

PSALM 34.1-8: O TASTE AND SEE THAT THE LORD IS GOOD

What have the two following clips in common?

- VW and The Force
- Old Spice: The Man you could smell like

They are last year's top TV commercials!

But how many of us bought a VW or stocked up on Old Spice as a result of this commercials? The truth is that we have become increasingly cynical about advertising. As an exasperated Charlie Brown said in one of the Peanuts cartoons, 'You just can't get anybody to believe in you these days'.

But there is one form of advertising that still does work - and that is the power of personal recommendation. If I were to tell you that the other Saturday night I really enjoyed eating out at the Italian restaurant in the Atlantic Hotel, you might go and give the place a try. Again, if I told you that yesterday evening, I saw the latest James Bond and think it is a really good film, you might go and see it. Personal recommendation makes all the difference in the world.

Tonight I want you to listen to King David as he talks about God. I've been in really deep trouble, he says - but when I turned to God, it made all the difference in the world. Listen to the first eight verses of Psalm 34.

I will always thank the Lord; I will never stop praising him. I will praise him for what he has done; may all who are oppressed listen and be glad!... I prayed to the Lord, and he answered me; he freed me from all my fears. The oppressed look to him and are glad; they will never be disappointed. The helpless call to him, and he answers; he saves them from all his troubles.... Find out for yourself how good the Lord is"

Going to God for help made all the difference. Why don't you too find out the difference that God can make. Yes, "**Find out for yourself how good the Lord is!**" Or as NRSV more literally puts it: ***O taste and see that the Lord is good***"

Tonight we have enjoyed 'a taste of Asia'. Maybe some of you were a little suspicious of Indian food. If so, then I would hope that by tasting it, you have changed your mind. Indian food is really good.

However, tonight I don't want to promote Indian food. Rather with David I want to promote the difference that God can make to your lives. Taste and see - find out by experience how good the Lord is. Many of us want to prove Christianity first, and only then practise it afterwards. But Christianity by its very nature demands that proof and practice go hand in hand: the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

Let me tell you a story which illustrates the point. In the USA somewhere a tall office block was constructed, where the whole wall of a top storey office was made of glass. The people who had to work in the office didn't like it. To their simplistic

way of thinking, it seemed that you only had to lean on this fragile pane of glass and out and down you went. So the office workers went on strike. The management were in despair, for you can't change the shape of a building once it has been built. They called in the engineer. He looked at the window, He looked at the office workers sitting there, defiant and unconvinced, with their arms folded. Then he had an idea.

He walked back the length of the office, ran full-tilt at the window and launched himself at that glass with a shoulder barge which would have looked good on any football field. Then of course he bounced back, bruised, but with the window intact.

In some ways, that crashing on the window was an act of faith. As an engineer he knew that from a technical point of view that glass was absolutely solid - he knew that you could drive a truck at that glass without it necessarily breaking. But he had never himself tested the glass. On that day, he dared to launch himself against the glass, and at that point his theoretical knowledge became experimental.

O taste and see - find out for yourself how good God is.

The Psalmist delivers a challenge - are we willing to rise to the challenge?