

Doctrinal Summary of Spiritual Development & Maturity: The Spiritual Child

In 1 John 2:13 John refers to believers who have matured spiritually out of infancy into spiritual childhood.

“I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father.”

The word “children” is translated from the Koine Greek word παιδία (“pai-di-ah”) which more literally means, “children, being tools or instruments used to accomplish something.” Physically speaking, it refers to those who are beyond toddlerhood and have moved into childhood but have not yet reached puberty. Spiritually speaking, John uses παιδία to refer to those who have come to know who God is as a result of personal relationship and experience with Him.

The words “you know” are translated from the Koine Greek word ἐγνώκατε (“eg-noh-ka-te”) which more literally means, “you really have performed the completed action in the past with results that continue on to experientially know someone or something.” The “someone or something” which the spiritual child “knows” is God, who He is and that He can be trusted. The type of knowledge the spiritual child has of God is knowledge that comes from interaction and experience with God.

Academic knowledge can be taught to anyone who will listen, but experiential knowledge requires application of academic knowledge. The application of academic knowledge to one’s experience results in understanding the abstract concepts taught through the academic process, the mechanics of how the learned information functions, and its limitations and boundaries. The spiritual child has come to know who God is personally by having personal experience with who He is, how He works, and what defines Him and His actions. The result is that the spiritual child can trust God because he understands Him personally, not just academically. This provides the believer with the foundation for obeying God’s commands which is the focal point of his education during spiritual childhood. 1 John 2:4 identifies,

“The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

The word “keep” is translated from the Koine Greek word τηρῶν (“tae-rohn”) which more literally means, “while performing the continuous type of action as a matter of principle to attentively watch over something in order to keep its position or condition from changing, based on his own initiation.” It describes the believer as paying attention to what God has instructed while making certain that every aspect of it stays in its original condition, neither being added to or subtracted from. He does this based on his own initiation, using the free will which God gave him to keep God’s commands. If he claims to have come to know God but is not keeping God’s commands while he makes that claim, then he misrepresents reality. The evidence that the believer has come to know God is found in him keeping God’s commands (cf. 1 Jn. 2:3) which he does by abiding in God through fellowship, walking in the same manner as Jesus Christ walked (cf. 1 Jn. 2:5-7).

While he walks with God, keeping God’s commands, the spiritual child begins having victory over Satan & Company and associates who operate the world system around him.