

# Tasting That the Lord Is Good

SERMON

By

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**TEXT:** 1 Peter 1:22-2:10

**PROP:** Proposition

1 Peter 1:22-2:10 (ESV)

**22** Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, **23** since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; **24** for

“All flesh is like grass  
and all its glory like the flower of grass.

The grass withers,  
and the flower falls,

**25** but the word of the Lord remains forever.”

And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

## **A Living Stone and a Holy People**

**2** So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. **2** Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation— **3** if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

**4** As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, **5** you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. **6** For it stands in Scripture:

“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone,  
a cornerstone chosen and precious,  
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

**7** So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe,

“The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone,”

**8** and

“A stone of stumbling,  
and a rock of offense.”

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

**9** But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. **10** Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Thus far in his first epistle Peter has taken note of several extraordinary outcomes of conversion. We have seen that God has caused us to be born again to a living hope such that our presuppositions change dramatically. Formerly we would never assume that God was infinitely powerful much less that he actually existed. Apart from conversion the Gods we worship are simply products of our imagination; foul monsters or as the Bible terms them, abominations. Our system of ethics apart from conversion does not involve Yahweh God at all and propounds moral concepts that are determined by popular consensus. Yahweh is never our pattern of righteousness. There is no such thing as absolute truth. Truth is relative, wishy-washy and situation dependent. What is true for one is not true for another because he may live in a different social context. But God calls all those whom he has converted to be holy just as he is holy. Therefore conversion brings moral war to us. The life of the believer is a constant struggle against sin as defined by law of God which is absolute truth even as God himself is absolute truth.

Our text today moves us along in the consideration of the inevitable ramifications of conversion. Because we have been born again the "seed", the word of God, springs up in us to produce imperishable fruit. As Isaiah notes, the word of Yahweh abides forever therefore its fruit in the life of one who is born again is eternal. Furthermore we expect that exhortations to "put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander" will be heeded. To the unconverted such an exhortation is not heard because the hearer is spiritually dead. With his system of situational ethics he has no standard by which to define such terms as evil, malice and deceit. In addition we expect that the use of the means of grace, the Bible, the sacraments, and prayer, will produce spiritual growth. People who are converted have a growing desire for the pure spiritual milk of the word of God which inevitably issues in spiritual growth. Foolish traditions and lack of growth do not comport with conversion. Speaking to Jews who claim conversion but seem to have difficulty leaving their Jewish superstitions and traditions, Paul writes

Hebrews 5:11-14 (ESV)

**11** About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. **12** For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to

teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, **13** for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. **14** But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

However, Jews are not alone in this problem. Many who claim the name of Christ are given to meaningless tradition and spiritual stagnation. Paul's allusion to milk differs from that of Peter. Paul contrasts milk with solid food and notes that milk is used by those who are unskilled in the word of righteousness that never seem to leave babies milk. On the other hand, Peter alludes to milk in the sense that it is pure and nourishing and the use of this spiritual food causes us to grow up to salvation – "If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good." Conversion brings us to understand that God is good but more than that, it brings us to experience his goodness.

In the text before us we cannot avoid noticing the influence of the Hebrew Old Testament. No doubt Peter is quoting from Psalm 34:8 when he refers to tasting that the Lord is good.

Psalm 34:7-10 (ESV)

- 7** The angel of the Lord encamps  
around those who fear him, and delivers them.
- 8** **Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!**  
Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!
- 9** Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints,  
for those who fear him have no lack!
- 10** The young lions suffer want and hunger;  
but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.

Neither can we escape the fact that Jesus is the Lord who is good. The literal translation of Psalm 34:8 is -- Oh, taste and see that Yahweh is good! In the context of the statement before us in 1 Peter 2:3 it is Jesus who is the living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious. The word "Lord" in our text is God's covenant name Yahweh just as it is the Psalm quoted here, such that our text in 1 Peter 2:3 must read, "If indeed you have tasted that Yahweh is good. Yahweh Jesus is good! That Jesus is very God of very God according to the Nicene Creed, is clearly taught by this text among many others and we build our everlasting confidence on this rock.

We will remember the remarkable confession of Peter,

Matthew 16:13-19 (ESV)

**13** Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" **14** And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." **15** He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" **16** Simon Peter replied, "**You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.**" **17** And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. **18** And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. **19** I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

This confession that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God did not come from the fertile imagination of Peter but it was revealed to him by God the Father. God revealed to Peter that Jesus was his only-begotten Son so it is no wonder that he should speak of tasting that the Lord is good. Conversion leads us to know from the Bible the great glory and majesty of Jesus our God and Savior and that he is good. The Greek word in our text (and its Hebrew form in Psalm 34:8) translated "good" refers primarily to the moral goodness of Christ but also to his kindness and loving benevolence. Some translations therefore read, "If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious." Peter had certainly tasted the grace of God. After his crass denial of Jesus he tasted that the Lord is good when he entered the tomb to find that the Lord was not there but had risen. Later by the sea Jesus asked him three times "do you love me." Peter responded, "Lord you know everything, you know that I love you." That Jesus had fully forgiven him is seen in his gracious command to feed his sheep. Once again Peter surely knew that the Lord is good. Peter tasted the goodness of Jesus when he was released from prison and on many other occasions. Speaking of Jesus Peter wrote,

1 Peter 2:24-25 (ESV)

**24** He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. **25** For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Here is the ultimate, most sublime, goodness of God and Peter had tasted this goodness in his own experience. We would do well to ask ourselves if we have tasted that the Lord is good. If we have not tasted that the Lord is good we are in a very precarious position for among the marks of the Christian are an understanding of moral goodness and experiencing for ourselves the loving-kindness of Christ our Savior. As Peter notes in our text, these marks are the result of God having caused us to be born again,

1 Peter 1:22-23 (ESV)

**22** Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, **23** since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;

Had the Lord not been good he never would have come to this sin rent world. He would never have been Immanuel, God with us. Why did he come into this world? As he said to Zachaeus, "the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." Jesus came to save his people from their sins. When Jesus the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, he fed the hungry, healed the sick, taught the ignorant, comforted the mourners and raised the dead. Here was one who was altogether goodness and loving-kindness. His loving-kindness was extended to all sorts of people, from tax-gatherers and prostitutes to rulers and authorities. His great goodness is seen in his longsuffering patience with sinners to the end that they might be saved. "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!" But what does it mean to taste that the Lord is good? As Spurgeon puts it, the goodness of the Lord is a royal dainty which flavors the mouth when we feed upon him by faith.

Tasting is a spiritual sense that transcends our physical senses. So much of religion depends on and is based on our physical senses; the beauty of architecture and stained glass windows or the serenity of a garden. We are thrilled to hear great choirs sing Handel's Messiah or Mendelssohn's Elijah or to sing praises to our God with his people as we come to worship him. To many the qualities of the music or the beauty of the environment are all that we really taste or experience for they are physical and our physical senses respond to them physically. Everyone has access to this kind of beauty and goodness. God who is good has blessed all mankind with things of great beauty. Who cannot be moved by beautiful art and music made beautiful because they reflect the beauty of what God has created. However the sense of taste mentioned in our text goes far beyond experiencing the beauties of the natural world. Tasting that the Lord is good involves testing or experiencing him. When we go to the supermarket we sometimes encounter someone offering a taste of a particular food product they want us to buy. Perhaps we taste it and because it tastes good we desire more of it so we buy some of the product. So it is with anything the value of which depends on its flavor. We ordinarily learn a great deal by experience and that is the idea here in this text. Taste and see that Yahweh is good.

We cannot taste the Lord in this manner apart from conversion. We cannot experience the goodness of Yahweh unless we have been converted so that we believe he exists and that he is good. To the unconverted God is angry and hateful. The angry wrathful Bible God is a myth, they say. They prefer the hideous blood-thirsty Kali or they prefer to burn their children in the hands of Molech. Not the God of wrath, they say, but the peace of a Shinto garden. Not a God who is angry with the wicked every day; a God who,

Psalm 7:11-12 (ESV)

- 11 -- is a righteous judge,  
and a God who feels indignation every day.
- 12 If a man does not repent, God will whet his sword;  
he has bent and readied his bow;

We will not be able to taste that the Lord is good apart from conversion. In order to spiritually taste we must know and believe that God is good. We must be able to understand the concept of goodness and apart from conversion our system of ethics will invariably be relative and situational. See how the world of unbelief views abortion or homosexuality. Being converted and able to discern what is good and able to believe that the Lord is good we still may question that the Lord is good to us. If that is the case we still have not really tasted that the Lord is good because we think we are excepted from his loving-kindness.

Lisa Beamer writes of her experience following the heroic death of her husband in the 9/11 plane that crashed near Pittsburgh, "For days I would struggle to deal with the shock. And yet, in that dark moment of my soul, I first cried out to God. I knew without a doubt that my hope wasn't based on Todd or any other human being. Nor was it based even on life itself, when I got right down to it. My faith wasn't rooted in governments, religion, tall buildings, or frail people. Instead, my faith and my security were in God. "

"A thought struck me. Who are you to question God and say that you have a better plan than He does? You don't have the same wisdom and knowledge that He has, or the understanding of the big picture."

Lisa Beamer had obviously tasted that the Lord is good just as all who are caused to be born again must do. Peter says, "If indeed **you** have tasted that the Lord is good." Believing that the Lord is good is not the same as experiencing the goodness of God. As Spurgeon puts it we put the goodness of God in our pocket but not in our mouth where it must be to taste it. We must take to ourselves the blessing of God's goodness before we can know what tasting means.

The conditional if-clause raises the issue that we might not be tasting the goodness of God. "If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good." That is not to say that the goodness of the Lord is conditioned upon our tasting of him. We have probably seen the road signs that urge us to try God or try prayer. The assumption is of course that when we do so we will be pleased with the result and continue to pray and believe. But that is not the way it works because by nature we are slaves to sin and will not try God nor try prayer. And that is not what Peter means to say here. Peter is telling us that being able to taste the goodness of the Lord by virtue of our conversion we still may not be actually experiencing

his goodness. We may not have actually tasted. We need to search our hearts to see if we have indeed experienced the goodness of God.

Tasting leads to spiritual growth; feeding on Christ Jesus. There is a way of life here, a continuing experience. The taste of Christ produces in one who is converted an increasing desire for him. We do not stop with a mere taste but we go on to feast upon the Lord to the fullest. A spiritual taste of Christ, an actual experience of the goodness of God and we are moved to be filled with all his fullness. It is our inheritance, to be filled with God's fullness. Have you tasted the Lord so that you know that he is good and gracious and there is none like him? When we taste Christ we expect to grow. We must see to it that we continue to feed on the pure word of God.

If we have tasted we must turn away from inferior food. The world of unbelief provides much to whet our sinful appetites but we must taste Christ instead. There is a river of grace that flows from God's throne. John writes,

Revelation 22:1-5 (ESV)

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb **2** through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. **3** No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. **4** They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. **5** And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

When we are sick we often lose our taste for food but not so with the goodness of God which flows from his throne for the healing of the nations. Peter tells us to long for the pure spiritual milk that by it we may grow up to salvation. The point here is to drink the milk of the word that has not been adulterated by the poison of liberalism and relativism. If we have tasted that the Lord is good we need to abhor the leeks and garlic of the world – malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander. People who taste that the Lord is good, show forth the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

If we have tasted that the Lord is good, Peter continues,

1 Peter 2:4-5 (ESV)

**4** As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, **5** you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

We are built up as a spiritual house by continually coming to Jesus. We are to taste his goodness over and over again and the Lord will withhold no good thing from us.

Psalm 34:9-10 (ESV)

- 9** Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints,  
for those who fear him have no lack!  
**10** The young lions suffer want and hunger;  
but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.

More about Jesus would I know,  
More of His grace to others show;  
More of His saving fullness see,  
More of His love who died for me.

More about Jesus let me learn,  
More of His holy will discern;  
Spirit of God, my teacher be,  
Showing the things of Christ to me.

More about Jesus in His word,  
Holding communion with my Lord;  
Hearing His voice in ev'ry line,  
Making each faithful saying mine.

More about Jesus on His throne,  
Riches in glory all His own;  
More of His kingdom's sure increase;  
More of His coming, Prince of Peace.

(Trinity 2ed 538)