

A SERMON FOR MEN OF TASTE

NO. 459

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere (or unadulterated) milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.”-
1 Peter 2:1-3.

“IF so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” *“If; if:”* then this is not a thing to be taken for granted concerning every one of the human race. “If:” then there is a possibility and a probability that some may not have tasted that the Lord is gracious. “If, if:” then this is not a general but a special mercy; and it becomes our business to enquire whether we are comprehended in that company, who know the grace of God by inward experience. There is no spiritual favor which may not be a matter for heart-searching. At the very summit of holy delight, we meet the challenge of sentinel “If.”- “If ye then be risen with Christ,” and at the very bottom, even at Repentance-gate itself, he meets us with a warrant of arrest until he sees whether our sorrow is the godly sorrow that needeth not to be repented of. “If thou be the Son of God,” is not always a temptation of the devil, but often a very healthy enquiry most fittingly suggested by holy anxiety to men who would build securely upon the Rock of Ages. If at the Lord’s Table itself it is proper for us to say, “Lord, is it I?” when there is a Judas in the company; and if after the most intimate fellowship Christ exclaimed, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?”- et no enjoyment of ordinances, let no high and rapt fellowship which we may have known, exempt us from the great duty of proving ourselves whether we be in the faith. But, beloved, albeit this should be a matter of heart-searching, I take

it that no man ought to be content whilst there is any such thing as an “if” about his having tasted that the Lord is gracious. I can understand believers saying-

*“Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought-
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I his, or am I not?”*

but I do not understand their being comfortable while their souls are under such suspense. I can comprehend the doubts which arise from jealousy and holy distrust, but I cannot understand the continuance of those doubts, without a desperate struggle to clasp the Savior with the hands of faith, and say, “I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him.” Do not rest, O believer, till thou hast a full assurance of thine interest in Christ. Let nothing satisfy thee till, by the infallible witness of the Holy Spirit bearing witness with thy spirit, thou art certified that thou art a child of God. Oh, trifle not here; let no “perhaps,” and “peradventure,” and “if,” and “may be,” satisfy thy soul. Build on eternal verities, and verily build upon them. Get the sure mercies of David, and surely get them. Let thine anchor be cast into that which is within the vein and see to it that thy soul be linked to the anchor by a cable that will not break. Dear brothers and sisters in Jesus, I exhort and stir you up to get beyond these dreary “ifs;” abide no more in the howling wilderness of doubts and fears; cross the Jordan of distrust, and enter the Canaan of peace, where the Canaanite still lingers, but which ceaseth not to flow with milk and honey.

Our text mentions a *taste*- “If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious;” and the apostle speaks of *the duty* of those men of taste who have received this special favor. These two things shall take up our time this morning- *the taste*, and *the duties arising out of it*; and before we conclude, we shall go back to the Psalm with which we commenced this morning, and address those who as yet have never tasted that the Lord is gracious, in the words of David- “O taste and see that the Lord is good!”

I. First, then, TASTE is prominent in the text.

I scarcely need observe, that in Scripture, the Holy Ghost uses natural things as figures by which to set forth spiritual mysteries. Inasmuch as our language was ordained to speak the thoughts of the mind, and to describe

the things of the body, it is not fitted in itself for the utterance of the things of the spirit. As much as the soul is higher than the body, so much superior is the spirit (that is, the new principle implanted in regeneration) to the mere soul which every man possesses; and, as you will clearly see, if our speech had only been made for the body, and had not been adapted for a being that had a soul, we should have been strangely embarrassed for the expression of our mental emotions; and now, as our speech only reacheth unto the natural soul, if we would speak of the higher thoughts and impulses of the inner and newborn spirit, we can only do so by using the words we employ concerning natural objects. In this way we do not so much describe spiritual things as they are in themselves, but bring them down to our comprehension. When we shall become pure spirit, we may have a spiritual language; when we are caught up to the third heaven, we shall use those words which now are not lawful for a man to utter, spiritual words fitted for spiritual things.

1. *The taste here meant is doubtless faith.* Faith, in the Scripture, in all the senses. It is *sight*. “Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth.” “They looked unto him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed.” It is *hearing*: “Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” Faith hears the voice of the Spirit in effectual calling: for the dead hear the voice of God, and “they that hear shall live.” Faith is also *smelling*. “All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia;” “thy name is as ointment poured forth;” “a bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me.” Faith is also *touch*. By this faith the woman came behind and touched the hem of Christ’s garment, and by this we handle the things of the good word of life. Faith is equally the spirit’s taste. “Flow sweet are thy words to my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my lips.” “Except a man eat my flesh,” saith Christ, “and drink my blood, there is no life in him.” We shall have an inward and spiritual apprehension of the sweetness and preciousness of Christ, as the result of living faith.

2. The taste here meant is faith *in one of its highest operations*. One of the first performances of faith is hearing. We hear the voice of God, not with the outward ear alone, but with the inward ear; we hear it as God’s Word, and we believe it to be so; that is the hearing of faith. Then our mind looketh upon the truth as it is presented to us; that is to say, we understand it, we see what it means, that is the seeing of faith. Then we perceive its preciousness to others, if not to ourselves, we begin to admire it, and find

how fragrant it is; that is faith in its smell. Then comes the appropriating act by which we lay hold of the mercies that are proffered us in Christ; that is faith in its touch. Then come enjoyments, peace, delight, communion; which are faith in its taste. Any one of these acts of faith is saving. To hear Christ's voice as the very voice of God in the soul will save us; but that which gives the true enjoyment is the aspect of faith wherein Christ, by holy taste, becomes assimilated to us; we feed on him; he cometh into us and becometh part of us; his living word sustaineth us, and his precious blood cheereth us as generous wine. Do you ask, "In what respect does faith *taste* that the Lord is gracious?" It is faith operating by experience. Dear Christian friends, you remember the time, when laden with guilt and full of fears, you looked to Jesus Christ, it was the eye of faith which looked. After a while Christ's sweet love assured you that your sins were forgiven, and you felt a calm in your soul, such as you had never known before. That was tasting Christ. You knew his sweetness, you knew the power there was in him to take the bitterness out of your mouth and to put in sweetness instead thereof. Since that time you have been in trouble, but you have tasted Christ, for he has comforted you, and lifted up upon you the light of his countenance. You have been often greatly tried, but he has sustained you, and you have experienced that he is a very present help in time of trouble. Temptation has assailed you, but you have been able to meet it by "Christ in you, the hope of glory;" and perhaps even to-day your soul is as full as it can hold, of delightful contemplations of the loveliness, the faithfulness, the affection, the power, and the glory of your precious Lord Jesus Christ. Now, this is what is meant by tasting; it is enjoying Christ by an act of faith, and finding him to be the altogether lovely, sweet, and precious One. It is something more than believing Christ to be precious; it is perceiving his worth, appreciating his sweetness, enjoying his loveliness; it is lying with his left hand under our head, while his right hand doth embrace us. Thrice happy is the man who has thus tasted that the Lord is gracious. Follow me, while by a figure I make this point clear as noonday. There is a rumor running through the camp of Israel, that God on the morrow, at the rising of the sun, will feed his people. The rumor is believed; that is faith as *hearing*. Israel has heard that God will feed, and Israel believeth. See now; ere day-break the hosts of Israel hasten to the borders of the camp, and they see lying upon the ground certain grains like coriander seed. "This, this," say they, "is the food that God hath sent to us." That is faith as *seeing*. They take it up in their hands; they examine it, and feel of what sort it is. That is faith as the *touch*. They put it to their

nostrils; they ascertain somewhat of its character by the very smell. This is faith judging and discerning as *smell*. But lo! they place it in their mouths, and one of them saith, "It tastes like wafers made with honey;" and another saith "It is as fresh oil." This is faith enjoying, for now they have come, not to hear of, nor see, nor smell, nor touch alone, but men do *eat* angel's food, and are fed even to the full. Here you see faith in its progressive works ending by the high degree of tasting.

3. Faith as exhibited to us under the aspect of tasting, *is a sure and certain mark of grace in the heart. It is a sure sign of vitality.* Man, by nature, is dead in trespasses and sins. See if the dead can taste. Bring the most pungent drugs; do these arouse the palate? Give them a foul draught, and see if nausea can be produced. Now, put sweets to the dead man's tongue; do the eyes glisten? It is long since that corpse has fed; does it show any satisfaction in the presence of food? No; it is dead, and taste has fled with the once sentient soul. Verily, brethren, no man can taste of Christ in his natural estate, and if you or I know Christ to be precious, we may be sure that we are alive through the Holy Ghost. We may not be able to say when the Spirit of God came into us; perhaps this may be a trouble to us, that we do not know the day when we were quickened from our death in sin, but, dear friend, the life itself is there. Dost thou enjoy Christ? Is his name sweet music to thee? Oh! canst thou roll the doctrine of his atonement under thy tongue as a sweet morsel? Say, is his flesh food to thee? Dost thou rejoice in his redemption? Then thou art alive, for no dead soul ever could taste heavenly things, and to taste that the Lord is good is a certain evidence that the quickening Spirit abideth in thee. Or, to put it in another light; if men have a taste of Christ, *it is certain evidence of a divine change*, for men by nature find no delight in Jesus. Books of surgery tell us of a few persons without taste, but the cure for such unfortunates is unknown; their infirmity is beyond the reach of drugs or surgery. If a man should be without hearing, the surgeon might, perhaps, effectually operate; or if blind, the film might be removed from the visual orb; but if without taste, the defect is beyond the range of mortal power. So, if any man hath a taste for Christ, inasmuch as he had it not by nature, and he could not have obtained it of himself, for his is a case out of the pale of human ability; that same Christ who raised the dead, must have given this holy taste to the tasteless palate and tongue of the sinner. I do not enquire what your experience may have been, or may not have been; if Christ be precious to you, there has been a work of grace in your heart; if you love him, if his

presence be your joy, if his blood be your hope, if his glory be your object and aim, and if his person be the constant love of your soul, you could not have had this taste by nature, for you were dead; you could not have acquired this taste by learning, for this is a miracle which none but the God who is supreme over nature could have wrought in you. Let every tried and troubled Christian, who nevertheless, does taste that the Lord is good, take consolation from this simple remark.

4. In the next place; this taste, where it has been bestowed by grace, *is a discerning faculty*. There have been instances of persons who could not discern between the various flavours. A man was well known to a certain surgeon, who could just detect the distinction between the smell of garlic and the fragrance of a rose, but was quite incapable of knowing any difference between the perfume of a rose and of a lily; and the same person in feeding could never distinguish between different meats or drinks, except between the more pungent and rancid, and the more exquisitely sweet. Now, there are some Christians of that kind, who have some taste for Christ, but their taste is not very discerning. You may preach to them a doctrine of “ifs,” and “ands,” and “buts,” and if it be warmly delivered and well disguised, they will hardly know what they are taking. Then, on another occasion, you may give them the sure mercies of David- “shalls,” and “wills,” and everlasting verities, and oaths, and covenants, and they like that too; for they have not yet, by reason of use, become able to discern between truth and error. Yet, mark you, there was never yet a Christian who did not know the difference between the Rose of Sharon and the garlic of Egypt; there was never yet a man renewed by grace who did not soon discover the difference between works and gospel; between law and grace; between the dead efforts of the flesh, and the living power of the quickening Spirit of the living God. I have noticed that some Christians in these modern times have but little taste, and do you know to what I have ascribed it? I think they have taken a cold, and have thus lost very much of their power of taste. Oh, how many believers there are who sit in the draught of worldliness till they get stiff-necks of carnal pride, and lose their taste for heavenly things! Besides, if a man will ruin his palate with the high-spiced viands of earth, it is little marvel that when he cometh back to his natural food, Christ Jesus, he should have lost some of his delight in divine things! Now, I know there are some professors who have such a taste for worldly joys, that it is no marvel that they cannot so well discern the divine and exquisite pleasure that is in Christ Jesus, when he is fed

upon by the spirit. Yet again, I say, though the degree of discernment may vary, there is a discerning power in faith as taste. If thou canst feed on a religion which gives thee ceremonies to trust to, thou hast never tasted that the Lord is gracious. If, my hearer, thou canst live upon a gospel which leads thee to depend upon thyself, thou hast no spiritual taste, or else thou wouldst loathe, as much as ever Egyptian loathed to drink of the waters of Nile when turned into blood, to drink of any river which flows from created springs; thou wouldst only drink of the cool stream of the river of life which rises at the foot of the throne of God, and flows around the base of Calvary, where Jesus shed his blood. Say, soul, dost thou love Jesus only? Is he all thy salvation and all thy desire, and dost thou trust and repose wholly and solely in him? For if not, then thou hast no spiritual taste, and thou hast no reason to believe that thou belongest unto Jesus Christ at all.

5. But, again, to pass on, having sufficiently enlarged upon that point; faith as a *taste is not simply a discerning but a delighting faculty*. Men derive much satisfaction from the organs of taste. We ought not to be as the glutton, whose only reason for living is that he may eat; but yet every one of us may be thankful that God has not made the repairing of our frame to be an obnoxious operation, and that he has given us a capacity for enjoying the flavours of food. Certain critics have a faith which is very good for discerning, but never for enjoying. They have a fine nose for heresy; the moment it comes anywhere near them they discover it; and if there be half a word in a sermon they do not like how sure they will be to take it home. One bad fish in our basket, and it will be cried all round the town before tomorrow; but let us offer never so much that is good we can scarce win a notice. Dear friends, I would have God's people discern, but the discerning propensity ought not to destroy the enjoying faculty. I bless God I love the doctrines of grace, but I never considered the doctrines of grace to be like drawn swords with which to fight every man living. I know it is a good thing to be like the armed men about the bed of Solomon, each with his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night; but for my part, to recline upon that royal bed, and sleep with Jesu's bosom for a pillow, is better still. I pray you, dear friends, delight yourselves in Christ! Let your faith so taste Jesus as to make you glad. Let your joy be as the joy of harvest, and sing ye with Zechariah, "How great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids." Better is Christ to you than all earth's harvests. He is the

cluster of Eshcol, so heavy that one man can never carry all of Christ! He is not one grape; but a cluster of sweetness is our beloved unto us! Feed to the full; eat, yea drink abundantly, O beloved! Be ye satiated with delight, and let your soul rejoice as with marrow and fatness; so shall ye understand in the fullest degree what this taste is which so delighteth the soul of man.

King Solomon, during his lifetime, sat at a feast. The first rich viand was one which he had asked for himself; it was wisdom. He tasted all its dainty morsels, and he cried, "In much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." Then an attendant, all bedecked with gold and silver, brought in the lordly dish of riches, and Solomon ate thereof till he cried out, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit, there is no profit under the sun." Then there came in one who looked most bewitching, bearing the dish of carnal and fleshly pleasure, and Solomon greedily sat down thereat, for this time, he thought, full sure he had obtained the honey that would enlighten his eyes. So Solomon feasted to the very full and at the last he said, "vanity of vanities; all is vanity!" But he never would have said this concerning the true wisdom; for at the last, when the old man ceased to be a hunter of pleasure, he bore his willing testimony to the perfection of that love which is better than wine. Dearly beloved, you who know what it is to taste Christ, can witness that Immanuel's love makes you like Jonathan in the wood, who did but dip the end of his spear into the honey, and his eyes were enlightened, Oh! what enlightenment, what joy, what consolation, what leaping of heart is there to that man who has learned to feed on Jesus, and on Jesus Christ alone.

6. We must remark, dear friends, that this taste of ours *is in this life imperfect*. As old master Durham says, "'Tis but a taste!" You have tasted that the Lord is gracious, but you do not know how good and how gracious he is. I am sure my soul was hot within me when you were singing that verse just now-

*"But when I see thee as thou art,
I'll praise thee as I ought."*

There is another verse, too, which I may aptly quote:-

*"When I have tasted of the grapes,
I sometimes long to go
Where my dear Lord the vineyard keeps,
And all the clusters grow."*

We have not yet rested beneath the vines of Canaan; we have only enjoyed the firstfruits of the Spirit, and they have set us hungering and thirsting for the fullness of the heavenly heritage. We groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption. We are like David; we have had a draught of water from the well of Bethlehem, that is within the gate, brought to us through the valor of Christ Jesus; but we have not yet drank the clear, cool stream, in all its perfection, at the fountain head. We are but beginners in spiritual education; we have learned the first letters of the alphabet; we cannot read words yet, much less can we read sentences, we are but infants now; we have not come to the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus. As one says, "He that has been in heaven but five minutes, knows more than all the general assembly on earth, though they were all learned divines." We shall know more of Christ by one glimpse of him in heaven, than we shall know by all our learning here. 'Tis but a taste here, and if a taste be so ravishing, what must it be to sit at the table and eat bread in the kingdom of God? And here I must again remark, that this imperfection of taste is in some Christians far more conspicuous than in others. There are some believers who seem to have no appreciating taste for Christ, they hardly know the savor of his blessed name. I declare to you all, if Christ were not better than the visible Church, we might be weary of him; his Church, alas, is but the blurred and blotted portrait of himself: lovely she is; but sometimes those blots and blurs are so conspicuous to our anxious eyes, that we rather mourn her uncomeliness than rejoice over her beauty. Oh! how many there are among you, professors of Christ, that are none of his. What says the Apostle? "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame. "Dear brethren, let us purge ourselves from the corruptions of these pretenders. Frivolity, pleasure, gain, worldliness, covetousness, what have these things to do with us? Get ye hence; get ye hence; avaunt, ye fiends! But how many open their hearts, and say, "Come, hide here, ye unclean spirits; come and dwell with us! "Surely, surely, surely, you have but little taste, if any, for the manna of Christ, or you would never eat the dust which is the serpent's meat. God quicken his people; wash their mouths out, if necessary, even with bitter medicine, till they desire Christ anew, and cleave to him with full purpose of heart.

7. Though ours is an imperfect, we thank God *it is a growing taste*. Old Barzillai told David that he was too old a man to enjoy dainties. Said he,

“Can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink?” We know that sometimes in the decline of life, the taste, like the other powers of manhood, decays; but glory be to God, a taste for Christ will never decay. The good bishop, when he was dying, was asked by his wife whether he knew her; but he shook his head, for memory had failed. His dearest friends and children, after repeating their names, asked whether their dear friend and father had not some recollection of them; but again he shook his head. “Do you remember Jesus?” said one; and oh! how he clasped his hands together, for that was a name he never could forget!

Our venerable friends who are present with us this morning, find- I hope they do-that they have a loosened grip for the world, but a tighter grasp for Christ. While your eyes grow dim and you need your glasses, I hope you can see Christ more clearly than ever. God grant that some of you may be called up to the top of Pisgah, and may have a view of the landscape, and see your Master’s love in all the length and breadth of its fullness and richness, ere yet you are raised up to heaven by the kiss of the Most High. In dying moments, the Christian’s taste gets quickened; and whereas before he *thought* Christ sweet, now he *knows* he is; whereas he once compared him to honey, now he declareth that honey from the honeycomb is sour compared with Christ; and he can cry out with Rutherford, “Black heavens, black moon, black sun! But fair, fair, incomparably fair Lord Jesus!” He can now tread everything beneath his feet as he would a dead and corrupt thing; but his soul crieth, “Jesu! Jesu! Jesu! thou art brighter, fairer, and more lovely to me than ever thou wast before!” God give us grace that we may understand and know; experimentally what it is to taste that the Lord is gracious.

II. MEN WHO HAVE THUS TASTED OF CHRIST HAVE SPECIAL SINS TO AVOID AND OBJECTS TO DESIRE.

We first dwell upon evils to be avoided. *Malice*. “Revenge is sweet,” is the proverb of the Italians, and many an Englishman has half learned it, if not wholly. “Revenge is sweet;” but not to the man who has tasted Christ, for he says, “How can I have vengeance upon my fellow, when Christ hath put away my sin?” Now, forgiveness is sweet, and he loatheth malice, and turneth aside from it as from venom itself. *Guile*: that is craftiness whereby men rob their fellow-creatures. Some men think guile a very fine thing. “That’s a sharp fellow,” says one; and sage fathers pat their boys on the back, and say, “If you become a sharp fellow you will be an alderman yet.”

See yon trader, you must keep all your eyes open or he will take you in; he does not exactly tell lies, but-well, he shaves very closely to the truth. It is guile; low craftiness and cunning. A man of God hates that thing. "What, I; I the servant of the God of truth, crouch, bend, fawn, do anything but what is upright, to gain wealth?" As surely as the Lord saith concerning the Laodicean Church, "I will spue thee out of my mouth," so the believer saith concerning anything that is not true and straightforward, "I am sick of it; I loathe it, I abhor it; I turn from it." The next thing is *hypocrisy*, whereby men are not so much robbed and injured as deceived. A Christian can be no hypocrite. Hypocrisy, like all other sins, lurks in man till the very last; but a believer hates to pretend to be what he is not. A man who has once tasted that the Lord is gracious, is a true and transparent man in his profession. If any suppose him to be better than he is, he does not wish to wear feathers that are not his own; he would not be glorified by another man's labors, nor build upon another man's foundation; hypocrisy he utterly detesteth, and would sooner die a pauper than live a pretender. Any man among you who has tasted that the Lord is gracious, will, I am sure, without my exhortation this morning, loathe all malice, guile and hypocrisy.

Once more, put away *all evil speaking*. I am sorry to say that there are some, who I hope are Christians, who do not hate evil speaking. "Have you heard about Mrs. So-and-So?" I shall not mention names, but there are fifty, perhaps a hundred, here, to whom it will apply. There is a little mischief in the village about Miss A or Mr. B. and Mrs. Tittle-tattle is up as early as possible, and calls on Mrs. Scandal, and says, "Have you heard the sad news? I hope it is not true." "No, I have not heard it." "Well, don't mention it to anybody else, I hope it is not correct; but I have heard so-and- so." And the two sit down, and they make such a breakfast over it; and they both say they hope it is not true, while all the time they are as glad of it in their hearts as ever they can be. They go on telling others they hope it is not true, and telling them not to mention it to anybody else, until they do all the mischief before they have stopped to enquire whether or not they are telling lies. Then there are the men; they like a bit of scandal in the newspapers every now and then. Public men have often to feel that evil speaking must be very sweet to the people, or surely it would never pay to print such barefaced lies. A Christian should have nothing to do with scandal, but should say in a company, "Stop! I cannot sit by and hear you say that of an absent person; if he were here, you might say what you liked, but as he is not, please to hold your tongue, for I am here as a defender of

those who are back-bitten." Every absent man should have an advocate in a Christian. More especially should this be true when the rumor injures a brother. "It is an ill bird that fouls its own nest;" and he is an ill believer who tells tales about his fellow-Christians. If you, as a Church member, have aught against a brother, tell him alone; and then, if it should be some public and crying sin, tell it in an orderly manner to the Church-officers; but for you to go chattering about things you do not know to be true, is such an offense against Church-order, that if you are expelled Church-communion for it, the ejection will be justifiable. You certainly cannot expect to have fellowship with Christ if you mar the fellowship of Christ's Church by talking the one against the other. See, now, among our different denominations, how pleased some ministers are if they can get a bone to pick against a brother in another denomination. If there is a fresh hitch in the machinery of the Church of England, how often the Dissenter feels devoutly glad that there is likely to be an upsetting of the Episcopal communion; and I know that some Episcopalians, when they hear that in a Dissenting Church there is something wrong, say, "Well, it is a great pity;" but they think to themselves, "Well, they will eat one another up and will be all the less trouble to us." Rinse your mouths, rinse your mouths all of you who have said aught against your brethren hitherto, and from this time forth, "if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious," eschew all evil speaking against your fellow-men.

The apostle, having told us what to avoid, tells us what to eat and drink. "As newborn babes desire the *sincere* milk of the word;" a most unfortunate translation, for who ever heard of "sincere milk?" "Unadulterated milk" is a more sensible translation. The Christian man should desire pure doctrine; he should desire to hear the gospel plainly and truthfully preached; not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth. It is a sign of declining health in a Christian when he does not love the means of grace. "But how, sir, if I cannot get on with my minister?" Well, it may be your sin that makes him such a poor minister as you think him to be.

No doubt, while the pew is to be supplied by the pulpit, the pulpit is acted upon very greatly by the chilliness and hardness of the pew. If you prayed more for your minister you would feed better under him. But in London you have not this excuse, for there is such a choice of preachers of the Word here, that if you had a desire for the pure milk, you might obtain it somewhere or other. Oh! what a good thing it is to have spiritual hunger

and thirst! When people are not hungry, you may set a fine meal before them, but they will turn up their noses at it; but let a man come fresh from the field, hungry, down he sits; no matter how rough the fare; he only wants it to be sweet, wholesome, and nutritious, and he cuts huge slices for himself, and feeds to the full. Give me a congregation of hungry hearers, such as I usually see here on the Sabbath-day, with eyes that seldom turn from the preacher, and with ears that catch every word! I think any man could preach to my congregation, for you come up here hungry. A minister would wish to be like the mother-bird which comes back with the worm to the nest, and finds all the mouths open, every one desiring to be fed. Now, this is just, I think, what the apostle meant- "As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word." You know babes do not have set times for desiring their food, but when they want it they *will* have it, and will cry till they get it. So should it be with believers. They should have such unceremonious longings to be fed from the breasts of heaven's consolation, that they will cry till they get the heavenly food from God their Father that living food by which they grow and are made strong in Christ.

I have thus enlarged upon text; and now, two or three minutes only, upon the next. "O taste and see that the Lord is good!"

Dear Christian friends, I have spoken to you of this taste; but among us this morning, in the galleries, and down below here, there is a goodly sprinkle of men who do not know Christ. They have come up to this house of prayer, not that they might know Christ, but that they might see a vast congregation, and amuse themselves by novelty. Ah! how many come with this miserable object. Well, let them come for whatever they like, we are glad to see them, for being in the way, God may meet with them. Now, to such of you who are not believers in Christ, and have never tasted that he is gracious, we say this,- "O taste and see;" by which we mean, *experience is necessary*. Taste and see; you cannot see without tasting. If you would know whether religion is a good and happy thing, try it. It is not rubbing the bread upon the cheek; it is tasting. You must have an inward sense of the things of God. "My son, give me *thine heart*." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Let thy heart believe in Jesus. Be not content with ceremonies; rest not satisfied with outward morality. Only that which reaches the core will really affect the fruit of the tree. We must make the fountain pure, or else our filtering the stream is all in vain. "Taste and see." Dear hearers, I cannot insist too earnestly upon this. Get an inward religion; vital godliness; which goeth into the secret parts of the

belly and dwelleth in the inner man. Nothing but tasting can save your souls. And then we say, "Taste *and see*," we are quite sure that if you will taste you shall *see* that the Lord is good. I bear my willing witness that Christ maketh a man blessed; that religion is a happy thing, and that "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." But you do not believe me. Then taste and see for yourselves. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found: call ye upon him while he is near." May the Spirit of God lead you to give your heart to Jesus, and you will find that the true religion of Jesus is a good thing for you; a good thing for you, young woman; a good thing for you, young man; good for the trader; good for the gentleman; good for the artisan; good for every one of you. We feel very earnest that you should do this, and therefore we say, "O taste and see that the Lord is good!" Do not despise our invitation! We beseech you, by the mercies of God, to give your hearts to Jesus. From our very souls, as though we pleaded for our own lives, we would beseech you. Give the things of God a patient consideration. Believe in Jesus; this is to taste. Trust Christ; this is to "taste and see that the Lord is good." Ay, I know you will turn on your heel, and say that religion is a good thing for Sundays, but you do not see anything in it for every-day life. Ah! sirs, it is for want of knowing better. If you would but taste and see, you would regret that you had not tasted before, and you would rejoice and bless the Lord that you were brought to taste at the last. But you say, "*May I taste?*"

Oh, yes; grace is free; Christ is free. If thou wilt come, poor sinner, there is none to push thee back. If God has made thee willing to take Christ, depend upon it Christ was always willing to take thee, for where God puts a renewed will into man, it is the image of his own eternal will. If thou desirest Christ, trust him this morning. This is the way to escape from hell and fly to heaven. Art thou black? The fountain is open-wash. Art thou hungry? The door is not shut; it stands open all day; come then and eat. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." If any of you should repent of trusting Christ come and blame me. Find my Master in your hearts, and if he be not a good and precious Savior to you, if he do not feed your soul with gladness, keep you from sin, and bring you at last to heaven, come and tell me I am found a false witness unto Christ! From the depths of my soul I say it, I would sooner be a Christian than an emperor; sooner have Christ than a crown; and sooner bear his cross than sit upon the throne of a Caesar.

Soul, taste and see that he is good. "But I am not fit to taste," saith one. Well, but who is fit to eat? A hungry man? Art thou hungry? Eat. "Oh, but my hands are black." Never mind; it is not hand-work here, it is mouth-work. "Oh, but I am afraid I have no taste, and that if I did receive Christ into my heart, I should not taste his sweetness." Mark, the taste is *in him* and not in your mouth. Come and take him as he is. A little child, however weak; can be fed; put up thy mouth, thou weak and foolish sinner, weary and heavy laden as thou art, and by receiving Christ into thy soul's mouth, thou shalt find him good, and thou shalt go thy way rejoicing. Hearken diligently unto the Lord, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. It will be an awful thing to feed on the wind for ever, and roll the morsels of hell beneath your tongue to all eternity, but this *must* be your portion unless ye taste of Christ.

May he add his own blessing to his own glory. Amen.