

Do You Have Salt?

By J. W. Jepson, D.Min

Copyright © 1980, 2017 by J. W. Jepson

All rights reserved, including the right to grant the following permission and to prohibit the misuse thereof:
The Author hereby grants permission to reproduce the text of this article, without changes or alterations*,
as a ministry, but not for commercial or non-ministry purposes.

*Permission is given for publication of excerpts and condensed versions.

This article was first published in *The Pentecostal Evangel*, November 9, 1980

* * * * *

Salt has always been important to mankind. Besides its use in foods to enhance their flavor, salt has served through the centuries as a preservative and an antiseptic.

The ancients associated definite ideas with it. Salt was a symbol of unbreakable, perpetual loyalty. Eating salt or salted food together placed a host under a solemn obligation to protect and defend his guest.

Hebrew parents rubbed newborn infants with salt (Ezekiel 16:4).

To be "salted with the salt of the palace" (Ezra 4:14, literal) meant to be a loyal servant on the king's payroll.

Roman soldiers were paid "salt-money" (*salarium*, from which we get our word "salary").

The prophet Elisha threw salt into the water supply to symbolize the healing of the waters by the power of God (2 Kings 2:20, 21).

A "covenant of salt" (Numbers 18:19; 2 Chronicles 15:5) was an incorruptible covenant, involving the total integrity of those who made it.

In Leviticus 2:13 the Lord instructed Moses: "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" (Also Ezekiel 43:24).

Salt was required in the sacrifices to teach that every sacrifice to God must be presented with sincere love and moral purity, because the covenant based on it was incorruptible.

This reminds us of Romans 12:1: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." The living sacrifice that is acceptable to God is permeated by the pure salt of sincere, incorruptible love.

Jesus said that believers are "the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13). We impede moral deterioration and bring out the flavor of true living. Like salt, our influence is tasted wherever we are present.

It was with this background that Jesus said to His disciples: "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" (Mark 9:49,50).

The disciples had been arguing about who of them would be the greatest. Jesus took a child to dramatize the truth that "whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives not Me but Him who sent Me" (verse 37).

John took the occasion to inform Jesus that they had forbidden someone to cast out devils in His name. Jesus responded by emphasizing the unity of all who truly believe in Him; they are one in Him in love and humility.

Jesus said that it would be better to be murdered than to be the cause of one child turning away from Him (verse 43).

The Lord went on to warn further that it would be better to lose one's hand, foot, or eye and "enter into life" without such body parts than to keep all of them and yet be cast into hellfire because some body part was allowed to lead oneself into a life of sin.

Jesus was not advocating self-mutilation. His point was simply that we must not allow any member of our body to lead us into sin.

It was then that the Master said: "For every one shall be salted with fire" (Verse 49 KJV).

The disciples were familiar with all the old meanings associated with salt, so they knew what the Lord was getting at.

Character becomes permanent and destinies become fixed as people make commitments and follow them out with resolute determination. People write their ticket with God.

Those who set their hearts in self-will and disobedience are establishing a covenant. Unless they repent it will become an unchanging "covenant of salt." When they plunge into the lake of fire, it will be too late. They have prepared [*katertismena*] themselves for their own destruction (Romans 9:22). Their covenant with death and agreement with hell will be irrevocable, because, as Hebrews 9:27 says, "it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment."

But for believers, the "fiery trial" of present testing in this life (1 Peter 4:12) is only to purify us and to perfect and preserve in us those qualities of holy character that last forever. We will be like Jesus. This is our covenant-destiny. This is our unswerving purpose.

And when by His grace we come through the "salting" fire in victory and our work has been tried by fire at the judgment seat of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:13 - 15), we will stand complete and glorified in His presence. We will be "salted" through and through with the abiding virtues of faith, hope, and love (1 Corinthians 13:13).

According to our Lord's words in Luke 14:25 - 33, we have put Christ first in our hearts, even above our loved ones. We have counted the cost. We have forsaken all and followed Jesus. The covenant established in our hearts is irrevocable. He is ours, and we are His—forever and ever!

How precious is the "salt" of abiding love, purity, humility, and wisdom. These are the qualities that make the living sacrifice acceptable, the covenant incorruptible and the "living sacrifice" (Romans 12:1) acceptable.

Yet in both Mark 9:50 and Luke 14:34 and 35 Jesus warned us not to lose the "saltness" of the salt—that is, the reality of our faith. If we do, we are left with only a form of godliness devoid of the power, a ritual but no virtue of heart. Such a bland, leached-out hypocrisy is fit for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled under foot (Matthew 5:13).

"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Luke 14:35).

Where the "salt" pervades the fellowship, there is peace. No one squabbles over who will be the greatest. The little child is received in the name of Christ. The fellow-worker is encouraged to "cast out devils," even though "he does not follow us." We are quick to give one another a cup of cold water in His name.

The "salt" is in us. We are all in the covenant. In this blessed communion we are delightful to God and well-pleasing to one another.

So, "let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, so you may know how you ought to answer each one" (Colossians 4:6).

Away with bland, tasteless living! Let the salt of love and truth so season our speech that our verbal expressions to one another will bring out the delightful flavor of Him who is the Bread of Life, whetting the appetite of the spiritually hungry to come to the feast.

Friend, come to Jesus. Leave the empty, spiritually unsatisfying "junk food" behind. *Come to where the flavor is.*

"Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!" (Psalm 34:8).