

A SERMON FOR MEN OF TASTE

NO. 459

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 6, 1862,
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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Therefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby, if, indeed, you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.”
1 Peter 2:1-3.

“If, indeed, you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” “*If*” *If*, then, is not a thing to be taken for granted concerning all 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 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 you, then, are 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 needs not to be repented of. “If you are 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, do you love Me?”—let 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 are in the faith! But, Beloved, albeit this should be a matter of heart-searching, I take it that no man ought to be content while there is any such thing as an “if” about his having tasted that the Lord is gracious. I can understand Believers saying—

*“It is a point I long to know,
 Often 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 you have a full assurance of your interest in Christ. Let nothing satisfy you till, by the Infallible Witness of the Holy Spirit bearing witness with your spirit, you are certified that you are a child of God. Oh, trifle not here! Let no “perhaps,” and “if,” and “maybe,” satisfy your soul. Build on eternal verities, and verily build upon them. Get the sure mercies of David, and surely get them. Let your anchor be cast into that which is within the vein, and see to it that your soul is 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 ceases not to flow with milk and honey!

Our text mentions a *taste*—“If, indeed, you 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 Spirit 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 reaches unto the natural soul, if we would speak of the higher thoughts and impulses of the inner, and new-born 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 spirits, 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, is all the senses. It is *sight*. “Look unto Me and be you saved, all you 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 who hear shall live.” Faith is also *smelling*. “All your garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia.” “Your 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. “How sweet are Your Words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my lips.” “Except a man eat My flesh,” says 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 looks upon the Truth of God 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 offered 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 comes into us, and becomes part of us. His Living Word sustains us, and His precious blood cheers 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. Since that time you have been in trouble, but you have tasted Christ, for He has comforted you and lifted up the light of His Countenance upon you; 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 today your soul is as full as it can be, 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 does 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 believes. See now—before daybreak 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,” they say, “is the food that God has 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 says, “It tastes like wafers made with honey.” And another says “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 as men to *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 Divine 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, Brothers and Sisters, 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 Spirit! 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. Do you enjoy Christ? Is His name sweet music to you? Oh, can you roll the Doctrine of His Atonement under your tongue as a sweet morsel? Say, is His flesh food to you? Do you rejoice in His Redemption? Then you are alive, for no dead soul ever could taste heavenly things! To taste that the Lord is good is a certain evidence that the quickening Spirit abides in you! 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 has a taste for Christ, inasmuch as he had it not by nature, and he could not have obtained it of himself, 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 is precious to you, there has been a work of Divine Grace in your heart; if you love Him, if His Presence is your joy, if His blood is your hope, if His Glory is your objective and aim, and if His Person is 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 worked 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 Divine Grace, *is a discerning faculty.* There have been instances of persons who could not discern between the various flavors. 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 is 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 the Truth of God 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 Divine 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 food of earth, it is little marvel that when he comes back to his natural food, Christ Jesus, he would 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 they are fed upon by the Holy Spirit. Yet again, I say, though the degree of discernment may vary, there is a discerning power in faith as taste. If you can feed on a religion which gives you ceremonies to trust to, you have never tasted that the Lord is gracious! If, my Hearer, you can live upon a gospel which leads you to depend upon yourself, you have no spiritual taste, or else you would loathe, as much as any Egyptian loathed to drink of the waters of the Nile when turned into blood! You would only desire to 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, do you love Jesus only? Is He all your salvation, and all your desire, and do you trust and repose wholly and solely in Him? If not, then you have no spiritual taste—and you have no reason to believe that you belong to 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 everyone 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 flavors 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 is 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 ever so much that is good, we can scarcely 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 Jesus' bosom for a pillow, is still better! 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 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, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved! Be satiated with delight, and let your soul rejoice as with marrow and fatness—so shall you understand in the fullest degree what this taste is which so delights the soul of man!

King Solomon, during his lifetime, sat at a feast. The first rich course 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 increases knowledge increases 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 to eat—for this time, he thought—he had full sure 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 woods, 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, "It is 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 You as You are,
I'll praise You 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 first fruits 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 drunk 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—we have not come to the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus. As one says, “He who 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. It is but a taste here, and if a taste is 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, who are none of His! What said 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 Brothers and Sisters, let us purge ourselves from the corruptions of these pretenders; frivolity, pleasure, gain, worldliness, covetousness—what have these things to do with us? Get away from us! Get away from us! Be gone, you fiends! But how many open their hearts and say, “Come, hide here, you 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 your 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?” asked 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, and 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 there may you see your Master’s love in all the length and breadth of its fullness and richness, before 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! Where he once compared Him to honey, now He declares 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 cries, “Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! You are brighter, fairer and more lovely to me than You ever were 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 has put away my sin?” Now, forgiveness is sweet, and he loathes malice, and turns 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 yonder 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 says concerning the Laodicean Church, "I will spew you out of My mouth," so the Believer says 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 detests 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 such-and-such." 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 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 or Sister in Christ. "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 anything 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 from 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 anything against your Brethren up to now; and from this time forth, "If so be you 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 teaches, but in the words which the Holy Spirit teaches. It is a sign of declining health in a Christian when he does not love the means of Divine 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 Sunday, 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, everyone 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. 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 the first part of the 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 objective! 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 *your heart*.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” Let your 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 goes into the secret parts of the heart, and dwells 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 makes 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 the Lord while He may be found: call 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 all 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.” Yes, I know you will turn on your heels and say that religion is a good thing for Sundays, but you do not see anything in it for everyday life. Ah, Sirs, it is for lack 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 last. But you say, “*May I taste?*” Oh, yes! Divine Grace is free! Christ is free! If you will come, poor Sinner, there is none to push you back. If God has made you willing to take Christ, depend upon it, Christ was always willing to take you—for where God puts a renewed will into man, it is the image of His own eternal will! If you desire Christ, trust Him this morning; this is the way to escape from Hell, and fly to Heaven! Are you black with sin? The fountain is open—wash. Are you hungry? The door is not shut. It stands open all day—come, then, and eat. “Ho, everyone who thirsts, come you to the waters, and he who has no money, come you, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” If any of you should ever regret of trusting Christ, come and blame me. Find my Master in your hearts, and if He is not a good and precious Savior to you; if He does 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,” says one. Well but who is fit to eat? A hungry man? Are you hungry? Eat. “Oh but my hands are black with sin.” 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 would 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 your mouth, you weak and foolish Sinner, weary and heavy laden as you are, and by receiving Christ into your soul’s mouth, you shall find Him good, and you shall go your way rejoicing! Listen diligently unto the Lord, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. It will be an awful thing to feed on the wind forever and roll the morsels of Hell beneath your tongue to all eternity—but this *will* be your portion unless you taste of Christ.

May He add His own blessing to His own Glory. Amen.

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