "young man" does, cf. 1 John 2:14b.
 - c. John revealed that if the immature believer heeds God's Word, he will resist the pressures of false teachers to take him out of fellowship with God, 1 John 2:24, 26.
 - d. In thus communing with Christ, he will also enjoy **subjective assurance** of eternal life, 1 John 2:25. (John writes of the **assurance** of salvation needed to offset claims by apostates who assert one is not saved by faith in Christ [as they deny His Incarnation], 1 Jn. 2:25-26; Bib. Kno. Com., N.T., p. 892).
- D. In summary, immature "little children" believers have the following issues to face and overcome by grace:
 1. Instead of relying on other people for fulfillment, (a) they must come to depend on the Holy Spirit and Word of God to discern truth and so avoid being hurt by apostates from leaning on people for spiritual fulfillment, cf. 1 John 2:18-27, 14b. (b) This way they will come to overcome Satan's wiles, 2:14b, c.
 2. Then, immature believers must learn not to look to the gratification of earthly lusts for fulfillment only to be hurt as doing so lets them disappoints, but to focus on the objective will of God, 1 Jn. 2:14b-17.
 3. So, like the "fathers," immature "little children" should come to depend only on Christ and His provisions of His Spirit and Word for fulfillment to avoid hurt in the Christian life, 1 John 2:13-14.

Lesson: Where mature believers rely on the indwelling Holy Spirit and Scripture to focus on finding fulfillment in Christ alone, immature believers errantly rely on other people around them, some of whom are evil, or on the world's lusts, all of which disappoint, and suffer tragic hurt in the end.

Application: If we discern we are immature, may we rely on the Holy Spirit and Scripture that points us to Christ alone, and in HIM ALONE find ALL the spiritual fulfillment we ACTUALLY need.