

God Endows the New Creature

*“The hearing ear,
and the seeing eye,
the LORD hath
made even both of
them. Love not
sleep, lest thou
come to poverty;
open thine eyes,
and thou shalt be
satisfied with
bread.”*

—*Proverbs 20:12,13*

A VERY IMPORTANT LESSON

for every Christian to learn is the fact that all the blessings which he enjoys are his as a result of the grace and mercy of God. This is true, also, of the natural man, who, as a product of the Creator, properly owes all that he possesses to him who is the fountain of life and of all blessings.

Among the gifts with which God has bestowed the natural man are the five senses of hearing, sight, taste, smell, and touch. Much that makes life truly enjoyable is communicated to the intelligence through these senses. In the symbolisms of the Scriptures, our Heavenly Father employs these natural senses to illustrate his endowment of the footstep followers of Jesus. Thus we find that hearing, sight, taste, smell and touch can all be viewed, symbolically speaking, from a spiritual perspective, in which we find valuable lessons to assist us in our

growth and development as “new creatures” in Christ.—II Cor. 5:17

In our opening text are mentioned two of the senses with which both the natural man and the New Creature are provided. Added is the reminder that it is only when one is awake that he enjoys the blessings that reach him through a proper use of the senses with which he is provided. This is true in a very marked way with the followers of Christ, who are admonished not to sleep as do others, but to be awake and alert that they may at all times be responsive to the blessings which can be theirs by the proper use of divine provisions.—I Thess. 5:6

As noted also in our opening text, if we are idle and drowsy, loving to be at ease in our walk with the Lord, the result is sure to be “poverty,” and a consequent loss of the proper use of all of our spiritual senses. The apostle reminds us that the nourishing, life-giving food provided by God belongs only to “those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”—Heb. 5:14

FEELING AFTER GOD

The sense of touch, or feeling, is used in the Scriptures to symbolize not only a similar gift with which New Creatures in Christ are endowed, but also to illustrate qualities of mind and heart possessed by those who desire to be in harmony with the Creator, even before they become Christians. The apostle speaks of those who “feel” after the Lord. (Acts 17:27) The illustration here is that of one feeling for an object with his hands, when neither sight nor hearing yet reveals its whereabouts or identity.

Man, when originally created, was given the quality of worship and reverence, and with it, a sense of dependence upon the Creator. As a result of the fall the race has mostly lost contact with God. However, there have been those throughout the ages who have longed to be in harmony with him, and these have reached out for him. God's recognition of those who "feel" after him is manifested through his giving them eyes to see and ears to hear the truths pertaining to his plan, and their part therein. From among those whose response continues to be enlarged, he calls his people.

This longing desire of the individual to be in harmony with God, and to serve him as well as to depend upon him, does not cease with the divine recognition and call. It continues to operate as an important quality in the character of the New Creature, only now it is not a mere feeling after God, but a passionate and enlightened desire to be pleasing to him, and to know and serve him better. David expresses the true feelings of every dedicated follower of Christ, saying, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."—Ps. 42:1

A proper feeling after God has associated with it a keen realization of our dependency upon him. If we are truly humble, we will seek the blessings from God which we so sorely need, and which he alone can provide. The humble-minded among the Israelites at the time of Jesus' First Advent earnestly sought the blessings which they believed he was able to give. One of these said, "If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole." (Mark 5:28) Here the close relationship between the sense of touch and

the receiving of blessings from the Lord is emphasized.

When the Master revealed himself to Mary following his resurrection, and Mary sought to embrace him, Jesus said, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father." (John 20:17) The New Testament use of the Greek word here translated "touch," shows its meaning to be that of making contact with the hope of receiving blessings. Jesus' statement to Mary, therefore, is merely explaining to her that until he ascended, and, symbolically speaking, presented the atoning value of his ransom sacrifice into the hands of the Father's justice, he was not in a position to grant her the blessing which alone would be of eternal value to her.

Now, however, the blood has been applied for those who receive and respond properly to God's invitation, and by faith they are able to make contact with him who is the source of life and blessing. Symbolically speaking, then, our spiritual sense of touch is that quality which prompts us to seek divine blessings, and to worship at the throne of heavenly grace. Our natural sense of feeling and touch should neither influence us, nor be our guide as New Creatures. God guides us by drawing nigh to us, enabling us to hear his Word of truth and see the vision of his great plan.

THE HEARING EAR

The blessing of spiritual hearing is of inestimable value. Jesus said to his disciples, "Blessed are ... your ears, for they hear." (Matt. 13:16) The blessing to which he referred by this symbol is described earlier in this chapter, where the Master said to his

disciples, "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 13:11) Jesus did not tell the disciples that they were to be congratulated because of their ability to fathom the mysteries of the kingdom, but reminded them that the understanding which they enjoyed had been "given" to them.

Referring to Israel as a whole during the time of his ministry, Jesus explained that their ears were "dull of hearing." (vs. 15) Because of this, it was not given them to know the mysteries of the kingdom. In the case of these, the gift of hearing was withheld because of their lack of appreciation and hardness of heart. In verse 17, Jesus also spoke of other men who were as godly and zealous as the disciples, and yet they could not "hear."

Why so, since these included "many prophets and righteous men?" Jesus said that they desired to hear these things, but failed in their attempt, because it was not God's due time to reveal these truths. From this we can see how greatly favored of the Lord we have been if we have been given ears to hear, and hearts to appreciate the glorious Gospel of the kingdom—God's "plan of the ages."—Eph. 3:11, *Rotherham Emphasized Bible*

Let us not think for a moment that we have attained this wonderful knowledge through any brilliancy of our own. We are to remember that there are others who have been similarly blessed, and who also have this mark of divine approval. A proper attitude of humility before the Lord, in view of the great things he has done for us, should make us careful in our judgment of one another and in our dealings with our fellow brethren in Christ.

If we properly appreciate God's gift of the hearing ear, we will endeavor to use the gift to his glory. Jesus said to his disciples concerning statements of truth he had made to them, "Let these sayings sink down into your ears." (Luke 9:44) Evidently Jesus' thought here is that the disciples should give special attention to what he was saying. The importance of properly using the sense of hearing given to us by the Lord is further emphasized in Proverbs 8:32-34, where we read, "Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors."

Of special interest to the Christian are the words of Jesus recorded in Revelation 3:20, where he says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Here we have brought to our attention our part in connection with the hearing of the Truth, that is, the privilege of responding, and inviting the Lord to come in and sup—dine and fellowship—with us.

The apostle further admonishes that we be not merely hearers of the Word of God, but also doers. (James 1:22) If the Lord has blessed us with a hearing ear, so that through this medium we have been made acquainted with him and his glorious message of truth, we should act in harmony with what we have heard. We should be "doers" of the Word. If we expect to continue receiving the blessings of the Lord, we cannot go on in life as the world does, merely being glad that we know something of the Word of truth, but otherwise doing nothing about it.

“HEARKEN, O DAUGHTER”

Through the psalmist, the Lord prophetically addresses those whom he invites to become a part of the bride class, saying, “Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house; So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.” (Ps. 45:10,11) Here, we are told not only to incline our ears to hear the words of the Lord, but upon hearing, we are to forget all other considerations except that of doing his will. Even such things as important and dear to us as our own people must take second place in our lives, if God’s gift of a hearing ear is to result in the rich blessings he intends for us.

Isaiah 55:3 reads, “Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” To “incline” our ears unto the Lord means to give close and undivided attention, to shut out from our hearing, as far as possible, that which distracts from what the Lord is saying to us. Only those who thus incline their ears, through making a full consecration to do God’s will, and faithfully carrying it out day by day, can expect to receive God’s covenant blessings. Thus, again, we are reminded of our part in the receiving of this gift of spiritual hearing. If we fail to use it, or misuse it, we will be depriving ourselves of the rich spiritual blessings that otherwise could be ours.

In another place, the Prophet Isaiah states, “Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it.” (Isa. 30:21) Here, the use of the symbolism of hearing ears indicates that it is

through this spiritual sense that God reveals his will to us through his Word, to guide us in the way we should serve him. If our ears are dulled to the hearing of God's instructions, we will be uncertain of the direction in which we should walk, and the manner in which we should serve.

EYES TO SEE

In Matthew 13:16, partially quoted earlier with regard to spiritual hearing, Jesus also says, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see." This is to be esteemed a great blessing from the Lord, and another means by which we are able to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Spiritual vision is closely related to spiritual hearing, yet the symbolism brings additional thoughts to mind. Ability to hear the Word of the Lord seems to be related more particularly to God's invitation to serve him, and our heartfelt response. Spiritual sight conveys the thought of the ability to discern not only God's will for us in our service to him, but also his plan in general, especially the wondrous truths pertaining to the establishment of his kingdom.

This thought is suggested in Isaiah 33:17, where we read, "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off." The "king" whom we see by spiritual vision, is Jesus, as God's agent. The Apostle Paul speaks of this, saying, "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (Heb. 2:9) What a great blessing it is to be able thus to "see Jesus." Millions are able to see Jesus as a teacher of high moral

ethics, and a leader in other respects, but only those who are blessed with true spiritual vision, see him in his true position in God's plan as the Redeemer of the world.

Millions who have hailed Jesus as the Redeemer have not been blessed with an understanding of the words they used. They have not discerned Jesus as the "only begotten of the Father," who was "made flesh" for the suffering of death as a "ransom for all." (John 1:14; I Tim. 2:5,6) Not discerning this, they have understood only that which they have learned through human philosophy, which has come far short of the full meaning of this all-important truth.

The vision of seeing Jesus includes more than our discerning the ransom feature of God's plan, fundamental though this is. The Messianic promises of the Scriptures reveal Jesus also as the future king of earth who, reigning for a thousand years, will subdue all enemies under his feet, and, at the close of that reign, deliver up the kingdom to his Father. —Rev. 20:4,6; I Cor. 15:24-28

The apostle says, "But now we see not yet all things put under him." (Heb. 2:8) That which we do not yet see as an accomplished fact is that which the prophet speaks of as the "land that is very far off," as earlier quoted. True spiritual vision, then, enables us not only to discern the purpose of Christ's coming to earth to die as man's Redeemer, but also to understand that the work of redemption is a necessary precursor to his glorious kingdom reign soon to come. It is the ability to understand and "see" what has already been accomplished, and to look forward to the fulfillment of that which has been promised, which has blessed our spiritual vision of God and his plan.

THE PURE IN HEART SEE GOD

Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” (Matt. 5:8) Here is spiritual discernment that enables us to see beyond the divine plan to perceive the character that is revealed in its author. Such ability to see is given only to the “pure in heart.” If in our hearts there is still some room for self, rather than undivided devotion to God, our vision will come short of actually beholding the glorious character of our Heavenly Father.

If, on the other hand, we can truly say from the heart, “None of self, and all of thee,” and are prepared to fully enter the way of self-sacrifice to do the Lord’s will, our devotion is rewarded even now with faith’s vision of the glory of God. If we continue our wholehearted devotion to the Heavenly Father faithfully even unto death, our vision of faith will be rewarded with the glorious privilege of being in the actual presence of our God and seeing him face to face.

SPIRITUAL TASTING

When God enlightens us, and we find him whom we seek, he gives us the great joy of knowing that he is good, gracious, loving and kind. David refers to this using the symbol of taste, saying, “How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (Ps. 119:103) Taste conveys the thought of experience. In the natural realm, we may see food that appeals to the eye, but when we experience its taste and find that it is good, the appraisal of sight has been verified. So in spiritual things, when we have “tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,” it means that we have appropriated these to ourselves and proved

their value by means of our own experiences.—Heb. 6:4-6

This thought is borne out by the words of David: “O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.” (Ps. 34:8) In other words, tasting of the Lord’s goodness involves the putting of his promises to the test through our experiences. By trusting him in all things, we are given the additional assurance, through our own experiences, of God’s blessing upon us.

The Apostle Peter exhorts that those who have “tasted that the Lord is gracious” should “desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” (I Pet. 2:2,3) Verse 1 admonishes the laying aside of “all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings.” Those who do this, Peter says, are like newborn babes. They are pure, innocent, unassuming and wholesome. The apostle’s illustration is evidently the same as that employed by Jesus when he said, “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”—Matt. 18:3

Having employed the illustration of newborn babes, it was but fitting that Peter continue with a logical sequence of symbolism by using the food of infants to picture the purity of the Word of God, upon which we feed and grow strong in the Lord. The apostle thus illustrates the purity and nourishing qualities of our spiritual food and its power to promote growth as New Creatures.

EATING THE BOOK

A still further aspect of taste is brought to our attention in Revelation 10:9, where God’s plan is likened

to a book, which, when eaten, is sweet to the taste, but causes bitterness in digestion. Here we are told what to expect as a result of fully appropriating the truths of God and applying them in our lives. The promises of God are always sweet, and how we rejoice in them, savoring every blessed assurance of his Word by which he tells of his love and tender care.

However, we are not to forget that obedience to God's will and Word leads to bitterness of experience through trial and persecution. No one could rejoice in the sweetness of the Father's Word more than did Jesus, yet his faithfulness to it led to suffering and death, even the cruel death of the cross. Those who are following faithfully in the Master's footsteps should not expect to have experiences different from his.—Matt. 10:22-25

SWEET-SMELLING SAVOR

The symbolism of smell is used in the Scriptures to convey the thought of sacrifice and devotion. In Ephesians 5:2, the apostle says, "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." By this language Paul takes our minds back to the services of Israel's Tabernacle, where, in connection with its services, incense was burned upon the golden altar in the Holy compartment, the odors of which penetrated beyond the second veil into the Most Holy.—Exod. 30:1-8

The regulations governing the services of the Tabernacle were very exact. On Israel's Day of Atonement, Aaron the high priest took the blood of the sacrifice into the Most Holy to sprinkle upon the mercy seat. However, it was essential that incense first be burned

at the golden altar in order that its smoke and odor enter the Most Holy prior to Aaron passing under the veil, else he would die as he entered the Most Holy. (Lev. 16:11-14) The smoke and odor of the incense was evidence that the sacrificial work had been properly carried out. That is why the sacrifice of Jesus is spoken of as “a sweetsmelling savour” to God.

The consecrated followers of Jesus are also invited to sacrifice, and to be baptized into his death. (Rom. 12:1; 6:3,4) Our work of sacrifice is directed particularly on behalf of our fellow brethren of the body of Christ. In Philippians 4:18, the Apostle Paul, alluding to the evidence of sacrifice on the part of the church at Philippi in sending him a gift while in prison at Rome, refers to it as “an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.” Here we have the authority of Paul himself for applying the lessons of Israel’s Tabernacle to the church, as well as to Jesus. It shows, furthermore, that God is testing the sincerity of our dedication to him by the wholeheartedness of our sacrifice and service towards one another.

The symbolism of the sense of smell should also enable us to discern between true devotion to God, and mere lip service. It is a sense by which we may test, as it were, the value of truth, and its application in our own lives. Where we can smell no odor of sacrifice, we may well wonder how deeply the truth has taken hold of our spiritual life. Our vision of truth should reveal the privilege of sacrifice on behalf of others, and our heart devotion to the Truth should make us quick to lay down our lives that others may be blessed. Thus can the sweet odor of devotion be strong.

If these spiritual endowments of the New Creature are to react in genuine and lasting blessings to us as followers of the Master, it is important that we use them continuously. In the natural realm, when sleep overtakes an individual, all of his senses lie dormant. The apostle, however, admonishing us against spiritual weariness, says, “Let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.” (I Thess. 5:6) Remaining awake and alert, let us use the spiritual senses which God has so abundantly provided, in order that we may know him better and serve him more faithfully. ■