

Well-Seasoned Greetings

Sampling the Savor of Our Savior

December 3, 2023

Today we're looking deep within to see if our well is well-seasoned!



But first: **Is your speech full of grace?** “Usually ... except when I’m upset or angry.” But *that’s* the *only time* it’s *actually* grace. Because, **grace is only grace when you don’t want to give it.** Which requires *selfless compassion*. **Which requires the reign of Christ at our very core.** When Jesus appoints His chosen twelve, He begins their apprenticeship training by explaining who’s *blessed*: i.e. the humble, heartbroken, meek, merciful, pure-hearted, peacemakers. And then, about them, He says:



“You are the salt of the earth.” [lit. ground; land] – Matthew 5:13 NIV

But what’s *that* mean? **Salt was sown as a curse** on the land of *Shechem*, the *hometown* of the *woman* Jesus later *encounters* at the *well*. (Jud 9:45) And, in fact, *throughout* Scripture, *salt lands* and the *Salt/Dead Sea* always symbolize the unquenchable *thirst* of *attractive* but *dry*, *dying*, *un-dwellable* hearts of those who turn *from* the goodness of God. Jeremiah writes:



[The one] whose *heart* turns *away* from the Lord ... will be like a **[thorn] bush** in the *wastelands* ... in the parched places of the desert, in a *salt land* where no one lives. ... [But] the man who *trusts* in the Lord **[like those pure-hearted peacemakers]** ... will be like a tree planted by the water that ... *never fails* to bear *fruit*. [But] The **[uninhabitable, salt-land] heart** is deceitful above all things and *beyond cure*. ... [Because] *They have forsaken* the Lord, **[a.k.a.] the Spring of Living [life-giving] Water.** **[So, Jeremiah cries out] Heal me, [of my salt-water heart] O Lord, [make me a freshwater fountain]** and I will be healed – Jeremiah 17:5-14 NIV



So how does the Lord heal an otherwise incurable, salt-water heart? The same way He heals an actual wasteland well, that Scripture tells us, symbolizes that salt-land, salt-water heart; in the non-intuitive, just-like-Jesus, surprisingly miraculous way ... **with a touch of salt.**



The men of [Jericho] said to Elisha ... “the *water* is *bad*, and the *ground* *barren*.” And he said, “Bring me a new *bowl*, and put *salt* in it.” ... Then he went out to the source of the water, and cast in the salt there, and said, “Thus says the Lord: ‘I have healed this water; from it there shall be no more *death* or *barrenness*.’” – 2 Kings 2:19-21 NKJ

And with *this*, as with most *symbols* in *Scripture*, **the Lord establishes a good and a bad side to salt.** Which goes hand-in-hand with Jesus proclaiming, that:

“He who believes in *Me*, as the Scripture has said, out of his *heart* will flow *rivers of living water*.” But this He spoke concerning the *Spirit* – John 7:38-39 NKJ

Because His *Spirit* is like “*rivers of living water*”, because “the *Lord* [is like] the *spring of living water*”, in a *healed heart*, which is “like a tree planted by the [living] water” “that never fails to bear fruit”. Because, as Jesus said:

“Out of the *overflow* of his *heart* his *mouth* speaks.” – Luke 6:45 NIV

[Because] The *heart* of the *wise* instructs his *mouth* – Proverbs 16:23 NAS

[So] “You will know them by their *fruits*. [After all] Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes [“in the wastelands”] nor figs from thistles, are they?” – Matthew 7:16 NAS

[In the same way] “The *good* man brings *good* things out of the *good* stored up in his *heart*, and the *evil* man brings *evil* things out of the *evil* stored up in his *heart*.” – Luke 6:45 NIV

Problem is, as believers in the process of being made holy, we often poison our own well!

Out of the *same mouth* come *praise* [on Sunday] and *cursing*. [On Monday] ... This should not be. [I mean] Can both *fresh water* and *salt water* flow from the *same* spring? [Nope. It’s one or the other. We gotta chose whether our heart’s gonna be a purified well or a poisoned well] ... Can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? [Nope; well] *Neither* can a salt [land] spring produce *fresh water*. – James 3:10-12 NIV

In fact, Jesus said:

“Any of you who does not give up everything he has [that poisons the well with saltwater] cannot be My disciple. [On the flip side] Salt is good, but if it [the good salt] loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the *soil* [which represents the hearts that receive the seed of God’s Word (Lk 8:15)] nor for [that matter] the *manure pile*; [that helps the seed to grow] it is thrown out.” – Luke 14:33-35 NIV



So **how can salt lose its saltiness?** Anti-Christian websites love to *accuse* Jesus of *displaying* His *ignorance*, saying that salt *can’t* lose its *saltiness*. It can be *diluted*. We can lose *ability* to *taste* it. But it can’t *lose* its *saltiness* they *say*. Well as Willy Wonka would say: “Wrong, sir! Wrong!” They overlook **the one and only way: fire**. Ever throw salt crystals on a fire? (that brand happens to be Red Devil!) After the colorful flames burn out, the salt is gone. Burned up in the fire. Which is why we need “the Spring of Living [life-giving] Water” as the *source* of our *speech*.

“For everyone will be *seasoned* [as it were] with *fire*, and every [OT] *sacrifice* [“with fire”] will be *seasoned* with *salt*. [This] *Salt* is good, but if the *salt* [of every OT *sacrifice* with *fire*] loses its *flavor*, how will you season it [i.e. *your sacrifice*]? Have [good] *salt* [that won’t burn up] in *yourselves*, and have *peace* with one another.” – Mark 9:49-50 NKJ

He’s referring to the OT practice, commanded by God, to:

Season all your grain offerings with salt. ... [And] Add salt to all your offerings. – Leviticus 2:13 NIV

[And] We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. – Hebrews 10:4-5, 10 NKJ

And, in response to that:

In view of God's mercy, [you are called] to offer your bodies as [the good salt of] living sacrifices, [that doesn't burn up; but instead, offers living water from an un-poisoned, well, heart. Again and again, the salt-seasoned sacrifices of the OT are said to be a pleasing aroma to God. (Lev 1:9, 13, 17, etc.) But, after Jesus' once-for-all sacrifice, it's the seasoning of salt that each of us adds to the offering that is now] holy and pleasing to God— [and] this is your spiritual act of worship. – Romans 12:1 NIV

Adding a touch of salt to the sacrifice that Jesus offered. Which is why Paul asks believers to:

Pray for us ... that God may open a door for our message [the sacrifice of Christ for the sin of mankind] ... that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. [And that you would] Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; [and that you would] make the most of every opportunity. [And that you would] Let your conversation [regarding our message] be always full of grace, [and] seasoned with salt, so that you may know [not necessarily what, but] how to answer everyone. – Colossians 4:3-6 NIV



One of my all-time favorite missionaries, Bill Kieselhorst, told a true story here, years ago, about fishing with some *pastors*; but the fish weren't biting. So, some guys pulled alongside griping, with "g-d this" and "f-bomb that", and then offered 'em a *beer*. And one of the men in Bill's boat said, **"No thanks. We're pastors."** And it so irked Bill, that he stepped into the *other* boat and said, **"Well, I'm a missionary; so I'll take your beer."** And in that moment, much like Elisha's bowl of salt cast into the water, I imagine Bill was like a bowl of pretzels in their beer-drinking boat! Something Paul tries to explain to the Corinthians, saying:

I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the Gospel – 1 Corinthians 9:22-23 NIV

[However] Those who use the things of the world, [should live] as if not engrossed in them. – 1 Corinthians 7:30-31 NIV

I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— not at all meaning the people of this world who are *immoral*, or the *greedy* and *swindlers*, or *idolaters*. In *that* case you would have to leave this world. – 1 Corinthians 5:9-10 NIV



It's all about being *in* this world without being *of* this world. How many times have I told you about my uncle Joe's shrimp boat? Well, whatever it is, it's one too few! So dig in! Cuz he took me out when I was young and we had a huge catch. And he boiled 'em onboard in a *huge* copper kettle filled with sea water, to which he added 50 *pounds* of salt.



When they were cooked, he gave us each a cup of melted butter and let us walk the halls of fresh shrimp to pick out the biggest and best. Here's the point: those shrimp spent their entire life in that salt-water. So **why did Uncle Joe have to add salt to the pot?** Because they would've been *flavorless*. Why? Because they didn't absorb the briny sea they swam in. So there's our lesson in a shrimp-shell: **don't absorb the salt water of our SeaWorld**. However, **do season it with a touch of salt**. Because, as the good, life-giving, heart-healing, sacrifice accompanying, salt of this world, we're called to help the world, to:

Taste and see that the Lord is good – Psalm 34:8 NIV

So, **how do you taste?** He's the sacrifice, and the Bread of Life, but you're the salt that seasons it. So, **how much do the people around you crave your beliefs**, based on the free sample you've been offering?

"Would you give [your son] a scorpion when he asks for an *egg*? Bad as you *are*, you *know* how to give *good* things ... how much *more*, then, will *the* Father?" – Luke 11:11-13 GNT

[But] Is there any *taste* in the white of an *egg*? [Not really] – Job 6:6b NKJ

[And] Can *flavorless food* be eaten without *salt*? [Not with pleasure] – Job 6:6a NKJ

[Well] "You are the *seasoning* *salt* of the *earth*" – Matthew 5:13 NKJ

[So] "Have *salt* in *yourselves*, and have *peace* with one *another*." – Mark 9:50 NKJ

For the *ear* tests words as the *tongue* tastes food. – Job 34:3 NIV

So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander ... grow up into salvation— if indeed *you* have *tasted* that the Lord is *good*. – 1 Peter 2:1-3 ESV

... and have *tasted* the *goodness* of the *Word* of God – Hebrews 6:5 ESV

And since "everyone will be *seasoned* with *fire*", **as the good salt, we need to shake things up!**

Since we are receiving a kingdom that *cannot* be *shaken*, let us ... *worship* God acceptably [as a *living sacrifice*] ... for our God *is* a *consuming fire*. – Hebrews 12:28-29 NIV

[But] *Who* of *us* can dwell with the *consuming fire*? *Who* of *us* can dwell with *everlasting burning*? [Well] He who walks *righteously* – Isaiah 33:14-15 NIV

[Trouble is ...] All *our* *righteous acts* are like *filthy rags* – Isaiah 64:6 NIV

[But] We have One who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the *Righteous One*. He is the atoning *sacrifice* for our *sins*, and not *only* for *ours* but also for the *sins* of the *whole world*. – 1 John 2:1-2 NIV

So **get shakin!** As we enter this Christmas season, keep in mind the one main reason, and **from deep in your heart, offer living, healing, life-giving, well-seasoned greetings!**