



THE PARABLES OF JESUS

THE SALT

Before Life Group

Read [Mark 9:42-50](#)

At the end of Mark 9, Jesus tells this brief parable: “Everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other.” ([Mark 9:49-50, NIV](#)). At first glance, verses 49 and 50 are only thematically related, in that they both refer to salt. Context, though, paints a different picture of the parable of the salt told in Mark’s Gospel. Directly preceding these verses are a dire warning against teaching falsehood and preserving oneself from the ravages of sin.

Jesus speaks in hyperbole regarding causing those who believe in Him to stumble. Death would be a better alternative than to frighten someone away from a relationship with Jesus Christ by what they do or what they teach. Therefore, it is vital that we watch our actions carefully. This is not only for our sake, but for the sake of those whom God places in our care. As representatives of Jesus to the world we live in, when people see us, they associate what we do with the things that Jesus approves of us doing. While all Christians still struggle with sin and temptation, striving to grow in grace daily, the world only sees our external expression. Thus, whatever causes us to sin should be removed.

This is the definition of salt to the world. Salt acts as a flavor for meats and other foods. Normally, in beginning with any form of seasoning, you would most likely start with salt. It is designed to increase the potential of the food in order to bring the flavor beyond what it normally would do on its own. Furthermore, in the ancient days, salt also functioned as a preservative. People had no access to refrigerators or other forms of prolonged cooling. Salt aided in keeping the food fresh for longer periods of time.

We, as follower of Jesus Christ who have declared that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that He saves, are the salt of the world. We become the salt as the reach of the Holy Spirit moves within us and extends outward from us. The Spirit of God seeks to redeem and sanctify His bland and dying creation that sin shattered. Furthermore, the Spirit of God longs for our preservation through burning away the decay and death that came from our sinful nature. In seeking to ensure that no part of us encourages others to sin, everyone will experience the full thrust of salt and fire.

The Role of Salt and Fire

This parable begins with a haunting warning that everyone will be salted with fire. There is no one who will escape this fate. Everyone in some form or another will experience a season of fire. It is no coincidence that this directly follows being careful of what and how we instruct others. The role of salt and fire is to preserve the soul and purge sin. Thus, in teaching others, we will be judged in the same way. For the non-believers,

they will experience the fullness of God's wrath poured out on them. The sin they refused to relinquish will be extinguished by a Holy and Righteous God.

The Christian though experiences the fire of God in a different way. The wrath of God is satisfied through Christ accepting the judgment of God on our behalf. God poured out the consequences of the fire on Jesus in order that we might be saved from our transgressions and sins. Throughout the bible, the Spirit is often referred to as a burning fire. This imagery depicts the sheer force that the Holy Spirit has upon a person. The Holy Spirit and sin cannot inhabit the same space. One must go, as the two are mutually exclusive to one another. The fire we face is the result of the Holy Spirit's invitation to come into our lives and have His way within us. Removing dead flesh is a painful process, but it is ultimately beneficial in order to thrive spiritually.

The imagery of salt and fire is reminiscent of the directives in [Leviticus 2:13, NIV](#) "Season all your grain offerings with salt. Do not leave the salt of the covenant of your God out of your grain offerings; add salt to all your offerings." God intended for the offerings to be seasoned with salt and in every case the fire consumed the offering completely. As Christians, we too are living sacrifices seasoned with salt. Our personal wants, desires, and urges all must be sacrificed. Everyone, in coming to Christ, leaves behind his old life. Yet, in leaving behind the old, we pave the way to embrace the new. We are transformed and renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit to be the salt to the world.

The Nature of Who We Are

So, Jesus asks the question "Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other." ([Mark 9:50, NIV](#)) In truth, salt is salty because it is salt. Salt isn't sweet, nor is it bitter, it is salt because of the nature of what it is. Likewise, we are by design and in the very core of our being, intended to reflect the glory of God in everything we do. Being made in the image of God, we put on full display the God that resides in us and transforms our soul. As the refiner's fire of the Holy Spirit works within us, we become the salt that we were intended to be by design.

After the fall, we marred our image and lost our purpose by disconnecting ourselves from our intended purpose and design. From the beginning, it was God's intention to delight in His beloved creation and remain in communion with Him in the Garden of Eden. Sin wedged a great chasm between God and man, a chasm that we willingly chose to endure. For momentary pleasure, we doubted the truth and goodness of God for the lie of sin, forsaking our purpose and identity. Yet, despite our rebellion, through the wondrous work of Jesus Christ on the cross our purpose is reformed and laid before us. We, as salt, can reclaim our saltiness. We can return to the communion of everlasting fellowship with our Savior. The Father reigning in heaven sent His Son Jesus Christ to pave the path for our return; and, by the hands of the Holy Spirit in our soul, we are restored to our rightful position. Through the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ, the salt that had forgotten its saltiness came to be delivered from sin and restored to its rightful identity.

Furthermore, just as no one uses one grain of salt and expects it to be effective for any purpose, we too are not meant to be only one grain of salt in the world. Jesus concludes this brief parable by stating, "Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other." ([Mark 9:50, NIV](#)) Time and time again, the bible makes it abundantly clear that God's intention is for all Christians to comprise the body of Christ. The salt, then, is not just one person but a collective group that functions together. The church, when it strives to pursue God and display His glory, profoundly impacts the world. Like salt, it provides flavor and life to whatever it touches. It preserves the integrity of the things it interacts with. Between us, we are all to be salty with one another.



When a person begins to stray from his intended design or fall into temptation, the church stands with him to aid him. The church shares strength with one another during times of need, and locks arms together during times of persecution. Mostly, the church, as the salt of the world, rushes in together to share the impact of the Gospel to the ends of the earth. This is our purpose—to die to ourselves and live unto Christ and reclaim the saltiness that God placed in us before we were born.

Discussion Questions

Read [Mark 9:42-50](#)

1. As Jesus is discussing cutting off parts that cause us to sin, this is of course, a metaphor. What does that mean in our modern-day context?
2. What are the effects of sin on a person? Why do we continually fall into the temptations of sin knowing the negative effects it has on us?
3. When was a time you felt the conviction of the Holy Spirit that some sin needed to be removed from your life? Describe this process. How did you protect yourself from the continuing temptation?
4. Why is it important to offer ourselves as living sacrifices? What occurs in our hearts when we hand over our desires and wants to God? How does this express itself through what we do?
5. How does it feel knowing that Jesus Christ bore the consequences of the wrath of God? What changes in our life in coming to the realization that Christ died for our sins?
6. What does it mean to be salty in a scriptural sense? How does God restore our saltiness? What specific purposes has God called you to?
7. How does the Holy Spirit move within us as the body of Christ? How can we represent God to one another in the church through the Holy Spirit's empowerment? How can we represent God to the world that is looking in from the outside?

About the Author.

Pastor Daniel Burton lives in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida. In May 2015, Daniel graduated from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary with his Master of Divinity. It was here that he began to explore his passion for Theology and deeper exploration of the word of God. Daniel believes that, at its core, Theology should be fun. Check out more of his work at <http://thegospeloutpost.com>

