

**Mark 9: 49 and 50; “The Flavor of Salt”, Sermon # 80 in the series – “Astonished at His Teaching”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

It might have seemed impossible for the disciples, after hearing Jesus speak the words of verses 42-48, to think of having to cut off the limbs or members which had caused them to sin. But these last words of this discourse were given to show how the disciples then, and how we ourselves now, are supposed to think of this spiritual surgery. God sees it as a holy sacrifice being offered up by his people; a sacrifice which is most acceptable to Him.

The Lord Jesus is not commanding us to really and actually cut off our physical hand, or foot, or to pluck out our physical eye. He is commanding us to present our bodies to Him as a living sacrifice. He is telling us, just as Paul tells us in Romans 6: 19, that just as we, in the past, presented our members as slaves of uncleanness, and lawlessness before we were converted; and that led to more lawlessness; so now we are to present our members as slaves of righteousness which will lead to our pursuing righteousness in our life. This will lead to our actually becoming holy. God says, “Be ye holy, even as I am holy,” in 1 Peter 1: 16. If we will cut off sinfully diseased members of our heart and offer up our bodies in holy sacrifice to God, we will make progress in relation to our sanctification.

Our sanctification is two-fold. We are sanctified when we first believe; we are set apart to God’s purposes when we are first converted to Christ. God sees us in Christ; when we first believe in Him. And from that moment on, we are one of His saints; His holy ones. And then the second “stage” if you will, of sanctification; is going on to become what He already calls us. His purpose is that we really, and experientially, become holy. And so, our Lord Jesus uses some very graphic language, here, in reference to the sacrifices being offered. The unusual truth that is being conveyed to our minds and hearts is this: That the people mentioned here are being seen by God Himself as sacrifices that need to be salted, as they are being offered up to Him.

So this morning we want to look, 1<sup>st</sup> of all, at the salting of everyone with fire. 2<sup>nd</sup> – We will look at what it means for the believer to be seasoned with salt. And 3<sup>rd</sup> – We will look at what it means for a person to lose their saltiness, and what should be done about this.

**1<sup>st</sup> – We want to understand what this phrase means – “Everyone will be salted with fire.**

It says here in verse 49, “For everyone will be seasoned with fire.” I believe that when it says everyone will be seasoned, that it means that every person living and hearing the truth of the gospel will be salted with fire. Both the wicked and the righteous shall be seasoned with fire to see what kind of a savor will come from their life. Does God savor your life, and what flows from it? Is it a sweet smelling savor to Him, or is it a bad smell in His nostrils? Are you His wheat, or are you chaff? In Jeremiah Chapter 23, verses 28 and 29 it says, “What is the chaff to the wheat?” says the Lord.” “Is not my word like a fire?” says the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?”

Yes, His word is a fire, and it will separate the wheat from the chaff. But the people are either wheat; those trusting in God and His word; or they are chaff; those who do not allow His fire to purge away their sins through burning. Those who do not receive the truth that they must have Christ in order to deal with their sins in order to have them taken away; and those who have not found grace so that they then would find a burning zeal in their heart to cut off all the habits of sin; these shall perish everlastingly in the lake of fire.

Malachi 3, verse 2 says, “But who can endure the day of His coming?” “And who can stand when He appears? “For He is like a refiner’s fire and launderer’s soap.” “He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness.” This cannot

refer to Christ's Second Coming, for there will be no refining of people on that great day. Only judgment or eternal salvation. It rather refers to Christ's first coming and His ministry to the Jews. Some of the sons of Levi were purged and purified, and others were not. But this principle of being refined by Christ is most certainly applicable to all Christians today. So ask yourself now, do I perceive that my life is being refined by the Lord Jesus? Am I being purified from my sins? Am I bringing offerings in righteousness to Him today?

This is the fire that people are salted with. They are seasoned by the preaching of God's word, and it will bring out different responses from different people. The wicked will be salted with it in this life and since they will not repent, they will be drowned in unquenchable fire in the next, as Jesus said to us 3 times in the verses that went before this. The righteous shall be salted with it here in this life; they will let it do its good work in purging their sin; and they shall never be touched by it again, forever, in the next. God comes through the gospel preaching and salts people with fire.

He gives them commandment to repent, and thereby seasons them with fire. In this preaching He is showing them that they are fully responsible for the outcome of their life if they will not turn to Christ and repent of their sins. You can see this if you will turn with me to Matthew's gospel Chapter 3, and verse 5. John the Baptist is preaching, and listen to how he addresses both the wicked and the righteous in his preaching. It says here, "Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins." "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, 'Brood of vipers!' "Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

"Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.'" "For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones." "And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees." "Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry." "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Now, I hope that you will agree with me when I say that this is a prime example of the text that we are studying this morning. Everyone is coming out to hear John preach, and they are all being salted with fire. The Pharisees and the Sadducees he addresses in a very blunt and confrontative way. He calls them "a brood of vipers". This is not very polite. He is not affirming their supposed spirituality, and their being religious men or righteous men, in the least. In fact, he is reproving them severely, and telling them that they have not come close. In coming to John, they had wanted to be seen as spiritual and righteous men, but a good many of them may not at all have been interested in repentance, or in bringing forth the fruits worthy of repentance. To them, it probably felt like they were being sprinkled with fire.

Many of the multitudes of people who were coming to hear him thought that they were children of God because they were children of Abraham; they were descendants of Abraham; he was their father. But John tells them all, that God could easily from the stones, raise up children to Abraham. He was saying that their hearts were very hard if they believed that they could be saved by simply being born a Jew. He was saying that they needed more than the name of Jews in order to be saved from the wrath of God against sin. They must have what he could not give them. They must have Christ who could baptize them with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

But God was seasoning these people with fire through the preaching of John the Baptist. And He is seasoning all of you here this morning, with fire as well. The only thing that will quench the fire of conviction of sin is the water of the Word. Plunge yourself in the water of the

promise of Christ in the word. Be baptized in water to show forth the remission of sins and the cleansing through the blood of Christ. Be filled with the fire of holy desire of putting all the remaining corruption in your heart to death. Now if you will turn over to Luke Chapter 3, you will find the parallel passage to this one. And here in Chapter 3, verse 7, we find that not only the Pharisees and the Sadducees were addressed as a brood of vipers; but we find that there were also many others besides. “Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, ‘Brood of vipers!’ “Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” “Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance.... And etc.” Not only the Pharisees were a brood of vipers, but the multitudes of people that came who were in the same boat, as regards their sins.

We should conclude from this that not only self-righteous Pharisees need to repent, but all men need to repent. Why does John call the multitudes “vipers”? He calls them this because they were all poisoned with sin; they all could turn against him and strike at him like a snake if he told them exactly how bad their case was. In fact John did eventually get arrested and put in prison and had his head chopped off; why? Because, it says in verse 19, “But Herod the king, being rebuked by him concerning Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, also added this, above all, that he shut John up in prison.”

John was salting Herod with fire; he was giving him a taste of what was to come for him; the eternal and everlasting fire that awaited him, if he did not repent. And when John preached to the multitudes, he didn’t spare them in his preaching because they were many. He let even the those whose hearts were more tender know specifically what they needed to do to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Verse 9 – “So the people asked him saying, what shall we do then?” “He answered and said to them, ‘He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.’” (He was telling them of their stinginess and unwillingness to help the poor or those in need.)

“Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, ‘Teacher, what shall we do?’ And he said to them, ‘collect no more than what is appointed for you.’” (He was telling them to repent of their covetousness and greed, and to repent of their stealing, in their taking more than what was appointed for them to take.) “Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, ‘And what shall we do?’ So he said to them, ‘Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with you wages.’” (He is telling them to be gentle and kind and tell the truth about people, and to people, and not to grumble and complain that they were not paid more.) All of these things were very practical things, that he said to them. He was salting them with fire.

Let me ask you this morning; how do you respond to being salted with fire? How do you respond to the preaching of the word of God when the preacher tells you that you must repent of your sins or perish in eternal fire? Do you resent him when he happens to put his finger on your particular sins? Do you become angry, and think that he ought not speak to you about your need to repent, and about hell and eternal fire? Do you think that he ought not preach in such a way that you are convicted of your sins?

O, I think that you ought to be thankful to be seasoned with fire now, so that you might escape it later. O how good a thing it is; how great a blessing it is, to come to a thorough repentance of all of your sins; to have the fire of burning zeal to cut them off and put them to death. Never stop, my friend, until you have that great blessing which only comes through Jesus Christ. Only He can baptize you with the Holy Spirit and this holy kind of fire.

**Now 2<sup>nd</sup> – Let’s look at what it means for the believer to be seasoned with salt.**

At the end of verse 49 it says, “And every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt”. This is where the wicked and the righteous diverge. The wicked sometimes do offer sacrifices to God. But their sacrifices are not accepted. Their offerings of worship are not accepted, their prayers are not accepted, and their religious works, no matter how good in the sight of men, are not acceptable to God, because the sacrifice is not seasoned with salt. They may even be keeping the

commandments of God outwardly, but inwardly, if there is no grace at work; there is no salt. That is what salt represents in the words of our text. It represents the grace of God which comes to a person only through the Lord Jesus Christ. In Proverbs Chapter 15, verse 8, it says, “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord; but the prayer of the upright is His delight. Let us never believe the lie that all prayers are acceptable to Him, no matter whether they are offered in the name of the Lord Jesus or not. No, a person cannot be saved by praying prayers to God without offering them in the name of Jesus. A person cannot worship God unless they are coming through the mediation of the Lord Jesus; and they cannot have their sacrificial works accepted and approved in the sight of God unless they have the salt of the New Covenant grace upon them.

Witness the offerings of Cain and Abel at the beginning of the world. Cain offered God “an offering of the fruit of the ground.” It was the works of his own hands. But Abel brought the first-born of his flock and of their fat. His was the sacrifice that typified what Jesus Christ; God’s first-born, and only Begotten Son, would do on the cross in dying as a sacrifice for sin. Abel’s offering was accepted because it had the grace of Christ upon it. Cain’s was not. And since it was not, Cain was very angry. God had to say to him, “Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen?” “If you do well, will you not be accepted?” “And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door.” “And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.”

Doing well is defined for us here as bringing a sacrifice which God is pleased with; one that speaks of the sacrifice and grace of Christ and the covenant of grace. But Cain did not pluck out his eye when he saw that his offering was not accepted. He did not cut off his hand from taking up whatever weapon he used upon his brother when he killed him. And he did not stop his feet from running to do this evil. He was seasoned with fire, but his sacrifice was not seasoned with salt. He thought that his works were good enough to be accepted by God, because he thought so highly of himself.

Now turn with me to the book of Leviticus Chapter 2. These commandments of the law fall under the Old Covenant ceremonial law. But these sacrifices, in their being offered, point to grace of God coming to all of His people to sanctify all of their offerings in righteousness through Jesus Christ our Lord. Look at verse 11. “No grain offering which you bring to the Lord shall be made with leaven, for you shall burn no leaven nor any honey in any offering to the Lord made by fire. “As for the offering of the first fruits, you shall offer them to the Lord, but they shall not be burned on the altar for a sweet aroma.” “And every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt; you shall not allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your grain offering.” “With all of your offerings you shall offer salt.”

These grain offerings are called, “Minchah” in the original Hebrew. They were an offering of the fruits of the earth; grain made into fine unleavened flour, and anointed with oil. (Verse 4) The grain offering is meant to make us think of the offering which Christ made to God; He who was unleavened; without sin, became sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5: 21) And He offered Himself up to God on our behalf, as a sacrifice and a sweet-smelling savor to God. (Ephesians 5: 2)

But the grain offering also represents us, offering ourselves (as believers in Christ) and all that we would do for God, up to Him as a sacrifice. We cannot offer our offering with leaven; that is with sin working in ourselves. It must be cut off and repented of. “If I regard iniquity in my heart, surely the Lord will not hear.” (Psalm 66: 18) But Christ, who is our Savior and Mediator and High Priest, did not have any sin and He will be our salt. “But surely the Lord has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer.” (Psalm 66: 19) He heard it and received my sacrifice of praise for the salvation of my soul, for Christ’s sake; not my sake. And He gives me grace and power to repent and to change, and to offer myself a living sacrifice unto God. Our offering cannot be offered with honey; that is with selfish ambition and pride working in our

heart. If we would do anything for Him, or offer anything to Him as a gift of ourselves or our service to Him, it cannot mean that we would be seeking our own glory in our offering of ourselves.

Remember that Proverbs 25: 27 says, “It is not good to eat much honey; so to seek one’s own glory is not glory.” This was what motivated the whole discourse that we are studying in Mark 9. That is what it’s all centered around; the disciples talking about who would be the greatest among them. You can offer the first-fruits; the first and best of what you can do for God, but it shall not be burned on the altar. In other words, that is not the basis of the Lord’s accepting the sacrifice of what you might give to Him and do for Him.

What is acceptable is Christ who is the first-fruits of all of God’s people. He was “burned on the altar”; He was crucified on the tree. He bore the wrath of God there as a sacrifice in our place. His grace is the salt of the Eternal Covenant, and every offering that we make shall be seasoned with salt. The salt of the Covenant shall not be lacking on it, which means that we will remember in the greatest of our sacrifices and in offering of the best of our good works; that it is Christ’s grace which makes these possible and acceptable in God’s sight. “Every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt.”

**3<sup>rd</sup> – This leads us to our final point – We want to look at what it means for a person to lose their saltiness (their savor), and what should be done about this.**

“Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it?” “Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.” I have said to you that salt is a word-picture for grace. I think that I can prove this. Turn with me to Colossians Chapter 4, and verse 5. “Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.” “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.” You can see here, that in order to be wise in your speech, around those who do not know the Lord, that you need to redeem the time; that you should recognize that time is passing by and that people are not changing; they are not repenting of their sins, they are not trusting in Christ for salvation. And you want them to come to know Him.

The best way that you can conduct yourself while you are in their presence is to be praying in your heart and mind and thinking of what words that God might help you to speak; words which would show them some aspect of your relationship to Him, or set forth some truth from His Word. Consciously think of how you, as a person can convey the reality of what it means to know Christ. If you look up the word “savor” in the dictionary you find this: 1. the quality in a substance that affects the sense of taste or of smell. 2. a particular taste or smell. 3. A distinctive quality or property. 4. power to excite or interest. Think about the fact that people are tasting of your life, spiritually speaking. Is it salty? Is it gracious? Do you speak to others about your relationship with Christ and the truth of the Bible?

Your speech is important to God and to other people. You let your speech be seasoned with salt; that is, gracious words which speak of a God who is gracious in Christ. Gracious words that will convey the truth of what ought to be said to answer questions about God, about salvation, about how to live righteously in this evil world, and how God is glorified in a sinful world. That is seasoning your speech with salt. It is one of the righteous sacrifices, seasoned with salt, which are offered to God in order to win people around you. You could talk about a hundred other things than God and spiritual things. But because you love Christ, you want to speak about Him. You offer the sacrifice of praise, the sacrifices of good works, and the sacrifices of good words. And God is pleased with such.

Salt is a most amazing substance. Salt has a preserving quality to it. It is used to be used extensively to preserve meat and to purge corruptions out of it. It was used on meat; worked into the meat; to preserve it from going bad. Even so, grace preserves the soul from all sorts of sin and defilements. The Lord works His good grace, His salt, into our hearts. In Titus Chapter

2, verse 12, we are told that “the grace of God teaches us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world. Salt seasons our food and causes bland foods to taste much better. Job Chapter 6 and verse 6 says, “Can flavorless food be eaten without salt?” And, of course, the answer is no, it cannot.

Similarly in the spiritual realm, the salt of God’s good grace makes every person trusting in Christ to have good, moral, right, and tasteful things coming from their heart and coming out in their speech and conduct. People around you, if you are a Christian, ought to be able to taste of the savor of your life and partake of the reality of grace in the things that you say and do. Matthew 5: 13 says, “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned?” “It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.” You see, people around you are tasting and smelling the savor of your life to see if you are salted with grace. Ask yourself now, if when people are around you, is your speech seasoned with grace? Ask yourself if the good works that you do point to Christ and to doing what is right? Ask yourself if grace is purging out corruption and purifying your heart by the exercise of your faith.

But what should you do if you do if you find that your life does not savor of grace? You need to obey the injunction of the Lord Jesus here in verse 50: “Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.” Grace is that which satisfies your soul and causes you to be at peace with people around you. The Christian is a peace-maker. He is not at war with the people around him; that is, if grace is working in His life. And ultimately, the reason that He is not at war with people around him is that the Lord is giving Him grace to satisfy His heart, even in the most troubling and difficult of situations that he faces in regard to people around him. You cannot afford to be a salt-less Christian. You will be very hard to get along with, if it is the case. And you will neither be useful or fruitful in relation to God or men.

Indeed, you may not be a Christian at all if there is no saltiness in your speech and conduct. In Luke Chapter 14, and verse 34, we are told: “Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned?” “It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out.” “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” Jesus knows that is essential for you to become salty if you are not; and to keep up your saltiness if you have it; so that you will not lose your savor. Lot’s wife was worldly, when she turned back to look at Sodom and Gomorrah with longing eyes. She refused to obey the command not to look back. She had no salt; and so the Lord because of her disobedience turned her into a pillar of salt; a lasting monument to His justice. Some Christians, or those who think that they are Christians, are the same as her. Worldliness will drain you of your saltiness, but I am hoping for better things for each one of you. I am hoping that you will be lasting monuments to the greatness of God’s grace and kindness. Have you tasted of it?

Here is how you become salty again. Psalm 34: 8 – “Oh taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him.” “Oh fear the Lord, you His saints!” “There is no want to those who fear Him.” (No lack of salt, or grace) “The young lions lack and suffer hunger; but those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing.” Well, salt is good; it is a good thing. If you seek the Lord you shall not lack it. Let me close by saying this about salt: It is of universal use throughout the world. It is the one thing needful among men. People all over the world need it, and they use it. Animals come looking for salt licks, and people need it for life, and to help them in so many ways. Will you not see the importance of grace? Without it you are lost. With it you are saved. Without it many things in life are unpleasant and unsatisfactory. But with it all things are made palatable; they are made tasteful. And even your life will taste better to yourself to others if you have salt. Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.

