

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

THE TASTE OF GRACE

If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

I Peter 2:3

It is quite common to hear folks say that they remember with fondness and express a longing for some particular dish that their mothers or grandmothers made when they were growing up. Many a night has been spent on the sofa, because of a simple comparison of a wife's recipe to that of the way mama used to make it. Most people's tastes are honed in childhood, and their likes and dislikes in food are usually shaped by the type of diet that they are exposed to during their formative years.

This is not to say that a person may not develop a broader spectrum of foods which they enjoy as they move on in life and their tastes mature; but the basis of their diet is indelibly stamped upon their mind, even when they develop new tastes and a richer array of things which they might enjoy eating later in life. An illustration of this can be seen in the wide variety of foods that are indigenous to various regions of the country and world. Any self respecting southerner loves grits and boiled peanuts while many from the north find such culinary delights to be quite odd.

Another observation that I would make is that as one matures, his (or her) enjoyment of the taste of food is more important, than simply having a large quantity of food, such as a teenage boy might delight in. His desire is more about the consumption than it is in dwelling upon the unique flavors he might experience. The purity and wholesomeness of the ingredients found in the food outweighs the quantity for the mature palate.

No matter how hard one may try, he cannot actually change his taste for something that he has no taste for. The LORD JESUS, (speaking on another topic), nonetheless illustrated this same truth. "*Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?*" (Mat 6:27) Just as a man by thinking (or determination) cannot grow in height, neither can a man cause himself to have affection for that which he despises.

Yet according to the purveyors of the "free will" doctrine that is so prevalent today, we are told that a man can choose to desire a truth for which he has no affection and can embrace that which he despises by nature. And then he can, supposedly, act completely contrary to that nature just because he has the proper instruction.

The exhortation of Peter (verses 1 & 2) to be kindly affectioned towards the brethren is a specific message, given to those whose hearts have been affected by a POWER which is outside of themselves. He points out that it is impossible (in the flesh) to lay, "*aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings.*" (1Pet 2:1) desiring to be fed the "*sincere milk of the word*", unless one ("*if so be*") has actually "tasted" (with feeling and affection) the graciousness of the LORD in HIS own soul..

All exhortations and encouragements which are given to the sons of GOD to increase in brotherly love towards one another, are based upon the very concept of CHRIST's example and HIS faithful service to those who in and of themselves do not deserve any consideration at all. "*Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be*

courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers." (1Pet 3:8-12)

When a man is born again (i.e.; from above) he is given a "taste" for the things of GOD. The appetites of some are greater than others even as Paul declares, *"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."* ((Rom 12:3) Yet, while the appetites of GOD's children may vary, according to HIS purpose; the "taste" of GOD's gracious dealings is the same in every one. That man who boasts in one shred of his own righteousness or worthiness before the KING, has never "tasted that HE is gracious". Likewise, that man who can justify mistreating or even despising another brother in CHRIST has never savored that grace either.

He might have viewed it from afar, smelled its sweet aroma for a season, and even spoken of it to others from a doctrinal and theological perspective, but such a man gives no evidence of a developed taste for the demonstration of grace. His "tastes" lie elsewhere and he feeds upon that which is not the MANNA from above. Paul's exhortation ; *"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."* (Php 2:3) seems, to such a man, to be of secondary importance to doctrinal "accuracy" as he would define it. Yet, this desire to prefer the honor of his brethren, as John points out is the very proof that one has been given a "taste" for heavenly things. *"We love him, because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."* (1John 4:19-21)

The very first time that the word "taste" appears in the scriptures is found in the account of the Manna which the LORD gave to the Israelites as they wandered in the wilderness. *"And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna: and it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey."* (Exo 16:31) That grace which the LORD gives is small in the eyes of the flesh like the coriander seed, meekness is indeed a discounted item to the proud flesh of men.

This grace which the LORD gives is pure (i.e.; white), peaceable and gentle, since it comes from above, (see James 3:13-18). It has a pleasant taste in the mouth of those who are given a taste for its sweetness, but it is bitter, like those waters of Marah (see Ex.15:23), to the natural man of the flesh, for he seeks not his brother's benefit but his own.

Those who have indeed "tasted that the LORD is gracious" rejoice most especially as they contemplate HIS PERSON and work. *"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee."* (Heb 2:9-12)

If the CAPTAIN of our salvation, has undergone the greatest of sufferings for HIS brethren's sake, can we who are made to taste of the benefits of HIS suffering, do any less than love those for whom HE has laid down HIS very life? HE tasted "death" for us that we might "taste" HIS graciousness toward us. *"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps."* (1Pet 2:21) *"O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him."* (Psa 34:8) *"How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"* (Psa 119:103) Have you tasted that the LORD is gracious?

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