

STRONG MEAT
NO. 506

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 19, 1863
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*"But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age,
even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."
Hebrews 5:14*

IN most large houses we shall find humanity in all its stages. We shall see the infant in its cradle, children laughing in their play, young men working with vigor, and the old man resting in peace. In such a mansion, if a careful Martha be in charge, provision will be made for all the different ages. There will be milk provided for the babes, and the larder will not be without solid meat for the full-grown men.

Now in our Father's great house, His family is always so large that you will always find believers in all stages of growth. Perhaps there is never a moment in the year in which there is not a new birth unto God by the Holy Spirit. The sighing of repentance, and the crying of simple faith are always in our heavenly Father's ears, giving Him delight. He has many babes, and for these He has abundance of nourishing food.

But we bless His name that they are not all babes in the house. Some are young men, who are strong, and have overcome the wicked one, and there are a few fathers who have known Him, that is from the beginning. For the young men and for the hoary sires there is as plentiful and as fitting a provision as for the infants.

He opens His hands and supplies the want of every living thing, and this is true, not only of the temporals which He gives to man and beast alike, but also of the spirituals which He dispenses liberally to all the new creatures in Christ Jesus.

Now it were unfitting to give milk to the man of full age, and equally improper to present the strong meat to those who are but infants. Our Lord has, therefore, been pleased to dictate directions as to the persons for whom the various provisions of His table are intended.

Our text talks of *strong and solid meat*, and it describes *the persons who are to feed thereon*, while the context *gives a mild rebuke to those who, by reason of indolence and sloth, have not attained to years of discernment, and cannot therefore feed on substantial diet*.

I. Let us, first of all, BRING FORTH SOME OF THIS STRONG MEAT AND SET IT UPON THE TABLE BEFORE YOU.

A careful examination of the context will inform you that one form of strong meat which is only fit for full-grown Christians is *the allegorical* exposition of Scriptural history. You will mark that the apostle was about to allegorize upon Melchizedec. He had intended to set forth that that venerable and priestly king was, so far as Scriptural information goes, without father, without mother, without descent—having neither beginning of years nor end of life—and that he was superior to Levi seeing that Levi's progenitor paid tithes to him and received his blessing.

The apostle was about to show that Melchizedec was a type of Jesus, who, as a Priest, is without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of years, but is a Priest forever according to the power of an endless life.

But the apostle paused, for he felt that this allegory of Melchizedec was too strong meat for those who were not full-grown men. Beyond a doubt, the historical parts of Scriptures are intended to be instructive allegories, setting forth heavenly mysteries. See how the apostle Paul used several of them.

There is the case of Hagar and Sarah. Since the promise was not performed to Sarah, and no offspring had been born to Abraham, Sarah suggests that Abraham should take to himself a concubinary wife, Hagar. He does so, and she brings forth, according to the flesh and by the power of the flesh, Ishmael. Now the apostle goes on to show that Ishmael was not the seed which God had promised, and that, consequently, in after years Isaac was born—not according to the power of the flesh—since his father and mother were past age, but according to the promise fulfilled by the power of God alone.

He then goes on to show that this is an allegory. That the children of the flesh, that is, those who are the seed of Abraham, by natural birth like Ishmael, are not the true seed, but that those who, like Isaac, are the fruit of God's promise, and having been once as dead are given to Abraham, as Isaac was on the mountain in a figure—that these are the true seed, concerning whom the covenant was made, and as Sarah said concerning Hagar—"Cast out the bond-woman and her son, for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac." So the Gospel says—"Cast out the law, for the children of the law, those who hope to be saved by legal works, shall not be heirs with My sons, even with those who are saved by the promise of grace." Now this allegory is meat for instructed believers.

Jacob and Esau—born of the same parents, at the same birth, and yet, separated in destiny by that memorable sentence, "Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated"—were a type of the election of divine grace. And with many other instances, these go to prove that Holy Scripture is to be received, not only as a literal description of facts which really did occur, but as a picture in which grace-taught souls, illuminated by the Holy Ghost, may see portrayed in express characters the great Gospel of the living God.

Those of you who are well-instructed will have found out by this time that the Book of Genesis is the *History of Dispensations*—that in all its types it sets forth, from Adam to Joseph—the various dispensations of primeval innocence—man without law, under law, in covenant, and apart from covenant, and many other things of which we cannot now particularly speak.

You will have discovered that Exodus is the *Book of Redemptions*. Here is redemption by blood when the paschal lamb was slain. Redemption by power when He broke the chivalry of Egypt, smiting Pharaoh in the midst of the Red Sea.

The Book of Leviticus is the *Handbook of Communion*, the *Guide to Access*, opening to us the way in which God can come to man and man can go to God. And I am sure the least observant of you must have discovered that the Book of Numbers is the *Record of Experience*, for all those journeyings of the children of Israel to and fro when they lived in the wilderness, sometimes by Marah's bitter fountain, and at other times by Elim's spreading palms, all describe the constant on-marching of the sacred army of God to the Promised Land.

The Books of Joshua and Judges typify the history of the people who have entered into the land of Canaan, who are saved, but who have to fight with their corruptions, who have to fight with the Canaanites that are still in the land, and to drive them out despite their chariots of iron.

I believe that every book of Scripture has some special lesson beyond its historical import. And perhaps when the history of the world shall have been fully wrought out, we shall see that the books of the Bible were like a prophetic roll sealed to us, but yet fulfilled to the letter.

I sometimes think that we live in the days of the Judges. God raises up one mighty minister after another, some Shamgar, Jephthah, Gideon, or Samson, and when these die the church relapses into its former state of coldness and indifference. But the time is coming when David the King shall come, and when Solomon shall reign from the river even to the ends of the earth. The Millennial age shall hasten its glories, and what if it should be succeeded by a time of falling away, as under the kings of Israel, and then the winding up of the dispensation, the carrying away of the wicked into their long and last captivity, and the setting of the chosen in another and a better land?

If these things are so, I am not wrong in the remark, that these allegories are only fit for strong men, who, by reason of use, have had their senses exercised. See, I set the meat before you.

I feel persuaded that the apostle also more particularly referred to those mysterious truths which have respect to *the relationships of our Lord Jesus Chris, and to His complex person*. The very simplest believer understands that Christ is God and man, that Christ stood as the sinner's surety, and paid his debt.

But brethren, when we come to meditate much upon the person of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall soon discover that there are depths of mystery in which an elephant might swim, as well as shallows where a lamb might wade. His complex person suggests a thousand thoughts—all of which are too high for comprehension or even consideration until our senses have been exercised.

The doctrine of Christ's ancient covenant. the striking of hands between Jesus-JEHOVAH, the Surety, and JEHOVAH of Hosts, who accepted Him as the substitute for His people—who but the perfect man can grasp this? Christ's frequent appearances upon earth, too, before His incarnation, when His delights were with the sons of men—when He talked with Abraham, communed with Moses, spoke to Joshua, and trod the coals of fire with the three holy children—what a theme!

Christ's eternal Sonship. The procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son. The conception of Jesus as to His humanity in the womb of the Virgin, and others of a kindred nature, are great mysteries. I do not believe that these are fit topics for babes in grace. These truths are as high above us as the heavens are above the earth. But if ever we do come to consider these sublimities, we must remember that they are only food for full-grown men.

I might go on to show that our union to Christ, that wonderful doctrine of our being members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones, is also a mystery not to be trifled with by children. I might show, too, that even in Christ's second advent there are lofty questions, mighty difficulties, which need the full-grown intellect of the believer to grapple with them, and therefore, here again you have another dish loaded with solid meat.

The *doctrines of grace* are also generally esteemed to be very strong meat. He who 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 is 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—but many there be who have been so scandalized thereat that they have been fain to write bitter things against themselves on account of it.

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 honeycomb, 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.

Oh! dear brethren, what a mercy it is that there are such things as the grand old truths which men nickname Calvinism, but which are the very marrow of the Gospel. I find when the heart aches, and the spirit is heavy, there is nothing like reading the eighth and ninth chapters of Romans. And when things go amiss with me, and everything is perversely disappointing my hopes, it is very delightful to throw oneself back upon the soft couch of God's eternal purpose, to pillow one's head upon the certainty that what He said He will perform, and that what He has commanded shall stand fast.

Here are royal dainties! Costly cheer for fainting pilgrims! If you want the wings of eagles, study these doctrines, and they shall bear you aloft. If you would creep along the ground, and be full of doubts, and fears, and miseries, and distractions, live on baser food. But if you would walk in the strength of a giant, and fight with the valor of a David, live on these loaves of heaven's best bread, and your youth shall be renewed. Yet these things are strong meat and are not for babes, but for men.

Scarcely need I mention that other dish—*the more advanced and inwrought forms of Christian experience*. I believe there are saints, for instance, who hardly comprehend that passage where the apostle speaks of the contest within—“When I would do good, evil is present with me.” You know there are many little saints who do not comprehend the fight within. The conflict is there, but they have not a clear idea of what that conflict is. They do not understand, with Paul, that, “It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.”

The philosophy of the two natures, and of their constant struggle with each other, is not at their fingers’ ends. Then, again, communion with Christ is a high mystery that is never learned in the preschool of repentance, not often in the grammar school of faith, but we must go the university of repentance to learn it—leaning our head on Jesu’s bosom, and having foretastes of the fellowship which makes heaven what it is. This is one of those rare experiences which can only belong in its frequency to the full-grown believer.

I do not wonder that some people cannot read Solomon’s Song. We do not expect that they should. If I put a book of algebra or a table of logarithms into the hand of a child who has just learned the multiplication table, I do not marvel that he should not understand it. The fact is that the Song is to the whole Bible what the holy of holies was to the temple.

You may walk into the Acts of the Apostles and the Gospels, and say, “Here I am in the outer court of the temple.” You may go to the Psalms and to the Epistles, and say, “Here I am in the court of the priests.” But the Canticles are the holy of holies, and he that has not learned to enter with the High Priest into that which is within the vail, will never be able to read Solomon’s Song. These experiences, I say, are for men of full age, who have had their senses exercised.

I have thus set before you the various sorts of strong meat. Before we leave the table *let me utter a word of caution*. Milk you may use as you will. You cannot take too much of it. It will not do strong men any great amount of good, but it will certainly do them no harm. But the strong meat must always be accompanied by a word of caution when it is placed before the uninstructed and feeble—since such are very apt to do mischief both to themselves and to others with this strong meat.

As for the *allegories*, what a world of nonsense have people talked about the allegories of Scripture, trying to make things run on all fours that were meant to walk erect. Alas, for those silly expounders who without the genius of old Origen, imitated his worst faults. What can I say that would be censure severe enough upon Origen himself, who never could read a chapter but he must needs twist it from its plain sense to make a mystery of it.

We have all heard, I dare say, of the divine who was foolish enough to take the three baskets full of sweet meats that were upon the head of Pharaoh’s baker, and to say that they represented the Trinity. I have heard of another who preached from this passage in Ezra—“Nine-and-twenty knives,” and went to show that they were types of the four-and-twenty elders. What he did with the surplus five I don’t know.

Was God’s Book ever meant to be a toy for the amusement of childish imagination? Surely, no. The strong meat of allegory must be for half-inspired saints like John Bunyan, and those masters in Israel who are not to be carried away upon the back of every figure, but who can ride their figures like good horsemen, with a bit in the mouth of the allegory, and make it keep in a straight road, and bear them safely on to their destination. How many weak men are like boys on unbroken colts. The sooner they are off the better, for they will hurt their steed and do themselves no good.

So must it be with *the good things concerning the person of our Lord Jesus Christ*. The mysterious doctrine of the Trinity, and the equally mysterious and sublime doctrine of eternal generation are best let alone by feeble minds. I do not think there are half-a-dozen men alive who ought to meddle with the last.

There has been a controversy lately in a magazine, which I sometimes read for amusement rather than for instruction, between certain self-considered great and able divines of modern times, who think they are the men, and that wisdom will die with them. They have been denouncing each other most heartily—and this seems the only thing they can do thoroughly well—they have been denouncing each

other heartily, because one believes this, and the other believes that, about a subject which not one of them knows anything at all about.

The Sonship of our Lord is a great and marvelous mystery, to be meekly and reverently received, but never to be disputed about, except by those gigantic minds which belong to the past rather than the present. We might like to see two titanic Puritans enter the field of controversy—two such men, for instance, as Dr. John Owen and Charnock—one might travel a thousand miles to see them grapple one of these lofty subjects. But when the little men of these days meddle with them, it saddens the humble-minded and affords enlightenment to none.

In a measure it is so with *the doctrines of grace*. The doctrines of grace are to be handled with caution, for there are some folks who are not of full age, and have not, by reason of use, had their senses exercised so that they can discern both good and evil. Many love high doctrine, but then they want it higher than the Bible.

Have we not known some who thought themselves very wise, but whose senses, I am certain, have never been well-exercised? They were so fond of the doctrine of justification by faith that they have denied sanctification by the Holy Spirit and have taught imputed sanctification, which is a doctrine of men, indeed.

Some have so exaggerated free grace that they have denied the practical precepts. This is partly through wickedness and partly through folly. It is the sure result of little minds losing their way in the great truths, and slipping from the high road, fall to flounder in the ditch of error.

Oh! my dear brethren, I would sooner you would leave these doctrines alone than that you should fall into Antinomianism, for among the most damnable things which Satan ever sent is that which shall lead you to deny the practical precepts, and to forget that “Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.”

Unholy fatalism is a deep ditch and the abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein. Those persons, too, who push the doctrines of election and make it into the doctrine of reprobation show that they are foolish. They are not fit to deal with sublime truth, and if some persons who are renowned for preaching the doctrines of grace would only hold their tongues till they understood them, their admirers would wait upon a dumb oracle.

Oh, 'tis a grand thing to be able to receive the whole truth—to learn human responsibility as well as divine sovereignty, to see God doing as He wills, but man bound to obey, to see JEHOVAH exalted on His throne, King of kings and Lord of lords, with man's will His subject and bound to do what God bids it, simply and only because God commands it.

I am sure if we can couple the two things, free-agency and predestination, together, we shall be saved from Antinomianism on the one hand and from infidelity on the other. It is not holding half the truth that marks the man, that is the attainment of a babe, but to hold all, and to be afraid neither of high doctrines nor of low doctrines—neither of Calvinism nor of Arminianism, nor any other *ism* so long as there is truth in it.

To pick the truth out and to hold fast that which is good—this is the conduct of a masculine, well-developed believer. May you have grace, dear friends, as touching these truths, to feed upon them as men who are of full age.

I shall not say anything upon the other point, except that it is just the same *as to advanced experience*. There are some who have run to the extreme of despondency, and others to the verge of levity through not knowing that strong meat is only for men of full age. But I have said enough, and therefore, I now leave this point to turn to a second.

II. Secondly, let me INVITE THE QUALIFIED PERSONS TO COME TO THE FEAST.

Who are they? They are here described as being persons *of full age*. Understand, dear friends, that there is no reference here at all to the age of a person as to human life. The Greek word is, “Men that are perfect.” It signifies, therefore, spiritual men who have attained to the highest degree of spiritual development.

Now this is not the result of years, for there 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 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. The expression in the text, then, has no reference to age, but is used in a spiritual and metaphorical sense.

But what is meant by men that are full-grown? Well, you know a babe has the same parts as a man. the babe is perfect in its measure, but it is not perfectly *perfect*. Those limbs must expand, the little hand must get a wider grasp, the trembling feet must become strong pillars for ripening manhood—the man must swell and grow, and expand, and enlarge, and be consolidated.

Now when we are born to God, we have all the parts of the advanced Christian. Faith, hope, love, patience—they are all there, but they are all little, all in miniature, and they must all grow. And he is of full age whose faith is vigorous, whose love is inflamed, whose patience is constant, whose hope is bright, who has every grace, in full fashion.

Nor is it only development. The full-grown man is *stronger* than the babe. His sinews are knit. His bones have become more full of solid material. They are no longer soft and cartilaginous, there is more solid matter in them. So with the advanced Christian—he is no longer to be bent about and twisted—his bones are as iron and his muscles as steel. He moves himself in stately paces, neither needs he any upon whom to lean. He can plough the soil, or reap the corn. Deeds that were impossible to infancy are simplicities to the full-grown man.

Now you understand what the full-grown Christian is. He can do, and dare, and suffer, what would have frightened him aforetime. He can fight with dragons though once he would have fled before a grasshopper. He can now endure to pass through deep waters, though once a little brook would have swept him away.

There is as much difference, in fact, between the full-grown Christian and the newly-born convert as between the strong, hale, hearty man of forty, and a babe of three or four. We must, then, before we can venture upon things hard to be understood, labor to arrive at full age.

But then our text tells us *that they have had their senses exercised*. The soul has senses as well as the body. Men who have had their senses exercised know how to choose between good and evil. Now, what are these senses? Well, there are our spiritual *eyes*. When the babe first sees, it has little idea of distances. I suppose that to a babe's eyes everything appears as a flat surface. It is the result of after-experience which enables the man to know that such a thing is so many yards off, and that another is so many miles distant.

Travelers, who go to Switzerland for the first time, soon discover that they have not had their eyes exercised. You think that you can reach the peak of yonder mountain in half-an-hour. There is the top of yonder rock. You dream that a boy might fly his kite to the summit, but it shall take you hours to climb there, and weary limbs alone can bear you to the dizzy height. At a distance, young travelers scarcely know which is mountain and which is cloud.

All this is the result of not having the eyes exercised upon such glorious objects. It is just precisely so in spiritual things, unless Christians have their eyes exercised. I hope, dear friends, you know what it is to see Christ. Your eyes, by faith, have looked upon the King in His beauty. You know what it is, too, to see self. You have looked into the depravity of your own heart and have been amazed.

Your eyes have seen the rising and the falling of many deceptions. Your eyes have been tried in waiting for God in many a dark night or in beholding Him in the midst of many a bright Providence. Thus your eyes have been exercised.

Now, when a doctrine is put before you, a strong doctrine, you look at it and say—"Ah! yes, my eye of faith tells me, from what I have seen before, that that is healthy food upon which I may feed." But if you detect something in it that is too high or too low, you at once say—"No, that won't do for me," and you put it away.

Hence it is that the man, the eye of whose faith has been tried with bright visions and dark revelations, is qualified to discern between good and evil in those great mysteries which would be too high for unexercised believers.

Then there is *the ear*. We hear it said of some that they have no ear for music. We sometimes hear it said of others that they have an ear for music, and they can tell when people are singing half a note amiss. How shocked they would sometimes be with some of you who will persist in running away from our good leader and getting a whole note amiss! But there are some who cannot tell one note from another.

So is it in spiritual things, "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound," but many do not know the difference between the joyful sound and that which is half a note lower. Why, dear friends, when a Christian is well-taught, he knows when a note goes too high and he says—"No, no, no, that jars." Or when it goes too low he says—"No, that is out of tune."

He wants to have the keynote of the Gospel constantly before him, and any divergence from the grand old tune of orthodoxy, which he has learned from the Word of God, at once makes him feel wretched. He has a fine, keen, discerning ear. He can tell at once any mistake and is not to be led astray by it.

Hence it is that such persons are fit to hear the solid doctrines of the Gospel preached, because they have listened to the voice of God. They have heard the charms of evil and have despised them. They have heard the conversation of educated saints, they have been taught in the ways of the Lord, and knowing, therefore, the difference between this and that, they can discern between good and evil, and are not to be led astray.

Now, I know that there is always a tendency in our large congregation for us to lose a driblet every now and then of two sorts of people. One sort, when they hear an earnest sermon to sinners, when the wanderers are exhorted to flee to Jesus, and are told that if they perish it will be their own fault. "Oh!" these people say, "that is Arminian doctrine!" And off they go to some place where they can have the hyperism undiluted.

And then, if on another morning God's predestination is proclaimed, and men are told that God has chosen His people, that, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy," then certain people say, "Ah! I did not get on this morning. It was too high for me." The fault is not in either of the doctrines, for they are both Scriptural—the evil lies in these people's ears.

They do not know the note which is the happy medium between the two systems—the note which takes in both, which shows the sinner his own responsibility, and yet shows to both saint and sinner, God's real sovereignty. Happy is he whose ear is well-tuned to discern both good and evil.

Then, dear friends, comes *the nose*, the intention of which sense is to smell things afar off. True Christians have smelt the fragrance of Christ's fellowship. "While the king sits at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof." Advanced Christians know the fragrance of heaven. The angels have brought them bundles of myrrh from the other side of the stream. They have had their nostrils exercised, and you know the nostrils are of very essential use in reference to food.

The nostrils can soon detect decay or that spiciness which the crafty trader employs to conceal it. There are certain persons whose ministry is putrid, but they lay on thickly very excellent spice about the safety of the believer, and the joy and peace that there are in Christ, that the putridity is somewhat checked, and some Christian people eat the nauseous morsels, forgetting, or not knowing what they really are, because of the sweet savouriness and flavor in which the whole is wrapped up.

But our nostrils are given us on purpose to detect the craft and mischief of designing men, and the spiritual nostril that has been made to perceive the difference between the righteous and the wicked, will soon be able to perceive what is true food and what is carrion.

Then, you know, there is *the taste*, and this sense needs educating, too. Some men have no taste. To them flavor is no luxury. There are many who have no taste spiritually. Give them a cup of mingle-mangle—"perhapses," "ifs," "buts," "peradventures," creature-willings, and creature-doings, and if it is only warm, they will drink it down and say, "Oh! how delightful!"

If you give them a cup, on the other hand, that is full of divine purposes, precious promises, and sure mercies of David—if you will only flavor it with a good style of oratory—they will drink that sweet potion too and relish it. The two things may contradict each other flatly, but these people have no discernment—they have not had their senses exercised.

But those of you who have been made to taste the sweets of covenant grace, you, especially, who have eaten His flesh and drunk His blood—and you, too, who have been made to drink the wormwood and the gall till your mouth knows every flavor, from the bitterness of death up to the glory of immortality—you may taste the strong meat without any fear, for your senses are exercised.

Lastly, there is the sense of *touch*, and you know how in some men this has been developed to a very high degree. Men who are deficient in sight, for instance, have acquired by touch the knowledge which would, if they had not been blind, have been derived from their eyes. So believers have been made to touch the hem of Jesu's garment. They have exercised the sense of feeling by joy, by rapture—perhaps by doubt and by fear—and their touch has become so acute, so keen that, though their eyes were shut, as soon as they touch a doctrine they would know what was of God and what of man.

Now our text says that this comes as the result of use and that use generally comes to us through affliction. Have you ever noticed how men get their senses clear through affliction? I read in the life of good Dr. Brown, that when he first preached he heard two women at the door talking to one another about his sermon. And one of them said to the other—"Ah! 'twas very well, but 'twas almost all tinsel."

A short time after, the good preacher lost his wife, his heart was broken, and his whole nature affected. The roots went deeper down into the solid truth, and when he preached again, the same woman said to her friend—"It is all gold now."

Afflicted Christians come to know the difference between tinsel and gold. I love a people who do not always care to have great garlands of fine flowers handed out to them. Oh! that running after oratory, that seeking after fine flowing sentences, that spread-eagle style which some adopt—why this is all folly!

What the child of God wants is matter. He would like to have the matter given him in a good shape, but still it is the matter, the real solid food that he wants, and that ministry will always be the most acceptable to advanced believers which has the most of truth in it. They do not care half so much about the style as about the food that is served up in the sermon.

They want something upon which the intellect may ruminate, which the soul can masticate, which the heart can assimilate, and upon which the whole being may be nourished and strengthened. Young Christians very frequently like Arminian doctrines, but as we grow older, as men who were radicals when they were young grow to be conservatives when they are old, so we grow to be Calvinistic, for Calvinism is the conservatism of Christianity. It is just the conservative principle, the old, solid, stiff, unyielding doctrine.

Though I am a long way from being anything like old, and do not intend to be old if I can help it for another thirty years or so, yet still I do find a greater and more intense love to the doctrine of election, the doctrine of eternal union to Christ, final perseverance, and all those great truths where saints in all ages have been wont to find a haven for their spirits.

III. And now we must conclude. I think our apostle meant the text to be a GENTLE REBUKE TO THOSE WHO ARE NOT FULL-GROWN MEN. The apostle says that the Hebrew saints ought to have been teachers, but that they still remained infants.

It is very pleasant to see the infant in the house. What joy there is in its tender cry. But suppose that our children were always to remain infants—that would be no happiness to the parent. If you had a son twenty years of age who still needed to be carried, who required still to hang upon the nurse's breast, would you not consider it one of the most serious of calamities?

But you say you would pity the child. Ah! so you would, but suppose it was his own willful fault. Suppose the little one could, by some piece of willfulness, prevent itself from growing, and would not use the proper means for development. I think you would then wisely use the rod as well as show your pity.

Twenty years of age and yet still in long clothes! Thirty years of age and still uttering a babbling cry! Forty years of age and still needing milk! Ah! you smile, but did any of you smile at yourselves? How long have you been converted to God? How long have you known the Savior? Why, I have known some converts who have been in long clothes for thirty years after they were converted and are babies still. If you asked them to speak for Christ, they could only say a word or two of mere babble. And as for their confession of faith, it was not a reason. They did declare the hope that was in them, but they did not give a reason for it, for they could not give one.

Then there are some who grow so slowly that their faith is just as weak now as it was twenty years ago. They go tottering along and cannot run alone yet. They will want always to have preached to them just the simple elements, and if you give them a piece of high doctrine, they have not cut their wisdom teeth yet, and therefore they cannot masticate it, much less can they get any comfort out of it. Have I not seen some who ought to have been as patient as Job by this time, as fretful as they can well be?

Dear friends, I must give you a word of rebuke. It must be gently, for you are our brother, and if you are but a babe, yet, if you have life in you, you are saved. But why should you always be a babe, dear brother? Is it not that you have been too worldly? You have made money—oh! I wish you had made an increase of grace!

You have been very attentive to those carts and horses, and to that farm and to that speculation—you have attended very diligently to that sale room and to that exchange—oh! if only you had been as diligent in prayer, if you had been as diligent for your Bible as for your ledger, and if you had ridden in the chariots of salvation as often as you have been riding your own horse about your farm—how much better a Christian you might have been!

Do you not see, brother, you have been stinting yourself of food. You do not read the Scriptures, which are the food of the saints. You have stinted yourself of breath, and if a man is short of breath, he will not have much to boast over. If you want to grow, you want to pray more. My dear brother, surely you have attached too little importance to these things. You have not enough considered them.

Why not begin to search the Scriptures? Why not try to live nearer to God? Why not pant after a greater conformity to Christ's image? Why, what a Christian you might then be! I do ask my Lord often this one mercy, not only to make this church, as it is, the largest church in Christendom, but to be pleased to make us also strong men.

Oh! if I can have in this church a body of strong men and women, who know what they have received and hold it fast, and grow in grace, who shall have their eyes lit up with enthusiasm because their hearts are burning with a divine fervor—why, there is nothing impossible for you! You shall make the church tell upon its age. You shall move London, which is the heart of the world, until it shall send out deep heart-throbs that shall reach throughout the universe.

What, with such multitudes as God adds to us continually might not be done if we had but the baptism of fire? But we must be ready for the fire. We must tarry at Jerusalem, and then, when the Holy Ghost comes down we may speak each in his own tongue as the Spirit shall give us utterance—and who can tell how mightily we may serve the Master?

Sunday school teachers, I would not have you ordinary teachers who merely set children reading. I would have you masters of the art of teaching, who are able to catechize with clearness and with power.

You young preachers who stand in the streets—I would not have it said of you that you can talk but that there is nothing in it.

You young men in our college—I hope it shall never be said of any of you as you go forth that you are deficient in spiritual intelligence and that you are unenlightened. May you be strong men, my brethren, all of you—and then it shall be my happiness to see you like the old guard of Napoleon, marching irresistibly into the battle, and this shall be your war-cry, if bad and evil times shall come—“We can die, but we can never surrender.” For God and for His truth you shall make your last charge over your enemies, and then enter into the victory which He reserves for all them that diligently serve Him.

I have said nothing to those of you who are unconverted. “One word,” says one, “one word. One word.” Well, there it is for you—I will give you more this evening, but I will give you one word now—“Prepare to meet thy God!” “But how?” says one. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. Taste and see that the Lord is good. He that believeth on Him shall never perish, but have everlasting life. To believe is to trust. Trust Jesus and be saved. Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.