

Faith And The Five Senses

Introduction. The ways we understand and perceive the world around us are known as senses. We have five traditional senses known as hearing, sight, touch, taste, and smell. The nervous system must receive and process information about the world outside in order to react, communicate, and keep the body healthy and safe. The stimuli from each sensing organ in the body is relayed to different parts of the brain through various pathways.

The Bible communicates to man the will of God in language that is easy to understand. One of the most potent methods of the Bible is its use of figurative language. We can observe how that throughout the Bible the “five senses” are said to have a part in one’s understanding of the Bible and his faith in God.

I. Hearing

- A. The primary means of communication between God and man is preaching which is perceived by our literal sense of hearing.
 - 1. Preaching is a very specific act. It is not a “stream of consciousness” or a time for making suggestions or trying out ideas.
 - 2. Preaching is careful and pointed communication of a message. It is a bold declaration of truth that is aimed at the heart and will of men (Acts 4:13, 29, 31). It is meant to stir the understanding, emotions, and the determination of the hearers.
- B. God expects us to hear Him.
 - 1. It is not enough that the gospel is preached by courageous men, it must be willingly heard and obeyed (Romans 10:14-17).
 - 2. Jesus described His purpose in speaking in parables in Matthew 13:10-15. The parables were for those whose ears were attuned to the truth and for those whose hearts are open. Failure to hear Jesus (Matthew 17:5) brings condemnation (Matthew 12:42).
 - 3. Like Cornelius, we must hear everything commanded by God (Acts 10:33; cp. James 1:19).
- C. The Bible also teaches us that God hears us — He always has, and He always will (Exodus 3:7; Psalm 6:8-9; John 9:31; 1 Peter 3:12).

II. Sight

- A. People have a tendency to put more stock in what they can see than any of the other senses. Anything we can see “with our own eyes” is hard to dismiss.
- B. The “sight” we need in order to believe is both literal and figurative.
 - 1. We see the word of God literally when we read the scriptures (1 Timothy 4:13).
 - 2. But, there is a figurative kind of sense that has part in our faith.
 - a) This is what we “see” by faith, which is not dependent on physical sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). In fact, what is seen and verified is no longer faith (Romans 8:24-25).
 - b) No man has ever seen God, yet we believe in Him (1 Peter 1:8). Moreover, the worlds were created by a God we cannot see, yet we

believe although none of us were eyewitnesses (Hebrews 11:1-2). We believe because of the testimony of scriptures.

- c) We can also see evidence for God all around us (Psalm 19:1-2). God has given us the ability to perceive Him in all that He has created. A man's lack of faith in the creator is without excuse (Romans 1:19-20).

III. Touch

- A. Our hearts are touched by the word of God. The sense of touch is what makes our perception of something “more real.”
 - 1. People who travel to the Middle East and see biblical places all comment on how the act of walking in places where Bible events happened brings the Bible to life.
 - 2. Don't you imagine that standing in the Areopagus in Athens (Acts 17) or sitting in the amphitheater in Ephesus (Acts 19) would deepen your appreciation of the biblical record of what happened there?
- B. The apostles had the advantage of having been with the Lord, having seen him, heard Him intimately, and handled Him (Luke 24:39-40; 1 John 1:1).
 - 1. Thomas needed to touch Jesus' wounds before he would believe in Him (John 20:27-29).
 - 2. But Jesus proclaimed a blessing on those who did not need to see and feel the wounds of Jesus to believe, but believed God's word as it is preached.
- C. We today are at the decided disadvantage to the apostles. We cannot touch the wounds of Jesus' hand. Our faith must come solely from the preaching of the word of God.
 - 1. However, there is the undeniable touch of God in our hearts when the word of God is preached (Acts 2:37; 5:33; 16:29; 24:25).
 - 2. There is the prick of our consciences which comes from the pull of God's word (1 Timothy 1:5; Hebrews 10:22).

IV. Taste

- A. The word of God, to the Christian, is sweet and delightful. It is what we hunger for (Psalm 19:10; 42:1-2; 119:103; Jeremiah 15:16).
- B. The word of God is often equally bitter to the taste.
 - 1. Ezekiel was commanded to eat the scroll of God's word, and when he did, it was sweet in his mouth and it filled his stomach. Then he was commanded to preach it (Ezekiel 2:9-3:3, 14).
 - 2. John was commanded to eat the “little book” and when he did it was sweet in his mouth, but it became bitter in his stomach (Revelation 10:9-10). The point of this illustration is that the word of God is good, but it is a message of bitter judgment against sin.

V. Smell

- A. The sense of smell seems the least likely of the five senses to have any correlation to the word of God and to faith. But the word of God is as sweet an aroma to Christians as our genuine worship is to God (“sweet savour” occurs 16 times in Leviticus [1:9, 13, 17; et al.]).

- B. Paul the apostle described the attitude of men toward the word of God in 2 Corinthians 2:15-16. He described the word of God, personified by himself and the apostles as an “aroma.” To the rebellious the apostles and their gospel was an “aroma of death,” but to the righteous, and those who loved the word of God, they were an “aroma of life.”
- C. This illustration is consistent with other statements made to the Corinthians. In previous statements Paul emphasized with figurative language that some want the gospel and others do not (1 Corinthians 1:18; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

Conclusion. If one rejects the word of God and denies God's existence; if he walks in sin, because he does not believe the gospel, then he has only himself to blame. God has appealed to us in the word of God in every way that matters. The word of God affects us entirely. It takes a truly hard heart to reject the “five senses” that God gave us and to which the Bible applies.

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