

# Taste and See

*"Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good."*

Psalm 34:8

By Rev. Derek Elphick

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## INTRODUCTION

We have two types of taste,

one physical,  
the other spiritual (of the mind)

Our *physical* taste is the most obvious taste, the one we're most aware of, because we use it at least three times a day...

- we are born with it
- basically, given perfect taste
- don't have to do anything to cultivate it
- and it's pretty reliable...

Our nose and tongue rarely let us down...

If the food we're about to eat stinks or is rotten, we won't touch it  
If the food smells delicious, we dive right in...

So, it is taste (along w/smell) that makes eating food enjoyable and pleasant.

Of course, we eat to survive.

Food is fuel for our bodies, and without it we die.

But again, the only reason we desire food, and take an interest in it, is because of its smell and taste.

As a result, physical taste is driven by the delights of our body, what the teachings of the New Church call, "natural delights" or "natural loves."

## 1. WHAT ABOUT SPIRITUAL TASTE?

Spiritual taste works in a similar way.

Just as natural food is fuel for our body, spiritual food is fuel for our spirit, and without it we die.

This is what the Lord meant when He said in the Gospel of John,

*"I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever..." (John 6:48-51)*

### **This is the first beautiful thing about spiritual taste:**

The Lord gifts us, here on earth, with a spiritual appetite for this spiritual bread (or food), which is, we're taught...

***"...an appetite for, or enjoyment of, learning" (SE 741).***

It's an appetite that never dies, but only grows (think about it, do we ever say, "I'm done learning," "I've learned everything I'll ever need to know!")? The more we learn, the more we realize how little we know!

Another teaching says:

Knowledge, intelligence, and wisdom are our spiritual food, and we cultivate a spiritual taste for it **based on our loves** (AC 4792).

### **This brings us to our second point about spiritual taste:**

It's something we're already cultivating.

We use language to describe it...

- that color, or piece of clothing, or style of furniture is not my "taste"
- or that experience left a bad "taste" in my mouth

When we say, "*that's a sweet idea,*" or "*that stinks,*" we are expressing a spiritual appetite and taste toward something we deem pleasant or unpleasant.

And the point here is...

...that love is the driver - "*if the love is evil, it has an appetite or longing for unclean things, but if the love is good, it has a longing and appetite for clean things*" (DP 233).

***But spiritual taste is different from physical taste in that...***

- the nose and tongue of our spirit, our mind, need to be trained!

(We've already talked about the fact that our nose and tongue rarely let us down with physical food - if the food stinks or is rotten, we won't touch it)

- But with spiritual taste,

we don't necessarily know, or realize, that negative thoughts and feelings carry a foul, rotten odor, and that things like...

contempt  
or rage  
or revenge  
or lust...

**...carry a terrible smell and taste!**

This is a *revolutionary* New Church idea - that in the spiritual world, every thought and feeling and activity carries an odor...

- pleasant and pleasing if the love or idea is good and true

- and extremely unpleasant and foul if the love or idea is bad and false

- for example, charity and faith "*correspond to sweet and delightful odors...*" (AC 925:2)

...kindness, mercy, forgiveness, tenderness & compassion =  
...sweet smelling

- this is why burnt offerings and incense offerings were commanded in the Israelitish Church = the pleasant odors corresponded to good, clean loves offered up to the Lord in prayer....(AC 925).

## 2. AN INVITATION

The Word is an invitation to "*taste and see that the Lord is good*" (Psalm 34:8).

This invitation is both exciting and daunting.

It's *exciting* because the Word is our salvation, the gateway to eternal life...

And it's daunting because the physical delights and pleasures of this world

...dull & blunt our taste and appetite for the spiritual truths of the Word (AC 9140).

## 3. THE CHALLENGE

When the ancient Israelites first received the bread from heaven they named it Manna, meaning, "*What is it?*"

They didn't know that it was food...

...that it would be their nourishment and sustenance for the remainder of their lives.

This represents the dilemma of the purely natural (or bodily) mind: it has no appetite or taste for spiritual food...

Our natural mind (and appetite) says,

...what is faith in the Lord or charity toward the neighbor? (AC 8462).

...before regeneration, the delights of self and the world are considered the only "food" worth eating.

***John's instruction to eat the "little book" in the angel's hand illustrates this challenge...***

The "higher callings" of the spirit - loving the Lord and our neighbor seem "sweet" to the taste, easy. What could be difficult about that?

But there's the "theory" and the "practice" and when we put the teachings of the Word into practice, we experience a bitter taste in the stomach.

Why? Because the internal sense of the Word exposes "*what we are like inwardly*" and what needs to change - bad habits (AC 5620:3).

*Bitter realizations:* it's much easier to notice the faults in others, than it is to notice our own faults, or "This job would be so much easier if I didn't have to deal with people." Life is about fostering *healthy* relationships - with the Lord, His Word, each other

#### **4. CULTIVATING A NEW TASTE**

Good news!

Our physical tastes and sensibilities change over time...

...choice of clothing, music, food, books, interests & hobbies

Our spiritual "appetite" changes too...don't want to indulge in the same old rhetoric

...don't want to argue so much  
get in the last word  
put others in their place

**(become more sensitive, perceptive, to the needs of others)**

In the spiritual world, food, eating, is not the primary "driver" as it is on earth.

Here we eat to survive.

In heaven, one's appetite and cravings are different (see AC 4794).

Food and drink are given to the angels gratis, for free, so that, as one passage says,

*"...they can devote themselves to heavenly matters" (SE 1243)*

Even though the food and drink in heaven is exquisitely delicious (beyond anything that the finest restaurants on earth could produce),

...food is not an end in itself.

Angels driven by a "perception" (a taste and smell) of what is good, true, useful, and kind...

**This is what drives their appetite**

- knowledge & understanding
- love and wisdom
- curiosity (never stop learning)
- discovery
- more than anything, a desire to be of use, help the common good

**5. ACCEPTING THE INVITATION**

*"Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8)*

It takes a lifetime to tame and curb our natural appetites,

to develop a clean spiritual palate,

to realize that, as the book Heaven and Hell says, *"everything that comes from the mouth of the Lord is [our] food"* (HH 341).

If knowledge, intelligence, and wisdom are our spiritual food, let us cultivate an ever-growing appetite and taste for it.

Let us make simple changes in our spiritual diet.

*"Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your words became for me a joy and delight of my heart"* (Jeremiah 15:16).

**AMEN.**

Lessons: Psalm 34:8; Jeremiah 15:16; Revelation 10:8-10; AC 4792, 5620:13