

A Lord's Day Snippet!

Biblical And Southern Studies

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Unto him that hath, Thou givest
Ever more abundantly;
Lord, I live because Thou livest,
Therefore give more life to me,
Therefore speed me in the race,
Therefore let me grow in grace.

Deepen all Thy work, O Master,
Strengthen every downward root;
Only do Thou ripen faster,
More and more Thy pleasant fruit;
Purge me, prune me, self abase;
Only let me grow in grace.

Let me grow by sun and shower,
Every moment water me;
Make me really, hour by hour,
More and more conformed to Thee,
That Thy loving eye may trace
Day by day my growth in grace.

From Thy fulness grace outpouring,
Show me ever greater things;
Raise me higher, sunward soaring,
Mounting as on eagle-wings.
By the brightness of Thy face,
Ever let me grow in grace.

Let me, then, be always growing,
Never, never standing still,
Listening, learning, better knowing
Thee and Thy most blessed will.
Till I win the glorious race,
Daily let me grow in grace.

Frances Ridley Havergal (1836-1879)

Are You on Milk or Meat?

“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye ... have become such as have need of milk, and
not of strong meat.”

Hebrews 5:12

Adult babies, what a contradiction! Perhaps we could say adults who are still on a baby diet. No, you are correct, that is not a pretty picture because it portrays a distortion. Imagine someone in an adult body who still has the immaturity of an infant. How sad that would be. William Gouge, the Puritan, in a section he called, “Of the disgrace of old babies,” said, “A young babe is no disgrace, but an old babe is.”

Obviously, the apostle is dealing with a very ticklish situation! There are many hard things to explain because of the dullness or sluggishness in their hearing (v. 11), for they had reached the stage in their spiritual lives when they should be teaching others the basics of the faith, but they are still on their ABC’s or the rudimentary elements of spiritual learning. The apostle makes a contrast to illustrate the problem between milk and meat (v. 12). The issue is that those who should be maturing are still on a milk diet (baby food as it were) when they should be on a meat diet (adult food as it were). The problem was that those on milk were again on a refresher course on the primary elements of the oracles of God. They were stunted in their development.

The apostle in verses 13 and 14 explains what he meant more fully. “A babe” in the Greek refers to one who cannot yet speak; it is one who still on breast milk whom the apostle is picturing as a Christian who is unskillful in the word of righteousness. This is how he pictures the adult babe or overgrown infant. However, one who is of full age or maturity is eating “strong meat.” Spurgeon pictured the strong meat as the doctrines of grace, “He that is not full grown in the faith will discover much in the doctrine of predestination that will stagger him. No doubt many young believers have felt God’s fore-ordination to be like a stone rolled in their way, over which they can scarcely climb. They have looked upon this glorious truth as a mountain, blocking up their path; they have not understood that though it be a mountain, it is one upon whose summit God communes with man. How many have been distressed with the precious doctrine of election? It is meat; it is hallowed meat—meat fit for the priests of God and for the Lord’s mightiest warriors.... So with the doctrine of the immutability of God, and the consequent safety of the Lord’s people, seeing that because he changes not, the sons of Jacob cannot be consumed; this, though sweet as honey dropping from the honey-comb, is not a doctrine for every man. Only they who do business upon the great waters, and have learned the need of solid food, can usually feed on these things with satisfaction.” Yes, the strong meat belongs to those who are full age or mature. In the Christian life our spiritual growth does not always coincide with our growth numerically. Believers seem to mature at different rates.

There is the ability “to discern” among the mature children of God. One who is discerning is able to distinguish between things that are good or evil. The distinction between “both good and evil” is the ability to distinguish according to God’s revealed will in the Bible.

“[T]here are some grey heads that have no more wisdom than when they first began; and, on the other hand, there are some youthful believers who are worthy to be called fathers in Israel, through the progress which they have made in grace. Growth in grace does not run side by side with growth in years. As old Master (Thomas) Brooks says, ‘There are some few believers who seem to be born with beards;’ they are ripe Christians at a very early stage of their spiritual existence; and there are some who, if they tarry at Jericho till their beards be grown, will be long in seeing the King’s face. They are always babes, needing the spoon and the rocking-chair, even in old age” [C. H. Spurgeon].

Thomas Brooks, the Puritan, wrote, “The apostle saith, Heb. 5:12, 14, that ‘strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age’ (or that are comparatively ... full-grown), ‘even those who, by reason of use’ (Greek, by reason of habit, which is got by continual custom and long practice), ‘have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.’ The Greek word properly signifies such an exercise as wrestlers, or such as contend for victory, do use, which is with all their might and strength, being trained up unto it by long exercise. It may be, O complaining Christian, that thou art but a scrub, a babe in grace, 1 Cor. 3:1-3; happily thou art not yet got beyond the breast, or, if thou art, yet thou art not past the spoon. Ah! Christian, if it be thus with thee, cease complaining of want of assurance, and be up and growing; be more aged in grace and holiness, and thou shalt find assurance growing upon thee. Divine wisdom sparkles much in this, in giving milk to babes that are more carnal than spiritual, and meat, *i.e.* assurance, to strong men, that have more skill and will, that have a greater ability and choicer faculty to prize and improve this jewel assurance than babes have.”