

## I JOHN: TRUE SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP

### VI. The Three Levels Of Spiritual Maturity, 1 John 2:12-27

#### A. The Father Level Of Spiritual Maturity

(1 John 2:12, 13a, 14a)

#### 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. Such a lack of true fellowship occurs in many believers today, what Christ predicted for our era of Church History in Revelation 3:14-22. We thus continue our study of 1 John in studying 1 John 2:12, 13a, 14a on the spiritual "father" level of spiritual maturity (as follows):

#### II. The Father Level Of Spiritual Maturity, 1 John 2:12, 13a, 14a.

- A. In 1 John 2:12, John addressed "the whole family of God" in using the Greek term *teknia* that is translated "little children" here, for *teknia* means "born ones" in a family regardless of their age or maturity level. (John G. Mitchell, Fellowship: Three Letters From John, 1974, p. 63) Thus, John emphasized the fact that every believer, regardless of his maturity level, had his sins forgiven when he trusted in Christ, Ephesians 1:7; 4:32.
- B. However, believers in God's spiritual family live at **different levels** of **spiritual maturity**, and 1 John 2:13-27 records John's address to three levels of spiritual maturity -- that of "fathers" in 1 John 2:13a and 14a, that of "young men" in 1 John 2:13b and 14b-17 and that of "little children" in 1 John 2:13c, 18-27, *Ibid.*, p. 63-77.
- C. Accordingly, we view these levels of spiritual maturity in the order John presented them in the text, noting what God's message is to believers at each level, starting in this lesson with the "fathers," 1 John 2:13a, 14a:
  1. The spiritual "fathers" described 1 John 2:13a and 14a) have "come to know" (the perfect tense *egnokate* from *ginosko*, "know" in the sense of "personal fellowship" (U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 815; The Analyt. Grk. Lex., 1972, p. 114; Theol. Dict. of the N. T., v. I, p. 711) "Him Who is from the beginning.")
  2. 1 John 1:1a in the 1 John 1:1-3 context identifies Him "Who is from the beginning" as Christ, but John does not name Him here as such, but alludes to his 1 John 1:1a description of Christ where He is described as **Eternal God** in **always existing** (imperf. tense of *emi* in *en* (*Ibid.*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., p. 813) from eternity past! Thus, the "fathers" have come to experience Christ in their fellowship with a **focus** on His **deity!** We clarify, using H. LaVern Schafer, Th. D.'s Theology Notes, San. Fran. Bap. Theol. Sem., 1971:
    - a. As for Christ's divine attributes, spiritual "fathers" have experienced in their Christian walk samples of His omnipotence, omniscience, love, truth, righteousness and goodness.
    - b. As for Christ's divine essence, which is His divine spirit, spiritual "fathers" have experienced samples of His aseity, that is, His self-perpetuated existence, His simplicity, His immensity and His unity of Person.
    - c. As for Christ's divine nature, qualities that describe His relation to created entities, "fathers" have experienced samples of His freedom, sovereignty, infinity, eternality, mobility, immutability and holiness.
    - d. [We illustrate **how** a "father" comes to know samples of Christ's deity by the event in Mark 4:35-41: when Jesus saved His disciples from perishing in a storm-tossed boat at sea in stilling the wind and sea by a gentle verbal command, the disciples were amazed at what kind of man He was that the wind and the sea obeyed Him! The disciples thus experienced samples of Jesus' divine **attribute** of **omnipotence** over wind and sea in stilling them and His divine **nature** as **sovereign** God to do so by means of a gentle command!]
  3. Consequently, spiritual "fathers" have come to realize that nothing in the created universe can come close to the value of Jesus Christ Himself because He is their All-Sufficient Eternal Creator God!
  4. Unlike what he does for those at the other levels of maturity, the Apostle John gives no admonition to the spiritual "fathers," for they have "gone through the tests and trials and afflictions of life, and yet, in spite of it all, *they are fully satisfied with Christ*. The world has no more pull on them. The flesh is kept in subjection. They know how to walk before God. If they fail, they know what to do. They confess their sin to God, are forgiven and cleansed, and go on in perfect fellowship with Him," *Ibid.*, Mitchell, p. 64.

***Lesson:*** Believers at the spiritual "father" level through life's experiences have come to know the Lord Jesus in tasting samples of His All-Sufficient DEITY, so their only need is to keep their focus on their Wonderful Lord!

***Application:*** (1) If we are NOT spiritual "fathers" yet, may we realize that this is the goal of maturity that God has for us. (2) If we HAVE arrived at the "father" level, may we stay focused on our Great Lord and deal swiftly with our sin as soon as it occurs that we might maximize our time in fellowship with our Great God and Savior!