

# Spiritual Baby Food

## *Hebrews 5:12*

Nutshell: Stunted spiritual growth, signaled by resistance to Bible teaching, is unnatural for a Christian.

I. Context: Paul trying to move on to Melchizedek.

### II. Text

**Heb 5:12** For indeed, considering the time *elapsed*,  
*you* ought to be instructors.

*Yet* you once again *stand* in need to be instructed  
in those matters *that are* the *foundational* elements  
of the *very* COMMENCEMENT of God's utterances.  
Yes, you have come to a state of constant need of milk  
rather than of solid food,

Literal Standard Version with modifications

The next four outline items, III. - VI., are based on the 4 uses of Scripture  
listed in 2 Tim 3:16 AND the 3 depictions of preaching in 2 Tim 4:2.

### III. Teaching

- A. Paul wrote an inspired book to a Jewish audience; 2 Pet 3:15-16;  
1 Pet 1:1; 2 Pet 3:1. Hebrews is the only possibility.
  - 2. The “us” of Heb 2:3 only puts the author outside the original 12
  - 3. Peter speaks of the Apostles in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person as well, 1 Pet 1:12
- B. Outline of Hebrews

*Authority:* God has at last spoken In Son (*Prophet*), ← follow this font  
His express image, 1:1-3a

*Theme:* **The SON** purified us from sin (Priest), then sat in  
authority (**King**), **1:3b**

- I. **Supreme over** the angels, Inheritor by ordeal, 1:4-14  
Therefore hear Him, 2:1-4
- II. **Supreme as** man, 2:5-9

**Psalm 8**- Since man must inherit, 2:5-8a  
but man failed, 2:8b, Christ became man, 2:9a

*Theme* reprise: crowned with glory and honor (**King**), **2:9b**  
to taste the death of “each one” of His own (**Priest**), **2:9c**

to bond with them and help them, 2:10-18

freeing them from bondage to Satan and fear, 2:14-15

Therefore, think hard on Him, 3:1

III. A better stewardship than Moses, 3:1-6

Therefore hear Him, unhardening our hearts, (*Ἰσραηλῆτι*)

**Ps 95-** for Moses' folk didn't inherit God's rest, 3:7-19

IV. A better Rest than Joshua, 4:1-11

Therefore, fear, 4:1a, lest we also miss God's rest

**Ps 95-** David told his people not to miss that rest, 4:1b-3

The Promised Land was a type of God's 7th day rest,  
which itself was a type of Salvation, 4:4-8

Christ's Salvation has become the final *Sabbatismos*, 4:9,  
the Son resting from the work of Salvation as the  
Father had rested from the work of Creation, 4:10.

We must EXERT ourselves to enter Christ's Rest, 4:11

For the Word penetrates, exposing us before God, 4:12-13

*Theme* reprise: Having the highest high priest (Priest), the  
Son of God (King),

Let us hold to our confession of Him (*Ἰσραηλῆτι*), 4:14

especially since He felt all our temptations +, 4:15

V. A better priesthood than Aaron, 4:14 - 10:18

VI. Exhortations based on Christ's supremacies, 10:19-13:21

VII. Concluding remarks, 13:22-25

C. "**Let us approach**" (Προσερχώμεθα) in 4:16 and 10:22

brackets the material between them

1. The material between = proofs of the superiority of Jesus' priesthood (the bulk of the book)
2. The "let us approach" outside the brackets say that the point of Jesus' priesthood is for us to approach God
3. Prayerlessness, then, is a dismissal of Jesus' priesthood

**Kid-speak:** Because Jesus died on the cross to bring us to God, what's one thing we should definitely be doing? Praying!

D. 5:1-10 is a chiasm, contrasting Aaron (v 1-4) to Christ (v 5-10)

1. Christ's priesthood is from Melchizedek, who was before Aaron
2. They needed teaching about Melchizedek but weren't ready. 5:11 - 6:19 is a rebuke + some quick, prerequisite teaching, since he's going into Melchizedek anyway

- E. As we saw in 5:11, Paul (and Silvanus and Timothy? “We,” 1 Thess 1:1) had a lot to say about Melchizedek, but it was going to be difficult to get it across
1. Why? The Hebrews had reached a point of no progress spiritually
    - a. They weren’t ready to learn the basis for Christ’s priesthood (Melchizedek), because it would mean denying Aaron’s priesthood that had lasted 1,400 yrs
    - b. How could Christ have meant the absolute end of the Old Covenant?! (not Old Testament, mind you. He was the confirmation of that, including the *fulfillment* of the OC)

**Kid-speak:** Whose family did God make priests in the Old Testament until Jesus could come and be the forever priest? Aaron.

2. The Hebrews had gone just as far in the doctrine of Christ as would leave them some comfort in the continuing authority and effectiveness of Aaron’s priesthood
    - a. It could have been demanding *circumcision* for Gentile salvation. Maybe the *unclean* laws or Jewish *feasts*:
    - b. -all *ceremonial* aspects of the Law, which had passed away when Christ’s cross established *their reality*.
  3. The allure of those symbols remains. Look at Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Episcopalian use of them.
    - a. There are many Christian elements in them, but the symbols now mask the reality
    - b. The Hebrews had a better excuse, though. The OC was simply THE covenant up until Christ.
  4. Is Hebrews a relevant book? Oh my, yes.
- F. 5:12 Summary:
1. The Hebrews had been Christians long enough that they should have been able to share Christianity’s truth with others; but they couldn’t
  2. They needed to be retaught the very fundamentals of the doctrine of Christ
  3. They had choked off their spiritual growth and were stuck in an infant stage

## Outline for Hebrew 5:12:

- I. Old enough to teach, 5:12a
    - A. The Bible is made to learn, Deut 29:29
    - B. It is therefore made to be taught
  - II. Old enough but needing lessons, 5:12b
    - A. The Bible gives all glory to God
    - B. When we keep some glory for ourselves, our ears close
      - 1. Especially the closer the truth is to the Cross
      - 2. What truth is *unrelated* to the Cross?
  - III. Needing ABC lessons, 5:12c
    - A. When on the ladder we get hung, we may be short a bottom rung
    - B. Bible foundations are still spiritual material. Flesh can't handle it.
  - IV. Needing baby food, 5:12d
    - A. Any truth we oppose shows weakness in a basic (theorem)
    - B. We don't know these areas unless we're exposed
    - C. The criteria is "the whole counsel of God," Acts 20:27
      - 1. Specifically including **mature** doctrines
      - 2. If you don't broach them, you're conceding babyhood
      - 3. Bible teaching is ordered. "Pattern," 2 Tim 1:13
- CAUTION: "You can believe \_\_\_ and still be a Christian."  
"You can disbelieve \_\_\_ and still be a Christian."
- a. Does that reflect Paul's teaching here?
  - b. Those formulae need work.
  - c. God's glory. *How easily we take it over!* (Even glibly!)
- G. 5:12, "For indeed, considering the time elapsed, you ought to be instructors" (Old enough to teach)
- 1. Had this been two years? Five? Ten? Of course, the amount of time itself wasn't the point

**Kid-speak:** If you've been a Christian long enough, you should be able to tell somebody else who Jesus is and how He saves us. Has Jesus saved *you*?

- a. It sounds like they'd had plenty of time.
  - b. How long did it take before *you* could explain at least the fundamentals of Christianity?
  - 2. The point was that they couldn't blame their ignorance on the shortness of time they'd been Christians
- H. "Be instructors," *informally*. You ought to be able to sit across from someone and explain Christianity.

1. Using the same word for “instructors,” Jms 3:1 says the Church isn’t supposed to be top-heavy with teachers
  - a. This suggests that the Holy Spirit doesn’t assign the gift of pastor-teacher to a high percentage of Christians
  - b. Plus, some with good speaking ability think themselves teachers appointed by Christ, Jer 14:14-15
2. 2 Tim 4:2 is preacher criteria
- I. So- any Christian beyond spiritual infancy ought to be able to explain the basics of Christianity
  1. An intriguing proposition! What’s it really saying?
  2. For one, it’s saying that Christianity is *teachable*

**Kid-speak:** Look at how big the Bible is! Do you think that we should be able to explain all of it? Yes, we should, Deut 29:29.

- a. At root, Christianity is *not* a feeling in my heart
- b. Sentences can be strung into paragraphs, start to finish, telling what Christianity actually is
3. The Epistles are a living example of Christianity being teachable/ explainable. (The Bible is made to learn)
- J. Scriptural summaries of Christian belief
  1. Christians can learn to teach the basics of Christianity right from the Bible (The Bible is made to be taught)
    - a. Some verses summarize various aspects of truth:
    - b. Examples: Micah 6:8 What God requires  
Matt 22:37-40 Abstract of the Law & Prophets  
Jer 10:12 A brief of Creation
  2. Paul sets apart three structured sayings of (apparently) fundamental truths for the Church
 

(In our blue book)	{	1 Tim 3:16 The disclosure of reverence
		2 Tim 2:11-13 The faithful saying
		2 Tim 2:19 The solid foundation of God
		(Titus 2:11-14 ?)
  3. The ‘Romans Road’ explains salvation with Romans verses
- K. Summaries of Christian belief outside of Scripture
  1. Example:

The Bible in 30 Words

God made man. Man **sinned**. Sin deserves Hell. Jesus paid for **believers’ sins** on the cross. Jesus rose from the dead. He is coming again. **Believe**. Turn from your **sins**.

**Kid-speak:** Have you memorized “The Bible in 30 Words” yet? OK, can you memorize it in a week?

2. There’s the Apostles’ Creed (AC) (which the Apostles didn’t write): a summary of main Christian *beliefs*
  - a. Our Scriptural Confessions of Faith #4-11 seek to cover the main doctrines in the AC. (Verse for 1<sup>st</sup> line of AC?)
  - b. The Bible in 30 Words seeks to summarize the *story* of the Bible, start to finish. Since the Bible has exhortations, so does the summary.
  - c. The AC had an *earlier version*, The Roman Creed:

I believe in God the Father almighty;  
and in Christ Jesus His only Son, our  
Lord,  
Who was born of the Holy Spirit and the  
Virgin Mary,  
Who under Pontius Pilate was crucified  
and buried,  
on the third day rose again from the  
dead,

ascended to heaven,  
sits at the right hand of the Father,  
from where He will come to judge the  
living and the dead;  
and in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy Church,  
the remission of sins,  
the resurrection of the flesh  
the life everlasting.

- d. I prefer the Roman Creed, partly because it excludes “descended into Hell,” which is true, but does it weigh on the same scale as the doctrines listed above?
3. Why are we covering Scriptural and extra-Scriptural summaries? Because they are teaching *aids*. We have plenty of help if we’d like to be able to explain Christ to people.
4. Catechisms too (some coming)
5. This is all related to the phrase “you ought to be instructors.”
- L. “*Yet* you *stand* in need to be once again instructed.”
  1. Not only could they not *communicate* basic truth, they didn’t *know* basic truth. Ouch. (Old enough but needing lessons)
  2. Yes, we’re all always in the process of learning, but this was different. They had muffed some *fundamental* planks
    - a. These missing planks were directly related to Melchizedek
    - b. There was no way to ‘climb a rung’ up to Melchizedek from where they were

**Kid-speak:** What’s the most important thing in the Bible? The Cross. When people don’t like stuff the Bible teaches, it may be because they also don’t really like the Cross.

- M. “Instructed in those matters *that are the foundational* elements”
1. The ouch deepens. Not only ignorant *and* happy to be that way (“unmotivated ears”), but in *foundational* matters.
  2. Why is the larger Christian community is still ignorant of these matters! The book of Hebrews has been here for 2,000 years.
    - a. Paul’s lessons haven’t taken root. Melchizedek is still a fringe subject; hence, fundamentals may well be missing.
    - b. Remember, Paul makes Melchizedek *normal* food, not supplements
- N. “Foundational elements of the *very* commencement of God’s utterances” (Needing ABC lessons)
1. The ouch goes to the bone. They weren’t just ignoring fundamental propositions, it was ABC stuff.
  2. Ever been told for real, “Go back to kindergarten”? (Actually I was, for handwriting.)
  3. Does Paul love the Hebrews? Yes.
  4. But note: these are ALL *God’s* “utterances” (Gk. *logion*)
    - a. We most often won’t know we missed a step until we balk at reaching a higher rung
    - b. But man always *claims* the higher rungs. The *least* spiritual will *most* envy spiritual attainment.
- O. “Yes, you have come to a constant state of need of [lit., “you have become those having/possessing need of”] milk”
1. And the ouch goes to- kaboom. You missed the whole thing.
  2. Of course, milk is great, but a baby is defined by his *limitation* to it (Needing baby food)
  3. Christians are not supposed to stay babies

**Kid-speak:** Paul said the Hebrews were still baby Christians. Do you think they liked that? No! But does God tell us what we need to hear anyway? Yes!

- a. Paul called the Corinthians babies too, 1 Cor 3:1-2
- b. Not meaning unintelligent! If anything, maybe *too* intelligent! Too prone to trust my own noggin.
4. A basic *doctrinal* problem is a basic *spiritual* problem, since the Bible is God speaking
  - a. The Bible sorts us as we are sorting it
  - b. There is a foundational compliance that must be established in our relationship to the Word. Our *only goal*

- is what it says (*not*, what about my sweet, Unitarian aunt?)
- P. “Rather than solid food”
1. By what they resisted digesting, Paul could peg their spiritual progress (“All God’s counsel” includes **mature** doctrines)
  2. We’re in an ignorant AGE. We shouldn’t be surprised if we’re infected with ignorance.
  3. (Pre-quiz: How is laying on of hands a foundational Christian doctrine, Heb 6:2?)
  4. Review Outline
- V. For the Walking Wounded (1 Thess 5:14, “Uphold the strengthless”) Embrace the Cross. Strength comes from it.
- VI. Conviction (2 Tim 4:2, “Convince, rebuke”): **What have I done wrong? How have I lost righteousness?**  
Am I a spiritual baby? Do I justify spiritual infancy in others?
- VII. Correction/ Realignment (2 Tim 4:2, “Exhort/encourage”):  
**How will I correct my error? How will I regain uprightness?**  
Lord, I see my responsibility to “grow in...” 2 Pet 3:18
- VIII. Schooling in Righteousness: **How will I avoid the error and follow Christ?**  
Our goal has to be mastery of *all* the Bible and its teachings.
- Wrap-up: Spiritual baby food. What should be a slap-on-the-wrist to motivate more serious Bible study instead becomes a shocking exposé.
- Those holding reformation doctrines are in a better position to see the resistance to deeper doctrines. But having that leg up is just as likely to make *us* lazy. Worse, it is likely to make us prideful. Bible doctrine has been annulled in those who hold it pridefully.
- But humbled knowledge should be burdened to correct the ignorant, as Paul is doing with the Hebrews. We can’t do that without loving them enough to characterize them, or at least their doctrine, as infantile. Again, in a humble, fearful spirit. But neither did Paul treat it as a matter of opinion.