



Luke 14:34-35
Pseudochristians

Luke 14:34 " Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned?

35 "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!"

Salt is an amazing compound. A while back, I recall watching a National Geographic special on Egyptian mummies. Apparently the main part of the mummification process consisted of covering the body with a naturally occurring salt called Natron. And now over 3000 years later we are still finding these mummies marvelously preserved by that salt.

Salt has long been recognized for its preservative role, long before there were refrigerators our ancestors salted meats and fish in order to preserve them for later use. It was the most common preservative and flavoring agent in the ancient world.

You probably seldom consider it, but salt is also essential for your survival. Salt affects the electrical conductivity through the body - it governs how our hearts beat, how signals are transmitted along our nerves and in our brains, and controls many other vital processes in your own body. Even the most primitive of peoples have realized that salt is necessary for life. Countless wars and campaigns have actually been fought for control of salt sources.

So salt preserves, it is necessary for life, and of course it adds taste to food. Regarding that quality Job asked the question: Job 6:6 "*Can flavorless food*

be eaten without salt? Or is there any taste in the white of an egg?" He calls this unsavory food, "loathsome."

So everyone hearing this parable would immediately have understood why Jesus said "Salt is Good." They also would have agreed about how worthless salt would be if it lost its good qualities. Now how could that happen? How could salt loose its saltiness?

Well the salt in Palestine was taken from natural sources and it was highly adulterated with other minerals, it was possible for water, for instance, to leach out the sodium and leave you with a substance that might *look* like salt, but *neither* tasted nor acted like salt. Such a substance unlike the waste from the kitchen wouldn't even be valuable on the compost heap or the dung hill, it couldn't be used as a fertilizer most other waste products, so it had *less* value than dung. What would you do with that? Throw it out!

Jesus though is not teaching a lesson here about household economics or chemistry. He is drawing an analogy, teaching a mini-parable, connected to what he had been teaching about true and false followers. In the earlier sermon on the mount, Jesus had said to his disciples "**You** are the salt of the earth." What made them salty? How did they *salt* the earth? What made them salty was the Gospel. The good news of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel, like salt, comes into a world filled with death and decay, and it exercises a preserving function. It is a critically necessary element for all true spiritual life. Where it is truly present it adds a distinctive flavor. The very words of a Christian should be as Paul puts it, "with grace, seasoned with Salt." A true Christian life and walk exudes the gospel. It is opposed to the death and putrefaction of worldliness, and its aim is to arrest and reverse the rot. It is opposed to A) corrupt doctrine and B) corrupt morals, and it is this gospel salt that should make such a difference in the world. Matthew Poole puts it this way:

"You are the salt of the earth, through the grace of God bestowed upon you. If it were not for the number of sound and painful ministers, and holy and gracious persons, the earth would be but a stinking dunghill of

drunkards, unclean persons, thieves, murderers, unrighteous persons, that would be a stench in the nostrils of a pure and holy God."

If you think that is too strong a statement, think of the example of Sodom, a city in which we read that there were not even 10 righteous people, and then extend that principle to cover the entire world. I know we may complain about the moral state of America, but can you imagine the stench that America would be *without* the salt of the gospel?

Now some of you might have been wondering if I misread when I said "sound and *painful* ministers," surely Poole meant sound and *pleasant* ministers? Or sound and *pleasing* ministers? Or maybe sound and *painless* ministers? Can't be sound and painful, *can it?*

Consider this, Jesus didn't say you are the sugar of the earth, or you are the honey of the earth. He said SALT. Salt is ascerbic, its biting, think about how salt feels when it gets into an open wound, it stings doesn't it? It purifies but man it hurts.

Growing up, I was one of those truly awful unregenerate kids, I mean terrible. I seem to have had a forcefield that repelled the effects of common grace, and I used to do really awful things. One of my favorites was before leaving a restaurant I *always, and I mean always, loosened the tops of the salt and pepper shakers*. I remember I thought it was such a hoot. Well many years later in university, I remember running in to the student union to get dinner, before I was due to travel all that night and all the next day. As usual I was broke and so I spent my last couple of pounds on my favorite Sausage, Eggs, Chips, and Beans. Well I went to shake the salt on it and wham suddenly the plate was utterly covered in sodium chloride and everyone with a view of me was suddenly turning purple with the effort of struggling not to laugh their heads off. Now I didn't have a choice, so I scraped off as much salt as I could, and proceded to eat my dinner. I think I finished at least half of it, and by the time I gave up my gums were stinging, my eyes were watering, it was a painful meal.

The gospel tastes the same way to many of the unregenerate, it is as Paul puts it in Gal. 5:11 an **offense. Isaiah 53.**

2 There is no beauty that we should desire Him.

3 He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

but it is a necessary offense. Because that salty flavor that the unregenerate find so unwelcome is evidence of its life-giving, preserving and purifying qualities. Salt melts ice, Sugar doesn't. Sugar will never melt an icy heart, but salt can and does.

A good and godly minister, brothers and sisters, *is a painful minister.* Because he knows that in order to do his hearers good, he cannot flinch from applying that which he knows will offend them. The plow of the law which breaks up the stony heart and produces conviction of sin. The Gospel of grace which while it has that melt, healing, preserving life giving quality, also has a salty taste – so salty that the majority of men spit it out instinctively and look around for something sweeter.

Understand this, the great danger that ministers face, that I face – isn't that we will become too salty, it is that we will become "too sweet." Brothers and Sisters, there isn't a month that goes by that I don't feel the huge urge to remove something from the ministry of this church that an unbeliever would instinctively find offensive and instead put something "sweet" in its place. No month more so than now in December. Now I'm not talking personal offense, I really am not striving to be personally offensive, I am talking about Gospel elements. For instance the idea that the bible, and not the traditions of men or the desires of the culture should be the source of all of worship and doctrine. But I have to remember that the degree that I remove that which is salty is the degree which I remove that which will do people genuine good.

And that removing of the saltiness of the gospel is part of what Jesus means by the salt losing its flavor. Worldiness leaches out the gospel from the church, and if the process isn't arrested and god-willing reversed, what is left

at the end is a church in name only. A church that no longer has the flavor of gospel nor the effectiveness of the gospel. That brothers and sisters is a worthless church. It doesn't change the flavor of the world, it takes on the flavor of the world. That by and large is the problem with the mainline liberal churches – no saltiness. A friend of mine described their agenda as *"figure out where the bleeding edge of progressive liberalism is headed and then jump out in front and pretend to lead the way."* Richard Neibuhr, who was himself a theologian in a liberal denomination, summed up the uselessness and emptiness of their message:

"A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgement through the ministrations of Christ with out a cross."

What good will such a message do? NONE AT ALL. Such a church, added to the dungheap of a lost and dying world doesn't change it all except perhaps to make wicked men worse by prejudicing them against the truth. Perhaps some of you have heard of the "Jesus Seminar"? This is a group made up of liberal theologians from the mainline churches who meet to decide which parts of the bible are true and which are false. True portions get a red vote, semi-true portions get a gray vote, and false portions get a black vote. According to the Jesus Seminar the entire gospel of John is BLACK. Such men are not Christians, they have a name that they are alive, but they are dead. There is a Greek prefix *pseudo* which when added to a word means "false, counterfeit, pretended, spurious", such professors are pseudo-Christians. Like that worthless salt they may have the appearance, but they have none of the flavor, and none of the preserving and flavoring qualities.

But what of personal applications?

- 1) Christians, **Beware of losing your flavor** – how do you season salt Christ asks? You can't, salt seasons other things, if it loses its own flavor, its good for nothing. You live in a fallen world, so you will feel the pull towards moral and doctrinal corruption. How can you avoid this? Prayer, and attendance on the means of grace, fleeing from man pleasing – and the best way to avoid that is to desire to see Christ glorified and lifted up more than you do yourself. Dying to self is not an optional part of the gospel.

Hold on to doctrines once for all delivered to the saints, hold fast to the pattern of sound words which learned from the scriptures. Watch out for wolves who seek to deceive and devour - **24 "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.**

DaVinci Code – why would this worry or even surprise us?

2) What of the fear that you may have already lost your saltiness? That you have fallen from grace -

1 John 2:19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

No real Apostates. But the fate of those who have experienced those *common operations of the Spirit is far worse even than the worst of sinners who hasn't. Dunghill vs. Trodden underfoot.*

2) Never underestimate the true uselessness of sugar and the true power of the salt: We are urged to adopt sugarary methods and they point to the "success" of sugar/salt churches. But the true successes are brought about by the salt in those churches not the sugar, and the sugar has only promoted the decay that exists. The power of the salt of the gospel is unstoppable – David Berkowitz example – 2 things struck me – sugary gunk of the announcers – saltiness of Berkowitz

Col. 4:6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one. But Without Grace and Salt Make sure then that all of your life and speech is salted.