

Hebrews 13:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

Analysis

Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein. This warning addresses doctrinal stability versus being 'carried about' (parapheresthe, παραφέρεσθε, 'swept away' or 'led astray') by 'divers and strange doctrines' (didachais poikiais kai xenais, διδαχαῖς ποικίλαις καὶ ξέναις, 'various and foreign teachings'). The maritime metaphor pictures ships blown off course by shifting winds—believers must anchor in truth rather than drifting with theological fads.

The antidote is having 'the heart established with grace' (chariti bebaiousthai tēn kardian, χάριτι βεβαιοῦσθαι τὴν καρδίαν). True stability comes from understanding and resting in God's unmerited favor through Christ, not from external religious practices. The reference to 'meats' (brōmasin, βρώμασιν, 'foods') likely addresses Jewish ceremonial food laws or ascetic practices that some falsely taught were necessary for righteousness. These 'have not profited them that have been occupied therein'—external rituals don't produce genuine spiritual transformation.

This illustrates the Reformed sola gratia principle—salvation and sanctification come through grace alone, not human works or ceremonies. Believers must be grounded in gospel truth: justification by faith alone, Christ's sufficient atonement,

free grace. Every doctrine should be tested against Scripture; novel teachings departing from apostolic truth must be rejected. Stability comes not from rigorous rule-keeping but from deep confidence in God's gracious provision in Christ.

Historical Context

First-century Jewish Christianity faced pressure to incorporate Mosaic ceremonial laws into Christian practice. Judaizers taught that Gentile Christians must observe dietary laws, circumcision, and sabbaths (Acts 15; Galatians). Hebrews addressed Jewish Christians tempted to return to temple rituals, food laws, and Old Covenant practices. The author insists these ceremonial matters were shadows fulfilled in Christ; returning to them abandons grace for futile law-keeping. Early church councils (Jerusalem council, Acts 15) addressed these issues, declaring freedom from ceremonial law while maintaining moral law. Throughout church history, believers have faced 'strange doctrines' requiring discernment and commitment to apostolic truth preserved in Scripture.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. What 'strange doctrines'—novel teachings or theological fads—tempt you to drift from biblical truth and gospel grace?
2. How is your heart established with grace rather than depending on external religious practices or rule-keeping?
3. What doctrinal anchors keep you stable amid diverse and contradictory teachings in contemporary Christianity?

Interlinear Text

διδασκαῖς	ποικίλαις	καὶ	ξέναις	μὴ	περιφέρεσθε·	
doctrines	with divers	and	strange	not	Be	
G1322	G4164	G2532	G3581	G3361	G4064	
καλὸν	γὰρ	χάριτι	βεβαιοῦσθαι	τὴν	καρδίαν	οὐκ
it is a good thing	For	with grace	be established	G3588	that the heart	not
G2570	G1063	G5485	G950		G2588	G3756
βρώμασιν	ἐν	οἷς	οὐκ	ὠφελήθησαν	οἱ	
with meats	which	G3739	not	have	G3588	
G1033	G1722		G3756	G5623		
περιπατήσαντες						
them that have been occupied therein						
G4043						

Additional Cross-References

Ephesians 4:14 (Parallel theme): That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

Ephesians 5:6 (Parallel theme): Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

Acts 20:30 (Parallel theme): Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

Romans 14:6 (Parallel theme): He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

1 John 4:1 (Parallel theme): Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

1 Timothy 6:20 (Parallel theme): O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called:

Jude 1:12 (Parallel theme): These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;

Acts 20:32 (Grace): And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

Matthew 24:24 (Parallel theme): For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

Matthew 24:4 (Parallel theme): And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.