

**“Keep It Salty” Mark 9: 38-50** (parts also in Matthew 18:6-9 and Luke 9:49-50; 14:34-35)

TODAY we mark the words of Jesus in Mark 9:50 where he says: **"Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."**

### Introductory thoughts

1. This passage contains some very serious warnings by Jesus on some “edgy” issues – dissention in ministry, serious personal sin and hell
2. These warnings are likely a compilation of various teachings of Jesus, which were repeated often throughout His ministry
3. We find portions of these teachings throughout the gospels – including the Sermon on the Mount of Matthew 5-7, which Mark omits (the teaching of Jesus is not Mark’s emphasis)
4. Between Mark 9 and 10 is an approximate 6-month gap of time as Jesus ministers and teaches on His way to Jerusalem. The teachings and events in this gap are uniquely found in Luke (9:51 – 18:14). Thus, these short teachings in Mark might be his attempt to briefly summarize this gap which he otherwise chooses to omit
5. The passage of warnings concludes with lessons on “salt” found in our key verse – the theme that seems to bind these teachings together – thus: “keep it salty” or, “keep it edgy” is our title and emphasis today

### Our passage of study

- 38 John said to Him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to hinder him because he was not following us."
- 39 But Jesus said, "Do not hinder him, for there is no one who shall perform a miracle in My name, and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me.
- 40 "For he who is not against us is for us.
- 41 "For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of your name as followers of Christ, truly I say to you, he will not lose his reward.
- 42 "And whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea.
- 43 "And If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire,
- 44 [where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.]
- 45 "And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame, than, having your two feet, to be cast into hell,
- 46 [where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.]
- 47 "And if your eye causes you to stumble, cast it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell,
- 48 where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.

49 "For everyone will be salted with fire.

50 "Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."

### Regarding "salt" in the Bible which informs this passage

1. Lot's wife turning to a pillar of salt when she disobeyed God by turning back to look at the destruction of Sodom links "salt" with "punishment and purification"

**Genesis 19:26** *But his wife, from behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.*

2. All sacrifices offered on the altar were first salted to make them acceptable – this was the "salt of the covenant" made with God

**Leviticus 2:13** *Every grain offering of yours, moreover, you shall season with salt, so that the salt of the covenant of your God shall not be lacking from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt.*

**Numbers 18:19** *All the offerings of the holy gifts, which the sons of Israel offer to the LORD, I have given to you and your sons and your daughters with you, as a perpetual allotment It is an everlasting covenant of salt before the LORD to you and your descendants with you.*

**2 Chronicles 13:5** *Do you not know that the Lord God of Israel gave the rule over Israel forever to David and his sons by a covenant of salt?*

3. Like today, salt is associated with bringing out flavor or "meaning"

**Job 6:6** *Can something tasteless be eaten without salt, or is there any taste in the white of an egg?*

4. We, Jesus' disciples, are called the "salt of the earth" in the Sermon on the Mount and the principle given is the same as in our Mark 9 passage

**Matthew 5:13** *You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? It is good for nothing any more, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.*

5. Paul speaks of the balance of "grace" and "salt" in our speech, similar to his call to "speak the truth in love"

*Colossians 4:6* Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person.

**ALL COMBINE TO LINK “SALT” to “EDGENESS” – that which might bring a mild “sting,” but for the sake of PURIFICATION and PRESERVATION**

**THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS MEANT TO BE COMFORTING, BUT NEVER COMFORTABLE**

There should always be a tension in sharing truth with an unbelieving world;  
In working out our salvation with “fear and trembling”; in the spirit being willing, but the flesh being weak. For all, we need SALT – or EDGENESS to our faith

### The three warnings that are “salty” or edgy”

1. **Re: Tolerance of differences in the ranks** (v. 38-41)

Do not hinder (put down) those who have differing methods of ministering Jesus  
(Denominations, styles, peripheral beliefs)

- √ There are differing thoughts and expressions (freedom of speech)
- √ Ultimately their life will show good fruit or bad
- √ Disagree with the beliefs or expression, but love the individual

Let us strive, by God’s grace, to embrace Paul’s perspective:

*Philippians 1: 15-18* Some to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; for former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice, yes, and I will rejoice.

2. **Re: Confronting personal sin** (v. 42-45)

- √ Causing someone else to sin is a critical offense
- √ Whatever causes you to sin deserves drastic attention
  - Destroy the item, cease the relationship, humble yourself in forgiveness,
  - Change your course, make yourself accountable, etc.

3. **Re: Hell** (v. 43-48)

Verses 44 and 46, repeated in v. 48, are not found in the earliest manuscripts. Either way, the reality of hell is emphasized.

- Gehenna – usually translated “hell” (v. 43, 45 and 47)
  - Gehenna was the valley on the “sons of Hinnon”, south of Jerusalem
  - Wicked king Ahaz offered sacrifices to the god Molech by burning children

- Good king Josiah stopped this practice and it became a garbage dump
- Garbage burned continually, and worms inhabited even the embers
- Isaiah 66:24 (last verse) refers this place as where “their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched”
- Gehenna became the designation for hell in the after life
- Jesus spoke more of hell than of heaven
- Hell was created for Satan and his demons
- Those who commit the “unforgiveable sin” of rejecting Jesus for a lifetime will spend eternity there
- Hell is essentially the absence of God and good – no light, love, hope, comfort, pleasure, relationship, provision, joy, etc.
- We must not shy away from teaching the truth of hell – it is “salt” that God can use
- *DO YOU HAVE THE HOPE OF HEAVEN THROUGH YOUR CONFESSION OF JESUS AS SAVIOR AND LORD? - HELL IS YOUR OPTION*

### The “salt” teachings of Mark 9:50

#### **1. V. 49 “For everyone will be salted by fire”**

We see now that this correlates to the “salt offerings” of the Old Testament. In order for our offering to God to be acceptable it must be tested, or “salted” by the “fire” of trials in our life. In other words, “by their fruit you shall know them”

LET TRIALS DO THEIR WORK – THEY KEEP OUR “EDGE” SHARP and keep us from becoming too complacent or comfortable

#### **2. V 50a “Salt is good, but if the salt becomes unsalty with what will you make it salty again?”**

We must not lose our “salt” or “edge.” The sharing of TOLERANCE IN OUR RANKS, DRASTICALLY CONFRONTING SIN and the reality of HELL is keeping our Christian life “salty” and effective for PURIFICATION and PRESERVATION

#### **3. V 50b “Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another”**

We must always be careful to **balance** grace with salt; edginess with love

- “Speak the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15)
- “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned (as it were) with salt” (Colossians 4:6)
- “Let us consider how to stimulate [provoke] one another to love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:24)

- “And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able also to admonish one another” (Romans 15:14)
- “Encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called today, lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:13)
- If we err, may it always be on the side of grace and love with peace as the goal.
- But may we never shy away from salt, edginess, truth, provoking to good deeds, admonishing when called for, or turning another from sin

***GOD, MAY WE “KEEP IT SALTY” FOR YOUR GLORY! AMEN***