

Taste the Goodness of the Lord

***“O taste and see
that the LORD is
good: blessed is the
man that trusteth
in him.”
—Psalm 34:8***

THE PSALMIST DAVID, IN writing the words of our opening verse, realized that not all of his fellow Israelites had truly discovered and appreciated the goodness of the Lord. Thus, he extends the invitation to “taste and see.” This is, of course, symbolic language, and although David desired that Israel would do this, there should be a much greater meaning in these words for spiritual Israelites of the present age. It is the lesson to consecrated believers, found in David’s words, which is the focus of our thoughts.

David indicates that to taste and see the Lord’s goodness should mean that we then place ourselves in a position of trusting implicitly in his care over us. In another Psalm, he identifies this as “the secret place of the most High.” (Ps. 91:1) Only those who have given all to God, and daily present

themselves to him as a living sacrifice, know of his goodness by experience, and can thus fully trust in him. When we responded to God's High Calling through full consecration of ourselves to do his will, we began to "taste and see that the LORD is good" in our experiences. The Apostle Peter uses this same symbolism, when he states, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious."—I Pet. 2:2,3

The goodness of God includes both the loveliness of his being and character, as well as the all-encompassing scope of his bountiful providence and grace. We "taste" his wonderful benefactions, relishing them as precious gifts, savoring their sweetness. We also "see" his beautiful character, and delight in the contemplation of his infinite perfections. By such taste and sight, we daily discover new beauties in our Almighty Creator. As a result, we enjoy a rest and peace beyond the world's comprehension, and are comforted and encouraged even in the most difficult of our experiences.—John 14:27; II Cor. 1:3,4

TRUSTING IN HIM

"Blessed are all they that put their trust in him," the psalmist says in another place. (Ps. 2:12) Trust, as used in this verse and our opening scripture, has the meaning "to take refuge." Trust is closely related to faith and hope. Faith denotes firm conviction, and hope signifies confident expectation. It is our faith, or conviction, in God's arrangements, and our hope, or confident expectation, that his plan will be fully carried out in every particular, that allows us to trust him at all times, and take

refuge in the “secret place” of his presence. Thus, we can commit all things to our Heavenly Father and his son Christ Jesus, and find refuge from the Adversary and the spirit of this world.

An important part of our trust in God has to do with reliance on his covering protections over us. Those who take refuge in God are promised, “He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust.” (Ps. 91:4) Even our sinful Adamic nature is covered, as the Prophet Isaiah states, “He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness,” made available to us through Jesus’ ransom sacrifice. (Isa. 61:10; Rev. 1:5) The Scriptures also tell us that the Lord knows “them that trust in him,” and “knoweth them that are his.” (Nah. 1:7; II Tim. 2:19) How blessed to realize that our loving Heavenly Father bestows such intimate care upon his consecrated children—those who trust him in all things.

GOD’S WORD

As followers of Christ, we develop a spiritual taste for the food which God provides for our nourishment. This food is found in the Bible, and it is this Word of God which we feed upon, eating the instructions, principles, and promises that we might be strengthened spiritually. God’s Word of truth, as we eat of it, sanctifies us, making us holy and setting us apart from the world and our fallen fleshly tendencies. (John 17:17) Sanctification through the Word of truth begins at consecration, and continues throughout our earthly sojourn, as we daily strive to carry out the terms of our covenant with the Heavenly Father.

Now, during the harvest of the Gospel Age, the Lord's people have been served with an abundance of "meat in due season." (Matt. 24:45) What rich delicacies we are finding at the table of "present truth" which the Lord has spread before us. (II Pet. 1:12) How satisfying it is to our spiritual taste as we learn more of our Father's plans and purposes by partaking of the food which he has provided. The Lord, through John the Revelator, tells us that the Word of truth "shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey," but also adds, "it shall make thy belly bitter." (Rev. 10:8-10) These are the bitter persecutions and trials which will come to us because we have eaten and are appropriating this spiritual food. We are told that the world, which is in darkness, "hateth the light." (John 3:19,20) This fact, plus the weakness of our fallen flesh and the temptations of the Adversary, will yield some of the bitter experiences that come to us because we have partaken of the Lord's Word.

HIDDEN THINGS

Jesus thanked the Heavenly Father that he "hid" the Gospel truths "from the wise" of this world, and had "revealed them unto babes." (Matt. 11:25) As previously noted, babes in Christ are encouraged to grow by drinking the "milk of the word." Paul states that the food of the consecrated believer should progress to the point of being "strong meat." (Heb. 5:13,14) In one sense, milk refers to our knowledge of basic, foundation truths, and that strong meat denotes the understanding of more difficult portions of God's Word. In another sense, however, and perhaps most importantly, strong

meat refers to the application in our daily life and conduct of truths learned.

In the verses cited above from Hebrews 5, Paul notes that strong meat belongs to the “mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.” (vs. 14, *New American Standard Bible*) If an understanding of the truths contained in God’s Word results in our application of its principles for the discerning of “good and evil” in our lives, then it is strong meat to us and an evidence of a certain level of spiritual maturity. This does not diminish the importance of the “sincere milk of the word,” but rather points out that there must be exercise, growth, and proper application of the truths we have learned in order for them to have their full nutritional benefit to the spirit-begotten New Creature.

All the truths of God’s Word are “revealed unto us by his Spirit,” and thus constitute, as Paul states, the “deep things of God.” (I Cor. 2:10) Applying these deep things, that they may nourish us as strong meat, requires that we be “doers of the word, and not hearers only.” (James 1:22) This aspect of our lives, applying and doing, is perhaps the most difficult to carry out, yet it is the most important. The development of a Christlike character will be the ultimate test of our faithfulness to God, and will prove the extent to which we have appropriated the spiritual food of his Word which he has so abundantly provided.

DAILY BREAD

When the children of Israel were provided manna in the wilderness, Moses said, “This is the bread

which the LORD hath given you to eat.” (Exod. 16:15) We have been provided with the true bread from heaven, our daily supply of spiritual food centered in Christ. (John 6:48-57) As with those in the wilderness, our gathering of heavenly manna is to be day by day, and our feeding upon it is to be a continuous privilege. Without its nourishment, we would not have spiritual strength, but with it we can be “strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”—Eph. 6:10

We daily partake of the “bread of life,” Christ Jesus, through examining and applying his teachings and example of conduct. Similarly, we “eat the flesh of the Son of man” by appropriating his spirit and disposition. There is no literal thought to this matter. Jesus makes it clear that eating his literal flesh “profiteth nothing,” but that “the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” (John 6:63) The life, words, spirit, and example of Jesus will be our portion of spiritual food until we reach the heavenly Canaan.

OUR SPIRITUAL SIGHT

Our sense of sight as New Creatures is the ability to discern the will of God as revealed in his Word. Jesus said to his disciples concerning their ability to understand the “mysteries of the kingdom of heaven,” “Blessed are your eyes, for they see.” (Matt. 13:11,16) Many in Jesus’ day had an opportunity to see, but they did not possess the spirit of discernment, and were hardened of heart. Of the religious leaders in particular, Jesus said they were “blind leaders of the blind,” and “blind guides.”—Matt. 13:14,15; 15:14; 23:16,24

When Jesus said to his disciples, "blessed are your eyes, for they see," they were not yet begotten of the Holy Spirit. Their ability to discern the "mysteries" of God's Word was limited until Pentecost, when the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit came upon them. Jesus said to them the night before his death, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." He promised, however, that the "Spirit of truth" would soon come, and guide them "into all truth: . . . and . . . shew you things to come."—John 16:12,13

What the disciples possessed prior to Pentecost was the necessary humility of heart, and desire to learn. These qualities are essential, and prerequisite, to being able to "see" the mysteries of God through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." (Matt. 5:8) A pure heart is one which is clean from ill motives, sincere and genuine in its desires, and above all, humble and teachable. Only those who are thus pure will be able to see God. One striving to be pure in heart will not only seek to "do no evil," but to even "abstain from all appearance of evil." (II Cor. 13:7; I Thess. 5:22) This depth of heart purity is necessary in order to be of those who will "see God."

HOW WE SEE GOD

For the faithful followers of Jesus, there will be the unspeakable privilege in the "first resurrection" of being presented before the Father, and of seeing him face to face. (John 14:2-4,12; I John 3:2) This, indeed, is a glorious hope which should lift our affections to things above. (Col. 3:1,2) However,

there is a way in which we see God now, and that is by the eye of faith. Faith in his plan, his working in our lives, and his promises for all the families of the earth all reveal the attributes of God's character—his wisdom, justice, love, and power. Each day, we should discern more clearly and appreciate more fully the Father's character, and his loving arrangements for man's ultimate blessing.

Our spiritual sight cannot be thought of as merely a momentary vision of knowledge. Rather, it must be developed into a daily observation of God's plans and purposes which governs our thoughts, words and actions. Our spiritual vision will be tested, Peter says, "That the trial of your faith, . . . might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen [by literal vision], ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing [seeing by the eye of faith], ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."—I Pet. 1:7,8

No words can describe the delight that fills our hearts as we thus see God. We see his love, and realize that such a love is all-comprehensive in providing our every need. We see his wisdom, and know that he is too wise to err, even as he is too loving to be unkind. We see that no matter what he may permit our experiences to be, it is because he loves us and knows what we most need, in order to be prepared to share his glory beyond the veil. We see his justice, that all his ways are true and righteous in his dealings with us. We see his power also, and realize that nothing can possibly interfere with what he proposes to do as our Heavenly Father.

What a basis this is for peace and joy. The character qualities that we see in God give us confidence that no mistakes will be made on his part concerning our spiritual well-being, nor that any experience will be permitted to come upon us that is not necessary for our discipline and training in his eternal service. Though these will be difficult at times, we know that not one of his precious promises will fail us, if we continue to trust him implicitly.

In the natural realm, as a human being, if we discovered that every possible need of life was to be provided; that there could be no possible contingency that would rob us of our security of both mind and body; that all our surroundings were to be only of the sort that would contribute to our good, would we not be exceedingly happy? This can be our experience spiritually if we see the Lord, his attributes, and his promises fully. Seeing him by such a keen vision of faith, he becomes more precious to us than any earthly object we have ever known.

Our joy in seeing the Lord is not merely confined to what he is doing for us. We rejoice also, and see the infinite beauty of his character, in the fact that he is so abundant in mercy and love, that he has made a plan by which all may be blessed in his coming kingdom. Though mankind suffers much now, and most do not see or taste the goodness of the Lord, he is, nevertheless, supervising all the affairs of this world, and will soon say to the groaning creation, "Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth."—Ps. 46:10

SOURCE OF OUR STRENGTH

We have a never-failing source of strength, and it abides continually for our benefit if we reach out by faith and lay hold upon it. The psalmist writes, “The LORD is the strength of my life.” “God is our refuge and strength.” “The LORD God is a sun and shield: . . . no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” (Ps. 27:1; 46:1; 84:11) As the sun, God shines upon our pathway and into our hearts, enlightening us and guiding us in the way. As a shield, he protects us from all the fiery darts of the wicked. “No good thing” will God withhold from those who walk in the sunlight of his guiding providences, and who humbly walk behind his shield of protection.

We can reach out to see and taste the Lord’s goodness through prayer and by claiming his promises. In all experiences, large and small, the mundane or the direst emergency, God is willing and able to meet our needs, and provide the best things possible for our spiritual good. (Rom. 8:28) Knowing this, we can join with Paul and say that we have been “strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”—Col. 1:11,12

APPRECIATING GOD’S LOVE

To taste and see the Lord’s goodness, it is especially needful that we understand his love. In turn, we are to exercise this highest of all character qualities toward all with whom we come in contact, especially our brethren. The Apostle John tells us,

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us.” Several verses later, John adds the important thought that unless we love our brethren, whom we have seen, we cannot truly love God, whom we have not seen. (I John 4:10,19,20) Even to see God by the eye of faith, we must exercise love toward our brethren, and a sympathetic love toward the world. The development of unselfish, Godlike love is one of the great tests of faithfulness to our consecration vows.

Daily we are the recipients of God’s love and goodness. Through his overruling providences in our experiences, we hear his voice telling us of his love, and instructing us in the way that we should go. Our ears hear his words, “This is the way, walk ye in it.” (Isa. 30:21) If, by obedience, we follow his instructions, we will not stumble as we “press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”—Phil. 3:14

A full appreciation of God’s love requires action on our part. Paul says, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” He then reminds us who is directing this work. “It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” (Phil. 2:12,13) The apostle further describes this work in us with these words: “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever.”—Heb. 13:20,21

Let us, then, continue to daily “taste and see that the LORD is good.” To do so will give evidence

of our reverence and honor to the Heavenly Father. In the next verse, the psalmist states, “No one who honors the LORD will ever be in need.” (Ps. 34:9, *Contemporary English Version*) Our eternal, spiritual interests will always be uppermost in our minds if we feast continually upon the glorious hope of living and reigning with Christ, of seeing him as he is, and of inheriting the promises of the heavenly kingdom.—I Pet. 1:3,4

“Therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.” (Heb. 13:15) Our Heavenly Father has spread before us a bountiful table of spiritual provisions to see and taste. Even in the midst of the trials and difficulties of our present sojourn, the manifold goodness of the Lord is thus displayed to his consecrated people. “Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.”—Ps. 23:5,6 ■