

Good Taste

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[0 : 00] Well, it would be great if you'd turn to Psalm 34 on page 463, 464, near the front of the Bible, close to the middle of the Bible. I'm just giving you all time to turn there.

This is one of the most greatly loved, rightly loved psalms, I think, in all the scriptures. And it is a cure for cynicism and cold-heartedness.

And it's a psalm we very much need to hear today. The heart of it is verse 8, over on the next page, where David says, O, O, taste and see that the Lord is good, best is the one who takes refuge in him.

And as a congregation, it's often accused of being comfortable in the head and not so comfortable in the heart. This is a good passage for us. It's a command, it's an invitation, it's a call to experience God.

It's an argument completely from experience. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Not taste and see any good gifts he gives. Not taste and see some of his goodness. The command is taste God himself.

[1 : 19] And you will experience his goodness. This is a wonderful gift I was recently given for my birthday. It's called the science of good cooking.

I was not greatly offended. There are 11 simple principles in it. And it's very, you know, proteins and fibres and all that sort of thing.

And hundreds of recipes. And it was with beautiful photographs here. And I was very happy to receive it. And I need to tell you that everything I've tried from this book has been a wonderful success.

And I could read you some of the hundreds of recipes until your mouths were literally salivating. But you wouldn't experience it. You wouldn't taste it.

You wouldn't actually know what the food was like. Because there are only certain things that you can experience. Only certain things that you can know by experiencing them. You don't know what apple really tastes like.

[2 : 21] What honey is like. What love is like. Apart from the experience. And the most important of these things we must experience. Is how good God is.

You see, you can say God is good. We can stand up and we can chant that the Lord is good. The Lord is good. The Lord is good. But apart from actually personally sampling it and savouring Him. It absolutely means nothing. Because true faith, you see, is not abstract recipes or formulas. It's tasting God. And tasting His goodness.

And apart from that inward experience. The experimental trial of God. We don't know Him. And what the psalm does is it shows us how to taste God.

But I want to just fly over it a little bit first before we get there. It's very strange. I don't know if you noticed this. But for such a happy psalm. It's full of troubles.

[3 : 24] And afflictions. And fears. Just scan down. Verse 4. David talks about all my fears. His internal fears. In verse 6. All his troubles.

Verse 17. All his troubles. Verse 18. The broken hearted and crushed. In verse 19. Which is a very important verse. Many are the afflictions of the righteous.

But the Lord delivers him out of them all. The psalm doesn't come from the calm detachment of King David on a personal retreat.

Writing these happy things. He is in trouble. He is in the middle of great difficulty. This is God's way with us. Those who belong to God suffer many afflictions and troubles.

God does not put and wool us. Or protect us from those things. He does protect us. He surrounds us with protection. But he leads us to know his goodness.

[4 : 24] Not outside the trouble. But in the trouble. And through the trouble. He takes us through these things. So that we might taste him and his goodness. In a way that we couldn't.

In any other way. The problem is. You see. Our hunger. We keep attaching our hunger to all sorts of wrong things. We keep gnawing and nibbling on these things.

That treasures and trinkets and trivialities. And one of the gifts of affliction and troubles and difficulty and suffering. Is that it can give us. Not just an opportunity.

But a taste. A taste for God. So that we will see. And experience. His true goodness. And that's why the heading of the psalm is so important.

Just look back at page 463. For those of you who are new to reading the psalms. The capitals. The headings of the psalms. Are part of the Bible.

[5 : 20] They're part of the original text. And most of them. The majority of psalms have headings. Some of them are general. Like of David. But some of them are very specific.

So that we know about the context. And this one is one of the most specific. I'll read it to you. Of David. When he changed his behaviour before Abimelech.

So that Abimelech drove him out. And he went away. You remember this story from 1 Samuel. It's a fantastic story. Okay.

So King David has been anointed. God's chosen one Messiah by God. One problem. The current King Saul doesn't want to be with the program. So twice Saul has personally tried to murder David. And David escapes after he's betrayed. And Saul sends the whole might of the Israeli army after David. And David's got nothing. So he flees.

[6 : 17] And he takes the sword of Goliath. Who he had killed. From the priest at Nob. And you know what he does? He makes a decision. Which is unquestionably.

Unmistakably stupid. I say that reverently. Because he's a great man of faith. And we follow in his footsteps. I could have said ill-advised or unwise.

But it was stupid. He takes the sword of Goliath. And he says I'm going to go and hide out. And ask for refuge. Amongst our mortal enemies. The Philistines.

Not only that. I'm going to go to the king of Gath. Which is where Goliath and his family. Well Goliath is dead now. His family come from. Carrying Goliath's sword. And ask for shelter.

You believe it? Comes into town. Everyone says here's the giant slayer. You know that song is on the radio. Saul has killed his thousands. David's tens of thousands. And every one of those tens of thousands were Philistines.

[7 : 21] And they bring him into the royal court. And they want nothing better than to skewer David alive. So David comes up with a plan. He pretends to be insane.

He feigns madness. Have you ever done that? It didn't work for me once. David. David. Much better performance. He starts drooling.

And dribbling. And saying stupid things. And he starts carving on the wall. Probably with Goliath's. Goliath's sword. And the king stands there. And he says.

Like every good political leader. He says. Have I got enough madmen around me? I don't need enough of it. I don't need enough of it. So David runs out. And he escapes to the cave of Adullam. Back in Israel. And sits down. He writes this psalm. And Dan reminded me. Between the services. That a bunch of people gathered to him.

[8 : 18] In the cave. At least 400 men. And this is how they're described. Everyone who was in distress. Everyone who was in debt.

And everyone who was bitter in soul. Gathered to him. So it's not the perfect congregation. We may have some people. Who are in debt and distress.

And bitter in soul as well. And that's fine. Because part of the gift of this psalm. Is that this psalm. Is a psalm for losers. It's a psalm for failures.

It's a psalm for you. If you're disappointed. By how you're living. David's performance. Was an absolute disgrace. I mean. This is not the day.

That when he was younger. Faced Goliath in the field. And said. Yeah you come with. Sword and might. And power. And spears. And I come to you. In the name of the Lord of hosts. This is the cringing.

[9 : 16] Conniving. And cunning David. Who's making very bad decisions. Just to save his own skin. So. Taste and see. That the Lord is good. Blessed is the one.

Who takes refuge in him. Is not for those. Who have their act together. It's for those. Who don't. It's for those of us. Who are in distress. And in debt. And in difficulty. And. Some. Must. And in trouble. Which we brought on ourselves. As David had. Because that's exactly. Where the grace of God. Shines most likely. Isn't it? When it shines on its own. That is why. You see. There's this strange thing. David gives testimony. In the psalm. But he. Most of the psalm. Is addressed. To. A very specific group. And. It only takes a verse and a half. To get there. So let me start. Verse one. Read two verses. David says. I will bless the Lord. At all times. This praise shall continually. Be in my mouth. [10:16] Verse two. My soul makes its boast. In the Lord. Let the. Humble. Hear. And be glad. From verse two onwards.

Apart from two lines. Everything in the psalm. Is not really about David. But David calls the humble. And the hungry. To taste and see. And to join him. In praising. And magnifying the Lord. See verse three. Oh. Magnify the Lord with me. He says to the humble. Let us exalt his name together. Magnify just means to make great. We can't make great. God any greater. But we can spread. How great he is. His fame. Around. And David is saying. Do it with me. He's saying. My praise. Is so pathetic. And God deserves. The very best. David's very aware of his weakness. And insufficiency. And don't you feel that. When you're singing. And praising God. [11:16] And so he says. Let's give glory to God together. And he begs us. To help him. It's the natural response. To someone who has tasted. The goodness of God.

We want to fill. The cave. And what a smelly cave. It must have been. 400 men. Let's not think about it. We want to. We want to. We want to. We want to fill. We want to. If you've tasted. The kindness and goodness. Of the Lord. We want to fill. Vancouver. We want to fill. The world. With his praise. We want to magnify him. Not just because. Of how good it will be. For other people. Not because it will give power. To change. Or bring salvation. But because there is no one. Who deserves more praise. Than God. And there is nothing. That deserves praise. More than his goodness. And I think that's why. There's this emotion. In this. You see the word. O. In verse 3. [12:09] O. Magnify. Or verse 8. O. Taste. Or verse 9. O. Fear. Or in verse 11. O. Children. You know. Welsh preachers. Those of you.

Who's ever heard. Welsh preachers. Have what's called. The hoyo. And they love to say. Bado. When they come to a point. In their congregation. And you know. Standing up here. There was. I could see people. In the last service. Reading something. During the sermon. And I felt like going. Bado. Because. That's not what David's doing. He's not manipulating us. He is speaking. Simply. He is calling on. People. Who will soften their hearts. To God. Who want to know. The goodness. And blessing of God. Now why is this. Why is this even important. And I think it's important. Because we are cynical people. Because when we experience. [13:06] Affliction. And evil. And suffering. Often. Even when it's out of our own stupidity. Instead of bowing ourselves. In humility. And crying out to God. We begin to question.

The goodness of God. God. It's what we do. Ever since we left. The Garden of Eden. Our default response. To difficulty. And evil. Is not to trust God. But to suspect him. It's not to run to him. But it's to. Separate ourselves. And create a distance. From him. And we become skeptical. And then we become cynical. We do it so fast. It's hard to even notice it. That's why you see. It is impossible for us. To taste. The goodness of God. Until we humble ourselves. It's pride. That creates the distance. It's pride. That interferes. With intimacy. With God. It's our cynicism. That creates. A standoffishness. With God. And with his people. [14:02] And. You forget. I mean. I forget the goodness. I forget the taste. So quickly. Suddenly. I forget it. And then I begin to crave other things. And gnaw on other things. To take its place. I think this is the key mark. Of our. Certainly our culture. Cynicism. And it's a kind of. It's a spiritual dullness. And it's a spiritual fatigue. It's a loss of the ability. To be. To have that childlike wonder. In front of God. Because we become clever. But not committed. We become critical.

But we don't cry out. To God. And there are a number of signs. That we are moving. Towards cynicism. If you feel spiritually paralyzed. And like you're a bit of a phony.

Or if you've moved. From being a participant. To being an observer. Or you're very quick. To critique others. Rather than to pray. And the hunger's not there.

[15:02] And thankfulness is just hard work. Come to this psalm. The wonderful thing is. The psalm just cuts across. All that cynicism. And argues from experience. Directly from experience.

And just says to us. Taste. Taste. And see. How good he really is. Bigger than emotion. This is bigger than our feelings. It's experience.

This week. My sister and brother-in-law were in town. And we took them up on the new squamish gondola. Which is very fast.

And very big. And my brother-in-law. Who's a great big guy. He does not like heights at all. And as he rode up. And as he rode down. We had a great time. His feelings.

In the gondola. Were very different than mine. But we both. Experienced it. Together. So you see. You may be. You may be feeling. I don't feel God's closeness.

[16:01] Or feel his goodness. David says. There is nothing on God's side. Which is blocking intimacy. There's nothing on God's side. That blocks. Tasting the goodness of God.

The only way to experience. Is to taste it. So how do we taste and see. There are three things. S. F. C. Simon Fraser Canis.

If you want to remember. Firstly. Seek the Lord. Seek the Lord. Because he delivers. Verse 4. Well. Really. Verses 4 to 7. But I'll just read verse 4.

David says. I sought the Lord. And he asked me. And delivered me. From all my fears. Isn't that wonderful? In the middle of his silly appearance. In the middle of his silly behaviour.

And performance. Before the king. David prayed. He called out to God. He sought the Lord. And the Lord delivered him. This is not a psalm.

[16:58] About David saying. I was very clever. I was very cunning. Try it this way. He sees. It was the Lord who delivered him. And there's absolutely nothing complicated.

About this. Seeking God. Is simply. Praying to him. It's not going on. A long searching expedition. Because God is hiding. Or he's difficult to find.

And. We'll hear later. That God is near. Waiting for us to call on him. And the moment we sincerely call on him. He answers us. That's fantastic.

Isn't it? Because. You know. The level of your sincerity. Is irrelevant. He's not. I mean. When David called on the Lord. He was confused. He was in the middle of a mess.

Of his own making. He was panicked. And this wasn't David. He was calm. And full of faith. And trusting in God. There was nothing detached. And therapeutic.

[17:53] About this prayer. Here is the key. He didn't look inside himself. He looked outside himself. He needed something. That was bigger than his enemies. Bigger than his fears.

He needed God. To deliver him. And we all have inner resources. Resilience is a very good thing. Resilience is of no means really. When you're in the courts.

Of the Philistines. In Gath. And they're about to. Chop your head off. You've got to seek God. And seeking God. It doesn't mean. Turning my face. Inside me.

To my resources. Or even outside. To the difficulties. I'm facing. It means. Turning my face. To the face. Of God. And when we look at. His face.

His goodness. Burns away. Everything that brings us. Shame. And everything that brings us. Guilt. Whether. Whether it's true or not. I think that's why. Verses five and six.

[18:47] Go that way. Those who look to him. Are radiant. And their faces. Shall never be. Ashamed. This poor man. Cried.

And the Lord. Heard him. And saved him. Out of all his troubles. David had plenty. To be ashamed of. And if you feel shame. Rightly.

Or wrongly. The first thing that affects. Is your face. You find it hard to look people in the eye. You cover your face. And you. You gradually turn away from people.

But to seek God. Is to turn our face to him. And when we turn our faces to him. The first thing we find. Is his face has been turned to us. All along. And in the fire. Of his goodness.

And of his grace. We find. He saves us. And this may be a little bit sentimental. But I think you can tell. When someone has really been seeking God. And turning their face to him.

[19 : 44] I think there is a change. In the look of their face. So there's a. I've certainly seen that. In many of you. This is the first way. We taste and see. The Lord is. But we seek him.

We pray to him. He delivers us. Yes. Second. Fear him. Because he is good. Verses 9 to 14. Now. I know this is strange. You might think. If God were bad. You should fear him. Or since God's very powerful. You should fear him. But the Bible way. Is always.

Since God is good. We fear him. Because there are different. So it's a fear. You see. I mean.

There's the fear of being. You know. The frightened. Threatened.

Phobia. Whether it's real. Or imaginative. The Bible fear. Is being in the presence of something. Or someone. That creates awe in us. That deserves us.

[20 : 39] To bow down. And worship. So ancient peoples. Used to worship the sea. And if they sail on the open ocean. You'll understand why. It's massive and mysterious. The fear of the Lord.

Is a bit different from that. The fear of the Lord. Is personal. Because. It's the Lord himself. Who is facing us. And it has a moral.

A definite. Moral. Shape. You look down at verse 11. You can read a couple of these verses. Come children.

Come. Oh children. Listen to me. And I will teach you. The fear of the Lord. What man or woman is there. Who desires life. And loves many days. That he may see good. Keep your tongue from evil. And your lips from speaking deceit. Turn away from evil. And do good. And see peace. And pursue it. The good life. Like the blessed life.

[21 : 35] In Psalm 1. Has a moral shape. It has to do with. Turning away from evil. And seeking to do good. That is not a separate thing. From tasting the goodness.

Of God. We cannot taste the goodness of God. Without repentance. He's savouring God. And tasting the goodness of the Lord.

What does it look like? It looks like turning away from lies. And seeking peace. And when David went on to Philistines. He wasn't fearing the Lord.

So he's calling himself. As he's calling us. Not to seek goodness. Outside of God's will. But to desire God. Above everything else. Within his will.

This is how we taste. And see. S. We seek him. F. We fear him. And C. We cry out to him. Because the Lord. Is near. You see down there.

[22 : 29] Verse 18. The Lord is near. The broken hearted. Saves the crushed in spirit. Verse 15. The eyes of the Lord. Are toward the righteous. His ears.

Toward their God. Very important. He's not talking in psychological terms here. Broken hearted. Literally means. Broken inside. It's the same word used.

In other Psalms. For being contrite. A sense of that. In a poverty. It's. This is not. The picture of just being weighed down. It's the.

It's the inward courage. Of saying. I'm being. Going to be truthful about this. I've made a complete mess of things. And I'm trying to fool others. With my own goodness. And trying to fool myself. With my own goodness. But it tastes like ashes. In my mouth. I need the real thing. And in the midst of troubles. We cry out. To God. He is near. His eyes.

[23 : 23] Is toward us. His ears. Are toward us. I think this is such good news. For those of us. Who want to taste. The goodness of God. Because you don't need really.

Well constructed. Impressive prayers. You don't need to go through. A series of moral exercises. You don't need to get your act together.

To prove. Your sincerity. To God. Just cry to him. You don't have to make him listen. You don't have to make him turn toward.

His eyes. Are on us. He's like a parent. You know. I didn't believe this until it happened to us. But a mother can tell the cry of their children. When there might be 40 children in a room.

There's just. There's a wavelength thing. Where they're tuned in. It's the same of God. The Heavenly Father. He is tuned in. To what's going into our hearts. What's going on in our hearts. Right now. He watches eagerly.

[24 : 21] For us to turn to him. And most of you know. That a few years ago. I had to take a year off. I had symptoms of exhaustion.

And I had a crash in September. And in the early months of being off. During the worst times. I testify to you.

That that is when. I tasted the goodness of God. In a way that I never had before. There was never a spiritual crisis in it for me. But each morning.

I'd get up. And I would read his word. And God was present with me. In a way. He had not been before. And I can still recall the sweetness.

Of that experience. And while I wouldn't wish that experience. On my worst enemy. I also would not trade it. For anything. Look at what David says.

[25 : 16] Taste and see. That the Lord is good. And the way we do it. Simon Fraser can. Seek. Fear. And cry. We seek God.

Because we have to take action. It doesn't just happen. We have to take action. Go to him. We fear. Because. When we. When we come to God. That life has a moral shape to it.

And we cry to him. From the middle of the trouble. And David says. God is good. He delivers and saves. All who call on him. He says in this psalm.

He surrounds us with protection. His eyes are towards us. His ears are towards us. He is near us. I heard an interview this week. With a Vietnamese woman.

Called Tan Lee. Who now lives in the States. And she tells the story. Of when she first tasted an apple. On an oil rig. In the middle of the Pacific.

[26 : 12] As a child. She and her sisters. Were rescued from the horrors. Of the Vietnam War. By their mother. And they sat out in a boat. In the dark. With a. With far too many people.

On the boat. And for days. They drifted along. Without food. And without water. Until they were close to death. And one night. They came. And they saw stars in the heavens.

That were too bright. And it was an oil rig. And they climbed up on the rig. And when they got to the top. Some of the workers. Had apples. And they were tossing apples. To each other.

And she'd never seen an apple. Let alone tasted one. She was half starved. She hadn't had water or food. And one of the men. Gave her an apple. And she says in the interview.

And I can't. I can't imitate it. But she says. I bit it. Unbelievable. And then she burst into a laugh. And there's this. Simple joy and delight. In the face of tasting something.

[27 : 06] That's so delicious. And so needed. I've been thinking about it. In this passage. She could have had the apple in her hand. And not tasted it.

Couldn't she? You know. She could have tossed it back to one of the guys. But it wasn't until she bit into it. It wasn't until she tasted it. That she really experienced it.

David assumes. That all of us. Who are trying to follow Christ. need to be encouraged. Ongoingly. To taste and see. That the Lord is coming.

Whether you've been in. Tandalee's position. You've never tasted the goodness of the Lord.

Whether you've tasted the goodness of the Lord. Over and over and over and over. Constantly forget. Constantly.

You know. Start gnawing on other things. And the reason why. Is that we need. A better Messiah. Than David. And I want to finish this.

[28 : 04] By reading the last few verses. Of the psalm. And I want to. As we read this. Remember David. Is not just speaking. As a private individual. He's speaking. As the Lord's anointed.

And he's prophesying. About the great righteous one. Who is to come. So I'm going to start at 19. And just read the last four verses. Many are the afflictions.

Of the righteous. But the Lord delivers him. Out of all of them. He keeps his bones. Not one of them is broken. I've broken my bones. And probably some of you have.

Official slave the wicked. And those who hate the righteous. Will be condemned. But the Lord redeems the life of his servants. None of those who take refuge in him. Will be condemned. Who's he talking about? He's talking about Christ.

Jesus. This prophecy of broken bones. Points to the truly righteous one. Jesus. Who always lived in the fear of the Lord. Who always cried.

[29 : 02] Who always sought the Lord. Who spoke about the fact that doing God's will. Was his food and drink. Because you know when he died on the cross. His bones were not broken. John's gospel tells us.

And this. I'm sorry to give you this gruesome detail. And when people were dying on the cross. The way to hasten their execution. Was to break their legs. So they couldn't prop themselves up and breathe. And in John 19 we read.

That the thieves on both sides. Had their legs broken. But when they came to Jesus. And saw he was already dead. They did not break his legs. Before. Before. These things took place. The scripture might be fulfilled.

Not one of his bones would be broken. And Jesus himself. Takes this psalm. And that. The central idea. Taste and see.

And takes it in a wonderful. And really dangerous new direction. And we're going to finish by doing this. Just turn over right. If you've got your Bible open. John chapter 6. Age 892.

[30 : 13] And then start at verse 51. These are the words of Jesus. He's just fed the 5,000. Okay. I'm going to read to about seven verses.

Jesus says. I am the living bread. That came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread. He. She. Will live forever.

And the bread that I will give. For the life of the world. Is my flesh. The Jews disputed among themselves. Say. Happen this man. Give us his flesh to eat. Jesus said to them.

Truly. Truly. I say to you. Unless you eat the flesh. Of the son of man. And drink his blood. You have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh.

And drinks my blood. Has eternal life. And I will raise them up. On the last day. For my flesh. Is true food. And my blood.

[31 : 11] Is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh. And drinks my blood. Abides in me. And I in him. As the living father sent me. And I live because of the father.

So whoever feeds on me. He also will live because of me. This is the bread. That came down from heaven. Not like the bread. The father's apron died.

Whoever feeds on this bread. Will live forever. With this great privilege. Of living this side of Jesus. His death and resurrection. We have more reason than David.

To taste the goodness of God. As we eat his flesh. And drink his blood. By faith. Not just here in the meal. That we share together. That's the key symbol.

But tomorrow morning. By faith. In the good ship. So here is the question. Are you tasting the goodness of the Lord?

[32 : 09] Are you seeking? Are you feeling him? Are you crying to him? I invite you to bring concerns. And cynicism. And circumstances. Taste and see.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.