

“Stay Salty My Friends”

Today I want to focus on what Jesus says about salt. But before I begin, I realize that my sermon title may be a bit controversial. You see I found out a couple of years ago giving a talk to my youth group that the word salty means something else now as it did in Jesus' day. The word now as explained in the urban dictionary means angry or bitter towards someone. That is not what I mean, nor is it what Jesus is saying. In fact, it's really the exact opposite. Jesus is saying,

If you pamper sin in your life, you will lose your "salty" character and not be able to affect others for Christ.

In a series of strong statements, Jesus emphasized how terrible sin is. Basically he is saying, deal drastically with sin as a surgeon does with a cancerous tumor. The imagery of cutting off the hand that causes sin, etc., is not meant literally but instead emphasizes the necessity of a decisive rejection of sin. In other words, you gain by losing. - *With the Word*

Most of us would agree that these are strange statements.

BUT: (Andrew Greeley on Domesticating Jesus) says, “If Jesus makes you feel comfortable with your agenda, then he's not Jesus.... Once you domesticate Jesus, he isn't there any more.”

So to break through to his disciples again, Jesus asks: “But if salt loses its flavor, how will you be seasoned? Or better asked, How Do You Re-Salt the Salt?”

To answer that, we really have to look at the cultural background of salt.

(Tyndale) Some background on "salt" (Mk 9:50) is helpful. Salt is not as valuable today as it was during the time of Jesus. Salt can be purchased very cheaply. Salt played an important role in the ancient world. It was necessary to life in Palestine, and had

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commercial value. Salt was used as a preservative for meats and as a means of payment. The soldier who was "not worth his salt" had not earned his "salary" (a word derived from the Latin word for "salt"). Its wholesome antiseptic properties are still universally recognized. The main source of salt in Palestine was from the area southwest of the Dead (Salt) Sea. *Bible Knowledge*.

It's not surprising then that Jesus says: Salt is good; that is, it is useful and beneficial.

Therefore, our Christian lives are to be “salty”. "

In another occasion, as we discussed in our bible study this past Wednesday, Jesus said that Christians are the salt of the earth in (Matt. 5:13). God expects us to exert a healthful, purifying influence. As long as we fulfill their discipleship, and don't be a stumbling block to them, then we are to be a source of spiritual blessing to them.

Is Anyone Thirsty Yet?

Salt could mean in this verse that, salt imparts a desirable flavor. Or that salt preserves from decay. These are true, however I think what Jesus is meaning here is that **salt creates thirst**.

In other words, have we ever made anyone *thirsty* for the Lord Jesus Christ?

What if maybe some of us have lost our salt, and can no longer thirst? "But if the salt loses its flavor, how can you make it salty again?"

This makes re-salting the salt imperative for our spirituality.

Salt today is purified and does not lose its taste; but the salt of that day contained impurities and could lose its flavor, could lose its saltiness. The coarse, impure salt from the inland sea was susceptible to deterioration, leaving savourless salt-like crystals as residue, and especially what was gathered from the Dead Sea in Palestine, contained

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many impurities. If it loses its saltiness, its savory quality, it cannot be regained so such salt is worthless. ; What was used as salt in ancient times, however was sometimes diluted by the addition of white sand, which made it "unsalty." Such unsalty salt was cast on the roadbeds to inhibit the growth of weeds. it is a saltlessness nothing can season and it is of no use to season anything else. It is like an exploded shell, a burnt-out crater, a spent force. This is a **warning** for all Christians.

Christians, can and sometimes do cease to function as the "salt" of the world, and it is against this that Jesus warned.

If the true salt were removed, what remained might still look like salt but could not perform the life-giving and life-saving function of salt. A person may have the external appearance of a disciple, but not the internal properties. *Robertson's Word Pictures:*

Mark 9:50.

Jesus cautioned them, against losing that which they had received from Himself.

We should counteract the moral decay in society, just as salt preserves food from decay.

When we lose this desire to "salt" the earth with the love and message of God, we become useless to him. If the disciple does not live in harmony with Jesus and with others, but sins or causes others to sin, the disciple will be worthless as salt, and unable to fulfill his or her function. A Christian who is not carrying out his duties as a true disciple is barren and ineffective. It is not enough to make a good start in the Christian life.

Unless there is constant and radical self-judgment, the child of God is failing to achieve the purpose for which God saved him.

The Purpose of Salt

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In The Journal of Biblical Counseling, Timothy Keller makes the following observation about salt:

The job of salt was to make something taste good. He says, I don't know about you, but I can't stand corn on the cob without salt on it. When I have eaten a piece of corn on the cob that I really like, I put it down, and what do I say? "That was great salt." No, I say, "That was great corn on the cob." Why? Because the job of the salt is not to make you think how great the salt is, but how great the thing is with which it's involved.

Van Morris, Mount Washington, Kentucky; source: Timothy Keller, The Journal of Biblical Counseling (Volume 19, Winter 2001)

"Have salt in yourselves"

points to the disciples' need to "have salt" which is good (not worthless) within themselves continually. IVP background. Once you have lost that precious Christian character, how will you restore it?

That real salt by definition does not lose its saltiness only reinforces the strength of the image (cf. comment on Mt 5:13).

Here "salt" depicts what distinguishes a disciple from a non-disciple (cf. Matt. 5:13; Luke 14:34). A disciple is to maintain his allegiance to Jesus at all costs and to purge out destructive influences (cf. Mark (9:43-48)).

Jesus was warning his disciples not to lose that characteristic in them that brought life to the world and prevented its decay, that is, not to lose their spirit of devotion and self-sacrifice (cf. v.49) to Jesus Christ and the Gospel.

(New American) Mk 9:50, "Have salt in yourselves" has been variously interpreted to refer to being willing to be sacrificed, common sense (cf. Col 4:6), loving neighbors,

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wisdom, fellowship and friendship, and being at peace. Probably the idea is simply to give life and preservation to the world.

This miscellaneous collection of the sayings of Jesus on discipleship began with a dispute (Mk 9:33-34)

Be a power for God in the world. Exert a beneficial influence for the glory of Christ. Be intolerant of anything in your life that might lessen your effectiveness for Him.

what they would need for this purpose would be to have in themselves 'salt', i.e. love for their neighbours, and a readiness to serve them, and make sacrifices for their sakes. (New Inter Bible Comm)

Or in other words, Random Acts of Kindness. (Believers)

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She and her husband, Aaron, are part of a growing network of Christians who seek to anonymously bless other people in the name of Jesus. They have even started a website to help share ideas, www.raoked.com. Some of those ideas include:

- Leaving a roll of quarters at the laundromat
- Paying for the person behind you at a drive-thru
- Leaving grocery gift cards in mailboxes
- Paying rent for a family in need
- Handing out water or sports drinks on a biking trail.

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Finally, "Be at Peace With Each Other"

(New American) 9:50 This miscellaneous collection of the sayings of Jesus' explanation of servanthood or discipleship began with a dispute provoked by the disciples' strife where they had argued over which of them was the greatest. (vv. 33-34) and it concludes with an admonition to be at peace with one another.

(Zondervan) 50 Jesus' disciples could only be at peace with one another where that kind of devotion instead of self-interest prevailed (cf. v.34)

In essence Jesus said, "Be loyal to Me and then you will be able to maintain peace with one another instead of arguing about status" (cf. Rom. 12:16a; 14:19).

(Pradis). Strife is resolved and peace restored when we recognize in one another a common commitment to Jesus and the gospel.

(Believers) "And have peace with one another." This apparently refers back to verses 33 and 34, Pride must be put away and replaced by humble service for all.

Mark 9:50 We should make a difference in the "flavor" of the world we live in, just as salt changes meat's flavor (see Matthew 5:13).

(Bible Exposition) Commitment and character are the essentials, if we are to glorify Him and have peace with each other.

(Harpers) ... Disciples who bicker about power, rather than lead sacrificial lives, will lose their effectiveness (they will be like salt losing its saltiness). Rather they are to live in peace. (and in outreach to others).

Teachers: Harmony (Mark 9:42-50). How, then, does Jesus instruct His followers to live as disciples? They, and we, are to live a life of prayer and of servanthood in a way that

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promotes harmony by personally rejecting temptations to sin, and being careful not to cause brothers and sisters to sin either.

My Challenge to you:

What can you do this week to make your witness for Christ clearer to the unbelievers around you?

From the words of Francis of Assisi, let us pray:

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace,

Where there is hatred, may I bring love,

Where there is malice, pardon

Where there is discord, harmony

Where there is error, truth

Where there is doubt, faith

Where there is despair, hope

Where there is darkness, Your light

Where there is sadness may I bring joy.

Oh, Master, may I seek not so much

To be comforted as to comfort

To be understood as to understand

To be loved as to love

For it is in giving our lives that we shall find them,

It is in forgiving that we shall be forgiven

It is in dying that we shall rise up to eternal life. Amen.