

TUSCULUM HILLS BAPTIST CHURCH

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Sermon title: Be at Peace – Part 3, Mark 9:49-50

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INTRODUCTION: Today is Part 3 of “Be at Peace.” Review—

- Two weeks ago: I preached on Three Things Jesus Wanted His Disciples to Know: He wanted them to know he was being betrayed, he would be killed, and he would rise again.
- Last week: I told you about how Jesus Gave a Caution About Sin.
- And today: We have—Jesus Cautioned About Service and Sacrifice. It’s no coincidence the words “service” and “sacrifice” are together.

SCRIPTURE: Mark 9:49-50 ⁴⁹ *Everyone will be salted with fire.* ⁵⁰ *“Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other.”*

ILLUSTRATION: During summer camp, a young man came forward during the invitation time at the end of the service stating he wanted to accept Jesus. As his counselor led him through the prayer, the counselor used the phrase, “... and be willing to give up everything for Jesus.” The teenage camper looked up at the counselor with a puzzled look. “Everything? I have to give up everything?”

We don’t talk much in our culture about having to give up everything in order to follow Jesus. We hear stories of people in other countries giving up their families, their homes, and their whole existence to follow Jesus. Some face death or imprisonment or torture. To deny ourselves and take up our crosses daily has been a verse we glibly read and continue on without thinking about it much.

Here in America, we don’t encounter outright persecution. Oh, we might get made fun of if we are really courageous and take a stand for Jesus. Or, we may get

rejected by some groups. But, until recently, to follow Jesus has been a very socially accepted norm.

In the past few years, however, we have begun to hear of people who have taken a stand against ungodly edicts ... E.g. a privately owned bakery owner refusing to bake a wedding cake for a homosexual wedding because of her religious convictions and who eventually lost her business. Or, a Justice of the Peace who refuses to perform same sex weddings and has been persecuted in the press. We have been silenced in the public square from praying in schools and at ball games. Public schools have been ordered to turn their gender specific bathrooms into transgender facilities. Just this past week, a federal judge ruled against that mandate—standing up to the presidential order. The persecution is coming. Are we courageous enough to stand up to it?

In all the verses in this passage, Mark 9:42-50, which we've been dealing with for the past three weeks, Jesus is talking to the disciples. In verse 42, he warns them against offending weaker believers. In verses 43-48, he warns them to avoid the tragic consequences of sin. Again, he is not saying a true believer loses his salvation, but he is saying sin cannot be dealt with lightly. It must be dealt with ruthlessly.

OVERVIEW: The next two verses, 49-50, are some of the most difficult in the New Testament to interpret, but if we take them in their natural context, I believe we can understand them. In these verses, Jesus warns his disciples that following him will require sacrifice and purity.

I have three points to my message today:

1. For everyone shall be salted with fire.
2. And, every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.
3. Salt is good.

First, in verse 49, Jesus tells us those who wish to be his followers are going to go through the fire. ...***FOR EVERYONE SHALL BE SALTED WITH FIRE.***

Those of us who have walked with the Lord for years know this to be true, don't we? Fire is a purifier, a cleansing agent. God will allow us to go through the fire in

order to purify us for service and make us more like Jesus (2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Thessalonians 3:3-4; Acts 14:22; 1 Peter 4:12-13). God allows us to be in the fire to burn away the flesh and its power over us.

Second, Jesus says, ***AND EVERY SACRIFICE SHALL BE SALTED WITH SALT***.

EXPLANATION: This is a reference back to the sacrifices of the Old Testament. When a sacrifice was offered, it was to be offered with salt (Leviticus 2:13; Ezekiel 43:25). The purifying element of salt made the sacrifice acceptable to the Lord. We are to be a willing sacrifice, giving up all of our rights to serve him and others (Romans 12:1-2). It goes against the grain of our American way of thinking. But, as believers in and followers of Jesus, we have no rights. We have surrendered everything to him. What we have are privileges. This is a hard concept to grasp for us, but our paradigm should be complete self-denial. I'm not speaking about government or legal matters, but spiritually.

Third, In verse 50, Jesus says ... ***SALT IS GOOD*** ... and so it is.

The Jews had a saying, "The world cannot survive without salt."

- It was currency. The word "salary" comes from the Latin word *salarium*. It referred to the fact Roman soldiers were often paid their wages in salt, an ounce for an ounce for gold. It was extremely valuable.
- It was a preservative. Salt was necessary for preservation before the days of refrigeration. Meat placed in a brine solution could last for long periods of time.
- It was a condiment. Salt made the unpalatable tasty.
- It was an antiseptic. Salt was often poured into wounds for healing and to stop infection.

But, if the salt loses its effectiveness, it is no good. Today our salt is pure and never loses its flavor, but in Biblical times, salt could become contaminated and had to be thrown away.

SCRIPTURE: Mark 9:50 Listen to The Living Bible paraphrase...

⁵⁰ *Good salt is worthless if it loses its saltiness; it can't season anything. So don't lose your flavor! Live in peace with each other (TLB).*

So, in the context of the scripture passage, to have salt means to be genuine, to be real, to possess the characteristics of who and what we are.

APPLICATION: If we are truly the children of God, then we should act like and live like the children of God. We do that by:

1. Not causing others to stumble and fall into sin.
2. Avoiding sin at all costs in our own lives.
3. Willingly embracing a sacrificial lifestyle.
4. Creating a thirst for the things of God in the lives of those around us. Has anyone ever said to you, “When I am around you, I want what you have?” You have created thirst by your “saltiness.”
5. Acting as a preserving agent in the world by raising the moral atmosphere, promoting honesty, elevating conversation, accepting and loving one another.
6. Acting as a healing agent.
7. Acting as a deterrent to infection and corruption in our society.

SCRIPTURE: Jesus closes this teaching session by saying, “... *and have peace one with another*”

EXPLANATION: You will remember the disciples had been arguing among themselves and had rebuked a man who was not of their group although he was doing works in Jesus' name. I think Jesus was trying to teach them: God's people shouldn't be arguing amongst themselves about who is the greatest or rebuking others, but we should be more concerned about examining our own hearts. We should check the “saltiness” of our walk. We glorify him when we forget about our own importance and prove we are his, by loving one another and being at peace with one another.

ILLUSTRATION: Another word about salt... It is made of sodium and chloride. Atomically bonded together in the form of salt, it is stable, but sodium and chloride are explosive if they are not unified. This is the same with God's people. Unified in Christ we have a reason to be stable. Without unity, our fleshly nature takes over and destroys the unity.

CONCLUSION: So where does this message find you today?

- Do Jesus' words concerning Hell trouble you? Do you need to accept him and be saved? You can be saved by repenting of your sin and turning to him today. Come to Jesus.
- Are you struggling with sin in your life? Do you keep going back to the same sin over and over? He can help you overcome the sin. Come to Jesus.
- Are you walking through purifying trials, and your knees are weak? Come to Jesus.
- Do you need to recover the saltiness in your life? The Lord can help you recover your saltiness. Come to Jesus.
- Are you leading people to Jesus or away from him? The Lord can help you define where you're going. Come to Jesus.
- Do you lack the courage to take a courageous stand for Jesus? The Lord can help you find courage. Come to Jesus.

You see, we don't just come to Jesus to be saved and then it's over. We come to Jesus with every facet of our Christian lives. Do you need to come to the altar for prayer, for salvation, for healing? How about for peace in your life? The altar is open. Come to Jesus.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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