

O Taste and See

By Ian Macleod

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Free Reformed Church of Grand Rapids

950 Ball Ave NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Website: www.frcgr.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/frcgr

The Psalm 34:8,

8 O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

If you have ever tasted some exceptionally delicious food and you begin to try to describe it to someone else, perhaps a brother or a sister, you might start to compare it to other foods, you might use descriptive words like it was very delicious, it was so sweet, or something like that, but after trying to describe it for a while, you would probably end up saying something like, "Well, really there's no point in me just telling you about it, you have to try it for yourself. You have to taste it for yourself. You have to experience this taste for yourself." I suppose that's what people do at stores when they offer free samples of food. You can read these lengthy descriptions, you can read all these kinds of descriptive words that people use for how delicious, how nourishing, how healthy this food is, but if you can taste it yourself, if you can taste it and experience it yourself, then this is certainly a far more effective way of marketing a product. But here in many ways this is what David is doing and this is what David is saying about something that is far greater to his taste. When he speaks of tasting and seeing, he's not talking about food that he's putting in his mouth, he's talking about an experience of something far better. "O taste and see. O come and experience yourself," he has said, "that the LORD is good."

This morning, we have two points here. Firstly, we want to see what it is that he's tasted and seen, what is it that is tasted and seen, the goodness of the Lord, that the Lord is good. And secondly, we want to see this warm invitation to taste and see. "O taste and see."

So firstly, then, what it is that is tasted and seen. What is this taste even? What is this sight? What is this experience that has captured your heart and your mind and your spiritual senses, your spiritual taste buds? He says, "O taste and see that the LORD is good." It's a fact. The Lord is good and what a wonderful fact that is. When you think of all that's in God and you think of his holiness, you think of his justice, you think of his righteous anger because of sin, and you think of all that God is in himself in this way, and yet what a blessed truth it is that we also worship the God who is good, that he is a God

who is kind, he is a God who is love, he is a God who is merciful, he is a God who is gracious and a God who is good.

It's a terrible thing to think about a being who would be all-powerful but would not be good. That would be a terrible thing to think about. But God is good, we're told here. Yes, God is all-powerful. Yes, he has all power in heaven and on earth, but this God is good. He is the standard of goodness. There is none good but one, that is God, and he cannot be anything other than good.

"O taste and see that the LORD is good." Remember when the rich young ruler came to Jesus and he said, "Good Master, what good thing must I do to inherit eternal life?" Good Master and Jesus here, as it were, teaches this young man, he's saying, "Why are you calling me good? For what reason do you call me good? Don't you know that there is none good but one, that is God?" Well, Jesus is not saying he is not good, he's not saying that he is not God, he's asking the young man, "Do you understand what you're speaking about? Do you understand that you cannot know what goodness is unless you know God, and you cannot know who I am unless you know that I am God who is good?"

God is good but what I think is really being emphasized here in this Psalm is not just that God is good but that he is good to his people. He is gracious to his people. Verse 10, you notice, the young lions lack, they suffer hunger. There's times when they can't taste. They suffer hunger but they that seek the Lord, they will taste, they will not lack any good thing.

God is good but God does good, he communicates good, and David knew this in his own experience. The situation that he find himself in in this Psalm, here he is and he's fled away from Saul, he's afraid of his life, and he ends up down there in the land of Philistines, in Gath of all places, in the place where Goliath came from, and in this place of great danger and you can read about that in Psalm 56. And he's afraid and they found out who he is, here's this one and, "Is this not David," they're saying? "This is David. That's David. Do you know who that is? That's David. That's the one of whom they're singing over there in Israel that he has killed his tens of thousands, and look at him. He's the one with the sword of Goliath in his hand right now." He's in great danger. They find out who he is and he's afraid and verse 4 tells us, David says, "I sought the LORD." And verse 5 says, "I looked to the LORD." And verse 6 says, "This poor man cried unto the LORD."

"I sought, I looked, I cried." And what did you find, David? I found this, "God is good. God is gracious. When I sought him, he heard me. When I looked to him, he lightened me. When I cried to him, he delivered me. O taste and see that God is good. This is what I found my whole life long," David would say. "There's times I was in great trouble. So many times my own folly, my own stupidity, my own sin brought me into these dangerous places and these places of folly. So rude was I and ignorant. I was like a beast." But what do you say of God? What do you say of God, David? "Oh, I would say this of God consistently, all the time, everywhere in every place, goodness and mercy has followed me all the days of my life."

Then in many ways David's experience, David, the picture here of David becomes a picture of the believer. The believer can say many similar things. My own folly. My own sin. My own foolishness that has brought me to this place of danger where these enemies, spiritual enemies too are all around me, and I have the danger of sin around and within. I have an evil heart of unbelief that departs from the living God. I have this roaring lion seeking to devour me. And so very often in the experience of the believer, the experience of the goodness and the grace of God comes in the context of our own folly and our own sin. To quote Asaph again in Psalm 73, "So foolish was I and ignorant. I was like a beast before thee." There's the context, "nevertheless I am continually with thee. Thou hast held me by thy right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel. Thy will lead me to glory."

God is good. He's always good. He's never anything but good. Maybe you ask, "But what does this look like? What is this goodness, what does it look like?" Well, you know Moses asked a similar question. He said, "Lord, show me thy glory," at the end of Exodus 33, and the Lord said that he would cause his goodness to pass by and Moses would see it, he would taste it, as it were, as it passes by. In the next chapter, chapter 34, you read of this, the Lord passed by and the Lord declared his name. Here's the goodness of God that is to be seen. Here's the goodness of God that is to be tasted and entered into. What is it? The name of the Lord, the Lord God merciful, gracious, abundant, longsuffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, trespass and sin.

You see, that's what God's people find. God is good. They will say of themselves, "I am evil, born in sin. A mighty stream of foul transgression prevails from day to day. So rude am I and ignorant. I am like a beast. My wounds stink and are corrupt. My folly makes it so." But what do you say of God? You say that God is good. There's none good but God. You look at your own goodness and it's the morning cloud that appears for a time and passes away, all my good intentions, all my good resolutions. Maybe you've made New Year resolutions and you've broken them already. Well, there you go. There's your goodness and mine. It's like the morning cloud, it appears for a time and it's gone before you know it.

That's our goodness but this is the testimony of God's people, this is what they're saying at the table today, God is good. God is consistently good. God is faithfully good. God is not, goodness is not like the morning cloud that appears and passes away. It's always there. He is good. He is kind. He is loving. He is gracious. He heard me when I cried. He did not cast me away. He forgave me my iniquity. He was slow to anger. He was abundant in goodness and truth. He did not deal with me as my sins deserved. No, as the heavens are higher than the earth, so is his goodness. His mercy is great to those who fear him.

As the east is from the west, things that you cannot measure, the height of the heaven above the earth, the distance from east to west, things you cannot measure, so is his goodness, so is his mercy to those that fear him and in that immeasurable goodness, this is what he has done. He has put away my sin as far as the east is from the west.

"O taste and see that God is good." And surely we see this supremely in Christ. Surely it's in the Lord Jesus Christ that we see that more than creation, more than God's general providence, more than anywhere else it's in Christ we see this glorious truth that God is good and that God does good.

Peter quotes this verse, or at least alludes to it in 1 Peter 2:3. There he's alluding to this verse and he says, he applies it unapologetically to Jesus Christ and he says there, "If so be you have tasted that the Lord," and in that context it's the Lord Jesus Christ, "If you have tasted that the Lord Jesus Christ is gracious." And indeed this is the reason we can speak about the goodness of God to us as sinners because of Christ, how Christ shows forth this truth, how when he passes by in the Gospel you see the name of the Lord, you see the goodness of God passing by you in the Gospel.

He goes about doing good, that John the Baptist from prison sends his disciples and says to Jesus, "Are you the one who is to come or do we look for somebody else? Art thou he that should come or do we look for another?" And what's the answer? "Go tell John about the goodness that you have seen. Go tell him how you have seen the goodness of God passing by. Go tell John that the things you have seen and heard," and we could say tasted, "how the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and to the poor the Gospel is preached. Go tell John that you have tasted and seen that the Lord Jesus Christ is good and he will know he is the one who is to come."

But surely it's at Calvary, is it not, where we see this truth shining like nowhere else? Is it not here that we see etched immemorally "God is good"? What do you see at Calvary? What is this great sight you see there? Oh, you see three men crucified, two thieves on either side and Jesus in the midst, and you see the Son of God in our nature hanging between heaven and earth, and you say how can this be good? Don't you see here the assembly of the wicked? Is that not what's all around in the assembly of the wicked, not good but wickedness and evil around him? Don't you hear the songs of the drunkards? Don't you see the pain, the shame, the spitting, the mocking, the crown of thorns, the blood, all that seems to cry of what is wicked around him? God says at the time of Noah, it says that God saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth, but what does God see here, we ask, when all around the Son of God in our nature there is this wickedness? "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Surely you see here more than ever before the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it?

Do you not see here the hatred and the hellish darkness that is in man by nature? Do you not see here the greatest crime that this world ever committed? They crucified the Lord of glory. Don't you see here Satan coming? This is his power, his hour and the power of darkness. You hear Christ saying, "Out of the roaring lion's mouth do thou me shield and save." You see great darkness. You see the sun refusing to shine upon the one who created it. How can I shine? It's as though the sun is saying, "How can I shine? How can I give my light upon such a scene?" You see the rocks and the mountains that he created shaking and rent.

But don't you see here too that God is here and God is here as a righteous Judge, and God is here with his justice, with his holiness, with the righteous power of his anger and wrath because of sin? You see here the curse of a broken law. You see that cursed is every one that hangs on a tree. You see the pains of hell. You see the God-forsakenness of a lost eternity. You hear him crying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" You see here that this one in the middle tasted death for every man.

But there's something else I see here at Calvary. Can you see it too? I see it. I see a fountain open for sin and for uncleanness. I see a fountain of life. I see a feast of fat things, of wines and the leave well-refined. I see the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. I see a great high priest who is offering himself and who is bearing away the sins of his people. I see an infinite love. I see one saying, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you." I see one who having loved his own which were in the world, loved them to the end.

I see in this scene a flood of hope and of even joy entering into one of the two thieves, a criminal on the other side as he hears this one in the middle say, "Today, you with me in paradise." Do you not see the glory here? I see here like nowhere else this eternal truth, God is good. I see the name of the Lord being passed before us and being proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, slow to anger, abundant in goodness and truth." I hear God saying to one and to all, to you and to me, "Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord. Though your sins be like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they will be as the wool."

I hear God saying, "O taste and see. You taste. You see that God is good," and that brings us to this invitation because that is what that is, it's a warm invitation, a warm invitation to taste and to see the goodness of the Lord. "O taste and see that God is good." Enter into this experience. Taste it for yourself. See it for yourself.

You know, this implies certain things surely. If you're being told to taste and see something, then you're being told that something is already there, you're being told that there's nothing left to be done, there's no meal left to be made, as it were, there's no salvation to be earned, it's already prepared. It is finished. Come for all things are now ready. Eat, O friends, yea drink abundantly, O beloved."

This is what God is saying, that something has already been done, it's finished, it's prepared but you see, too, that the many ways, the many descriptions, how the Lord is condescending to us in our weakness and he's given us so many kinds of descriptions that whereby we can taste. How do I taste? How do I see? How do I get this goodness? And the Lord is giving us so many doors, so many entry points, so many ways to taste and to see.

Look at verse 4 and it speaks of seeking, "I sought the LORD." Verse 5, they're looking to him. Verse 6, they're crying to him. Verse 7, they fear him. Verse 8, they're tasting and seeing. Verse 12, they're desiring and they're loving. There are so many ways and again

in verse 8, to go back to verse 8 at the end there, "blessed is the man that trusteth in him." To trust him is to taste.

There are so many ways, my friend, that these are all descriptions of what faith is and what faith does, but the key thing is the object, the key thing is the food, the key thing is who you're looking to, the key thing is who you're crying to, the key thing is who you're seeking, who you're tasting, who you're longing for, desiring for. That's the key thing. It's all him. "O taste and see that the LORD is good." Look to him. Believe in him. Desire him.

It's telling us, too, then that this must be a personal thing. You must taste yourself. You must appreciate yourself. You must enjoy yourself. Nobody can do your tasting for you. You must taste it yourself and this is what David is saying here, "I have tasted. I have seen that God is good, and come and you experience and you taste and you see what I have seen." That's what he's saying in verse 3, "O magnify the LORD with me. I don't want to do this alone. I don't want to be the only one that's tasting this. I want you to taste. I want you to magnify the LORD. I want you to speak of this taste. I want you to speak of this sight. I want you to speak of this goodness too. O then, come and taste and see and let us magnify the LORD together. Let us exalt his holy name together. Let us do this together. Let us all add to this praise that is going out to him."

God is saying it, it's not just David, "O taste and see. I've made my name known. I've shown myself to be good. I've shown myself to be consistently good and kind and merciful and loving and abundant in goodness and truth, and my provisions have not been exhausted. Yet there is room. Yet there is food on this banquet table. Will you not come and taste it for yourself? Will you not cry for yourself? Will you not experience this yourself?"

This is true of all believers, then. It's surely one of the most beautiful marks of grace, that when somebody tastes it, what do they want? They want others to taste it too. That's what you see, you see it in John 1, John the Baptist is saying, "Behold the Lamb of God. See him. Look and taste and see that he is good." And then you see the effects as this chapter moves on. Jesus calls Andrew to himself and Andrew when he tastes and sees that the Lord is good, he goes to Peter and he says, "Peter, brother, we have found Messiah and you come and taste and see that he is good too." And Peter comes. And then Jesus moves on and he finds Philip and he says, "Follow me." And Philip goes to Nathaniel and says, "We found Messiah." And Nathaniel says, notice, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

Come and see. Is there good in the Gospel for you? Come and see. Come and taste. Come and experience yourself. Don't just take my word of it, and you can take the word of God for it, but taste it yourself. See it yourself. Experience this yourself. Come and see. And that's what Jesus is saying to you in the word. He's saying, "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you. I am tasting it. I am enjoying this taste but with you I have desired to taste and see that I am good. You must eat to live. I am the bread of life. You must drink to live. Come unto me and drink."

Surely you can't be here and you can't be saying, "I am the exception. This is not for me." You're looking at verse 16 in this Psalm and you're saying, "The face of God is against them that do evil." You say, "That's me. I don't deserve this food and drink. I only deserve the curse. I only deserve to die. I'm not worthy of life." My friend, you've got to see how that kind of language despises Christ, speaks badly of him, takes away from his goodness. Consider what he experienced so that there would be this Gospel table and this table here this morning. Hebrews 2:9 tells us Jesus tasted something, something that he tasted so that his people would never taste, he tasted death. He entered into death, the experience of death. He tasted it for every man and the reason there is a cup of salvation for you today is because he tasted death, because he said, "I thirst," and he drank of that cup of damnation. He exhausted that cup. He drank it until the point where he could look into that cup, he could analyze that cup and he could say, "There's not a drop left." The curse has gone. The curse has gone for his people, "It is finished."

To refuse to taste and see that God is good is, in effect, to say this, "I don't want to be the poor sinner who looks to Christ as the Savior. I don't want to cry out to him for mercy. I don't want the bread from heaven. I don't want this heavenly drink." But God's people are here and they're saying, "O give me this appetite. I've tasted it before and I want to taste it again. I want to experience it again. I want to lose my appetite for the tastes of this world." That's what the Psalmist is saying in Psalm 141, he speaks of the wickedness and he ends that, I think it's verse 6, he says there, "Let me not eat of their dainties. Don't let me spoil my taste buds with the filth, the music, the filthy jokes and whatever else of this world. Don't spoil my taste buds with their dainties. Let me not satisfy so that I would have a taste for this."

You cannot have an appetite for Christ and an appetite for the world. Paul says that to the Corinthians in 1:10, 1 Corinthians 10:21, "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils." The two tastes don't go together. They clash. "You cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and the tables of devils." The two things can't go together. But those who taste that the Lord is gracious then are saying, "Sweeter are thy words to me than all other goods can be." And what they desire in their souls is that they would taste again and that others would taste with them. "O taste and see that God is good and that who trusts in him is blessed."

Well, may the Lord bless his word. Let us pray.