

Daily Bible Study

“A Salt Trilogy” Mark 9:49 - 50

February 20 – February 26, 2011

THE LORD’S DAY & MONDAY – As we return to our study of Mark’s gospel we take as our text the last verses of **Mark 9**; namely **Mark 9:49-50**. We have entitled this message *A Salt Trilogy* for in this short passage we read three teachings by Jesus where He uses the metaphor of salt. It is my understanding that these three teachings are related in thought. Some see these as strictly three independent teachings and it is true they can stand alone independently in the lessons they convey to the listener. But as we are so often prone to do with Scripture, in haste or excitement we miss or set aside the context of a passage and therefore miss the main point that in this case, Jesus is making to His men. I must say from the start, especially **verse 49** of this passage, has provided many various interpretations by Godly scholars through the centuries. For different reasons **verse 49** is considered by many as somewhat difficult to define as to its precise meaning. Like we have seen in many portions of God’s Word, it is not the Scripture that is the problem or that is too vague and unclear; rather, it is the prideful and fallen human beings that attempt to explain and define God’s written revelation. There is no reason to panic though Beloved, God has given us His Spirit and we can go to the Word and Spirit in prayer and trust in Him to teach us and guide us all the time remembering that our presuppositions are with us. In this specific instance, I think remembering the context and entire last ongoing section and discussion between Jesus and the disciples is KEY in helping us see the meaning Christ intended. In a nutshell, I believe Jesus is explaining to the disciples that they as living sacrifices (Christians) would undergo trial which would help grow them into maturity so that they would be a blessing to both themselves and others. And furthermore, if they are to have a positive influence upon anyone, they must remember to kill sinful pride as they mortify their sin and have peace with one another. This is precisely what they were NOT doing in the preceding verses. They were not being humble servants, they were not being a blessing to others, and they were not at peace with each other. All these things were sin and all these things thankfully were and are conquerable through Jesus power. Read our text: **Mark 9:49 – 50** *“For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. 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.”*

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: Father God, teach me and feed me from Your Word this week. Help me to be humble as I study and hear the important truths You are saying to me through Sacred Scripture.

TUESDAY – **Mark 9:49** “*For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt.*” We begin our study of this text with the 1st of the *Salt Trilogy* as we look closer at **verse 49**. I mentioned this verses difficulty and some believe that is why it is omitted by Matthew and Luke and found exclusively in Mark’s gospel record. Adding to the difficulty is the fact that there is some textual variance with some manuscripts omitting “*and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt.*” But in proceeding to study we must remember the immediate context which is so very important. Also keep in mind that Jesus is talking to His disciples in this passage, yet we can learn from what He is teaching as well though removed from the specific conversation by centuries. We find this to be the case in the very beginning phrase “*For everyone...*” Jesus, in the primary context is speaking to His disciples who would live out the things He is about to mention and yet by extension we see that all true disciples of Jesus find Jesus words here to be applicable. Furthermore, even those who are not His disciples (the unsaved) can be in view. Everyone will be seasoned with fire speaks to the fact that a fiery trial will come upon all people. Some will find in the fire a judgment while some will have in the fiery trial the purpose of purification. John the Baptist referred to Jesus as coming with a Baptism of The Holy Spirit and fire in **Matthew 3:11-12** which goes on to speak about the judgment and burning. But not only will there be fire of judgment, there is a purifying fire like The Apostle Peter reminds believers in **1 Peter 4:12** “*Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you...*” This verse I believe addresses both of these facts. In support of that line of thinking is that it would seem that our Lord has in mind or at least is referring to **Leviticus 2:13** as He speaks in our current text. **Leviticus 2:13** states: “*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 your offerings you shall offer salt.*” We’ll stop here today but I would ask you to consider the fact that there is coming a day of reckoning with The Almighty Creator of Heaven and Earth, our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: *Father, keep me consciously aware that one day You’ll call for an account of my life. Thank You Jesus that I will avoid ultimate, eternal condemnation because of Your perfect life and sacrifice in my place. Help me live in a manner that pleases & glorifies Your name.*

WEDNESDAY – **Mark 9:49** “*For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt.*” As we continue we are talking about the idea of a fire of judgment and purification. When we speak of the fire of judgment tied to the final judgment as seen in passages such as **1 Corinthians 3:13** we must remember that when the final judgment does take place all the “wish I had’s” are done as well. It is the FINAL judgment. But in this life we have mentioned that we do undergo fiery trials which purify us and help us in developing into Godly, preserving, “salty” Christian people. Fiery trials are necessary to refine us. God’s “living sacrifices” (**Romans**

12:1-2) like the ones mentioned in **Leviticus 2** need to be salted. This is the painful process of discipline. It was Spurgeon who said, “Do not indulge the notion that you can be contented with learning or learn without discipline.” God sends the fires our way to purify us and make us into persevering and if I may “preservative laden Christians”. I am not referring to our awful dietary habits but our place in this world as *salt* to bring influence and Godly, God like and God honoring flavor to everyday life. The former verses (**Mark 9:42-47**) which refer to cutting off hand or foot or plucking out the eye that would cause sin and offense seems somewhat linked to this verse dealing with the painful work, trial, fire, and discipline of self sacrifice necessary for us to go through in order to purify us as believers. All of us as believers can understand this to one degree or another; some of the most painful moments in my Christian life were and are the moments that God humbles, shapes, and grows us as He purifies us and conforms us more into Jesus image. In the midst of these times Beloved, take heart, be encouraged, and meditate on The Apostle’s words in **2 Corinthians 4:17**.

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, thank You for caring for me to the point that You providentially bring even fiery trials into my life as You purify me. Help me see Your hand & trust and obey You.

THURSDAY – Mark 9:50 “*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.*” As we move to the 2nd of our *Salt Trilogy* we shift from the severe warning and call for alertness we have clearly seen in **verse 49** and hear Jesus describe the positives of learning and heading the 1st truth. Jesus now states the universally recognized fact that *Salt is good*. For many reasons it is good. In the culture in which Jesus was speaking a primary thought that would come into people’s minds is the preserving qualities of salt. Without refrigerators in those days the people relied on salt to keep food and preserve it for long periods of time. We need not state the obvious that a steak without salt is just not as tasty (you supply the food for example). *Salt is good* and Christians are called to bring a wholesome flavor and preserving affect to this sin cursed, fallen world in which we live. Remember the context again Beloved; the arguing arrogant disciples, the warning to guard against their own sin, the call for peace and humility toward others working in Jesus’ name. Are you salting people and situations for good? I am speaking about the “*salt of Divine grace and growth*” if I may. The life influenced and led by The Holy Spirit. The disciples needed to be reminded that *if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it?* Just like salt can lose its saltiness those who are not humble and submissive to God’s Holy Spirit and living Word but harden themselves against it will become of no use in bringing flavor and life to the lost world or other Christians for that matter. People see our conduct and if in our conduct we do not live to the standards of our calling (in this passage- love, service, humility and peace) our words, knowledge and lives will not do much good as *salt*. We won’t flavor for good we will just leave a “bad taste” in others mouths not to mention our Lord’s. We will be that insipid tasteless, flavorless, “unsalty” salt.

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: *Holy Spirit of God, help me walk with You and be controlled by You and Your Word that I would not become “unsalty” salt to those You bring me into contact with.*

FRIDAY & SATURDAY – Mark 9:50 “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.” Our Lord brings this epic teaching to a close and pinnacle as He speaks to the 3rd Salt Trilogy in the last portion of **verse 50**. He takes the salt metaphor and applies spiritual truth to these men. He says that if you as a Christian lose the properties of salt; lose your love for others, heart of service and humility to others, lose your salting influence because of unchecked pride, ambition, lust (whatever), the sin which needs to be radically dealt with or *cut off*, how will you be restored to salty vigor? What a lesson! So to wrap this wonderful teaching up Jesus says, *Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another*. You do have the salt within as true believers; you have the fruit of The Spirit (**Galatians 5:22-23**). We have it and are called to live toward others in the salt of wisdom, love, humility, service, hatred of our sin among other things. We have been warned in the prior verses of our text that the Christian life is made up of these Godly traits not prideful, arrogant, argumentative, lobbying for prestige place and position qualities such as the disciples were demonstrating. There is no place in the Christian life for envy (which is interestingly found in **Galatians 5:26** immediately after the fruit of The Spirit is mentioned), contention, rivalry, selfish ambition. Jesus saw that even His 12 Disciples were vulnerable to these sins and therefore He warned them and taught them to *have peace with one another*. We are told in Scripture to *endeavor to keep the unity of The Spirit in the bond of peace* (**Ephesians 4:3**). Don’t be like the disciples and react sinfully to people and situations out of pride; rather love, serve, and pray for others realizing God’s grace toward you as a sinner. If we lived that way our influence would be both shocking & irresistible (**Acts 5:12b-13**) but sadly and tragically we find we are often just irritating instead. May we learn this incredibly important, necessary, practical lesson of *who is the greatest?* Answer...the last of all, servant of all.

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: *Father, forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.*