

Scripture: Mark 9:49-50

Text: Mark 9:50b -- "...have salt
in yourselves."

Topic: Have Salt in Yourself.

Proposition: In his "salt Sayings",
Jesus gave practical and spiritual
guidance for those who will listen to
him.

Date written: June 30, 1973

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Cover

W. K. 2:50-50

... have self
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Topic: Have faith in yourself.

Conclusion: In his "Self-Confidence"
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Reference: Luke 22:32

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Introduction:

1. A mountain man who was driving to town caught up with an elderly neighbor who was on foot. The motorist picked up the hiker, who volunteered, "I'm on my way to town 'cause I've gotta pay a bill. It's been on my mind so's I can't sleep."

The neighbor could not imagine the old man's owing much. His needs and wants were few. "How long have you owed this money?" the driver asked.

"Just a few days," said the old man. "But I want git it cleared."

"How much is this bill?"

"Five dollars. I owe it to the doctor."

"Good gracious," said the neighbor, "that's not much! How come you're fretting so over owing five dollars?"

"Walk," said the old man, "it's this way. You kin never tell when you're gonna leave this world, and I don't want ^{to} go owin' nobody nuthing. 'Cause when I git where I'm going, St. Peter's liable to tell me I can't git in till all my debts is paid. Then I might have to walk all over hell to find the folks I owes."

(Leo Aikman, in The Atlanta Constitution).

2. We don't want to have to "go all over hell" either, but we may have to go over a good many thoughts to come up with the meaning of our Scripture! Like the old fellow wanting to pay his bill "right now," this is the time to clarify this Scripture. We will try to do that by taking a

I. A close look at the Scripture.

1. The first part of our Scripture, verse 49, is only here in Mark. It is not in the Bible anywhere else. The second part, verse 50, is in Matthew and Luke in some form, but I did not find it in John.

2. Verse 50 in Matthew and Luke is in somewhat different form from our Scripture as in Mark. Luke makes plain that this Scripture is a parable or parables: "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Matthew pins the meaning of the parable right onto the reader or hearer: "You are the salt of the earth."

3. The Interpreter's One Volume Commentary on the Bible says that our

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Scripture is a grouping of 3 sayings about salt, but that each is unrelated to the others. There is no common theme in the sayings.

4. This same Commentary, as do others that I studied, presents our Scripture text as depending entirely on the individual interpreter for any meaning. These textual words are in verse 50: "Have salt in yourselves." I hope that the meanings I present here make sense to you. I feel as if what I say here about this passage and text was given to me, inspired if you will, by the Lord Jesus who said these words in the first place. I must present these meanings through my ~~p~~ personality and in my own way.

5. First, let's think about

II. The nature and usages of salt.

1. Chemically, salt is a mixture of sodium and chlorine, in equal amounts, a 1 to 1 ratio of each element in each molecule of salt. Each of these elements is quite potent alone. Of course you know this about chlorine, with its germ-killing and purifying power in water. Together sodium and

chlorine form salt; and it is an important part of the bodily life of all mankind.

2. A woman on a diet was told by her little girl that she shouldn't eat peanuts because they would make her fat. "How do you know that?" asked the mother.

"Mother," said the little girl, "haven't you ever seen an elephant?" (from Good Housekeeping, 4-73)

You expect results like body fat when you eat lots of peanuts. You expect certain things from salt, too.

The most

3. The most obvious modern usage is for seasoning. In amounts to your liking, salt helps poor food to taste good and good food to taste better.

a. Verse 50 of our Scripture points to this most-obvious and common usage: "if the salt has lost its saltness, how will you season it?" That is, how will you season whatever food you are preparing if the salt you use has lost its saltness?

b. This thought of salt losing its saltness was more understandable to people in Biblical times, and in primitive countries ~~today~~, than to

us of today. They did not have efficient refining and purifying methods for salt, by which to separate it from other substances. Their salt often was mixed with sand or other materials. They had few moisture-tight containers for salt. So it was common that moisture would get into their salt and combine with it and take away its saltiness. At that point it was of little good, to be thrown out, ~~and~~ perhaps on a dung hill, and trampled underfoot. At least it might dry and ^{HELP} make a firm pathway, and so have some value there on the ground.

4. A woman told one of her friends, "I think I've cured my husband from coming in too late at night."

~~Well,~~ "How did you do that?" asked the friend.

"Well," said the wife, "last night when I heard him downstairs fumbling around, I yelled, 'Is that you, Harold?'"

"So how did that stop him?" asked the friend.

To which the sweet wife said, "His name is Al.!"

(from The Wooden Barrel, 1-73)

This husband felt that his marriage was worth keeping, and he began to stay

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home in order to preserve it!

a. That word "preserve" is the key to another usage of salt, which was much more common in days before electric refrigeration than it is now. Salt can be used to preserve food, to keep it from spoiling, for a long time. Many of us still like salt meat or salt fish, food which is preserved with salt in the old-time way.

5. Another function of salt is in retaining water in the bodies of living organisms, including people. All of us have bodies which are saline solutions, in a sense.

a. Sometimes bodily control functions go wrong and too much water is retained in a body. At that point, for good health, it may be necessary to cut down on salt intake, or to give it up completely. Usually when this happens, the extra water is then released and health returns.

b. The reverse may happen, too, so that a person needs to eat lots of salt in order to retain the healthy salt-~~and~~^{to}-water ratioⁿ of the body.

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c. Salt is necessary to the life of our bodies, is what we are saying.

d. If salt seasons food and makes the food tasty, if it preserves food for delayed and future consumption, and if it is necessary to life, then Jesus was absolutely right when he said, "salt is good," as we have his words in our Scripture.

e. There are other usages of salt and other facts about it, but the things we have talked about are the best-known and most-universal usages and facts. One other thought concerns the pain-giving aspect of salt. Put it in a ~~salt~~^{WOUND}, and ~~it~~^{OTHER LESION} burns and hurts. The quality that makes ~~salt~~^{SALT} do that makes ~~salt~~^{IT} a good antiseptic with which to gargle so as to kill germs in throat and mouth. Though it causes some pain, that very capability ^{CAN BECOME} is a source of good.

6. The Gospel of Luke has Jesus point out that there are other meanings here than the obvious ones about salt: "He who has ears to hear, let him hear," were words of Jesus, ^{which} in Luke we noted. At this point now we want to hear some of

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III. The practical and spiritual teachings for us of these "salt messages." We hope to get across the right meanings better than the swimming instructor at the summer camp pool who was explaining the "buddy system" to some beginners. He asked "Does anyone know what a buddy is?"

After a moment of silence, one youngster replied, "It's someone who drowns with you."

(from Successful Farming, 3-73)

1. The Gospel of Matthew has Jesus end its salt sayings, we have noted, with the words "You are the salt of the earth." If Jesus meant YOU, or me, then he was speaking to us -- which we believe he was.

2. The fact that salt seasons food to make it good and tasty suggests that we ought to affect our lives and those of people around us so as to make them more pleasant and meaningful. We can do this through patient listening, service, giving till it hurts, forgiveness of those who wrong or speak ill of us, the speaking of cheerful and encouraging words, the refusal to spread malicious rumor and gossip, and in many other ways. You can figure them out.

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(from Necessary Journey, 1-2)

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3. Just as salt can preserve food, so we can help keep and preserve good customs, morals, and institutions in our society. Your attendance at and support of Church worship indicates that you are so trying.

4. That salt in the proper amount is necessary to life suggests that ~~we~~ we should not force ourselves on others nor dominate ~~too much~~ the time and activities of another. Be a friend, not a pest and a non-paying boarder! There is a proper proportion and method in which to mix with others and with society in general. The effort never ends to keep that balance. We must work hard at trying to keep it.

5. The pain-causing ability of salt which can also do good as an antiseptic suggests that to each person sorrow and suffering must come, but that much good can come from our grief and pain.

Conclusion:

1. Matthew says "You are the salt". Mark puts it, "Have salt in yourselves!" In my sermon topic I am trying to make it even more personal for each of us: "Have salt in yourself."

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2. When he said those words, "Have salt in yourselves," Jesus was telling this to his first hearers; he was talking to Bible readers since; and he is speaking to you and to me.

3. "Have salt in yourself"!

a. Make life for yourself happier and better, and do it for others too

b. Help keep intact and lasting the good and worthwhile things of personality and society.

c. Work to keep in balance the necessary physical and spiritual factors of life.

d. Find the good and worthwhile in life's sorrow and suffering.

4. As a seasoning, salt brings out distinctiveness of flavor in a food. When you "have salt in yourself," your distinctive individuality is reinforced and enhanced. You're not a rubber stamp of anybody else, and you don't have to fit anybody's pattern. You can be ~~you~~ ^{you} and you should be yourself; ~~you~~.

5. "You are the salt of the earth." "Have salt in yourself." Only believe in the Lord Jesus, who gave these wonderful salty teachings!

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