

Serving
the Lord
with
our
five senses

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Forward

I sense God

By Harold Bollinger

**When I arose to face another day.
I heard the sound of laughter and a
Bird singing softly in the tree.
I felt the glow of friendship
Of those who spoke of hope and life
When I looked out upon the world,
My eyes did see the beauty God had made.
The fragrance of the kitchen,
The garden and the walk encamped within me.
As I touched the beauty of the world
I found that I had touched the hand of God.**

Psalm 115:3-8

**For our God is in the heavens,
And he does as he wishes.
Their idols are merely things of silver and gold,
Shaped by human hands.
They cannot talk, though they have mouths,
Or see, though they have eyes!
They cannot hear with their ears,
Or smell with their noses,
Or feel with their hands,
Or walk with their feet,
Or utter sounds with their throats!
And those who make them are just like them,
As are all who trust in them**

Philip. 4:23

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you?

Chapter 1

See



Isaiah 45:22

Let all the world look to me for salvation! For I am God; there is no other.

Salvation is for all nations, not just the Israelites. Many times it seems as though Israel had an inside track on salvation.

But God makes it clear that his people include *all* those who follow him. Israel was to be the means through which the whole world would come to know God.

Jesus, the Messiah, fulfilled Israel's role and gave all people the opportunity to follow God.

1 Cor. 2:9

That is what the Scriptures mean when they say,

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard,

And no mind has imagined

**What God has prepared
For those who love him."**

We cannot imagine all that God has in store for us, both in this life and for eternity. He will create a new heaven and a new earth (Isaiah 65:17; Rev. 21:1), and we will live with him forever.

Until then, his Holy Spirit comforts and guides us. Knowing the wonderful and eternal future that awaits us gives us hope and courage to press on in this life, to endure hardship, and to avoid giving in to temptation. This world is not all there is. The best is yet to come.

1 John 3:2

Yes, dear friends, we are already God's children, and we can't even imagine what we will be like when Christ returns. But we do know that when he comes we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is.

The Christian life is a process of becoming more and more like Christ (see Romans 8:29). This process will not be complete until we see Christ face to face (1 Cor. 13:12; Phil. 3:21), but knowing that it is our ultimate destiny should motivate us to purify ourselves.

To purify means to keep morally straight, free from the corruption of sin. God also purifies us, but there is action we must take to remain morally fit (see 1 Tim. 5:22; James 4:8; 1 Peter 1:22).

Matthew 5:14-15

You are the light of the world—like a city on a mountain, glowing in the night for all to see.

Don't hide your light under a basket! Instead, put it on a stand and let it shine for all.

Can you hide a city that is sitting on top of a hill? Its light at night can be seen for miles. If we live for Christ, we will glow like lights, showing others what Christ is like.

We hide our light by:

- (1) Being quiet when we should speak,
- (2) Going along with the crowd,
- (3) Denying the light,
- (4) Letting sin dim our light,
- (5) Not explaining our light to others, or
- (6) Ignoring the needs of others. Be a beacon of truth—don't shut your light off from the rest of the world.

Matthew 13:16

"But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear.

The doctrine of the Trinity means that God is three persons and yet one in essence. In this passage, all three persons of the Trinity are present and active.

God the Father speaks; God the Son is baptized; God the Holy Spirit descends on Jesus. God is one, yet in three persons at the same time. This is one of God's incomprehensible mysteries.

Matthew 13:16

"But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear.

Chapter 2



Taste

Job 12:11

Just as the mouth tastes good food, so the ear tests the words it hears.

Job answered Zophar's argument with great sarcasm: "Wisdom will die with you." He went on to say that his three friends didn't need to explain God to him—they were saying nothing he didn't already know (Job 12:7-9; Job 13:1-2).

Job continued to maintain that his friends had completely misunderstood the reason for his suffering. Job did not know it either, but he was certain that his friends' reasons were both narrow-minded and incorrect. Once again Job appealed to God to give him an answer (Job 13:3).

Matthew 5:13

"You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it useful again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless.

If a seasoning has no flavor, it has no value. If Christians make no effort to affect the world around them, they are of little value to God. If we are too much like the world, we are worthless. Christians should not blend in with everyone else. Instead, we should affect others positively, just as seasoning brings out the best flavor in food.

Psalm 34:8

Taste and see that the Lord is good.

Oh, the joys of those who trust in him!

“Taste and see” does not mean, “Check out God’s credentials.” Instead it is a warm invitation: “Try this; I know you’ll like it.” When we take that first step of obedience in following God, we cannot help discovering that he is good and kind. When we begin the Christian life, our knowledge of God is partial and incomplete. As we trust him daily, we experience how good he is.

Proverbs 24:13

My child, eat honey, for it is good, and the honeycomb is sweet to the taste.

Times of trouble can be useful. They can show you who you really are, what kind of character you have developed. In addition, they can help you grow stronger. When Jeremiah questioned God because of the trouble he faced, God asked how he ever expected to face big challenges if the little ones tired him out (Jeremiah 12:5). Don’t complain about your problems. The trouble you face today is training you to be strong for the more difficult situations you will face in the future.

Matthew 6:25

"So I tell you, don't worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food, drink, and clothes. Doesn't life consist of more than food and clothing?"

Because of the ill effects of worry, Jesus tells us not to worry about those needs that God promises to supply. Worry may

- (1) Damage your health,
- (2) Cause the object of your worry to consume your thoughts,
- (3) Disrupt your productivity,
- (4) Negatively affect the way you treat others, and
- (5) Reduce your ability to trust in God.

Here is the difference between worry and genuine concern—worry immobilizes, but concern moves you to action.

Chapter 3

Hear



Matthew 11:15

Anyone who is willing to hear should listen and understand!

Jesus condemned the attitude of his generation. No matter what he said or did, they took the opposite view. They were cynical and skeptical because he challenged their comfortable, secure, and self-centered lives. Too often we justify our inconsistencies because listening to God may require us to change the way we live.

Rev. 2:29

Anyone who is willing to hear should listen to the Spirit and understand what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

Christ is called the morning star in Rev. 2:28, Rev. 22:16, and 2 Peter 1:19. A morning star appears just before dawn, when the night is coldest and darkest.

When the world is at its bleakest point, Christ will burst onto the scene, exposing evil with his light of truth and bringing his promised reward.

Mark 4:23

Anyone who is willing to hear should listen and understand!

Mark records the origin of the Lord's Supper, also called Communion or Eucharist (thanksgiving), which is still celebrated in worship services today.

Jesus and his disciples ate a meal, sang psalms, read Scripture, and prayed. Then Jesus took two traditional parts of the Passover meal, the passing of bread and the drinking of wine, and gave them new meaning as representations of his body and blood. He used the bread and wine to explain the significance of what he was about to do on the cross

Jesus' death for us on the cross seals a new covenant between God and people.

The old covenant involved forgiveness of sins through the blood of an animal sacrifice (Exodus 24:6-8). But instead of a spotless lamb on the altar, Jesus offered himself, the spotless Lamb of God, as a sacrifice that would forgive sin once and for all. Jesus was the final sacrifice for sins, and his blood sealed the new agreement between God and us.

Now all of us can come to God through Jesus, in full confidence that God will hear us and save us from our sins.

Proverbs 4:20

Pay attention, my child, to what I say. Listen carefully.

Even friends can make you fall. It is difficult for people to accept the fact that friends and acquaintances might be luring them to do wrong.

Young people want to be accepted, so they would never want to confront or criticize a friend for wrong plans or actions.

Many other people can't even see how their friends' actions could lead to trouble. While we should be accepting of others, we need a healthy skepticism about human behavior. When you feel yourself being heavily influenced, proceed with caution.

Don't let your friends cause you to fall into sin.

Proverbs 15:31

If you listen to constructive criticism, you will be at home among the wise.

“From the LORD comes the reply of the tongue” means that the final outcome of the plans we make is in God's hands. If this is so, why make plans? In doing God's will, there must be partnership between our efforts and God's control. He wants us to use our minds, to seek the advice of others, and to plan. Nevertheless, the results are up to him. Planning, then, helps us act God's way. As you live for him, ask for guidance as you plan, and then act on your plan, as you trust in him.

The righteous weighs their answers; the wicked don't wait to speak because they don't care about the effects of their words. It is important to have something to say, but it is equally important to weigh it first. Do you carefully plan your words, or do you pour out your thoughts without concern for their impact?

Proverbs 28:9

The prayers of a person who ignores the law are despised.

God does not listen to our prayers if we intend to go back to our sin as soon as we get off our knees. If we want to forsake our sin and follow him, however, he willingly listens—no matter how bad our sin has been. What closes his ears is not the depth of our sin, but our secret intention to do it again.

1 John 1:1-4

The one who existed from the beginning is the one we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is Jesus Christ, the Word of life.

This one who is life from God was shown to us, and we have seen him. And now we testify and announce to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then he was shown to us. We are telling you about what we ourselves have actually seen and heard, so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

We are writing these things so that our joy will be complete.

John, one of Jesus' original 12 disciples, wrote first John.

He was probably “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 21:20) and, along with Peter and James, he had a special relationship with Jesus. This letter was written between A.D. 85-90 from Ephesus, before John's exile to the island of Patmos (see Rev. 1:9).

Jerusalem had been destroyed in A.D. 70, and Christians were scattered throughout the empire. By the time John wrote this letter, Christianity had been around for more than a generation. It had faced and survived severe persecution.

The main problem confronting the church at this time was declining commitment: many believers were conforming to the world's standards, failing to stand up for Christ, and compromising their faith. False teachers were plentiful, and they were accelerating the church's downward slide away from the Christian faith

John wrote this letter to put believers back on track, to show the difference between light and darkness (truth and error), and to encourage the church to grow in genuine love for God and for one another.

He also wrote to assure true believers that they possessed eternal life and to help them know that their faith was genuine—so they could enjoy all the benefits of being God's children. For more about John, see his Profile.

As an eyewitness to Jesus' ministry, John was qualified to teach the truth about him. The readers of this letter had not seen and heard Jesus themselves, but they could trust that what John wrote was accurate. We are like those second and third-generation Christians.

Though we have not personally seen, heard, or touched Jesus, we have the New Testament record of his eyewitnesses, and we can trust that they spoke the truth about him. See John 20:29.

John writes about having fellowship with other believers. There are three principles behind true Christian fellowship.

First, our fellowship is grounded in the testimony of God's Word. Without this underlying strength, togetherness is impossible.

Second, it is mutual, depending on the unity of believers.

Third, it is renewed daily through the Holy Spirit. True fellowship combines social and spiritual interaction, and it is made possible only through a living relationship with Christ.

Light represents what is good, pure, true, holy, and reliable. Darkness represents what is sinful and evil. The statement "God is light" means that God is perfectly holy and true and that he alone can guide us out of the darkness of sin. Light is also related to truth in that light exposes whatever exists, whether it is good or bad.

In the dark, good and evil look alike; in the light, they can be clearly distinguished. Just as darkness cannot exist in the presence of light, sin cannot exist in the presence of a holy God. If we want to have a relationship with God, we must put aside our sinful ways of living.

To claim that we belong to him but then to go out and live for ourselves is hypocrisy. Christ will expose and judge such deceit.

Chapter 4

Touch



Mark 10:13 -16

One day some parents brought their children to Jesus so he could touch them and bless them, but the disciples told them not to bother him.

Jesus was often criticized for spending too much time with the wrong people—children, tax collectors, and sinners (Matthew 9:11; Luke 15:1-2; Luke 19:7).

Some, including the disciples, thought Jesus should be spending more time with important leaders and the devout, because this was the way to improve his position and avoid criticism. But Jesus didn't need to improve his position.

He is God, and he wanted to speak to those who needed him most.

Adults are not as trusting as little children. To feel secure, all children need is a loving look and gentle touch from someone who cares.

Complete intellectual understanding is not one of their requirements. They believe us if they trust us. Jesus said that people should believe in him with this kind of childlike faith.

We should not have to understand all the mysteries of the universe; it should be enough to know that God loves us and provides forgiveness for our sin.

This doesn't mean that we should be childish or immature, but we should trust God with a child's simplicity and receptivity.

Eccles. 9:10

Whatever you do, do well. For when you go to the grave, there will be no work or planning or knowledge or wisdom.

When Solomon says the dead know nothing and that there is no work, planning, knowledge, or wisdom in death, he is not contrasting life with afterlife, but life with death. After you die, you can't change what you have done. Resurrection to a new life after death was a vague concept for Old Testament believers. It was only made clear after Jesus rose from the dead.

Considering the uncertainties of the future and the certainty of death, Solomon recommends enjoying life as God's gift. He may have been criticizing those who put off all present pleasures in order to accumulate wealth, much like those who get caught up in today's rat race. Solomon asks, "What is your wealth really worth, anyway?" Because the future is so uncertain, we should enjoy God's gifts while we are able.

Wearing white clothes and having oil on the head were signs of happiness and celebration.

Solomon also wrote a proverb about marriage. “He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD” (Proverbs 18:22). How sad it would be to be married and not appreciate the enjoyment and companionship God has given you.

It isn't difficult to think of cases where the swiftest or the strongest don't win, the wise go hungry, and the intelligent are unrewarded with wealth or honor.

Some people see such examples and call life unfair, and they are right. The world is finite, and sin has twisted life, making it what God did not intend.

Solomon is trying to reduce our expectations. The book of Proverbs emphasizes how life would go if everyone acted fairly;

Ecclesiastes explains what usually happens in our sinful and imperfect world. We must keep our perspective. Don't let the inequities of life keep you from earnest, dedicated work. We serve God, not people (see Col. 3:23).

Mark 6:56

Wherever he went—in villages and cities and out on the farms—they laid the sick in the market plazas and streets. The sick begged him to let them at least touch the fringe of his robe, and all who touched it were healed.

REAL LEADERSHIP

Mark gives us some of the best insights into Jesus' character.

Herod a leader was selfish, a murderer, immoral, a political opportunist and king over a small territory.

Jesus as a leader was compassionate, a healer, just and good, a servant And king over the entire world.

Matthew 8:3

Jesus touched him. "I want to," he said. "Be healed!" And instantly the leprosy disappeared.

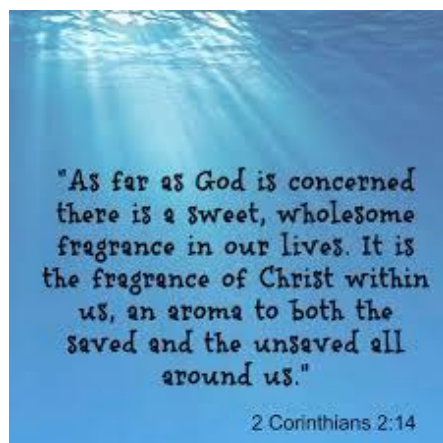
From Mark's Gospel we learn that Jesus precipitated this conversation by asking the disciples what they had been discussing among themselves earlier (Mark 9:33-34).

Jesus used a child to help his self-centered disciples get the point. We are not to be *childish* (like the disciples, arguing over petty issues), but rather *childlike*, with humble and sincere hearts. Are you being childlike or childish?

The disciples had become so preoccupied with the organization of Jesus' earthly kingdom that they had lost sight of its divine purpose. Instead of seeking a place of service, they sought positions of advantage. It is easy to lose our eternal perspective and compete for promotions or status in the church. It is difficult to identify with "children"—weak and dependent people with no status or influence.

Chapter 5

Smell



Deut. 4:27-29

For the Lord will scatter you among the nations, where only a few of you will survive. [28] There, in a foreign land, you will worship idols made from wood and stone, gods that neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell. [29] From there you will search again for the Lord your God. And if you search for him with all your heart and soul, you will find him.

Do you want to know God? God promised the Israelites that they would find him when they searched with all their hearts and souls. God is knowable and wants to be known—but we have to want to know him. Acts of service and worship must be accompanied by sincere devotion of the heart. As Hebrews 11:6 says, “Anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” God will reward those who pursue a relationship with him.

Ephes. 5:2

Live a life filled with love for others, following the example of Christ, who loved you and gave himself as a sacrifice to take away your sins. And God was pleased, because that sacrifice was like sweet perfume to him.

Just as children imitate their parents, we should imitate Christ. His great love for us led him to sacrifice himself so that we might live. Our love for others should be of the same kind—a love that goes beyond affection to self-sacrificing service.

When we see, hear and taste the truth in the Bible, we will know that we are sinners who need a savior. Jesus Christ provides that way through his death on the cross. Use your senses to receive and praise God, the only hope of all creation.

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