

# IN RESPONSE – TASTE AND SEE, PART ONE

by Dennis Prutow

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Psalm 34:8 urges, “O taste and see that the LORD is good; how blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!” There are several matters in this text that arrest our attention. First, David directs his thoughts and praise to Jehovah. Second, David reminds us that our relationship with the Almighty has a certain *positive* sense appeal. “O taste and see that the LORD is good.” Third, the apostle Peter applies the content of Psalm 34:8 to Christ. He reminds us that Jesus Christ is the LORD. Fourth, this understanding of Jesus takes us to the biblical view of the Trinity. Fifth, David’s use of sense appeal directs us in a biblical approach to the use of sense appeal in preaching. Sixth, our text also leads us toward a biblical view of preaching Christ from the Old Testament. We will look at these six points as space allows.

The LORD in Psalm 34:8 is Jehovah. The word translated LORD is printed in the English text in capital letters to indicate the Hebrew word also commonly translated Jehovah. David declares his devotion to Jehovah, the Lawgiver and God of the Covenant. He speaks of the LORD and uses this Name no less than seven times in the first eight verses of this Psalm.

I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul will make its boast in the LORD; the humble will hear it and rejoice. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together. I sought the LORD, and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces will never be ashamed. This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him, and rescues them. O taste and see that the LORD is good; how blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!

This validates our first point.

Second, David uses sense appeal to describe a *positive* relationship with the LORD. “O taste and see that the LORD is good.” It is not uncommon for the Spirit to use the sense of taste in this way.

David declares the precepts and judgments of God are, “Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb” (Psalm 19:10). We ought to savor the Word of God as honey. The taste is delightful. It sweetens our lives and makes us more pleasant to ourselves and to others.

Psalm 119:103 indicates the same thing. “How sweet are Your words to my taste! *Yes, sweeter* than honey to my mouth!” The Word of God is pleasant. The metaphor is *sweet*. How *sweet* it is. Implementing the Word of God in our lives leaves a sweet taste in our mouths.

Solomon takes up the theme from his father in Proverbs 24:13-14. “My son, eat honey, for it is good, yes, the honey from the comb is sweet to your taste; know *that* wisdom is thus for your soul; if you find *it*, then there will be a future, and your hope will not be cut off.” Wisdom from God is sweet to the soul like honey is sweet to the taste.

Psalm 34:8 exhorts a direct taste of the LORD Himself. We must taste of Him. We must discover by tasting, by experimental acquaintance, that the LORD is good. It is one thing for someone to describe the taste of honey. The description rarely encompasses the reality. You must taste. You must savor. You must know this sweetness, not by description, but by experimentation. So it is with the LORD. Do you want to know if the LORD is indeed good? Taste and see.

As mentioned, David uses sense appeal to describe a *positive* relationship with the LORD. Unbelievers have a very *negative* relationship with God. Although they might deny it, they are enemies of God. Paul declares, “While we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son” (Romans 5:10). God gets our attention and convicts us of our status by a work of His Spirit. Speaking of the coming of the Holy Spirit, Jesus taught, “He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment” (John 16:8). The Spirit convicts us that we are wretched violators of God’s standards for living. He convicts us of the exalted nature of the righteousness of those standards.

We see our liability for judgment because of the disparity between our sin and the righteous standards of God. He instills fear in us. Fear overtakes the hearts young people convicted of criminal conduct. Sinners fear the dungeons of eternal torment.

Governor Felix is a good example. “Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul and heard him *speak* about faith in Christ Jesus. But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, ‘Go away for the present, and when I find time I will summon you’” (Acts 24:24-25).

How does one overcome the fear attending conviction. David answers, “I sought the LORD, and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears” (Psalm 34:4). God brings us out of fear into a state of love. We no longer seek to serve God because of fear; we serve God out of love. While in fear we are in bondage. The Lord delivers us from this fear arising from a knowledge of our lost condition.

Paul reminds us of these two sides of the Spirit’s work in Romans 8:15. “For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’” John Newton reminds us of these two aspects in his hymn, “Amazing Grace.” The second stanza reads, “’Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my fears relieved; How precious did that grace appear The hour I first believed.” The gracious convicting work of the Holy Spirit brought an indictment and the attending fear. Newton sought the LORD. The gracious work of regeneration brought relief from fear. Newton had a taste of the goodness of the LORD.

The sense appeal David uses in Psalm 34:8 reminds us of the *positive* side of a relationship with God and of the vital experimental nature of that relationship.

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## IN RESPONSE – TASTE AND SEE, PART TWO

by Dennis Prutow

We are looking at the ideas David presents in Psalm 34:8, “O taste and see that the LORD is good.” We’ve seen that David directs his thoughts and praise to Jehovah. We’ve also looked at David’s use of sense appeal. “O *taste* and see that the LORD is good.” Now we turn to the use of this same idea in the New Testament. Two passages refer to David’s thought in Psalm 34:8.

First we look at Hebrews 6:4-6.

In the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and *then* have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.

Hebrews speaks of people who have *tasted* of the heavenly gift and the power of the Holy Spirit. They have *tasted* the Word of God and the powers of the age to come. The confession indicates the circumstance, contrasting these people with the elect of God. “Others not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the Word, and may have some *common operations of the Spirit*, yet they never truly come unto Christ, and therefore cannot be saved” (Westminster Confession of Faith 10:4, italics mine). The proof texts are Matthew 7:22, Matthew 13:20-21, and Hebrews 6:4-5.

This taste of the powers of the age to come involves the illuminating work of the Spirit. Berkhof says of these persons, “Though they do not experience the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit, yet they are subject to certain special operations and influences of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit strives with them in a special manner, convicts them of sin, enlightens them in a measure, and enriches them with the blessings of common grace, Gen. 6:3; Matt. 13:18-22; Heb. 6:4-6.”<sup>1</sup>

In this case, the *taste* does not seem to be good. These people turn away from the grace of God. They are similar to

those of Galatia only more so. Galatians 5:4 declares, “You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.” The Galatians turned their backs on salvation by grace. They took up the position of salvation by works of the law. Paul says they are severed from Christ.

The case of those mentioned in Hebrews is more severe. It is impossible to renew them to repentance. They not only turn from the grace of God, they turn with a vengeance that is unforgivable. This means they must attribute to Satan the gracious works of the Holy Spirit they taste (Matthew 12:31).

This taste is real but it results in rejection. It is the opposite of our text. “O taste and see that the LORD is good.” Here, those who genuinely taste, say of the taste, “It is bad; it is evil; it is Satanic.” There is no forgiveness for this.

The apostle Peter gives us the positive side. “Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the LORD” (1 Peter 2:1-3).

The question is simple. Have you tasted the LORD is good? If so, long to be nourished by the Word of God. Why? So that you may grow in respect to salvation. This you will do if you have tasted of the LORD and found He is good. “O taste and see that the LORD is good.” Here, those who taste the goodness of the LORD press further to confirm their status as believers. They do not back away or fall away. Of those who taste, there are two categories. Those who taste and turn away and those who taste and pursue the things of God further.

As already shown, the LORD in Psalm 34:8 is Jehovah. Peter refers the text to Christ.

Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been

rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:1-5).

We come to *Him*; that is, we come to Christ, the arch typical living stone. When we come to *Him*, we offer sacrifices of praise to God acceptable through Christ. Note the connection between verses 3 and 4. “You have tasted the kindness of the *Lord*. And coming to *Him*” (italics added). Peter indicates Jesus Christ is the LORD. We must taste and see that Jesus Christ, the LORD, is good. To put it another way, we taste and see the LORD is good, in terms of Psalm 34:8, by coming to Christ and tasting of Christ.

Such a notion was absolutely repugnant to the Jewish hierarchy. Such a position is also repulsive to modern Unitarians. This teaching is the glory of Christianity. Jesus Christ is LORD.

This brings us to a biblical understanding of the Trinity. The Westminster Shorter Catechism teaches, “There are three persons in the Godhead; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory” (Answer 6). The Father is God (Ephesians 1:3). The Son is God (Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1:1). The Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4). There is one God, one essence or substance. There are three persons. God is not one and three at the same time and in the same relation. One God is not also three Gods. One person is not also three persons. These would be logical contradictions. Rather, God is one essence or substance and three persons.

Jehovah God dwells fully in Jesus Christ. “In Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form” (Colossians 2:9). To taste of Jehovah we taste of Christ. David exhorts, “O taste and see that the LORD is good.” To follow this injunction of David we turn to Christ; we seek the face of Christ. We pursue this train of thought further in our next lesson.

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<sup>1</sup> Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 289.

## IN RESPONSE – TASTE AND SEE, PART THREE

by Dennis Prutow

As shown, the apostle Peter applies the content of Psalm 34:8 to Christ. He reminds us that Jesus Christ is the LORD of whom we ought to taste. This understanding of Jesus Christ takes us into a discussion of the Trinity. We expand this discussion with the point that the Second Person of the Trinity is the Person of the Godhead who directly interacts with us as creatures.

We see this in creation. Christ is God's agent of creation. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). The New Testament interprets. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being" (John 1:1-3). "For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him" (Colossians 1:16).

We see this in Jehovah speaking through the prophets. Peter is quite explicit. "The prophets who prophesied of the grace that *would come* to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow" (1 Peter 1:10-11). Those who prophesied and boomed, "Thus says the LORD," spoke by the power of the Spirit of Christ. Jehovah speaking is Christ speaking in and through the prophets.

We see the same in redemption. "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). This is the Word that was with God and was God. Paul adds, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

We see this in Scripture's teaching of the covenant. Christ is the covenant God effects with His people. In Isaiah 42:6 Jehovah speaks to His servant, Messiah, "I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I will also hold you by the

hand and watch over you, and I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations." E. J. Young comments on this text. "To say that the servant is a covenant is to say that all the blessings of the covenant are embodied in, have their root and origin in, and are dispensed by him. At the same time he himself is the center of all these blessings, and to receive them is to receive him, for without him there can be no blessings."<sup>1</sup>

To participate in the covenant of grace, we must come to Christ. We must taste and see the goodness of the perfect life Jesus Christ lived on behalf of those unable to fulfill God's perfect righteousness. We must taste and see the goodness of the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on behalf of sinners and receive the forgiveness of God through Christ. In this we taste and see the LORD is good.

We see our theme in sanctification. God is in the process of restoring His moral image in us. This image is restored as we are conformed to Christ. This is God's purpose. "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29). To be like Jehovah is to be like Christ.

We find our theme in the concept of light that Scripture gives us. The LORD says of Messiah, His servant, "I will also make You a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6). During the first missionary journey, Paul preached Christ in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:16-41). The missionary party met strenuous resistance from the Jews.

Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, 'I HAVE PLACED YOU AS A LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES, THAT YOU MAY BRING SALVATION TO THE

END OF THE EARTH'" (Acts 13:46-47).

Christ is the servant placed as a light among the nations. Jesus Himself said, "I am the Light of the world" (John 8:12).

We see our theme in the pictures of judgment. Paul teaches us "we will all stand before the judgment seat of God" (Romans 14:10). How so? Paul answers in 2 Corinthians 5:10. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." Jesus adds this explanation.

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left (Matthew 25:31-33).

The judgment seat of God *is* the judgment seat of Christ.

Finally, when we enter glory and see God face to face, we see Christ. "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:2). Jesus Christ is the One who will appear. He promised this. "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also" (John 14:2-3). As creatures, we know God in and through Jesus Christ. "There is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5).

Since all of this is the case, to taste of the LORD, we must taste of Christ. We must think of Christ when we hear the injunction, "O taste and see that the LORD is good." We taste of Him as our creator, prophet, and redeemer, our covenant relationship with Jehovah, our light, our sanctifier, our judge, and our eternal God and Savior.

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<sup>1</sup> Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 3:120-121.

## IN RESPONSE – TASTE AND SEE, PART FOUR

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Our text is Psalm 34:8. ‘O taste and see that the LORD is good.’ We’ve covered four points. (1) David directs his thoughts and praise to Jehovah. (2) David reminds us that our relationship with the Almighty has a certain *positive* sense appeal. (3) The apostle Peter applies the content of Psalm 34:8 to Christ the LORD. (4) This understanding of Jesus takes us to the biblical view of the Trinity.

We now turn to our final two points. (5) David’s use of sense appeal directs us in a biblical approach to using sense appeal in preaching. (6) Our text also leads us toward a biblical view of preaching Christ from the Old Testament.

By sense appeal we mean that in preaching there is a proper appeal to the senses. We do not refer to emotionalism. We maintain there is a proper arousing of emotion through the five senses. Our text is an example. “O taste and see that the LORD is good.” David does not hesitate to use language linked to the senses.

Jay Adams puts it this way, “The deeper purpose of sense appeal with its arousal of emotions, lending their dimension of reality to what is said, is full—including experimental—understanding. Sense appeal, when effective, helps the members [of the congregation] to experience the impact of truth in addition to merely thinking about it.”<sup>1</sup> Sense appeal is the use of language evoking a certain sense, feeling, or emotion. “Evocative words appeal to the senses, stir emotion, and bring about other responses.”<sup>2</sup>

How do we come into union with Christ? We must *taste* Him. As mentioned above, we can talk about honey to someone all we want. To the sight, honey may *appear* no different than very heavy lubricating oil. You will *gag* and *wretch* on a spoon full of dripping, heavy, honey appearing, oil. *Taste* and *smell* make the difference. Getting a taste of Christ means reading the Bible, going to Bible studies, attending worship services, and rubbing shoulders with believers. As you listen and learn in the Christian context, you get a *feel* for what Christianity is all

about. You *see*, from the interaction of Christians and your interaction with them that Christ is no fleeting *mirage*. He is *wholesome* and good. This *taste* drives to seek further. You *long for* what they *enjoy*.

David uses evocative language in our text. Peter unhesitatingly picks up the same language to cement his point about Christ. We ought to take the lead of Scripture in our own teaching and preaching. We must do so unabashedly.

This brings us to our final point. Psalm 34:8 and Peter’s quotation of it in the New Testament teaches us that we may freely preach Christ from the Old Testament. In fact, the hermeneutic Peter uses is quite simple. Jesus is Jehovah.

Over and over again the apostles apply to Christ Old Testament texts speaking of Jehovah or referencing the undifferentiated Trinity. The apostles do this under the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. As examples, I once again draw our attention to the following.

Deuteronomy 10:17, “For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God.” Revelation 17:14, “These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings.” Revelation 19:16, “And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, ‘KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.’”

Isaiah 8:13-14, “It is the LORD of hosts whom you should regard as holy. And He shall be your fear, and He shall be your dread.” 1 Peter 3:14-15, “AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts.”

Isaiah 6:1-3, “I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.’” John 12:41, “These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him[Christ].”

Joel 2:32, “And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD Will be delivered.” Romans 10:9 and 13, “If you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved... for ‘WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.’”

Isaiah 45:22-23, “Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear *allegiance*. Philippians 2:10-11, “At the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

We have made these points. The apostles regularly apply to Christ Old Testament texts speaking of Jehovah. Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Godhead is the only mediator between God and men. Jehovah God comes to us through Christ, the Second Person of the blessed Trinity. This is the biblical and Reformed teaching of the economic Trinity. We therefore taste of Jehovah as our creator, prophet, and redeemer, our covenant relationship, our light, our sanctifier, our judge, and our eternal God and Savior, when we taste of Christ the LORD. Therefore, Scripture, in its New Testament use of Old Testament texts, leads us to vigorously preach Christ from the Old Testament.

We must always bear in mind the overarching biblical and theological parameters such as the economic Trinity, the mediation of all things through Christ, and the example of the apostles. Within these parameters we can and should energetically preach Christ from Psalm 34:8 and similar texts. We may freely do so because Jesus Christ is LORD (Romans 10:9). He is Jehovah God. He is the LORD in whom we taste and see all goodness.

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<sup>1</sup> Jay E. Adams, *Preaching with Purpose* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 87.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 89.