

Hebrews 5:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

Analysis

By now they should be teachers, yet they need someone to teach them 'basic principles' (Greek 'stoicheia' - elementary truths). The milk/solid food metaphor indicates spiritual immaturity. Reformed theology emphasizes progressive sanctification - believers should grow in grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18). Stagnation indicates spiritual illness, as saving faith produces growth. The 'oracles of God' likely refers to OT Scriptures pointing to Christ.

Historical Context

The extended time since conversion ('for the time') suggests these were not new believers but those who should have matured. Their failure to grow was culpable negligence, not innocent ignorance.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What evidence of spiritual growth or stagnation do you see in your life?
2. How can the church better equip believers to move from milk to solid food?

Interlinear Text

καὶ γὰρ ὀφείλοντες εἶναι διδάσκαλοι διὰ τὸν χρόνον
and For ye ought to be teachers when for the time
G2532 G1063 G3784 G1511 G1320 G1223 G3588 G5550

πάλιν χρείαν ἔχοντες τοῦ διδάσκειν ὑμᾶς τινὰ τὰ
again need have that one teach you which
G3825 G5532 G2192 G3588 G1321 G5209 G5101 G3588

στοιχεῖα τῆς ἀρχῆς τῶν λογίων τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ
principles be the first of the oracles of God and
G4747 G3588 G746 G3588 G3051 G3588 G2316 G2532

γεγόνατε χρείαν ἔχοντες γάλακτος καὶ οὐ στερεᾶς
are become such as need have of milk and not of strong
G1096 G5532 G2192 G1051 G2532 G3756 G4731

τροφῆς
meat
G5160

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 6:1 (References God): Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,

Hebrews 5:13 (Parallel theme): For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

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

Colossians 3:16 (Parallel theme): Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

2 Samuel 16:23 (References God): And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom.

Ezra 7:10 (Parallel theme): For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

Isaiah 55:1 (Parallel theme): Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Acts 7:38 (Parallel theme): This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:

Psalms 34:11 (Parallel theme): Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

1 Corinthians 14:19 (Parallel theme): Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.