

1 Corinthians 3:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.

Analysis

I have fed you with milk, and not with meat (γάλα... οὐ βρώμα, gala... ou brōma)—Paul employs a nursing metaphor common in ancient pedagogy. Gala represents elementary gospel truths (repentance, faith, baptism), while brōma (solid food) denotes deeper doctrinal instruction about Christ's supremacy, church order, and eschatology. **For hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able**—their ongoing inability reveals arrested development.

This incapacity wasn't intellectual but moral and spiritual. The Corinthians prided themselves on wisdom and eloquence (1:5, 8:1) yet lacked the character to handle weightier truth. Knowledge without love produces arrogance (8:1); doctrine divorced from holiness breeds heresy. The author of Hebrews similarly rebuked believers who should have been teachers but still needed elementary instruction (Hebrews 5:12). Spiritual maturity requires both time and sanctification—doctrinal understanding wedded to Christlike character.

Historical Context

Paul had spent 18 months in Corinth founding the church (Acts 18:11), followed by years of absence during which Apollos ministered there (Acts 18:27-19:1). Despite extensive teaching from two gifted leaders, the congregation remained spiritually infantile, unable to digest theological meat. Their cultural environment—Greek intellectualism combined with moral libertinism—made sanctification particularly challenging.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. Does your spiritual diet consist primarily of 'milk' (basic, comfortable truths) or 'meat' (challenging doctrines that require maturity)?
2. What character deficiencies might prevent you from handling deeper biblical truth—pride, impatience, lack of love?
3. How does the Corinthian example warn against pursuing knowledge without pursuing holiness?

Interlinear Text

γάλα	ὕμᾱς	ἐπότισα	καὶ	οὐ	βρῶμα	οὕπω	γὰρ
with milk	you	I have fed	and	not	with meat	hitherto	for
G1051	G5209	G4222	G2532	G3756	G1033	G3768	G1063
δύνασθε	ἀλλ'	οὔτε	ἔτι	νῦν	δύνασθε		
able	to bear it neither	G3777	yet	now	able		
G1410	G235		G2089	G3568	G1410		

Additional Cross-References

1 Peter 2:2 (Parallel theme): As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

John 16:12 (Parallel theme): I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.