

# The Lethal Maturity Gap

## Hebrews 5:13-14

Nutshell: The gap between spiritual infants and the spiritually matured is a chasm. A perpetual infant is an oxymoron.

I. Context: A digression, since they're not ready for Melchizedek.

### II. Text

**Heb 5:13** For each one partaking of milk *is* untried *in the* Word of Righteousness, for he is an infant.

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 (*Ἰερωφῆτ*), ← 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, (*Ἰερωφῆτ*)

**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 (*Ἰερωφῆτ*), **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

D. They needed teaching about Melchizedek but weren't  
ready. 5:11 - 6:19 is a rebuke + some prerequisite teaching,  
since he's going into Melchizedek anyway

**Kid-speak:** Who was the man with the ↑ funny name whom  
Paul wanted to teach the Hebrew Christians about?

1. 5:1-10, a chiasm, compares Aaron (v 1-4) to Christ (v 5-10),  
whose priesthood is from Melchizedek (who was before  
Aaron)

2. 5:12, they were babies needing spiritual milk, missing  
basic teachings, though they had been Christians long  
enough to be sharing the faith accurately with others by  
now

## Outline:

### I. The Spiritual Infant

- A. What he *can* stomach (spiritual baby food)
  - 1. Which can't keep an adult alive
  - 2. An alarming sign for the spiritual infant
- B. What he *can't* take (the Word of righteousness)
  - 1. Especially what the Word says about how man presents righteousness to God
  - 2. Which is-
    - a. NOT by personal righteousness (enhanced by Levitical practices). We have no personal righteousness
    - b. BY Christ's righteousness

### II. The Spiritually Mature

- A. Is ready for 'regular' Bible teaching
- B. Because he put in the work to train his brain (soul/spirit/etc.)
- E. 5:13, This verse gives the rationale for calling them spiritual babies, as the word "for" indicates. 'This is my *basis* for calling you infants.'
- F. 5:13, "For each one partaking of milk is untried in the Word of righteousness"
  - 1. The WORD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS is the **standard** by which to measure spiritual growth
  - 2. Notice first that, as important as **prayer** is, people can be disciplined supplicants, but if their understanding of God is off, their prayers are *ineffectual*
    - a. Especially concerning the means by which man achieves RIGHTEOUSNESS
    - b. That is, the prayer God awaits from them is, "I have been denying Your Word. Forgive me."

**Kid-speak:** Do you understand everything the Bible says? No, but some things are easier to learn when you get older.

- 3. After doctrinal solidity is achieved, prayerless is *as* telling or *more* telling than doctrinal deficiency
  - a. Hence, Prayer = what you do with/ where you take a correct understanding of God, man, self, and the world
  - b. If you don't pray earnestly, permeating your soul, you

- don't think these matters are very important
4. The milk-dependent hadn't cut their teeth
    - a. By this, we can draw an important inference: spiritual growth is inextricably linked to *choice*
    - b. *Physical* growth happens on its own. *Spiritual* growth only occurs as we INTAKE God's living words. **This involves the choice and practice of doing so.**

**Kid-speak:** How do you become a grown-up in understanding the Bible? Keep studying it and thinking on it!

- c. Misreading Scriptures is like food 'going down the wrong pipe', or mixing poison in with each bite
  - i. Note: a *mistaken* misread is simply corrected, like a piece of rice flying down with an inhale, then being coughed back up
  - ii. The *harmful* misreading of Scriptures is a *persistent* one, especially in the face of correction
  - iii. Especially at the key defining lines in the Epistles
- G. "Each one partaking"
  1. We already know that their dangerous growth inhibition was *general*: 5:11, "you" plural; same in 5:12, 2x
  2. With "each one," singular, Paul particularizes each *individual*
    - a. This may simply be the language of example, like using the word "whoever"
    - b. But Paul may be intimating that for the group to have been stunted, each one (virtually) had to be stunted. His probe deepens.
- H. "Partaking of milk," here connoting partaking *exclusively* of milk. This is an abbreviated form of the longer phrase in the previous verse, "need of milk rather than of solid food."
  1. You're known by what you eat, especially in distinguishing infant from adult
  2. Milk, which is an *expected* diet for an infant (as God made them), would be an unhealthy- ultimately a *deadly* diet for an adult (not a danger limited to exclusive milk, of course)
- I. "Is untried in the Word of righteousness"
  1. "Word (*logos*) of righteousness" could be "principle/idea/concept of righteousness";

2. But it was the “Word” of *Scriptures* about Melchizedek that they were ignoring

**Kid-speak:** What is righteousness? It’s what is right. God is righteous, so He always does what is right, and He loves what is right. Are we righteous? Not on our own! Jesus died on the cross to give us His righteousness.

3. Though this would be the only time *Scriptures* are called a Word of righteousness
  - a. There is no article (“the”), but one can be inferred
  - b. Albeit we have phrases like Word of... truth, His grace, promise (of a single verse), Christ, the last 3 of which occur only once
4. We want to know, then, why Paul would call *Scriptures* “the Word of righteousness”
  - a. First, as in English, “of” in Gk can denote a description of *or* the source of
    - i. The Word that is *about* righteousness; or
    - ii. The Word whose *source* is righteousness
  - b. Of course, either one could be argued, but the context seems to favor the former
5. The WHOLE LEVITICAL SYSTEM showed that *no standing before God can be established on **human** righteousness*
  - a. This basic message began on Day 1 of God’s Rebuild: “Man, *you* covered yourself this way. It is insufficient. For your covering to actually cover you, it must picture substitution a death in your place.”
  - b. So *God* provided them coats of animal skins, a death having been provided
4. The constant temptation of the Jewish people was to use the Levitical system *opposite of its intention!* They perceived it as an attaining of their own righteousness, Rom 10:3.
  - a. Of course, the same temptation is with man always
  - b. When Christ came, Christian Jews’ continued adherence to aspects of the Levitical system showed *again* that they had not appreciated the basic Levitical message!
  - c. They had ignored “the Word about righteousness.”  
Righteousness can only be found outside of the sinner. It can only be found in Christ.

**Kid-speak:** After God gives us Jesus' righteousness (justification), what happens? THEN He starts to make us righteous in our own souls (sanctification).

5. That is the *main* import of "Word of righteousness," but other applications are certainly legitimate
    - a. Such as God's righteous judgment on those who insult His Son's sacrifice, Heb 6:4-6
    - b. Or the Word giving new birth, then working good into us
- J. "Untried"
1. This is a negative prefix attached to the root word for "tempted" in Jms. 1:13-14. "Untested" is just as accurate.
    - a. Just as an infant has *no way* to experience solid food, the Hebrews were in a different ballpark than the one in which God's righteousness is expounded and understood
    - b. And they had no immediate access. They'd have to become aware of the real menu in Scripture before they'd even have a *chance to develop* a digestive system for it.
    - c. So Paul was cluing them in... with concern
  2. Again, we'd say that they hadn't cut their teeth yet
    - a. But here they were, perhaps 20 or 30 years into their faith in Christ, assuming that their Christian experience was normal- that they were mature and healthy
    - b. Wouldn't this be the same for *anyone* who sought to establish righteousness with the help of Levitical (OC) means? Like Catholics, etc.? (Censers, etc.)
    - c. They *insist* on spiritually infantile fare because it looks and feels impressive (and comes from Scriptures!)

**Kid-speak:** Are there grownups who only eat spiritual baby food? Yes, lots and lots of them, sadly. Don't be surprised by it.

3. But isn't an infant at least still alive?
  - a. See if you can find one who stayed on just milk for even a year. Can't find one? There's your answer.
  - b. Are Paul's warnings in this book in keeping with that dire a level of warning? Very much so.

**Heb 5:14** But solid food belongs to matured ones. *These are the ones whose opinions were opinions already* having been athletically trained for *the* discrimination of both good and bad-

this by reason of *long* routine.

- K. Now the other side of the contrast: the mature
  - 1. The “solid food,” repeated from v 12, is what they eat
  - 2. How did they develop to maturity?
- L. Literally, “The ones on account of habit having the perceptions gymnasized for thorough separation of both good and bad.”
  - 1. The word for “athletically trained” is the word from which we get “gymnasium”- “naked” (their mode of athletics)
  - 2. This is no light training
- M. There is a dividing line, politeness aside
  - 1. The mature are the only ones ready to move on, unlike the spiritual babies
  - 2. To them alone belongs solid food, such as ‘regular folks’ eat
- N. These are the ones who already had their perceptions athletically trained
  - 1. Which means that you’re not spiritually mature until the course is complete
  - 2. Paul was trying to provoke godly envy in the Hebrews- looking longingly to the disciplined who had attained what they had foregone

**Kid-speak:** How hard is it to become a spiritual grownup? It’s like athletic training. You have to keep at it. It’s not always easy.

- a. The Hebrews may have been *very* ‘athletically trained’- in baby elements
- b. That didn’t count. Look back at the *real* starting blocks; there they are, toddlers shuffling about aimlessly in grown-up shoes: “Look at me! I’m racing!”
- O. “Athletically trained,” *gumnadzo* (“gym”). Requiring what?
  - 1. First, exposure to **TEACHING** on this level. E.g., from me.
    - a. A good athletic trainer can break down the techniques to their simplest elements, but the sweat still has to flow
    - b. This is supposed to be every teaching elder’s calling, 2 Tim 4:2, “with all forbearance and instruction”
      - i. Wading through all the books, all the verses, all the doctrines of the Bible
      - ii. There is no shortcut to that
    - c. You can’t say, “I learned Haggai, so I know Zechariah.”
      - i. All Bible training worthy of the name is an all-out,

drawn-out effort

- ii. It's not really "Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth" (entry level all that's necessary)
  - d. It's more like **Survival Camp Required In Perilous Times, Using Rigorous Education**, 2 Tim 3:1; Heb 5:14
2. Secondly, conforming **YOURSELF** to the pattern of a Bible investigation regimen (on top of being taught)
- a. Can your instruction from me + your own study get off track, becoming mere academic curiosity?
  - b. Yes, but do such detours invalidate the real practice? No.
  - c. How to tell the difference? The real one draws you closer to God (and therefore also to His people).

IV. For the Walking Wounded (1 Thess 5:14, "Uphold the strengthless")  
Set spiritual goals per realism. But set them.

V. Conviction (2 Tim 4:2, "Convince, rebuke"): **What have I done wrong?  
How have I lost righteousness?**  
Where do *I* practice or excuse in *others* spiritual infancy?

VI. Correction/ Realignment (2 Tim 4:2, "Exhort/encourage"):  
**How will I correct my error? How will I regain uprightness?**  
I will pursue, not resist, full Bible understanding.

VII. Schooling in Righteousness: **How do I put this on the road?**  
Thank you, God, for the realistic goal of knowing all You say.

Wrap-up: The dangerous gap between spiritual infants and adults caught the whole Jewish Christian community with their diapers on. It was like Eden: "Oops. We're not dressed properly."

But did all of them repent? No, many looked at themselves and said, "What? I see splendid, adult clothes." That has been the larger Jewish community for 2K years, Rom 10:3.

But ALL who seek to establish their own righteousness are in the same boat. If you look at the Catholic church and don't see diapers (of death), what *do* you see?